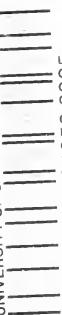
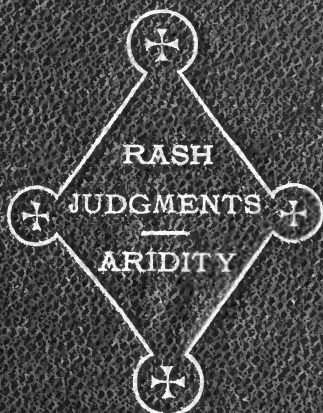


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TRANSFER



SELECT WORKS

OF THE

VENERABLE FATHER NICHOLAS LANCICIUS, S.J.

VOL. II.

- I. ON RASH JUDGMENTS.
- II. ON ARIDITIES.

ROEHAMPTON:
PRINTED BY JAMES STANLEY.



SELECT WORKS

OF THE

Venerable Father Nicholas Lancicius, S.J.

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN.

VOL. II.

- I. ON RASH JUDGMENTS.
- II. ON ARIDITY.

With a Preface by

FATHER GALLWEY, S.J.

LONDON: BURNS AND OATES.

—
1881.

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PREFACE.

I THINK that it is Venerable Bede who has preserved for us the ancient story, that when St. Paulinus first preached the Gospel in the northern parts of this island, the rude Pagan warriors met in council to deliberate whether they would listen to him or kill him. It chanced that, as they debated, a bird flew into their council-chamber and out again. And one of the assembled chiefs noticed the incident and made it the text of his harangue. "It appears to me," he said, "that we come into this world and leave it again just as this bird appeared here and disappeared. If then this stranger who is come among us can teach us something on these two points—whence we came and whither we go—he will do us a service, and we ought to hear him. If he cannot teach us anything useful, let him die."

This second volume of the Works of the Venerable Father Lancicius does not deal precisely with these two all important questions, "whence we came" and "whither we are going," but still it treats of two questions on which all who wish to save and sanctify their souls are specially glad to receive help and instruction. I think that every one, whether in Religious life or living in the world, who "wishes to live piously in Christ Jesus,"¹ will be glad to know what

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 12.

so practical a guide as Father Lancicius has to say on two subjects of such vital importance as those discussed in this volume—Rash Judgments, and Dryness and Distraction in prayer.

Any one who has himself conquered the difficulties which beset prayer, and has moreover schooled himself to the faithful observance of the precept, "Judge not," well deserves a hearing when, in the spirit of charity, he comes forward to make known to others the methods by which he has helped himself. He is truly a friend in need, for he brings succour where our need is the sorest." Dryness and distraction in prayer is avowedly one of the most common causes of discouragement and loss of hope. How many have uttered in their own fashion the substance of this sentence: "I would gladly pray if I could; but I cannot. My prayer is nothing but a hopeless distraction."

The evil that comes to our soul from judging others hastily and severely, is perhaps not so commonly felt or understood; and for this reason the treatise of Father Lancicius is the more valuable, since it will help to awaken us to truths which we cannot forget with impunity. For so long as that golden rule stands on the page of our Blessed Lord's Gospel: "With what judgment you judge you shall be judged; and with what measure you mete it shall be measured to you again,"² every one who allows himself habitually to judge too severely is continually heaping up difficulties on his own path. For whether he betakes himself to prayer, or sets his hand to work, in all places and at all times he needs God's mercy and God's blessing; and everywhere the sentences he has pronounced against his

² St. Matt. vii. 2.

fellow-servant confront him, and hinder mercy and blessing from reaching him and his works.

In conclusion I think that I may without rashness predict that this volume will be cherished by many as a wise and sincere Counsellor and Friend, which has helped them to learn two lessons of priceless value—the first, due leniency in estimating the faults of others ; and the second, great patience and hopefulness in presence of our own defects in prayer.

P. GALLWEY.

Feast of the Epiphany, 1881.

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ON RASH JUDGMENTS.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

IN order that I may propose some remedies for a disease which is very common and widely diffused, I will treat of the reasons for avoiding rash judgments, and of the rules which should be observed in order that we may not err in our judgments of others, and of the remedies by means of which we may avoid this vice. For it grows strong in many now as in the days of St. Chrysostom, when he said (in book i. on *Compunction of heart*), "You will not easily find either men of the world, or hardly a monk, free from this vice ;" because, as St. Gregory Nazianzen remarks (Oration 26), "Men are very ready to judge other men's works, but slow to judge their own." "For," says Seneca (book ii. chap. 28, on *Anger*), "we have other men's vices before our eyes ; our own are behind our back."

Men too, as Themistius observes (Oration 17), "take occasion to calumniate others for things the most contrary to each other. The philosopher is silent: they heap reproaches upon him as if, from his awkwardness in speaking, he put on an affectation of gravity. He prepares to speak: they find fault with him as passing from the camp of philosophy to that of rhetoric. If he utters a warning, they declare that he is trifling; if he bestows praise, that he is flattering; if he finds fault, that he is atrabilious; if he comes to Court, he is going out of his place; if he remains at home, he is lying like useless lumber on the ground; if he interests himself in the affairs of the State, they assert that he is ambitious; if he retires from it, the very same

people maintain that he is of no use. What can we do with men so peevish, who have nowhere to put us?"

The very same things may be said about our own times, so far and wide is this vice diffused; and it is hurtful not only to him who judges, but also to others. Its evil impulse spares none; whether superiors or spiritual fathers, preachers or professors, masters or scholars, procurators, missionaries, domestics or externs. For it is a vice which is one of the chief roots of that great liberty in speaking of the faults of others which we all condemn, and yet which we almost all cherish; and therefore it is necessary to speak of this evil which assails all and hurts all, so that a matter in which all are interested may be dealt with, and that all may learn to shrink from this vice, to which even holy men are sometimes liable.

St. Catharine, although a saint, testifies that she laboured under this vice before she was taught by our Lord that she should not judge any one. Therefore (in chap. cviii. of her Dialogues), addressing God the Father in a rapture, she said: "Thou gavest me a welcome medicine for a certain secret malady, of which I was still ignorant, nor did I know its nature, by teaching me that I should in no way presume to judge any rational creature, and least of all Thy servants, with respect to whom I was sometimes tainted with this disease, like one who was blinded and sick; because, under colour of zeal for Thy honour and the salvation of souls, I was judging rashly." And this is no wonder, as well because we cannot help seeing many things in others which are not perfectly done or said, as because of a certain tendency of our corrupt nature to rash judgments. "For it is difficult," says Socrates (in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, book ii), "to do anything in such a way as to make no mistake; and even if any one should do anything without a fault, it is difficult to escape unjust judgment."

CHAPTER I.

The first reason for avoiding rash judgments.

THE first reason is, that we may not, for such judgments, be severely judged by God and by men. "For in that great day," says St. Chrysostom (in his homily on those words of the Apostle, *Salutate Priscam*), "God will thoroughly judge us, not only for those things in which we have sinned, but for those things in which we have not sinned, but on account of which we have passed judgment on others. And that which in its own nature is often a slight sin, becomes grave and unpardonable when the offender is one who judges another. Perhaps what we have said is not sufficiently clear, and therefore we will express it more clearly. Some one has sinned, and has condemned another for committing the same sin: he will, in that most bitter day, not suffer that punishment only which the nature of his sin demands, but more than double or triple, not because he has sinned himself, but because he has judged another. For this it is that God will pronounce judgment against him. And that this is true I will prove from things which have already taken place. For the Pharisee, although he had in no way sinned himself, but had lived justly, and could claim many virtues for himself, yet because he condemned the Publican as an extortioner, as avaricious, and as most unjust, was not himself justified, and was reserved for a greater punishment than the Publican's. But if he who had in no way sinned, and condemned in very few words one who was a notorious sinner, incurred such loss, and was punished so heavily, think how great punishment they will have to bear, and how

they will be excluded from all forgiveness, who sin daily in many ways, and yet condemn the life of others, even of those who are unknown to them." "For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged," says our Lord, "and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again;" that is, as the same St. Chrysostom explains (Hom. 14), as also the author of the *Opus Imperfectum* (Hom. 17), and St. Augustine (bk. ii. on our Lord's Sermon), as well as Bede and Euthymius, "by God," and, as others explain, "also by men." For it comes to pass, by the just judgment of God, that those who pry inquisitively into the deeds of others, and condemn them severely, are permitted by God to fall into similar faults, and are punished for them, and are also condemned by men. And this severe judgment against those who judge rashly, God shows in these ways :

First, by being displeased at such judgments. "There is nothing," says St. Dorotheus, "which God more dislikes and abominates than the judging of one's neighbour, as all our Fathers most clearly set forth, since they have esteemed nothing worse, nothing more wicked, than judging one's neighbour." And further on : "Nothing so provokes God to anger, nothing so ruins a man, nothing so denudes him of every moral defence and virtue, nothing exposes him to a judgment so severe, as to speak against his neighbour, and to judge and condemn him. From such faults," says the same saint in the same place, "it comes to pass, beyond all doubt, that we fall into the same vices which we had condemned in others."

When, in the year 1616, I was looking over the Vatican Library at Rome, I fell upon a Greek manuscript of a book called *Geronticon*, containing the Lives of the Fathers. In it, besides many most beautiful examples, I fell upon that of an old man who thus writes of himself. "When," he says, "I was in a very remote desert, there came to me from the monastery a certain Brother with refreshments, and when I had asked him respecting the Fathers, how they fared, and

he replied, they fare well through the power of your prayers, I inquired further concerning a certain Brother of ill fame, and he said to me, 'I believe, Father, he is not yet free from that ill name.' When I heard that, I said, Oh! And immediately I was seized with sleep and an ecstasy, and I seemed to be on Mount Calvary, and there to see our Lord Jesus Christ between the thieves; and when I began to pray, and was drawing nearer, an angel, speaking with a loud voice, gave command to those who were standing by: 'Cast out this man, because he is as Antichrist to me; for before I judge, he has judged his brother.' And when I was forcibly driven out, my cloak remained sticking in the door, which was immediately closed, and leaving it, I came away. And immediately I awoke, and considering what I had seen, I said to the Brother who had come to visit me: 'This is an unhappy day for me.' And he: 'Why, Father?' And when I had told him all, I added: 'My cloak, that is, God's protection which I enjoyed, I am now deprived of.' And from that time I spent seven years walking in desert places, as in the presence of the Lord of Glory, and I tasted no bread, and went under no roof, until I saw again my Lord on Calvary, Who now in like manner ordered my cloak to be restored to me."

Rightly, therefore, did St. Catharine of Siena, in conversing with God, pray that she might be taught by God the Father, "that," as she said, "she might avoid every kind of false judgment towards creatures, and chiefly towards Thy servants, for this reason, that such judgments seem to me to be a reason why the soul is separated from Thee." And when very near to death, as St. Raymund writes in her Life, among other good counsels which she left by way of testament to her spiritual sons and daughters who were then assembled, one was, "that they should never judge any one. And she said it was necessary, in order to acquiring true purity of mind, to preserve ourselves from every judgment of our neighbour, and from every remark on our neighbour's actions, so that in all things we might wait upon

the will of God, Who permits all things for a good end. And therefore, she constantly affirmed, with much earnestness, as being certain of this truth, that a man should not, for any reason, judge—that is, despise or condemn—any one, although he should see with his own eyes a manifest sin, since God does not reject or condemn such an one, but even gave His own Blood for him. And she was wont to add, as from the mouth of God, ‘That many, from not observing this, had been hindered from perfection of life, which they would have acquired as true saints of God, on account of the excellence of their works.’” It is a great sign from God that He is displeased with our rash judgments of our neighbours, when for this reason He denies perfection to those who judge others which He would otherwise give them on account of their good works.

Secondly, God shows the same severity towards those who judge others rashly, by permitting those who censure others to fall into the same faults, on account of which they have condemned others. St. Vincent, in his *Treatise on Spiritual Life*, says: “If you do not wish to fall, do not judge others. For it commonly happens that whoever judges another in anything, is afterwards permitted by God to fall into the same fault, or a greater.”

A most beautiful example of this respecting Abbot Machetes is preserved by Cassian. “This old man,” he says, “when he was teaching us that no one ought to judge, brought forward three cases in which he criticized or reprobated his brethren—namely, that some of them had allowed their uvula to be cut; that they had in their cells a thick cloak; and that they had blessed oil and given it to seculars—and all these things he said he had himself fallen into. For having contracted a disease of the uvula, he said, I was so long prostrated by this affliction, that being constrained, as well by the force of the pain, as by the entreaty of the elders, I allowed it to be cut. In consequence of which infirmity I was also compelled to have a cloak. And in like manner I was forced to bless oil and give

it to some who asked for it—a thing which I execrated above everything else, considering that it came from great presumption—but when many seculars suddenly came round me, I was so hemmed in that I could in no other way escape from them but by yielding to their violence and urgent entreaties, and taking from them the vessel, and putting my hand upon it, making the sign of the cross ; so that they, believing that they had obtained consecrated oil, let me go. By which means it was clearly shown to me that a monk becomes entangled in the same things, and in the same vices, in which he has presumed to judge others. It behoves every one, therefore, to judge himself alone, and to watch circumspectly and cautiously in all things, and not to discuss the life and conversation of others, according to that precept of the Apostle : ‘But thou, why judgest thou thy brother?’ ‘To his own Lord he standeth or falleth.’ And those words of our Lord : ‘Judge not, that you may not be judged ; for with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged.’” And that was always the custom of God, to punish others through those things by which they sinned, or by which they might be reminded of their sin.

Procopius of Gaza asks why the first plague of the Egyptians was the turning of the waters into blood? He answers, To show them their sin, which was the killing of so many children by throwing them into the waters. The sons of Aaron sinned by bringing “strange fire” for the sacrifices ; and they were also punished by fire.¹

David violated the wife of Urias :² his wives were also violated by Absalom,³ according to the words of the Prophet Nathan.⁴ David killed Urias by means of the enemy.⁵ God also allows his son to be killed.⁶ Absalom pursued David to the death ; but he died himself in an oak.⁷ For among the ancients an oak rod was the symbol of royalty, and was painted with as many leaves as there were provinces. As, therefore, he was plotting for sove-

¹ Lev. x. 1, 2. ² 2 Kings xi. 4. ³ 2 Kings xvi. 22. ⁴ 2 Kings xii. 11.
⁵ 2 Kings xi. 15, 17. ⁶ 2 Kings xiii. 29. ⁷ 2 Kings xviii. 14.

reignty, he was hung on a tree which was the symbol of sovereignty. He wished to be higher than others; and so he became higher when hanging in the tree. He injured the father by whom he was fed; and he hung from that tree by whose fruit men were fed before they used wheat. He used a mule in order to reach his father as he fled; and a fleeing mule led him to reach death by hanging on a tree, and as he hung he ended his life, as did his counsellor, Achitophel, who hanged himself by reason of the same crime. So it is that those who condemn the life, or words, or deeds, of others, are condemned, by Divine permission, for practising the same things. Lest this then should happen to us, we must abstain from rashness in judging others.

But even if God does not permit those who censure others to lapse into similar vices, yet he allows them to fall into grave sins. Palladius writes: "Concerning a certain virgin of Jerusalem, who wore sackcloth for six years, and was shut up in a cell, nor did she make use of anything that tended to give pleasure; but afterwards, being deserted by the Divine assistance, she fell, by reason of excessive pride, and opening her window, she let in the man who had been her servant, and fell into sin with him; because her mode of life had not been according to the Divine Spirit, nor from charity, but from human display, which is vainglory, and depravity. And in what way she had arrived at this state of pride" he tells us immediately afterwards; "for when her thoughts had been occupied in condemning others, she was urged on to that frenzy of pride by the demon, and delighted in it, so that she was abandoned by the holy angel, the guardian of her chastity."

Thirdly, God shows the same severity towards those who judge rashly, in that, on account of such judgments, He inflicts other punishments upon them, whether His friends or His enemies. Mary had condemned Moses, not, indeed, in any grave matter, but, as Cajetan well remarks, because, under the pretext of prolonged prayer with God, he had little intercourse with his wife, and often absented himself

from her. And although this was worthy of commendation in Moses, yet Mary condemned him for it, and for this reason she was smitten with leprosy by God. In which punishment some things are to be noted. (1) That this leprosy covered only her face, as may be inferred from Numbers xii. 12; because those who judge rashly are said to "judge according to the appearance." "Judge not according to the appearance; but judge just judgment."⁸ (2) Moses, praying for Mary, asks that she may not, on account of this leprosy, "be as one dead, and as an abortive that is cast forth from the mother's womb;" which epithets are fitting for those who judge rashly. For as an abortive is an immature foetus, so rash judgments denote an immature judgment; for he who maturely weighs all things, easily makes excuses for all things; but fools do otherwise. Hence the Holy Spirit says: "Yea, and the fool when he walketh in the way, whereas he himself is a fool, esteemeth all men fools."⁹ And those who judge rashly may be called dead, because he who is a living member does not rise against another member. But "the members," as St. Paul says, are "mutually careful one for another, and, if one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it; or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it."¹⁰

So also God found fault with the friends of Job when they were rashly judging him and condemning him, saying to Eliphaz, the Themanite: "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends, because you have not spoken the thing that is right before Me."¹¹ And yet those friends seem to have spoken very spiritually concerning God, and the things of God; and in condemning Job they seemed and professed to be doing the work of God, and were humbling Job, as one who was lifted up, and was comparing himself with God, and not fearing God greatly. "He was angry against Job," says the sacred text of Eliu, "he was angry, and

⁸ St. John vii. 24.

⁹ Eccles. x. 3.

¹⁰ 1 Cor. xii. 25, 26.

¹¹ Job xlii. 7.

was moved to indignation ; now he was angry against Job, because he said he was just before God."¹² And further on he says : "I will not accept the person of man, and I will not level God with man."¹³ And again : "Now this is the thing in which thou art not justified, I will answer thee that God is greater than man. Dost thou strive against Him, because He hath not answered thee to all words?"¹⁴ And again : "For Job hath said : I am just, and God hath overthrown my judgment. For in judging me there is a lie : my arrow is violent without any sin."¹⁵

And that this is the way of God is shown by St. Gregory. For when Bishop Cassius of Narni met King Totila in that city, because Cassius' face was red from a complaint of the liver, the King did not think it was caused by this complaint, but by an excess of drinking, and showed great contempt for him ; but Almighty God, that He might show how great a man he was who was despised, in the field of Narne, whither the King had come, suffered an evil spirit to assail his eunuch before the whole army, which began to vex him cruelly. And when he was brought, before the King's eyes, to that venerable man Cassius, the man of God expelled the demon by prayer and by making the sign of the cross, so that he did not presume to enter him again. And so it came to pass that the barbarous King from that day venerated from his heart the servant of God whom he had despised on account of his face."

Disquietude and grief of conscience are also wont to be the punishment of such judgments. Those who censure others God is wont to trouble with great melancholy and sadness. Whence we read in the Lives of the Fathers (as Rufinus and Rosweyde) : "A certain Brother asked Abbot Pastor, saying, 'What shall I do, Father, since I am troubled with sadness?' And the old man said, 'Look at no one for any reason, condemn no one, detract from no one, and God will give you rest.'" We must therefore

¹² Job xxxii. 2.¹³ Job xxxii. 21.¹⁴ Job xxxiii. 12, 13.¹⁵ Job xxxiv. 5, 6.

guard against rash judgments, lest we should feel Divine judgments against ourselves, to our hurt.

Fourthly, in the next life also God specially punishes such. Therefore our Lord revealed to St. Mechtildis, a virgin of the Order of St. Benedict, "that it is a great crime when a man judges his neighbour; for if he judge him unjustly, he will be guilty of as great a crime as he would be if he had committed the evil for which he judges another. But even if a man had done what was said of him; yet he who is ignorant of his intention in doing it, and judges him according to his own heart and feeling, will be as guilty, because of the judgment itself, as he who did the very thing judged, and unless he expiate it by penitence, he will be liable to the same punishment which he deserved who has done this wrong." So it is written at the end of the *Spiritual Grace of St. Mechtildis* (book i. chap. 7).

CHAPTER II.

Second reason for avoiding rash judgments.

A SECOND reason for avoiding rash judgments is found in the wonderful example set us by God, and by Christ, Who was in the highest degree careful, even in correcting human excesses, so that Divine justice might be satisfied in such a way that man's reputation should suffer no detriment, and that we should have examples of not lightly condemning others. Let us consider some remarkable instances of this.

The first instance is that of Adam and Eve. We know how grave was the sin of Adam, by which "sin entered into this world, and by sin death: and so death passed upon all men."¹ Yet how gentle was the Divine judgment and condemnation of Adam!

In the first place, God did not immediately rush upon Adam; but He walked in Paradise, and this not at night, a time of terror, but "at the afternoon air;"² and then He said, "Where art thou?" and did not add, "Thou sinner, disobedient, cause of so many evils;" although He might truly have said so. And even after He had heard him say, "I heard Thy voice in Paradise; and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself," although He sees insincerity here, inasmuch as Adam conceals the chief cause of his fear, namely, his sin, and says that it was his nakedness; yet God did not condemn him as insincere, but taking occasion from his words to show him gently the chief cause of his state, namely, his disobedience; and that the source

¹ Rom. v. 12.

² Gen. iii. 8.

of his fear and shame was not his nakedness, but his disobedience, He said: "Who hath told thee that thou wast naked, but that thou hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?" He points out the sin: He suspends His judgment and condemnation.

This has been remarked by St. Chrysostom. For after I had written this passage I observed that he says, in his Homilies on the Epistle to the Romans:³ "When He censured the transgressor, see how gently He did it. He did not say to him: Criminal, when thou hadst received so great kindnesses from Me, after all these, thou hast trusted in the devil; and leaving thy benefactor, thou hast given heed to the evil suggestion of the demon. But what did He say? 'Who hath told thee that thou wast naked, but that thou hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?' Just as if a father had given orders to his child that he should not touch a knife, and after he had disobeyed and had been wounded, he were to say, How were you wounded? Was it not because you did not listen to me? You observe that they are the words of a friend more than of a lord; of a friend, I say, who has been contemned indeed, and yet does not cease from loving." Adam therefore, seeing that time was given him for further excuse, said: "The woman whom Thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat;" thus tacitly referring the cause of his sin to God, just as a master might say to an angry friend in the world, in reference to one of his servants or handmaids who had injured him, that he or she had been recommended or sent into service by himself.

God still withholds His judgment and condemnation, lets the frivolous excuse of Adam pass, as well as the tacit accusation of Himself, and speaks no more to him about it, but acts, as judges are wont when they intend to set any one free in a trial, taking occasion by some word of his, so as to leave off the examination of the charge, and pass

³ Hom. xxiii.

on to something else. Therefore He addresses the woman—believing of course that she has done it, because He knew it, and because Adam was an eye-witness, who could not be excepted to, yet still not to condemn her, but, as if giving her an opportunity of clearing herself and coming out free from the trial—and says: “Why hast thou done this?” He does not say, “Why hast thou seduced Adam? Why hast thou been the cause of so many evils? Why hast thou sinned?” He says none of these things; but “Why hast thou done it?” “Sin is not a work,” says St. Augustine; “it is nothing; but God speaks of it as a work done.” She says: “The serpent deceived me, and I did eat.” She said nothing of having also given to Adam and deceived him: God still winks at this, and does not condemn. For this reason, says St. Irenæus, he interrogates them, that the accusation may be passed on to the woman, and He further interrogates her, that she may hand it on to the serpent; and so, leaving her, He says to the serpent: “Because thou hast done this thing, thou art cursed among all cattle and beasts of the earth.” He does not interrogate the serpent, or ask him why he has done it, but immediately condemns him. He thus deals with the serpent, because he had no liberty of will, because, as an irrational animal, he can neither do right nor sin, because not of himself; but through the demon who appeared in his form, he deceived Eve; and yet he is condemned, and Adam and Eve not. He did condemn them, but afterwards; not at once, putting off the condemnation as long as He could. And what was the condemnation? He does not at first call her a deceiver, a wicked one, and the like; but being unwilling to confound her, He makes no mention of her sin, does not reprove it, only inflicts a punishment; and of what kind? That which she would have had, even if God had not proclaimed it with His own mouth; for, when she had lost her innocence, she could not bring forth without sorrow. Then He tempers this penalty with the hope of the thing

which she desired, and which was to be connected with the penalty itself. Mothers desire offspring: sometimes even holy women have been afflicted at being without children.

“I will multiply thy sorrows:” here is the punishment; “and thy conceptions:” here is the honey which tempers the gall of condemnation; “in sorrow shalt thou bring forth:” here is punishment, condemnation; “sons:” here is consolation, both for the sake of the offspring, as well as because they are male, which is commonly pleasing to mothers. “Thou shalt be under thy husband’s power, and he shall have dominion over thee;” but thence thou shalt have help, defence, consolation. He condemns Adam last, because he sinned last; more severely, because his sin was more grievous; for it injured us also. And He denounces his sin clearly, but with three circumstances. First, He sets forth the occasion of his sin, as having been suggested by another, that He may the less confound him: “Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife.” Secondly, He does not give him the names which belong to his sin, as disobedient, offender, and the like; but simply mentions his wrong doing, “and hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat.” Thirdly, He does not mention the evil effects of his sin which were to follow in others, but which were born in him, lest He should have to censure him for these. But He inflicts this punishment, “Cursed is the earth in thy work,” not upon him who deserved the malediction, but upon the earth; and of what kind? Tempered with benediction: “Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee:” things useful for hedges for keeping out thieves and beasts; “and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth,” a useful and necessary punishment; in truth, it were a greater punishment to be without this punishment. “In the sweat of thy face (punishment!) shalt thou eat bread (consolation!) till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken;” as if He would say, Be not sad, this shall not be for ever. And

because death is a thing hateful, that he might the less feel the decree of death that was to follow, He tempers it, as being a thing which was necessary, as if to say: It is just, that you may bear it with resignation, "for dust thou art, and into dust shalt thou return."

But that He might alleviate this punishment, He "made for Adam and his wife garments of skins;" He not only gave them skins, but He also made garments out of them, as good masters do, who, not content to give cloth, also have the garments made at their own expense, and give them to their servants; and besides, we read, "and clothed them." As a mother herself clothes her son and her daughter, that she may see whether the garments fit well to the body, doing this from the tenderness of her love. Thus, on one occasion, Rebecca, wishing that Jacob should please his father, "put on him very good garments of Esau, which she had at home with her, and the little skins of the kids she put about his hands, and covered the bare of his neck."³ But God wholly clothed Adam and Eve, as children. And what need was there? Irenæus answers: "Instead of that clothing"—namely the fig leaves—"which pricks and stings the body, the Lord, Who is compassionate, clothed them with garments of skins. He cast him out of Paradise, compassionating him, that he might not for ever persevere in his transgression, and He removed him from the tree of life, not as grudging him the tree of life, but as pitying him; lest sin which was about him should be immortal, and an interminable evil; and therefore He put an end to it by the dissolution of his flesh, and by death." Or, as St. Chrysostom says in his Homilies on the Epistle to the Romans:⁴ "Because He cast them out of Paradise, and appointed them to labour, therefore ought we the more to admire and adore Him. For since pleasure had brought them down to that state of deadness, cutting off their pleasure, He built up sadness as a wall for keeping off dead slothfulness, that they might

³ Gen. xxvii. 15, 16.

⁴ Hom. xxiii.

return to His love." And more on the same subject you will see in this Homily, on the clemency of God in punishing.

Behold, then, the judgment and condemnation of the first sinner on earth, and of so grievous a sinner, inflicted by God the Lord of all, who hates sin more than all. If, therefore, in a thing known to God, and so grievous, such was the judgment of God, what ought judgment to be in a matter which is hidden, and not so grievous, when it is to be pronounced by a man of the same nature with the offender? Well, therefore, does Christ say to us now: "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."⁴

Secondly, this mercy of God appears in His not punishing the murmuring of Aaron.⁵ When God proposes to punish, He says first, "Come out you three only;" not wishing to speak to them before many others, lest He should give occasion for rash judgments, if others heard; and come not to a private house to which there is common access for all, but to the tabernacle of the covenant, to which men were not accustomed to come so often as to their own houses, that the thing might be as private as possible. Therefore "the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the entry of the tabernacle," as if to hinder by the cloud the entrance of others; and then he did not call Moses to Himself, but Aaron and Mary, and blamed them by themselves, not wishing even Moses to know this; "and being angry with them He went away," nor did Moses then learn this from God, but afterwards from Aaron. Mary "appeared white as snow with a leprosy," not Aaron. Why? Because, whilst God did not think it expedient that their offence should pass unpunished, He chose to condemn Mary only, without Aaron, because his reputation, being High Priest, was more necessary to be preserved among the people than that of Mary. And this same mercy in rebuking the evil judgments of men, God showed, after the death of Aaron, with Moses,

⁴ St. Luke vi. 36.

⁵ Numbers xii.

when He hid his body. For first, He hid his body, as some think, lest it should be adored with *latria* by a people prone to idolatry. Secondly, "No man hath known of his sepulchre until this present day."⁶ Why this, when He chose that so many other sepulchres of men less famous should be known—as those of Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, Lia, and Joseph? And not only have the sepulchres of good men been known, but also of the bad men who desired the quails.⁷ But of Moses, a man so highly extolled by God, illustrious by the working of so many prodigies, a god to Pharaoh, the sepulchre is unknown. And the reason is, that men should not have a bad opinion of him, because God buried him on the mount, from which the Land of Promise could be seen, and from which God showed it to him immediately before his death.⁸ If the place of his sepulchre were known, men coming thither to gratify their feelings and seeing the place and the Land of Promise, would have had opportunity of thinking or speaking of his sin, on account of which he was shut out from the Promised Land. Lest, therefore, there should be occasion for these judgments, He concealed the place.

And that which God did with those who were in the higher places of the Church, He did also with secular persons. St. Theodoret asks why God willed that the newly born son of David should die. He answers, Because living he would have been a proof of the crime of David, who had him by the wife of Urias. Therefore, having regard to the pious King and His own prophet, He did not suffer the child to live, lest occasion should be given for judgments and words which, although true, should be unfavourable. For it is said: "The children that are born of unlawful beds are witnesses of wickedness against their parents in their trial."⁹

King Solomon acted in the same way. For observe, the homicide of Urias killed by David was notorious, and God

⁶ Deut. xxxiv. 6.

⁷ Numbers xi. 34.

⁸ Deut. xxxiv. 1.

⁹ Wisdom iv. 6.

would not have the temple built by him because he had shed much blood.¹⁰ Now though this may be understood of bloodshed in just wars, especially as there is only one case mentioned of unjust shedding of blood by David,¹¹ and the just shedding of blood by him is often mentioned, so that there was greater reason for thinking that God had spoken of this; yet because many might interpret God's words, and with reason, of David's sin, Solomon would not assign that reason, though the sin was quite public, and though by so doing he might have enhanced the sanctity of the future temple in the mind of Hiram the Gentile, but concealed it, and gave him another reason, namely, that his father¹² could not build the house "because of the wars that were round about him." And thus God also exculpates him. "Because David had done that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him, all the days of his life, except the matter (word) of Urias the Hethite;"¹³ that is, except in his adultery with the wife of Urias, and the homicide of Urias. Where, mark—He does not call it homicide, nor sin, nor work, but "matter" (in the Vulgate *sermone*, meaning *word*), because the sins of words, other things being equal, are less grievous than those of deeds. And moreover He does not say the "matter" or "word" of Bethsabee, although it was on her account that David offended oftenest—since, in the case of Urias, he sinned but once, having him put to death—because that would have conveyed a greater reproach against David, the holy Prophet of the Lord, than the homicide, since that does not seem so foul an offence in a warrior, as lust in a holy man.

And that which God did, Christ His Son also did in a like case. Whence it can be said of Him: "The Son cannot do anything of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing; for what things soever He doeth, these the

¹⁰ 1 Par. xxii. 8.

¹¹ 3 Kings xv. 5.

¹² 3 Kings v. 3.

¹³ 3 Kings xv. 5.

Son also doth in like manner.”¹⁴ There is brought to Christ a woman taken in adultery,¹⁵ and that in the temple before all the people, who might be scandalized at the connivance of Christ, especially as the Pharisees referred to the law in Leviticus xx. 10, which commanded that such an one should be stoned ; and as they continued asking Him what was to be done with her, “tempting Him, that they might accuse Him ;” then Jesus began to write with His finger on the ground. Why? It is commonly said, especially by St. Jerome in his Commentary, that He wrote down sins of the priests who had brought her which were greater than hers ; so that they, while curiously watching the acts of Christ, might be confounded, and might desist from accusing her, although guilty. Why did He not tell them of their sins openly? Lest He should disgrace them. Why did He not write it on the wall, or on some exposed place? Lest others should see. He wrote it on the ground, that those alone who surrounded the woman might see, and might desist from their accusation which, although she was sinful and guilty, was yet made with an evil disposition ; and when they continued asking, Jesus wrote again, wishing to conquer them by His patience. Mark two things which followed afterwards. (1) That all, although there were many, for “all the people,” we read, “came to Him,”—they all “went out one by one ;” and the Evangelist remarks that they went out, “beginning at the eldest,” who were the chief movers, so that “Jesus alone remained, and the woman standing in the midst.” (2) He absolved her whilst she was alone, because as He was going to say, “Woman, where are they that accused thee?” He would not say even this to her before the others, lest He should even indirectly make mention of the sin of which she had been accused. Finally, He remained alone with her, as if to make her appear innocent instead of guilty, and then He said: “Neither will I condemn thee ; go, and now sin no more.”

¹⁴ St. John v. 19.

¹⁵ St. John viii. 3.

Observe, therefore, if Christ covered over a sin, public, proved in the temple, putting to shame these judges, who were truthful, although intemperate, what will He do to those who judge and condemn faults which are slight, uncertain, hidden, or which even have no existence, and by so doing wrong their neighbours? Let us not, then, want to be better and more holy than Christ; but let us regard the defects of others, if any there are, with the same disposition with which God sees ours, not condemning them rashly, but excusing them while we can, so that in the day of judgment we may find mercy with our just Judge, Who is the Judge of all.

CHAPTER III.

Third reason for avoiding rash judgments.

A THIRD reason is found in the condition of humanity, which is such that there is no thing, action, or person so perfect and holy, that he cannot be condemned, if one will give reins to his judgment, and not make the best of things. "Hardly anything," says St. Bonaventure, "is so purely done, that it cannot be unfavourably interpreted by some one, as though it had been badly done." And that this matter may be explained fundamentally, we should consider the various actions of various saints, concerning whose holiness there can be no room for doubt among us. One thing only I commend to the readers of this treatise, that when I refer to the acts of the saints as not deserving reproach, which yet might be found fault with by rash men, they should by reflection recall to their memory other similar actions of other men, which have sometimes been marked by a similar unjust censure, and blamed as vicious by those who judged rashly, that they may thus learn to correct unfavourable judgments and speeches from the acts of others. This is admirably taught by St. Chrysostom in one of his homilies on the Epistle to the Romans.¹ "As," he says, "when you see Paul circumcising and sacrificing, you do not for that reason condemn him as Judaizing, but rather give him the highest commendation, as being far removed from Judaism; so when you see him wishing to be an anathema, be not disturbed by this, but commend him for this, too, very greatly, when you have learned the

¹ Hom. xvi.

cause for which he wishes it. For unless we examine the cause, we shall say that Elias was a homicide, and that Abraham was the assassin of his son, and we shall also accuse Phinees and Peter of slaying, and not only those saints, but the God of the universe Himself; and whoever neglects this rule will fall into many absurdities. And that this may not happen, in all these cases, we must as it were undertake the defence of the acts done, putting together the cause and design and occasion and all the circumstances, and thus at length form our judgment on the case.

And in one of his homilies on Genesis,² he says: "Let us not go over those things which are brought forward in the Divine Scriptures hastily, nor let us glance superficially at those things which are said; but when we have gone to the very depths and have learned the riches which are there hidden, let us glorify our Lord Who dispenses all things with so great wisdom. For if we neglect to inquire into the intention and cause of all things which have been done, not only shall we condemn the conduct of Thamar, but we shall also find fault with Abraham as having intended child-murder, and Phinees as guilty of a double homicide." Let us go on to other examples.

That was a holy action which Abraham performed in being ready to sacrifice his most dear son Isaac to the Lord, for by that means he merited to receive from the Lord this commendation: "By My own self have I sworn, saith the Lord, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not spared thy only-begotten son for My sake, I will bless thee, and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of Heaven, and as the sand that is by the sea shore; thy seed shall possess the gates of their enemies. And in thy seed [that is, in Christ, as the Apostle explains, Gal. iii. 16] shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice."³ Whence it follows that this action of Abraham was not stained by any sin, for when sin infests

² Hom. lxii.

³ Gen. xxii. 16—18

an action, even in a just man, it deprives it of merit, for it is required in order to merit that an action be good ; but good, as the theologians say, from St. Dionysius, "must be complete and have all the requisite conditions, whereas one single defect may render a thing evil." If any one, therefore, would examine this action of Abraham with the same disposition, and the same criticism with which he is wont to inspect and blame the actions of his brethren and superiors, he would say that Abraham told a falsehood at the beginning of this action, because "he said to his young men : Stay you here with the ass : I and the boy will go with speed as far as yonder, and after we have worshipped, will return to you."⁴ And yet he intended (the critic would say) to sacrifice him, and not therefore to return with him. Therefore he lied when he said : "We will return to you." Therefore he was insincere, he equivocated, he promised to return, and he did not mean to fulfil his promise. But we must not thus judge, for St. Paul defends him, saying : "By faith Abraham offered Isaac . . . accounting that God is able to raise up even from the dead,"⁵ that is to say, on account of the promise, which was made to him, as the same Apostle says : "In Isaac shall thy seed be called."⁶ Whence also the Apostle says of him, that he "against hope believed in hope."⁷ He said, therefore, that he would return with Isaac, hoping that he would be raised up by God after the sacrifice had been completed. So too Abraham seems to tell a lie,⁸ when he said of his wife that she was his sister. To which St. Thomas replies : "In Sacred Scripture, as St. Augustine remarks, the acts of some persons are brought forward as examples of perfect virtue, with reference to which we must not think that those who performed them lied. But if anything appears in their words which resembles falsehoods, we must understand that those things were spoken figuratively and prophetically ;" and in this way the holy Doctor

⁴ Gen. xxii. 5. ⁵ Heb. xi. 17—19. ⁶ Gen. xxi. 12.
⁷ Rom. iv. 18. ⁸ Gen. xii. and xx.

explains various acts of the ancients drawn from the Sacred Scripture.

In the same Abraham a censorious judgment might discover incontinence, because he had two wives. But St. Augustine, as quoted by St. Thomas, says: "The merit of conjugal continence in Abraham was equal to the merit of virginal continence in John."

Parsimony, too, might be discovered in the same man by the censorious, because in dismissing Agar from his house, by command of God, along with his son Ismael, begotten of her, who moreover was his first-born, he is said to have given her no more for her support on the way, but "bread and a bottle of water."⁹ Who, the censor would say, ever thus thrust forth his wife who was never to return, and his son? And indeed a wife who had long discharged the duties of a handmaid was worthy of a good salary. And he might add, too, that he gave her but little water, for soon her son began to die of thirst, the water being exhausted, and unless God had succoured her by an angel showing her water, he would have died of thirst. But it is certain that he did not sin; for he was so liberal towards guests that he willingly invited them, and speedily ordered the best food to be prepared for them, as we read: "Abraham made haste into the tent to Sara and said to her: Make haste, temper together three measures of flour, and make cakes upon the hearth. And he himself ran to the herd, and took from thence a calf, very tender and very good, and gave it to a young man, who made haste and boiled it. He took also butter and milk, and the calf which he had boiled, and set before them."¹⁰ He who, with his family, so gladly and so readily entertained guests, and by his hospitality is said to have pleased God, and to "have entertained angels,"¹¹ undoubtedly would have given larger provisions to Agar and Ismael; but, inasmuch as his not doing so was the will of God, he did not excuse himself or give an explanation of what he did. Yet he was holy, and

⁹ Gen. xxi. 14.

¹⁰ Gen. xviii. 6—8.

¹¹ Heb. xiii. 2.

dear to God, and he lived perfectly, so that he merited, that God with His prophets should place among His own names and titles of honour the name of this man, Scripture so often repeating it, "the God of Abraham." Therefore he was worthy that the saints, when asking for the greatest blessings, should commemorate his name in invoking God. Thus did Moses when imploring that God, when displeased, would spare the idolaters who were worshipping the golden calf, saying: "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel Thy servants."¹² But if Abraham, the father of the faithful, does not escape censorious judgments, much less would Sara his wife escape. The censor would say that she was cruel, tyrannical, envious, labouring under jealousy, because after Abraham had begotten Ismael, she persuaded him to expel Agar from his house with her son.¹³ The censor would say that there was no sufficient cause for expelling them. For why did she recommend that they should be cast out? Because she "had seen the son of Agar the Egyptian playing with Isaac her son."¹⁴ A great matter, that the boys should play, the censor would say: she recommended this to Abraham from the promptings of avarice and envy; and he would prove it by her words: "Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son Isaac." And it would be no wonder if the censor did say so, for Abraham also "took this grievously," but complied, because God persuaded him to it by the words: "Let it not seem grievous to thee for the boy and for thy bondwoman: in all that Sara hath said to thee, hearken to her voice."

If Abraham did not escape censure, certainly Jacob would not escape, who was so dear to God that He said to Laban when he was pursuing him: "Take heed thou speak not anything harshly against Jacob;" or, as it is in the Hebrew, "Speak not to Jacob from good to evil;" that is, speak not even good to him that should offend him; or it may mean, speak not even good, lest from thence, as

¹² Exod. xxxii. 13.¹³ Gen. xxi. 9—14.¹⁴ Gen. xxi. 9.

happens in process of discourse, you pass on to speaking evil. This man, I say, dear to God, whose very name God assumed among His own titles, calling Himself the "God of Jacob," might be called a liar by some censor, and accused of having snatched by falsehood his brother's right of primogeniture and his blessing, seeing that he called himself "first-born" and "Esau," for he said: "I am Esau, thy first-born."¹⁵ And yet, as St. Augustine says, he did not lie, for although he was not Esau according to the flesh, yet he was according to the right acquired from Esau's consent, which God also had ordained for him.¹⁶ In which sense St. John Baptist was called Elias by Christ.¹⁷

Joseph, too, that model of chastity, might give occasion for censorious tongues on the score of vanity, boastfulness, illusions. Was it not vanity, the censor would say, that he should narrate his visions openly: "I thought we were binding sheaves in the field: and my sheaf arose as it were, and stood, and your sheaves, standing about, bowed down before my sheaf."¹⁸ Which words were no sooner spoken than he had his brothers as his censors: "His brethren answered: Shalt thou be our king, or shall we be subject to thy dominion? Therefore this matter of his dreams and words ministered nourishment to their envy and hatred." So afterwards, when he told another vision: "I saw in a dream as it were the sun and moon and eleven stars worshipping me. And when he had told this to his father and brethren, his father rebuked him and said: What meaneth this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren worship thee upon the earth? His brethren therefore envied him." And afterwards, when they had sold him, undoubtedly they said that he had been deluded. For this may be inferred from their words which they spoke, while they were conferring about putting him to death: "It shall appear what his dreams avail him."¹⁹ He is sold, then, and cast into prison, and there is no

¹⁵ Gen. xxvii. 19.¹⁶ Rom. ix. 8, 11.¹⁷ St. Matt. xi. 14.¹⁸ Gen. xxxvii. 7.¹⁹ Gen. xxxvii. 20.

appearance of the worship which he had foreseen. What an illusion it had been! But God showed the truth of his visions in His own time, and, as the Holy Spirit says of him: "In bands she [that is, the wisdom of God] left him not, till she brought him the sceptre of the kingdom, and power against those that oppressed him, and showed them to be liars that had accused him."²⁰

The same holy Joseph might have been condemned as a drunkard, because the Scripture says of him: "And they drank [that is, his brothers] and were merry with him."²¹ What testimony is more sure than the testimony of Scripture? Thus we often judge others rashly, under the influence of the words of some grave man badly understood—taken with a bad meaning when they might bear a good one—as if spoken against ourselves or against some of our friends. Oh, how many sins arise in this manner! Just as a good and prudent man would not condemn Joseph of drunkenness, because he is said to be "making merry" (*inebriated*), but would say that this word means that he had drunk more copiously than was his wont, but was sober, and in the sense in which the word is used in Deut. xxxii. 42, where we read: "I will make my arrows drunk with blood," that is, "I will stain, or wet my arrows with blood;" and in Psalm xxxv. 9: "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house;" and in Canticles v. 1: "Drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved."

Job might have to endure a more severe censure than these, because we read of him: "After this Job opened his mouth, and cursed his day, and he said: Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said: A man-child is conceived. Let that day be turned into darkness, let not God regard it from above, and let not the light shine upon it."²² Now such maledictions have the appearance of a grave fault; for the theologians teach with St. Thomas that even irrational creatures cannot be cursed without sin. Therefore Brentius and the Anabaptists

²⁰ Wisdom x. 14.

²¹ Gen. xliii. 34.

²² Job iii. 1-4.

and the Talmudists accuse Job of cursing and blasphemy. Others, however, defend him from the charge of sin. St. Thomas, writing on the third chapter of Job, says, that he, by this curse, neither wished nor imprecated evils on that day, but only declared that the day was evil, not according to its own nature, in which it was created by God, but according to the things which happened at that time, in accordance with the words of the Apostle: "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil;"²³ and further, that Job said this not from his reason, but from the lower part of his soul, which on account of those evils was affected with sadness and grief. In the same way, says Pineda, on the third chapter of Job, and Sanchez, in his Commentary, Christ our Lord also gave expression to "His sadness and fear of death," in His sensitive part, and the vehemence of His sorrow, and of His internal desolation, when crying with a loud voice, He said: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"²⁴ It is no contradiction of fortitude or virtue to utter grief and groaning, as Cicero well observes, as well as the philosopher Taurus in Gellius, in opposition to the Stoics, who praise apathy and insensibility to pain. As that man also observes, in Q. Curtius (lib. vi.), "Grief has a right to be somewhat free in uttering recriminations." And Aristotle gives a philosophical reason why those who sorrow cry out. So that even if Job had spoken from the judgment of his reason, he would have said well, as Pineda shows, proving that the complaints of Job proceeded from love towards God, and in that case are to be excused. Thus Jeremias is to be excused who wrote these words, and indeed, by Divine inspiration: "Cursed be the day wherein I was born; let not the day in which my mother bore me be blessed. Cursed be the man that brought the tidings to my father, saying: A man-child is born to thee; and made him greatly rejoice. Let that man be as the cities which the Lord hath overthrown, and hath not repented; let him hear a cry in the morning, and howling at noontide: who

²³ Ephes. v. 16.²⁴ St. Matt. xxvii. 46.

slew me not from the womb, that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb an everlasting conception. Why came I out of the womb, to see labour and sorrow, and that my days should be spent in confusion?"²³ Now these words are defended by Clement of Alexandria, by Origen, and by St. Thomas.

CHAPTER IV.

Let those who are addicted to rash judgments learn from the words and deeds of God not to judge the servants of God, because in the most holy deeds and words of God, they have examples of words and deeds of God, such that, if they did not know that they had been spoken and done by God, they would, by their unjust judgment, malignantly condemn similar good words and deeds of the servants of God.

FOR the reason stated at the head of this chapter, it becomes us to attribute a good sense and to give a favourable interpretation to the words of men, if at any time they seem to utter anything that offends, even as we ought to interpret the good things described in Holy Scripture (for they cannot be so circumspect as the Holy Spirit Who dictated Holy Scripture). Otherwise, if we should so proceed, as we are wont to do with our brethren, we should say (which God forbid) that God is a liar, inconstant in His promises, promising one thing, doing another. For He said to Jacob when he went down into Egypt: "I will bring thee back again from thence,"¹ and before He had promised him the same thing;² yet Jacob did not return thence, but died there.³ Thus Porphyry once, as we are told by St. Jerome

¹ Gen. xlvi. 4.

²⁵ Jerem. xx. 14—18.

² Gen. xxviii. 15.

³ Gen. xlix. 33.

when writing against the Pelagians, said that Christ had lied when He said, "I go not up to this festival day,"⁴ since we are told in the same chapter that "He also went up to the feast."⁵ As therefore the words of God, Who is infinitely wise and prudent, and, to speak in our ordinary way, infinitely considerate and circumspect in all His deeds, might be distorted to an unfavourable sense, although undeservedly, how much more the words of men, who neither are so guarded nor can be so perfect as God is. Therefore, even when they seem to sound amiss, let them be taken in a good sense. And this is most highly necessary in our intercourse with so many persons, and those so often distracted and so greatly occupied; and hence it was not without reason that our holy Father St. Ignatius, immediately after the title to his Exercises, placed this caution in the very first place: "It must be assumed," he says, "that every pious Christian ought to be more ready to take any obscure sentence or proposition of another in a good meaning than to condemn it. But if he can in no way defend it, let him search out the mind of the speaker." If the holy Father judged this caution necessary for the time of the Spiritual Exercises, at which time both he who gives the Exercises and he who receives them are wont to be very considerate, very circumspect, and very much inclined to good, and more averse to evil than before; how much more is it necessary at other times, in which our language and conduct are not so considerate!

And that which I say on not rashly condemning the words of others, I wish also to say on not condemning the writings of others, whether they are letters, or the dictates in the schools, or classical exercises, such as are odes, orations, epistles, compositions, prefaces, dialogues, declamations: let us condemn nothing rashly, let us not judge, let us not condemn judgment, style, words, phrases, sentences, connexion, elocution, action, erudition, historical knowledge, and other things, the condemnation of which,

⁴ St. John vii. 8.

⁵ St. John vii. 10.

if known to their authors, would greatly offend them, and make them lose the sweetness of religious charity and mutual benevolence. For it is most certain that, if any one wants to be malicious, he may find fault with all writings, even the most sacred, and also the Scripture itself.

For, to pass over heretics, who distort it into wrong meanings, and sometimes with such acuteness and plausibility that it seems to speak for them; are there any passages of Scripture, even of those with respect to which there is no contention between the followers of different religions, which can be kept free from the censure of rash judgments? By no means. Everywhere the prurience of man's judgment and of a malignant tongue will find something to carp at. For example, it is said: "The Philistines were humbled, and they did not come any more into the borders of Israel."⁶ But afterwards they are said to have invaded the borders of Israel,⁷ and to have been smitten in Gabaa,⁸ which was a city of the Israelites.⁹ So it is said, "Samuel saw Saul no more till the day of his death;"¹⁰ and in the same book we read that Saul "prophesied before Samuel,"¹¹ and in his house. So we are told that "in all" there were "thirty and seven"¹² (leading men) who were with David; but in another place¹³ there is a larger number given, besides many other similar passages which I leave out.

Now, if any of us were to write such things, would he not be condemned as a liar? Would it not be said to him that "a liar ought to have a good memory?" Most certainly. As, therefore, it does not become us to condemn Scripture of falsehood or error, so, by analogy, ought we not to condemn the writings of others, who neither are nor can be so accurate, so circumspect in writing, as were the writers of the Sacred Books which were dictated by the Holy Spirit.

That which I have said of words and writings, I must

⁶ 1 Kings vii. 13.

⁷ 1 Kings x. 5; xvii. 1, 23, 26.

⁸ 1 Kings xiii. 3.

⁹ 1 Kings vii. 1.

¹⁰ 1 Kings xv. 35.

¹¹ 1 Kings xix. 22, 24.

¹² 2 Kings xxiii. 39.

¹³ 2 Paral. xi.

also say of the deeds of others, that they are not to be judged or condemned rashly. I have said something above on this subject, and I will now add other instances, that I may open the eyes of those who brand similar acts in others with grave censure, though themselves good and spiritual men. And sometimes those who seem to themselves to be spiritual and devout, are more free in condemning others, as St. Bonaventure has observed in his *Inducements to Divine Love*. For St. John Climacus wrote truly: "Even those who seem to be spiritual do sometimes slip into judgments of their neighbours."

If any Superior or Master in a College, seeing the defects and insolence either of his subjects or of his scholars, should be so incensed with anger as to dash on the ground and break a timepiece which he was holding in his hand, he would be condemned as greatly wanting in mortification and patience, particularly if he went so far as to order the offenders to be beaten with a whip or with rods until the blood came. But Moses did more, for he, as we read in Exodus,¹⁴ when he saw his people engaged in idolatrous dances, was inflamed with anger, and broke the tables of stone of the Law which he had received from God, and which had been written by God Himself on both sides, and had been made by the work of God, as the Scripture says. "Moses was justly angered," says St. Ambrose, in his book, on Noe and the Ark, when discussing this breaking of the tables, "lest they should have Divine privileges who did not pay obedience." And yet after this God does not reprove him, but again gave him other tables, and he was called by the Holy Spirit, Who rightly interprets all things, "a man exceeding meek above all men that dwelt upon earth;"¹⁵ although not contented with the breaking of the tables of the Law, at the same time he put to death by the sons of Levi about twenty-three thousand of those against whom he had been angry; and afterwards, as St. Chrysostom remarks, "Though others had been slain in war by the

¹⁴ Exodus xxxii. 15—19.

¹⁵ Numbers xii. 3.

Amalekites, and before that war they had been terribly wasted because of their anger and gluttony, for God slew very many of them, says Psalm lxxvii., while the meat was yet in their mouth; yet Moses, after he had seen this terrible slaughter, prayed that God would put an end to their life by a new and strange kind of death. And thus some, by the sudden breaking out of fire, were burnt in the conflagration; others were swallowed up by the sudden opening of the earth, and these not few, but more than fifteen thousand men. And afterwards, when they committed fornication with strange women, and were initiated to Beelphegor,¹⁶ he gave orders again that they should take and kill each other, saying, Let every man kill his neighbours that have been initiated to Beelphegor." And yet he was not judged by any of his own people to have governed tyrannically, as a Superior would now be judged, or the prefect or master of a school, if he should punish any fault with a more severe penalty than was usual, or should angrily chide any one on account of the commission of a fault.

If any one should now utter as many praises of himself as Job did—"My justification which I have begun to hold, I will not forsake; for my heart doth not reprehend me in all my life;"¹⁷ and again: "I was clad with justice, and I clothed myself with my judgment, as with a robe and a diadem. I was an eye to the blind and a foot to the lame. I was the father of the poor, and the cause which I knew not, I searched out most diligently. . . . They that heard me waited for my sentence, and being attentive, held their peace at my counsel. To my words they durst add nothing, and my speech dropped upon them. They waited for me as for rain, and they opened their mouth as for a latter shower. If at any time I laughed on them, they believed not, and the light of my countenance fell not on the earth. If I had a mind to go to them, I sat first, and when I sat as a king, with his army standing about him, yet I was a

¹⁶ Numbers xxv. 3, 5.

¹⁷ Job xxvii. 6.

comforter of them that mourned.”¹⁸ And throughout nearly the whole of the thirty-first chapter he writes many things abundantly in his own praise.

And if any one in the same way should inveigh against his adversaries, as he did in chapters xii., xiii., xvi., xix., xxx., and vi. ; and if any one should so assert his innocence before God, and that his punishment was greater than his offences, as he did (chapters vi. 2, 3 ; x. ; and xvii. 2), he would be reckoned proud, impatient, and irreverent towards God, as he was by his friends (chapters xxxii., xxxiii. 8, &c., xxxiv., xxxv., and xxxvi.). You may consult the passages referred to. And although God Himself seems to have spoken against Job, whence Job humbles himself,¹⁹ yet he is defended by God.

But this is still more wonderful that God Himself, Who inspired the Prophets, Who, as we say almost daily in Holy Mass, “spoke by the Prophets,” foretold to David, “I will give thee rest from all thy enemies ;”²⁰ and yet immediately in the following chapter wars are recounted which he carried on with the Philistines, with the Moabites, and with the King of Soba, who had in his army twenty thousand footmen, with the Syrian soldiers of Damascus, of whom he slew “two-and-twenty thousand men.” And in the tenth chapter we read that he fought with the Ammonites, who in their army brought against David twenty thousand footmen and twelve thousand men. And again he fought with the Syrians, of whom he slew the men of seven hundred chariots and forty thousand horsemen, and put to flight eight-and-fifty thousand of the residue of their army. Besides all this he had not rest from his own son, who drove him to flight,²¹ a thing which other enemies had not done since the death of Saul.

Afterwards Siba stirred up a new conspiracy and war against David, so that all Israel departed from David who said that Siba did him more harm than did Absalom.²²

¹⁸ Job xxix. 14—16, and 21—25.

¹⁹ Job xxxix. 33 ; xlii. 3, 6, 7.

²⁰ 2 Kings vii. 11. ²¹ 2 Kings xv. 14, seq. ²² 2 Kings xx. 1, 2, 6.

Afterwards, the Philistines again disturbed David by beginning war,²³ in which his life was endangered by the stroke of a spear. After this, another war was carried on in Gob against the Philistines. Then another war against the same enemy, in which Adeodatus was distinguished. Besides these there was another war in Geth. Thus the Scripture in this one chapter (xxi.) expressly says that David fought four battles and waged four wars, and in the other chapters referred to eight wars are mentioned. Is this rest, to fight twelve times with enemies greater in number than our most august Emperor has ever had? And yet God predicted what was true, although there may be a difficulty in interpreting the Divine predictions. As, therefore, we interpret these favourably and as being true, so let us interpret favourably all the words and acts of others, after the example of St. Aloysius and St. Ignatius, which will be mentioned further on.

We have another example in St. Matthew²⁴ where the holy Evangelist, drawing up the genealogy of Christ, says: "All the generations from David to the transmigration of Babylon, are fourteen generations;" when it is quite plain, from the Books of Kings and of Paralipomenon,²⁵ that the generations referred to by St. Matthew were not only fourteen, but seventeen, because he has omitted three. For although St. Matthew, in the eighth verse, says that Joram begot Ozias, yet it is quite plain from the passages here adduced that Ozias was not begotten by Joram, but Ochozias, and that Joram was begotten by Ochozias, and that Amasias was begotten by Joram, and Azarias, who was otherwise called Ozias, by Amasias.

If any one in these days, writing to another, should say that he was beloved of God, it would be ascribed to boastfulness; but St. John says of himself, and that not once only, in the Gospel which was written by him for the whole

²³ 2 Kings xxi. 15, seq.

²⁴ St. Matt. i. 17.

²⁵ 4 Kings viii. 24; xi. 2; xii. 21; xiv. 21; 1 Paral. iii. 11, 12; 2 Paral. xxvi. 1,

Church, and not for any one person : “ This is that disciple whom Jesus loved,” and no one has taken his doing so amiss.

So if now any one should say to another what Paul said to Elymas the magician, “ O full of all guile and of all deceit, enemy of all justice, thou ceapest not to pervert the right ways of the Lord ”²⁶—good God, what censures would he not undergo ! If, then, deeds and words of that kind deserve no reproof, neither ought the same things to be blamed if they proceeded from any of us ; for we cannot be, nor are we bound to be, more holy than Christ and His Apostles, nor can we be more circumspect in speaking than they.

If any one should now say that he had never, in all his life, deliberately sinned, or if any one should say in a public discourse of himself, that, by the blessing of God, he had preserved his virginity unimpaired, he would be condemned as proud, and as boasting of himself and his virtues. And yet both of these things were said by Cardinal Bellarmine, first at Rome, to the Father Rector of the English College ; secondly, in the Cathedral Church of Capua in a public discourse ; and when a certain Canon was scandalized at this, God, desiring to show that Bellarmine had well said, and with the Divine approval, irradiated his face with celestial splendour, which, when the Canon saw, he corrected his unfavourable judgment, and testified to this on oath in the process for the canonization of Bellarmine, made by Apostolic authority, in which I read it ; which was also confirmed at the same time by the testimony of another, namely, the Superior of the Theatine Fathers.

²⁶ Acts xiii. 10.

CHAPTER V.

It is shown by other most holy examples and sayings of God and of Christ our Lord, and of the saints, that all things should be favourably interpreted and defended, unless they are manifestly evil.

IF one were now to see either the Superior in a house, or the procurator at a farm, or the preacher, or the prefect of the church in church, or the Prefect of the Studies, or a master in the schools, or a cook in the kitchen, taking a rope and attacking others, and overthrowing tables and chests, and driving others out, he would be condemned as most impatient and intolerant. But Christ our Lord, Who said of Himself: "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart,"¹ did the like of this when, entering the Temple, "He found," there, "them that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves," although they were things necessary for the sacrifices, "He drove them all out of the Temple, the sheep also and the oxen, and the money of the changers He poured out, and the tables He overthrew;"² and yet it was of Him that Isaias predicted: "The bruised reed He shall not break, and smoking flax He shall not quench;" "neither shall His voice be heard abroad."³ And although these acts in men are commonly the effects of great impatience, and of anger, and of unmortified passions; yet the disciples of Christ, taught rightly to interpret all things, as it is written in the same place, "remembered that it was written: 'The zeal of Thy house

¹ St. Matt. xi. 29.

² St. John ii. 14, 15.

³ Isaias xlii. 3.

hath eaten Me up.'"⁴ Now there are many actions entirely the same in their outward appearance, which proceed both from virtues and from vices; but where Christian charity flourishes, which, as the Apostle says, "thinketh no evil," and "believeth all good"⁵ of others, it will ascribe them not to vice, but to virtue.

In the same way, if one should now attack others with words like these: "Ye brood of vipers,"⁶ and, "you are of your father the devil;"⁷ or again, "Go behind Me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto Me,"⁸ he would be regarded as most passionate, and yet those former words Christ spoke to the Jews, whose conversion He desired, and the latter to His dear disciple, and indeed at the very time at which He promised him the primacy of the Church; and He said these things in the hearing of the other Apostles, among whom it was necessary to commend his authority, as their future Superior, although the person of Peter might fall into contempt through so severe a rebuke from Christ.

If any one should now bring forward concerning another a negative proposition without any further explanation, and there should be opposed to such a proposition acts of his almost entirely contrary to it, he would be considered by his censors either as lying, or malignant, or inconsiderate in speech; for example, if one should say of a master, "That master does not study, does not prepare for his lessons, does not give attention to his pupils, has no discipline in his school," and the contrary of all these things should somehow be most certain and evident to all, he would undergo the censure of which I have spoken. Again Christ, Who was most considerate in speech, said of John, "John came neither eating nor drinking,"⁹ when it is certain that he both ate and drank, otherwise he could not have lived, and it is said in the Gospel that "his meat was locusts and wild honey."¹⁰ Therefore let us,

⁴ Psalm lxxviii. 10; St. John ii. 17.

⁶ St. Matt. iii. 7.

⁷ St. John viii. 44.

⁵ 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 7.

⁸ St. Matt. xvi. 23.

⁹ St. Matt. xi. 18.

¹⁰ St. Matt. iii. 4.

in like manner, piously interpret the words of others; as, for example, those of the Mother of God: "Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing;"¹¹ words, which, if we take them literally, are not true, because Joseph was not the father of Christ in the same sense in which Mary was His Mother; yet they were well and holily spoken. In the same way, therefore, let us interpret favourably the words and deeds of others.

If any of us now should, on a mission, go to a marriage feast, and, the wine failing, should procure from some friend a number of jars of generous wine for the guests, good God, what would he not hear? He would be declared to be a wine-drinker, an encourager of drunkenness and intemperance. But Christ our Lord did that, and took with Him His most pure Mother and His disciples, and the very first time He made public use of His power of working miracles, He multiplied wine in great abundance in six water-pots. For the water-pots contained "two or three measures apiece." Let us suppose the smaller quantity, or that each water-pot held only two measures. Now, a measure, or metreta, as Budæus thinks, contains ten congii, or, as St. Epiphanius thinks, twelve. But a congius contains six sextarii [sextarius about an English pint], or eight foliette, says our Cornelius, in his Commentary on the passage. And thus ten congii, our Barradius says, contain sixty sextarii. But Georgius Agricola, in his work on Greek Measures, and Jansens, following Robert Cenali who, after Budæus, wrote very accurately on measures, assign twelve congii to a metreta, that is, seventy-two Attic sextarii. For a congius, as I said, contains ten sextarii. Therefore, according to Budæus, if each water-pot contained only two measures, as there were six water-pots, they contained altogether seven hundred and twenty sextarii [pints]. But, according to Agricola, the six water-pots contained, according to the Greek measure, eight hundred and sixty-two sextarii. But as the same writer says, in his book on

¹¹ St. Luke ii. 48.

foreign measures, among the Syrians one metreta contained one hundred and twenty Italian sextarii; so that if these were Syrian metretæ (and Judæa is a part of Syria), then the water-pots contained fourteen hundred and forty sextarii. Whence it follows, if they were Syrian measures, that Christ our Lord gave them fourteen hundred and forty sextarii, that is eleven of our jars,¹² and thirty-two sextarii. If they were Greek, according to Agricola, He gave eight hundred and sixty-two sextarii, that is, six of our jars and ninety-four sextarii. But, according to Budæus, who reckons fewer sextarii to the metreta, He gave seven hundred and twenty sextarii, that is, five of our jars and eighty sextarii; for our jar contains thirty-two pints [Bohemian pints of that period], or one hundred and twenty-eight sextarii [modern English pints], for there are four sextarii in a (Bohemian) pint. But, as the Evangelist says, according to the exposition of Cajetan and Toletus, that some of the water-pots contained three measures, then Christ our Lord, Who was the Teacher of temperance and sobriety, and of every unreprouable virtue, furnished for the marriage feast a greater abundance of wine than I have said. I speak here of the Bohemian jar, not knowing the size of the jar in other provinces of Germany.

Cornelius remarks that "there were three kinds of sextarii: the Roman, which contained twenty ounces of water or wine; the Attic, which contained fifteen; and the Hebrew, which contained exactly thirteen, and is the same which in Hebrew is called *log*." But here Cornelius thinks we are to understand the Hebrew sextarius; so that a metreta, containing seventy-two sextarii of thirteen ounces, contained seventy-two pounds and as many ounces (for Cornelius takes the common pound of twelve ounces), which ounces make six pounds more, and so altogether it makes up seventy-eight pounds; so that the metreta contained thirteen Italian boccali and two foliette. For a boccale contains four pounds of our ounces; that is sixty-four ounces; and a folietta is the fourth part of a boccale,

¹² [*Urnas*: an urna contained half an amphora.]

containing sixteen ounces. Therefore a water-pot which contained two metretæ, contained twenty-seven boccali; and so six water-pots contained one hundred and sixty-two boccali; so much wine, therefore, Christ here made out of water. But if you allow three metretæ to the water-pot, each water-pot contained forty boccali, and two foliette, so that six water-pots contained two hundred and forty boccali and twelve foliette: that is, almost a whole cask of wine; for a Roman cask contains two hundred and fifty-six boccali. So then Christ in this moment produced nearly a cask of wine." This is the opinion of Cornelius.

Since then "every action of Christ," says St. Basil, "is for our instruction," if any Superior should choose (which I do not advise him, on account of censorious tongues) to imitate Christ in this matter, not to the full amount, but even a hundredth part, he would suffer much and grievously.

If any one now, regarded as a holy man and a prophet, should predict anything which afterwards did not turn out literally as he predicted it, he would be regarded as under a delusion; yet Christ predicted¹³ that He should be "in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." Since, however, He was in the heart of the earth only in the night following the sixth day, and on the Sabbath (Saturday), and His death took place at the close of the sixth day, and lasted till the night of the Sabbath, He did not come to the third day, which was Sunday, because He rose before the break of day on Sunday. As therefore we interpret these words favourably, adding favourable explanations, so also human words should be favourably explained, since men cannot be so circumspect in speech as Christ.

Men, too, should not be accused of falsehood, if, in referring to any thing which was said or done by one person, they should say that it was said or done by several. For thus the Scripture speaks of a thing which one Prophet said as being said by several,¹⁴ as Maldonatus has well

¹³ St. Matt. xii. 40

¹⁴ St. Matt. ii. 23; xxvi. 56; St. John vi. 45; Acts xiii. 40; xv. 15.

remarked in his Commentary on the last verse of the second chapter of St. Matthew.

If any one now, either in sincerity, or ironically, or in contempt, should be said to have the prophetic spirit, and should predict that Rome would be destroyed after two months, and if, after two months had elapsed, that did not take place, he would be regarded as one deluded by the devil, and as a false prophet; yet we read that a true prophet, Jonas, was sent by God, and predicted by command of God: "Yet forty days and Ninive shall be destroyed;"¹⁵ and yet it was not destroyed.¹⁶ So Isaias was sent by God to King Ezechias, and predicted his death; and yet he did not die, but God added fifteen years to his life, and God confirmed it to him by the miracle of the sun's going back.¹⁷

If in our days one of our Superiors, or a King, or a leading senator, should dance in the procession of Corpus Christi before the Most Holy Sacrament, he would be considered an idiot or a fool; yet David danced before the ark when he was a public character, a most glorious King, and not even attired in his royal apparel, but clad in the sacerdotal or clerical linen ephod,¹⁸ and in a robe of fine linen.¹⁹ And this appears to have pleased God, for He punished Michol with barrenness, who had derided him for it, because, St. Gregory says, "He liked to see him dancing better than fighting," praising this act of his, "in which he conquered himself." And our holy Father St. Ignatius did something similar, when he was ordered to dance in private after the manner of the Biscayans, and by his dancing restored Ortizius, the Ambassador of the King of Spain, from his madness to a sound mind, when he was beginning to get deranged, at Monte Cassino, in the first week of the Exercises which our holy Father was giving him, becoming, in accordance with the custom and expression of the

¹⁵ Jonas iii. 1--4.

¹⁶ Jonas iv.

¹⁷ 4 Kings xx.

¹⁸ 2 Kings vi. 14.

¹⁹ 1 Paral. xv. 27.

Apostle, "all things to all men," that he might gain them to Christ, and "might save all."²⁰

If in these days any of our preachers, or any Father giving domestic exhortations, or any professor of theology, when asked by a king in a matter of great importance, bearing upon the safety of his kingdom, should quote Holy Scripture, and should quote it differently from what it was in the Bible, or even in a sense almost opposed to that which it bore in the text quoted, he would be regarded as an ignorant person, and laughed at, and he would afford matter for talk during recreation, and would be libelled as ignorant throughout the colleges and the whole province, perchance in private letters or in some other way. And yet, in answer to King Herod, the passage of the Prophet Micheas was quoted in this way by all the Chief Priests and Scribes of the people: "And thou Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda;"²¹ when the passage in Micheas means the reverse: "Thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda."²² And yet no critic was found to censure the answer which was given to the King, as though it alleged something contrary to the text. Let us at least imitate the Jews, the enemies of Christ, in abstaining from censuring others, although we may seem to have a clear and just cause for finding fault with the words and acts of others. But it is no wonder that those teachers of the law should have gone astray in the quotation of Scripture; it is more wonderful that there should be very many sayings of the Holy Spirit in Sacred Scripture, which are entirely free from all error, and are worthy of pious interpretation; and yet I dare to say if we should say or write the very same things, they would not obtain a favourable interpretation, but would be most severely censured. I will adduce one or two other examples.

We read these words, dictated by the Holy Spirit to the Hebrews: In the "ark of the testament" there "was a

²⁰ 1 Cor. ix. 22.

²¹ St. Matt. ii. 6.

²² Mich. v. 2.

golden pot that had manna, and the rod of Aaron that had blossomed, and the tables of the testament.”²³ But the same Holy Spirit of infallible truth apparently dictated the contrary in the sacred Old Scripture, that is, in His epistle to us, for thus St. Gregory and other Fathers call the Holy Scripture; for in the Third Book of Kings it is written: “Now in the ark there was nothing else but the two tables of stone;”²⁴ and yet, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, three other things are said to have been placed there, namely, “a golden pot,” and “manna,” and the “rod of Aaron.” As, therefore, we piously interpret the words of the Holy Spirit, although they are in appearance self-contradictory, so we ought favourably to interpret similar human expressions, although they have the appearance of being untrue, because men are not bound to be, nor can they be, so accurate and circumspect in speaking and in writing as is God, or the Holy Scripture dictated by God.

Another motive for avoiding false interpretations and censures of other men’s doings, is the example of the demons among whom such things are not practised. Christ our Lord did not think it unworthy of His mouth to seek an argument for refuting the Jews, who assailed His doctrine, and life, and miracles, and to rebuke them by the example and custom of demons, among whom there is no dissension; that hence He might defend the power of casting out demons which He possessed, which was by them ascribed to the prince of demons; nor should it be alleged against me as a fault, if, from the custom of demons who are free from mutual fault-finding and unfavourable interpretations, I endeavour to persuade ourselves to abstain from them, as they abstain, and applaud all the doings and efforts of their companions, lest in this matter we should be, and should be regarded by God, as worse than devils. For, if Christ used the example of the Ninivites in order to recall that perfidious nation from their impiety, when He said: “The men of Ninive shall rise in judgment with this

²³ Heb. ix. 4.²⁴ 3 Kings viii. 9.

generation, and shall condemn it, because they did penance at the preaching of Jonas ;”²⁵ it ought to be a much more efficacious motive for deterring the servants and sons of God, who are beloved of God, from a malign interpretation of the words and deeds and intentions and omissions of others, lest Christ should bring it as a reproach against them in the particular or general judgment, that devils have been in this respect better than they have been, in that they did not assail their infernal companions with any harsh interpretations and censures, but by interpreting everything favourably for the best, they rather animated them to things which indeed were evil and execrable; and yet of such a character that we may learn, like good bees, from them to suck the good even from infernal poison, and that which is salutary for the direction of our manners. And this should be done the more by us from the example of our holy Father St. Ignatius, who, as Maffei writes of him in his Life, “had wonderful ingenuity in soliciting men and drawing them from the servitude of the devil to the obedience of Christ, and adapted those arts which the devil employs for the destruction of souls, as far as it was lawful and right, for the salvation and well-being of men.” By which example the holy Father taught us, that we might also make gain of demons, by turning their custom to good, which they abuse to evil; since God made all creatures for three ends, as He revealed to St. Mary Magdalene dei Pazzi, “for necessity, for recreation, and for our instruction,” as is written in her life.

David, together with Abiathar the High Priest, would have been condemned as sacrilegious, because the former, by permission of Abiathar, eat the loaves of proposition, which might lawfully be eaten only by the descendants of Aaron, who were employed in Divine ministries.²⁶ And from this act Christ was constrained to draw a defence of His disciples, when they were judged by the Jews,

²⁵ St. Matt. xii. 41.

²⁶ 1 Kings xxi. 6; Exod. xxix. 32; Levit. viii. 31; xxiv. 9; St. Matt. xii. 3, 4.

because they plucked the ears of corn on the Sabbath. The same David might be condemned by the censor as lascivious, because he had ten wives, or, as the Scripture calls them, concubines.²⁷ And here the censor would have on his side the law of God which expressly forbade this to the kings.²⁸ To that authority he might add a good reason, and one which could not be assailed, according to his wisdom, namely, that there was not then a reason for so many wives as seemed necessary at the beginning of the world for the propagation of the human race, for in the time of David the human race was too much propagated, since in his time the soldiers of Israel alone, when the census was taken by order of David, were eleven hundred thousand in number, and of Juda, four hundred and seventy thousand;²⁹ although, as we are told, they were not numbered from all the tribes. If so many soldiers, what of the rest, the children and women? What need, then, for so many wives? "Oh, lascivious and effeminate man!" the censor would say.

He might further be reproached as having died badly, and perhaps in sin, because he seems, in a spirit of vindictiveness, when at the point of death, to have ordered that Semei should be killed on account of the malediction which he formerly pronounced against him: "Thou hast also with thee Semei . . . who cursed me with a grievous curse, . . . but because . . . I swore to him by the Lord, saying, I will not kill thee by the sword: do not thou hold him guiltless. But thou art a wise man, and knowest what to do with him, and thou shalt bring down his grey hairs with blood to Hell."³⁰ Oh, how many things an ill-disposed censor would here condemn! First, the remembrance of the injury; secondly, the spirit of vindictiveness, because he ordered him to be put to death; thirdly, perjury, for he swore, and yet he wishes him to be killed by his son; and to the excuse that he wished him to be killed by another,

²⁷ 2 Kings xv. 15.

²⁹ 1 Paral. xxi. 5.

²⁸ Deut. xvii. 17.

³⁰ 3 Kings ii. 8, 9.

the censor might take objection, and say with the philosopher: "He who is the cause of the cause, is the cause of the thing caused;" and he might quote the legal maxim: "He who does a thing by another, seems to do it by himself." *Qui facit per alium, per se ipsum facere videtur.* Fourthly, he might point out the cunning, since he had acted insincerely, in swearing that he would not kill him, that is, by himself, and yet meaning that he would kill him by another. Fifthly, he might remark upon his artful and adulatory speech, in praising his son as wise, that he might the more easily persuade him to what he wished. Sixthly, he might observe the tyrannical spirit which breathed in his manner of speaking: "Thou shalt bring down his grey hairs with blood to Hell." Seventhly, he might remark his hypocrisy and feigned humility or patience, for he would say: Where now are those words of piety, redolent of humility, which he uttered when he heard the cursing of Semei? "Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bid him curse David: and who is he that dare say, Why hath he done so?"³¹ Eighthly, he might point out his disobedience towards God; because he resisted His will, from Whose decree he formerly thought that malediction proceeded as a punishment. And yet it is certain that David did this, not with a tyrannical or vindictive disposition, nor with an evil motive, as we have seen, but from a zeal for justice, for the good of Semei, for an example to others, and to produce a horror of sin which is committed against the authority of superiors; because elsewhere David was so gentle, as he often showed, that he could rightly say of himself, when openly conversing with God, if he is the author of that Psalm (as is thought by SS. Basil, Gregory, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, Theodoret, Euthymius, Innocent, in their writings on the Psalms; and by St. Irenæus, Justin, and Tertullian;) or if any one else is the author of it, still he could truly say to God, when asking Him to incline His mercy towards

³¹ 2 Kings xvi. 10.

him. "O Lord, remember David, and all his meekness."³² It is not vindictiveness, no; it is not cruelty, when anything is ordered by a magistrate as a punishment of others; because not alone the omission of a punishment which is due (which would be a greater sin), but even the omission of a heavier punishment, and the infliction of a light and gentle punishment, when it ought to be more severe, is a great and hateful sin before God.

Consider that wonderful decree of God: "For I have sworn unto him [that is Heli], that I will judge his house for ever, for iniquity; because he knew that his sons did wickedly, and did not chastise them. Therefore have I sworn to the house of Heli, that the iniquity of his house shall not be expiated with victims nor offerings for ever."³³ A wonderful thing! And yet it is written that Heli said these words to his sons: "Why do ye these kind of things which I hear, very wicked things, from all the people?"³⁴ Mark, God called them iniquitous things, but here Heli uses a harsher and more significant word, "very wicked things;" and yet he seems to God not to have chastised his sons. And then he went on: "Do not so, my sons, for it is no good report that I hear, that you make the people of the Lord to transgress. If one man shall sin against another, God may be appeased in his behalf; but if a man shall sin against the Lord, who shall pay for him? And they hearkened not to the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them." Where mark, besides, that Heli not only reprov'd the crimes of his sons, but also brought forward certain reasons, by which they might be induced to desist from sinning. And therefore St. Basil rightly remarks: "Heli in no way connived at the crimes of his sons, and often endeavoured to deter them from them, and in an unusually long speech he showed them the greatness of their crime, and its necessary and inevitable condemnation." And St. Nazianzen says, that "Heli not only did not approve of the impiety of his sons, but even very frequently

³² Psalm cxxxi.³³ 1 Kings iii. 13, 14.³⁴ 1 Kings ii. 23—25.

rebuked them." And moreover their sin seems to be attributed to the withholding of Divine aid, and to the Divine permission: "Because the Lord would slay them;" and yet God says: "Because he did not chastise them." But how can it be said that he did not chastise them, when he did chastise them, as we have heard? You know the cause. For this reason He says that he did not chastise them, because he did not punish them so severely as was required. "For he ought to have struck them," says St. Gregory. "He ought to have cast them off," says St. Jerome. "He ought to have removed them from his presence, and to have disinherited them, and to have had them beaten," says Theodoret; and Procopius says: "That, after a first and second admonition, he ought to have removed them from the holy places or inclosures."

St. Chrysostom remarks that David, in order to enhance the greatness of his sin, used the name of Shepherd: "It is I the shepherd that have sinned . . . these that are the sheep, what have they done?"³⁵ As though he would say, "Even if they had sinned, I should be regarded as guilty, because I did not correct them."

"He ought to have shown a greater indignation against them," says St. Basil, "because," he says, "he had not inflicted upon them the punishments which they deserved, nor had he been indignant with them, as it was right that he should have been; and thus he so stirred up the anger of God, that his people, together with his sons, were taken off in one destruction, and the ark itself was taken, and fell into the power of the enemy, and he himself ended his life by a miserable death."

"Heli did indeed restrain his sons," says St. Chrysostom, "and check them, but not with so much care and earnestness as was necessary. For when he ought to have scourged them, and cast them out of his house, and used every kind of correction, he only exhorted them and counselled them, saying, 'Do not so, my sons, for it is no good report that I

³⁵ 2 Kings xxiv. 17.

hear.' What do you say? They have insulted God, and you call them sons? Therefore, He says that Heli had not chastised them; for it is chastisement when we do not merely give counsel in this way, but more vehemently and sharply, and when we inflict whatever wound the ulcer requires. It is not, therefore, sufficient only to speak, but we must also strike great terror, so as to get rid of the reckless indifference of youth. Consequently as he only exhorted them, and not this even as he ought, he exposed them to the enemy; and when war began they fell in battle, and he, unable to bear the news, fell, and broke his neck, and died. You see, then, I said truly that those are the murderers of their children who do not chastise careless children sharply, nor require of them the worship which is due to God. And thus certainly Heli was the slayer of his children. For although the enemy killed his sons, yet he was the author of their death, because by his own negligence towards them he turned away the help of God from them, and left them, unprotected and forsaken, to those who wished to slay them. And not only them, but he destroyed himself along with them. And this very thing now also happens to very many fathers, because they would not beat, or rebuke, or grieve their children, when they were living irregularly and iniquitously." And it is the opinion of St. Augustine, of St. Gregory, of Eucherius, and of Bede, that for this Heli was condemned to the pains of Hell.

When, therefore, David, for a similar cause, ordered Semei to be severely punished, he did well. Hence learn (as I may remark by the way) not to condemn the orders of your Superiors, when they inflict upon offenders a greater punishment than is usual: they are constrained by the love of justice, by the love of religious discipline, by the love of the brethren. Hence, when St. Louis Bertrand, the glory of the most holy Order of St. Dominic, and the patron and defender of our Society, whilst he lived, in the time of our holy Father Ignatius, was asked why he punished so severely the slight defects of those who were subject to him, he

replied, "that they may escape the more severe pains of Purgatory." Correct was the reasoning of that most holy man, because, if for one idle word which is not purged here, the pains of Purgatory must be undergone, which are more bitter than all the torments of this life joined together, what wonder is it that sometimes our offences are not lightly punished? If any one should now for one idle word prescribe a public flogging in the refectory, he would be considered cruel and tyrannical; and yet one beating, compared with even the lightest fire of Purgatory, is like painted fire compared with real fire. And so God is not cruel when He purges even idle words with that fire. Let not then those Superiors seem, or be rashly judged to be cruel, who punish our offences, who are angered and saddened by us when we sin. "To be angry with one who sins," says St. Augustine, "that he may be corrected; to be saddened for one who is afflicted, that he may be delivered; to fear for one who is in danger, lest he should perish; surely no one will, if right minded, find fault with this." These things I have brought forward in defence of the gentleness of David, and for the brotherly correction of his accusers.

I omit other actions of great Saints which might be gnawed by a malignant tooth. Take that frankness of Ezechias, when, addressing God, he said: "I beseech Thee, O Lord, remember how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is pleasing before Thee,"³⁶ which a rash judge might ascribe to pride, arrogance, boastfulness, presumption. Yet God, when He heard those words, recalled the decree which He had spoken by Isaias, intimating that his death would soon take place, and added fifteen years to his life, and confirmed His promise by a miracle.

I pass by the zeal of Elias, who, although addressed not by an insulting title, but as the "Man of God," yet slew a hundred men by fire from Heaven,³⁷ which act a rash and blasphemous tongue might attribute to impatience.

³⁶ 4 Kings xx. 3.

³⁷ 4 Kings i.

I pass by the just severity of Eliseus, who, when called by boys "bald head,"³⁸ as he truly was, procured a severe punishment from God against them, which a malignant judge would say proceeded from his wrath and fury.

We know how great was the holiness of St. Paul the Apostle, and yet not only his life was condemned by some, but even his doctrine; and hence it came to pass that some did not receive some of his Epistles, as though they had not proceeded from the Holy Spirit. For, as St. Jerome writes, in his Preface to the Epistle to Philemon, they said "he was not always an Apostle, nor did he say all things from Christ speaking in him, and that there were times when Paul would not venture to say, 'I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me,'³⁹ or 'Do you seek a proof that Christ speaketh in me?'⁴⁰ What sort of a proof, they say, of Christ speaking in him is it to hear him say, 'The cloak that I left at Troas,'⁴¹ or 'But withal prepare me also a lodging.'"⁴²

I pass by numberless other examples of sacred actions which appeared similar to those which we now rashly condemn in others. You may consult the sermon of St. Augustine on these words, "But when all things shall be subdued unto Him," who admirably explains how both Christ and His Apostles did not always speak in the same manner, and accommodated themselves to their hearers, and employed language apparently contradictory. To unjust critics St. John might seem vain, because he alone, and no other Evangelist, wrote of himself that he outran Peter and came first to the sepulchre.⁴³

Oh, how often do we condemn, in a similar spirit, the ordinances even of our Superiors! Oh, how often we condemn them as being partial, because they do not deal equally with all, since to all they do not communicate all things, but only to certain persons! "But forgive me,

³⁹ Galat. ii. 20.

³⁸ 4 Kings ii. 23.

⁴⁰ 2 Cor. xiii. 3.

⁴¹ 2 Tim. iv. 13.

⁴² Philemon 22.

⁴³ St. John xx. 4.

Fathers and brethren," says St. Theodore Studita, "it is not right that matters should be disclosed to all, nor to any but the leaders of the brethren, as we are taught by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Who at one time discloses the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven to all His holy disciples, and at another, takes Peter, James, and John, and to them alone exhibits the mysteries." At one time Superiors refuse some things which are asked either by members of the house or externs; they forbid some things being done at a particular time or place; either they forbid them at that particular time or place, or they forbid them altogether; some things they punish, which it would not seem that they ought to punish, and say things which it would appear they ought not to say, and do things which it might seem they ought not to do, and order things which it would appear they ought not to order (that is, as it seems to men who are imperfect, by whom such acts on the part of Superiors are wont to be branded as evil), and do not prevent things which it would appear they ought to prevent; nor punish things which should be punished; and immediately judgments arise: O the cruelty! O the inhumanity! O the heart of a step-mother! O what folly! and they do not consider that the Superiors do this, perchance because they were ordered so to do by those who were over them, which, however, they do not say, lest they should transfer the reproach to them. Nor do they consider that the Superiors are taught either by experience and the sure judgment of their natural reason, or by a peculiar Divine light; (and if this was not wanting to Caiaphas when he prophesied concerning Christ, no wonder that, when God wills, it is communicated to a Religious Superior, who is not worse than Caiaphas), or by a hidden Divine Providence which, even without the Superiors themselves being conscious of it, directs them to forbid, or not permit, or to order some things; and that it is under such influence that they forbid, refuse, command certain things; and therefore some sciolists condemn them as though those things were wrongly or through whim forbidden,

refused, or commanded. This is not right. If we were to regard them as in the place of Christ ; if we were to regard their judgment and will as the rule of our judgment and will ; if we believed that we should thus conform exactly to the first and highest rule of all good will and judgment, which is the eternal goodness and wisdom, as the thirty-first rule of the Summary prescribes, we should not thus speak. We should approve of all things ; we should excuse all things ; we should refer all things to the Divine Providence, and we should believe that which the thirtieth rule of the Summary says : " Let every one persuade himself that those who live under obedience ought to allow themselves to be carried and ruled by Divine Providence through their Superiors, as if they were a dead body, or the staff of an old man," and so forth. And unless this is done, we cannot hope for that good in the religious life for the obtaining of which we have embraced this state. For as in philosophy he who does not believe the principles of philosophy will not be a good philosopher, so he who does not believe practically in religious life, that is, does not conduct himself according to the first principles of his Order, will not be a good religious.

One first principle of our Order, among others, is this, to follow the direction of our Superior. But to what extent ? " In all things in which there would be no sin," says Rule 31. How ? " Entirely, promptly, resolutely, and with due humility, without excuses, even when he orders things which are difficult and repugnant to our sensuality." And only externally ? No ; but let them also " endeavour to have inwardly resignation and true abnegation of their own will and judgment, conforming entirely their will and judgment with that which their Superior wills and thinks."

Think not, dearest brethren, that it is cruelty when sometimes small things are denied us, even those which seem necessary. Superiors are compelled to do so, either for your own good or for the good of others : they are compelled, that they may preserve either you or others from

evil. The playing of Ismael with Isaac seemed a small thing, for what wonder is it that boys should play? Yet it did not seem a small thing to God, Who, not content to forbid the play, willed them even to be separate in their place of abode; willed even that the mother of Ismael should be driven out, that Isaac might be the more secure from the evils which were impending from his playing with Ismael. So it evidently happens in religion. Superiors often foresee dangers in the ways mentioned, and do not permit certain things which, if they were allowed, would lead those subject to them involuntarily to destruction. Oh, if we might venture to speak openly and plainly, how some who have not confided in the command of their Superiors, but have despised their oft-repeated admonitions in things which seemed trifling, have fallen away to things of which they never thought and which they have afterwards acknowledged, while others who have been more severely treated have found that in this manner they have been preserved from great evils, and have afterwards given thanks!

I, indeed, although I have always believed with simplicity that Superiors are in an especial manner overruled by God, and therefore have always held their ordinances dear, even when difficult and repugnant to our liberty, yet now practically experience it, and, as I may say, feel with my hands, in my present office, that many things which seem to fall out by accident are ordered by a special Divine direction, which I do not remark until after the event,—that many things thus come to my knowledge, and are by me regulated, but for which grave evils would have followed, and have followed, when those things which had been ordered have not been observed. But although things may be most prudently regulated, it sometimes turns out, as St. Thomas remarks,⁴⁴ that “Men who have to pronounce judgment on others, often have many adversaries for justice’ sake. Whence we ought not readily to believe what is said against them, unless a considerable number agree in their

⁴⁴ 2. 2. q. 70, a. 2 ad 3.

testimony." And in the next article he says of those who are in a state of subjection, or those to whom commands may be given, "it is likely that they should easily be induced to bear witness against the truth."

From all these things let us learn to avoid this vice, mindful of two things. First, of that proverb which is drawn from our natural light: "What you would not have done to yourself, do not to another. What you wish to be done to yourself, do to another." We do not like our words, writings, deeds, to be rashly judged; we like them always to be taken in good part, even when sometimes they might be drawn to a bad meaning. Let us concede the same to others; for otherwise that saying of our Lord will be verified: "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again." Believe me, it will be so done. "Thou art just, O Lord; and Thy judgment is right."⁴⁵ I might bring forward household examples of this, and of Divine judgments, which are of recent date, and which have happened within my own remembrance, of the way in which God has permitted severe judges of the morals of others to lapse into much greater faults. Let us beware lest the same happen to ourselves. A second thing which we ought to remember is this, that if at any time we hear our own actions condemned without cause by others, we be not cast down, nor trouble ourselves about such judgments. "Your thinking," says St. Gregory Nazianzen, "is nothing to us, any more than other people's dreams. To many, you say, you do not seem to be a man of that sort. Does the earth seem to be at rest to those who are suffering from giddiness? And are those who are sober thought to be sober by those who are intoxicated? and not rather to be walking on their head, or upside down? Is honey, then, bitter because it may seem so to some who are sick and indisposed? Things are not, then, as they appear to those who are diseased." Let us not be angry with the authors of adverse judgments,

⁴⁵ Psalm cxviii. 137.

but rather let us rejoice that we are treated in the manner in which God is wont to treat those who are dearest to Him; because there never has been one holy to God and very dear to the world; or whose life has not been set up and shot at by arrows, through the judgments and tongues of others. Let us therefore avoid unfavourable interpretations of the doings of other men. But if it happens that we innocently suffer such judgments without our having given just cause for them, let us bear it patiently, and solace ourselves by the examples of great saints who have suffered such things after the manner of Christ, Who was most unjustly harassed by so many malignant censures, and even by the chief priests and the elders of the people, whose business it was to prevent and to punish unjust censures. Hence Christ our Lord says: "Blessed is he who shall not be scandalized in Me."⁴⁶

St. Severus Sulpicius writes of St. Martin of Tours, at the end of his Life: "In truth we have found some envious of his virtues and of his life, who hated in him what they did not see in themselves, and what they were unable to imitate. And, O lamentable and deplorable misery! no others were his assailants (and but few of them), no others, according to report, than men who were themselves bishops."

St. Francis, although he was an example of surpassing and admirable holiness, and evidently a miracle of grace, on account of the many rare and admirable gifts which had been granted to him by God, suffered many persecutions from his own General, Brother Elias, and was called, from his manner of proceeding and acting, the "destroyer of the Order" which he had founded. St. Romuald, the most holy founder of his Order, and already a centenarian, was publicly condemned in a General Chapter, by his subordinates, as guilty of a horrible crime, such as God punished with fire, and prohibited from saying Mass. And after he had borne this disgrace and calumny most patiently, and, in obedience to the unjust decree, had abstained

⁴⁶ St. Matt. xi. 6.

from saying Mass, he was refreshed by an angel sent from God, and ordered to say Mass, as is all written in his Life by St. Peter Damian, as quoted by Surius.

So our holy Father St. Ignatius suffered the most grievous things from one of his first companions: being accused, among other things, of destroying the Society, and of governing it badly, and was considered by Paul IV., the Supreme Pontiff, to have governed despotically (as Laynez expressed it), or tyrannically, as others are now wont to say, who are unruly and cannot endure just discipline; as is recorded by the historians of the Society, Orlandini and Sacchini, and is more clearly set forth in the Manuscript History which is preserved in the Roman Archives of our Society.

A certain holy man, now enrolled among the number of the saints, was, before his canonization, in my presence gravely censured by his own confessor, otherwise a good, spiritual, prudent, and learned man, for two things, which had reference as well to his holiness as to his spirit of prophecy. For when once I asked him to tell me something edifying of that holy man, he answered me with some indignation, in Italian, in words of this kind: "Well, I never saw such great sanctity in him; yet he was a good man; but his spirit did not please me." But when it was spread abroad that this holy man had predicted the day and hour of his death, he began to deny this in my presence: "I," he said, "when I was about to go to a certain place, met him, and he asked me when I was going to return to Rome. I answered him that I should return in about two weeks. Whereupon he, thinking for a little while, said to me: 'Then we shall meet again;' but before I returned from Rome he had died; and I found him dead and buried." These words were spoken to me by that man who was in other respects of great authority, and most venerable from his hoary old age.

And as for St. Teresa, what did she not suffer from her confessors? For they regarded her as one deluded by

the devil, so that some wished to make use of exorcisms to expel the demon from her, by whom they thought she was possessed. She was also reprov'd by her own Superiors, and by those above them, as fantastic and guilty of spiritual extravagances, although she is now held in greater honour and veneration by others, throughout the whole world, and even by the Apostolic See, than many others who were great saints.

We know also what things Father Balthasar Alvarez suffered at the hands of our chief Fathers and Superiors, as is written in his Life, being even rendered an object of suspicion, through accusations made to the General, Father Everard, and carefully examined, by his command, by a severe Visitor; yet his holiness was so pre-eminent, that God revealed to St. Teresa that no one in the Church of God at that time was his equal in sanctity, but that he exceeded in holiness of life all who were then living, and that he was predestined by God to hold that rank in Heaven; as our Father Louis de Ponte, his spiritual son, writes in his Life of Father Balthasar.

Finally, these words of St. Gregory may afford much consolation, "that he did not think that man to be an Abel who had not a Cain against him." For all virtues are both acquired and made known by the assaults of things contrary to them, if they do not yield to them. But, when we are led by self-love, we wish, as it is said in Cassian, "to obtain the chastity of the flesh without chastisement, and to acquire purity of heart without the labour of vigils, to abound in spiritual virtues at the same time that we have rest in the flesh; to possess the grace of patience without the provocation of any insult; to exercise the humility of Christ without the loss of worldly honour; to serve Christ, and have at the same time the praise and favour of men." Let us go forth, therefore, to Him," as the Apostle exhorts, "without the camp, bearing His reproach,"⁴⁷ and this "by evil report and good report; as deceivers and yet true; as unknown and yet known."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Heb. xiii. 13.

⁴⁸ 2 Cor. vi. 8.

In one word, those whom God loves, as well superiors as inferiors, if they rightly discharge their duties, He leads to Himself by that way by which He led His only-begotten Son, that is by tribulations and crosses, especially if they are profitable for their souls; leading them from an evil life to a good, or from a good to a more perfect life. And thus it was, as Ribadeneira writes, that our holy Father St. Ignatius, when he was not helping souls, lived without persecutions, in great peace and tranquillity; but whenever he expended himself in assisting souls, immediately there were wont to rise against him great adversities, and particularly tempests of false accusations, allegations, and calumnies, which, however, in process of time, his innocence and that care which God has of His own dissipated with increase of his good fame and glory. Wherefore, having experienced in himself how greatly the devil assails those with unjust accusations who increase the glory of God, he forewarned, in his Constitutions, both superiors and inferiors, and, in short, all of us, that we should be prepared to receive these weapons of the devil with a courageous heart, and to repel them with invincible patience, and by them to destroy the stratagems of the demon, like a Goliath, hateful to the people of God, slain with his own sword.

For he wrote of Superiors, in the ninth part of his Constitutions (chap. iv.): "Those who have the care of others may suffer calumny unjustly from many, for various reasons." St. Chrysostom, in his Homilies on the Epistles to Timothy, speaking of an ecclesiastical Superior, says: "He is set up to be lacerated by numberless tongues: one blames, another praises, another detracts, another calls his memory in question (that is, when he is preaching), another his composition, and he has need of great firmness, in order to endure these things." And that this is entirely true, is experienced by all Superiors, and especially by those who check the sins and imperfections of the more imperfect members of their Community, and incite their good and spiritual subjects to better things. And St. Gregory observed

the same. "Often," he says, "the deeds or words of the better men displease those who are more imperfect, because they cannot be understood. But on that very account these deeds and words should not be rashly reprehended by them, because they can in no way be justly reprehended. It often happens that something is done or commanded, according to a providential dispensation, by greater men, which is considered an error by lesser men. Often, many things are said by those who are strong, which the weak criticise because they do not understand them. And this was well signified when the ark of the Testament leaned aside because the oxen kicked,⁴⁹ and the Levite, thinking it was about to fall, took hold of it, and immediately received the sentence of death. For what is the mind of a just man but an ark of the Testament, which leans aside when carried by kicking oxen; because sometimes even he who presides well, whilst he is shaken by the disorderly action of those who are subject to him, so as to grant a dispensation, in doing so is moved by charity alone; and yet, when people look at the dispensation itself, that very yielding of the strong is thought by the ignorant to be an accident. Whence some who are subject put forth the hand of reproof against this yielding, but instantly pay, with life itself, the price of their temerity. The Levite then held out his hand, as if to give assistance; but he lost his life for his transgression, because, when the weak presume to reprove the deeds of the strong, they are sometimes cut off from companionship with the living."

When that holy old man, Father Bernardine Realini, was in a position of subjection, no one spoke against him; but when in time he discharged the office of Vice-Rector, he was not only assailed at home by slanderous tongues, but was also traduced at Rome, by means of letters, written to Father Claudius, the General. This is an old custom of malevolent or rash subordinates. "Who," says St. Gregory of Nyssa, in his Oration on those who bear reproofs amiss,

⁴⁹ 2 Kings vi. 6, 7.

“who was a better pastor than Moses? What prince or ruler so moderate and gentle, as to be become altogether to his people, educator, leader, priest, in short, their father;—a fellow-servant in war; furnishing them with good things in the wilderness, where the earth was neither ploughed nor sown; judging rightly, and leading them on their way, free from error? But what followed? As though he had been doing them an injury, he was harassed by seditions; assailed by insults and reproaches as if he had been injuring them; their complaint was not less loud against him than if he had stolen or appropriated the goods of others. He is attacked with curses as an unskilful commander of the army and one who did not govern rightly. He even came in danger of being banished from the priesthood, when Dathan and Abiron and the sons of Core, laying hold of the mob and separating them from the people, strove to be the profane priests of the holy places, and seized the censers, and forthwith began to handle the sacred things and kindle the mystic fire, which burnt them up before they could touch it. And so readily did his administration and his office and exercise of teaching provoke the dislike of the people, that not even his own kin spared Moses, but even Mary detracted, and Aaron assailed him with reproaches. But all was vain and useless; for he all the while was Moses, and came out nothing worse than himself. But God exacted and took vengeance upon them for their offences and crimes against His own leader.” Such are the words of St. Gregory Nyssen.

Others, also, our holy Father fortified to bear with equanimity the censures of others, when (as we have it in the eleventh rule of the Summary) he ordered us “with all our might to desire, and to receive whatever Christ our Lord loved and embraced; to be clothed, in short, with the same garment and with the insignia of our Lord, out of love and reverence to Him, to suffer contumelies, false testimonies and injuries, and to be held and thought fools; to the extent of desiring to be made like to Christ.”

Let us bear, then, the unjust censures of others, and judgments which are adverse to our reputation, and all the more that they are painful to our self-love. "Not to know one's own evils," says Seneca, "is not human; not to bear one's own evils is not manly." If such is the judgment of a heathen, how much more ought it to be of the religious, who are crucified to the world, as they are called by St. Ephrem, St. Chrysostom, and other of the holy Fathers, and who ought to conform themselves to Christ, their Leader and Head; because, as our holy Father wrote in the place referred to, "for the sake of our greater spiritual advancement, He assumed suffering and gave to us an example, that in all things, as far as it shall be possible, by the inspiration of Divine grace, we may be willing to imitate and to follow Him, since He is the true way that leads men to life." For, as the Apostle says, "Whom He foresaw He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son,"⁵⁰ that is, in bearing those very things, as St. Augustine explains, which He suffered from the judgments and tongues and hands of His enemies. "That Seducer," they called Him.⁵¹ "For if they contradicted Christ," says St. Cyril, "how must we expect that they shall deal with us? And if calumnies were raised against the saints, without exception, how should we, who are the least, escape?" Let us, therefore, suffer willingly unjust censures after the example of Christ and the saints; but let none of us censure others, nor give occasion for lamentations, in the house of Christ, to those who, for His sake, have left all worldly consolations, even those which were lawful and good. Therefore the Apostle exhorts us: "Obey your prelates and be subject to them, for they watch as being to render an account of your souls: that they may do this with joy and not with grief."⁵² And again: "And you, fathers, provoke not your children to anger."⁵³ And again: "Be zealous of the better gifts."⁵⁴ And immediately after he adds, commending charity:

⁵⁰ Rom. viii. 29.⁵¹ St. Matt. xxvii. 63.⁵² Heb. xiii. 17.⁵³ Ephes. vi. 4.⁵⁴ 1 Cor. xii. 31.

“Charity thinketh no evil.”⁵⁵ But censures are always preceded by the thinking of evil; and therefore St. Dorotheus says: “Those who wish to be saved are never curious about the slight faults of their neighbours; but they are always occupied about their own, and cut them off.”

But even if there were no examples of the saints, we have Christ Jesus, the Head of our Order, by Whose example we are able to console ourselves when innocently we suffer so many unfavourable judgments. “Think diligently,” says the Apostle,⁵⁶ “upon Him that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself; that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds.” Only take care that you observe the caution given by the same Apostle: “Therefore, judge not before the time, until the Lord come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise from God;”⁵⁷ which I wish that we, in the hour of our death, may hear from the mouth of God. We shall hear it, if we do not censure others, and if we live well ourselves; deeply meditating in our minds that which I have so often here inculcated, that even the words of Scripture, dictated by the Holy Spirit, if they were taken as they sound and at their first appearance, might be assailed by unjust censure no less than the words of men. Therefore, St. Chrysostom, in his Homilies on the Epistle to the Romans, rightly remarks: “Unless we mark well the words with proper circumspection and regard them with great attention, in accordance with the scope and mind of the Apostle, it will come to pass that infinite absurdities will follow.” And further on, explaining the passage, “They who are in the flesh cannot please God,”⁵⁸ he remarks: “Some one will say, What? Shall we tear the body in pieces, shall we depart from the flesh, in order that we may please God? What? Do you think that we shall become man-slayers when we are drawn

⁵⁵ I Cor. xiii. 5.

⁵⁷ I Cor. iv. 5.

⁵⁶ Heb. xii. 3.

⁵⁸ Rom. viii. 8.

by you to the pursuit of virtue? You see how many absurdities arise if we take without discretion what is written by an author."

CHAPTER VI. -

Fifth reason for avoiding rash judgments.

A FIFTH reason is found in the manifold malice which is hidden in such judgments, and which, therefore, does not a little offend the Divine Majesty. "Often," says St. Ambrose, "when we judge, our judgment is a greater sin than the sin on which it has been pronounced." "If it is wrong," says St. Chrysostom, "not to see our own sins, it is a double or triple sin to judge others, and to carry the beam in one's own eye without pain; nay, this is something worse than any beam." Nay, there are more sins than three in this vice.

For, first, for the most part these judgments arise from some fault opposed to charity, as from hatred, or aversion of mind, or anger, or envy, or from all these together (for it is not uncommon that all these should be found together in one judgment against the same person), and in consequence, such a judgment will then be stained by manifold malice; and this is not found in the heart in which true charity resides; as well because "Charity covereth a multitude of sins"¹—or, as it is said in the Book of Proverbs, "Charity covereth all sins;"² for as the Apostle says, "it thinketh no evil"³—as because we are taught by daily experience that those things which we sometimes censure in others, we do not blame in those whom we particularly love; on the contrary, we sometimes (and this is not free from vice) praise even the defects of those whom we love, or at least excuse them. Wherefore if we loved all, as we ought to do, with a sincere and perfect love, we should judge and condemn no one rashly. "He that judgeth his brother," says

¹ 1 St. Peter iv. 8.

² Prov. x. 12.

³ 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

St. James, "judgeth the law;"⁴ because, says St. Thomas, "he despises the precept which requires him to love his brother."

Secondly, rash judgments arise from pride, which is the root of all evils; for, where solid humility exists, it makes a man judge others to be better than himself, and to prefer the interests of others to his own; yea, rather, as St. Bernard and other Fathers remark, "Let a man become vile in his own eyes;" and he who is so, condemns no one as imperfect, but excuses all things as far as he can.

Thirdly, rash judgments often arise from levity of mind, and impetuosity of thought, for he who seriously and maturely considers the deeds of others can discover, without difficulty, that those things which they do admit of some excuse, and are not mere subjects of abuse and condemnation, and therefore most commonly those who judge others rashly, and lightly condemn them, are themselves condemned by others as guilty of levity, which, in fact, they generally are.

Fourthly, the rashness of our judgments arises not seldom from irreverence, or from a want of due respect; for when we look on men with respect we dare not give loose reins to our judgments upon their actions, either in outward expressions, or even in our minds, as we do when we despise some one.

Fifthly, they arise from self-ignorance. "Miserable man," said God the Father to St. Catharine of Siena, "whilst ignorant of himself, wishes both to know and to judge the heart and affection of his neighbours: and from some particular act, or even from the slightest word, he rashly judges and condemns those things which are hidden from men; but My friends always judge on the side of good, because they are founded in Me, the Chief Good; but miserable men of this kind always judge towards evil, because they are founded in miserable evil."

Sixthly, whatever, in fine, may be the origin of such judgments, they are contrary to justice. For as to defame

⁴ St. James iv. 11.

any one, by relating the fault of another which is not certain, is an act of injustice, in the judgment of all the Doctors, and this for no other reason than that such an act destroys the good esteem of such an one in the minds of other men, to which the person defamed has an undoubted right, which is the object of justice ; so also he who within himself and only internally judges another rashly, destroys in his own mind the good estimation to which he who is thus rashly judged has a right, because he has no more right to the estimation which is in the mind of one man than to that which is in another. Therefore he who destroys that estimation in himself by judging another rashly, is unjust towards him ; much more if he condemn him outwardly before others ; because by condemning him he defames him. And if this occur with full perception of the case, without probable guides to the formation of such a judgment, and in a matter in which the person thus judged sustains a notable injury to his reputation, then certainly a mortal sin is committed.

And therefore God the Father said to St. Catharine of Siena, that various sins against justice arise from judgments. "From such judgments," He said, "are most frequently engendered hatreds, homicides, detractions, ill-feeling towards our neighbour. After these forth spring the leaves—that is, words contrary to reverence, rising even to reproach and insult towards Me, and to the injury of one's neighbour.

Finally, it is certain that judgments of this kind, as St. Thomas says, are born of the malice of the heart. "An evil man," says St. Gregory Nazianzen, in his Oration on the praises of St. Athanasius, "is very quickly led to condemn even a good man ; on the other hand, a just man will not readily condemn one who is evil. For he who is little prone to vice, is not easily moved to suspect evil of another." And, as the same Father says, "He does not easily suspect evil of another, who is not easily drawn to evil." And Abbot Chæremon says (in Cassian): "It is most certain that a

monk falls a victim to those same vices which he condemns in others with unmerciful and inhuman severity." St. Nilus says: "Let us attend to ourselves, and not reproach others." And again: "Many of those things exist in ourselves for which we find fault with others." He says the truth; because most commonly the imperfect judge others rashly, but the perfect excuse all things, as far as is lawful. "As a column," says St. Chrysostom, "if it stands upright in a temple, is made more steady by the weight which is placed upon it; but if it lean the least, when a weight is placed on it, not only is it not strengthened, but leans more on one side; so also the heart of man, if it is upright, when it sees or hears of the works of any just man, is more fully confirmed by the teaching of his wisdom; but if the heart be perverse, when it sees or hears of the works of any just man, not only is it not confirmed, but rather it is stirred to envy, and more perverted." Thus the inward evil state of a man leads to the evil judging of others. St. Dorotheus explains this by a beautiful similitude: "It will often happen," he says, "that one may stand by night in any place or corner of a city, I speak not of a monk, but any one else from the city, and it shall happen that three men pass by, near him, and one of them thinks that he is waiting for some companion that they may go together to commit lewdness; another suspects him to be a thief, or a robber; but a third thinks that he has called his friend from a neighbouring house, and is waiting for him, that they may go together to prayer. Now these three men have all seen the same man in the same place; and yet they have not had the same opinion of him, nor have thought the same thought, but the first has thought one thing, the second another, and the third something different, of the same person. Each one has judged according to the state of his own soul and the disposition of his own mind." "All who are bad in morals," says St. Ambrose, "take delight in the errors of others;" and not only in their errors, but in those things which seem evil to them, even when they are not.

St. Dorotheus says : “ As bodies in bad health, whatever food they take, are injured by it, although the food may have been very good—nor is the cause from the food, but from the body which was disordered, and suffering from want of power to digest, changes the nature of the food—so the soul which is badly disposed is injured through its own vice by anything, however good and useful. Imagine that a vessel of honey was placed before us ; if any one should throw a little wormwood into it, would it not spoil the whole vessel, and make the honey bitter ? We see ourselves doing the same thing when, with a handful of our bitterness, we spoil all the good of our neighbour, judging him in accordance with the state of our own mind, and transforming him according to the bad disposition which exists in ourselves. For those who are well disposed in mind, are so towards all, just as those who have sound bodies, even when they eat something hurtful, turn all to nourishment. The reason of which is found, as I have said, in the state of the body, its health, and good habit, which turns everything, whatever they may eat, to good, digesting it, and assimilating it.” And almost the same thing had been said long before by Seneca. “ In the same way,” he says, “ as the stomach, when vitiated by disease, and collecting bile, changes whatever food it takes in, and turns all nourishment into a cause of pain, so the blind soul, whatever you may give it, turns it to its own depression and ruin, and makes it an occasion of misery.”

Since unfavourable judgments of others are liable to these evils, St. Catharine of Bologna was wont to say, as our Father James Grasset writes in his *Life of her*, “ That nuns can infallibly attain to the glory of Paradise by two ladders. The first is the ladder of virtue, which consists of ten steps, of which the seventh step is purity of mind, which, she said, consisted peculiarly in always thinking well of others, and in always interpreting in good part any action of our neighbour, refusing to stain even the mind by admitting to it a corrupt thought on the works of others.”

CHAPTER VII.

Sixth reason for avoiding rash judgments.

A SIXTH reason is found in the secret but just arrangement of God, Who sometimes is willing to keep secret the great virtues which are in His servants, lest even by possessing them, they should be destroyed through elation of mind; or (if there be no danger of this) sometimes lest the gifts of God should suffer calumny from the inexperienced, or worldly-wise, or malignant, He allows His servants to lapse into some slight defects.

Such was that holy man Isaac, mentioned by St. Gregory, endowed with virtues, miracles, and the gift of prophecy, in whom was noted a certain excessive and reprehensible joy. Of which St. Gregory thus speaks: "Great is the dispensation of Almighty God, and very often it happens that to those to whom He gives the greater blessings, He does not grant some of the lesser, that their soul may always have something for which to reprove itself; so that, while they desire to be perfect, and cannot, and labour for that which they have not received, and yet do not succeed by labouring, they may not be lifted up by those things which they have received, but may learn that they have not those greater good things of themselves, seeing that in themselves they are unable to conquer small vices and the least faults. "As God did in the elements," says St. Chrysostom, "creating some weak and some glorious, the one to declare His power, and the other to check human error; so also His saints were both admirable and weak; that by their work and their life their weakness

might be disclosed." Elias, although he was a most eminent man, yet was sometimes remarkable for timidity. And Moses was also great, yet he also took flight from the same cause.¹

Other reasons for the same thing drawn from Divine illumination were given by St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi in a rapture, according to the testimony of Puccino, her confessor, in her Life.

"Sometimes," she says, "God does not permit self-love and self-consciousness to be removed from some souls, as long as they live, although these things displease Him, as being a hindrance to perfection. For He Who is Eternal Wisdom sees that many souls, without the presence of this self-love and self-consciousness, would not do those good works which they do; therefore He does not draw out nor extirpate these passions, lest they should cease to pursue good works, to the edification of their neighbours and to increase of holy Church, but in the time of harvest, which shall be at the end of the life of those souls which have loved themselves too well and have been too self-conscious, they will be punished. Although for a long time God endures the tares of self-love in that soul, let none think that it will lie stored up in the barn of eternal life with the best seed, unless all the evil is first consumed in the fire of Purgatory. In the same way the most wise God permits, by His supreme providence, that some souls shall not know that they have these tares of self-love, because He knows that, if they were aware of it, they would fall into such dejection of mind, that they would do nothing good. Whence, as long as they are ignorant of it, they cannot eradicate it, and so it grows in them until their death, along with the good seed. But He will show to those souls in the time of harvest, which will be at their death, that these tares in them did not please Him; because it was their own fault that they did not know their defects, since they made themselves incapable of this knowledge by hav-

¹ Exod. ii. ; 3 Kings xix.

ing a grovelling and cowardly heart ; therefore, by the judgment of the Supreme Judge, these also will be sent to the flames of Purgatory."

From the Life of St. John the Almoner (in Rosweyde) we take the following : " Among all his other virtues, this blessed man (St. John) possessed this one, that (as it was said) he did not condemn his neighbour, nor receive those who did so. But I will give you an example of his teaching on this subject which is profitable to all. A certain young man, carrying off a nun, fled to Constantinople. Learning this, the holy man became sad even to death. But when some time had passed, while he was sitting one day with some clerics, uttering a discourse useful for the soul, they fell upon the subject of the young man who had carried off a handmaiden of God, and those who sat by the holy man, began to anathematize the young man, who had destroyed two souls, his own and that of the virgin. Thereupon the blessed man restrained them, and reproved them, saying, Not so, my sons, not so ; for I will show you that you are committing two sins. One, because you transgress the command of Him Who says, ' Judge not, that ye be not judged ;' and a second, because you do not know for certain if they are still sinning, and do not repent. For I have read the Life of a Father, containing something of the same kind : That in a certain city two monks went out on ministerial work. And as one of them passed along, a harlot cried to him, saying, ' Save me, Father, as Christ saved the harlot.' But he, utterly disregarding the criticism of men, said to her, ' Follow me.' And holding her by the hand, he went publicly out of the city, in the sight of all. Therefore the report went abroad that the abbot had taken in the woman Domna Porphyria (for so she was called). While they were going along, that he might place her in a nunnery, the woman found in a church a boy left on the ground, and raised him to nurse him. Then after a year some persons came to the country where the abbot was, and Porphyria who had been one of the harlots ; and

seeing her hold the boy, they said to her, 'Truly you have borne a fine child to the abbot.' For they had not yet heard of the abbot's holy scheme for her. For those who had seen her, going to Tyre (for thence the abbot had brought her), spread abroad the rumour that Porphyria had had a child by the abbot, and we, they said, have with our own eyes seen that the child is like him. When, therefore, the abbot knew from God of his approaching death, he says to the nun Pelagia, for so he changed her name when he gave her a holy state of life, 'Let us go to Tyre, because I have a pledge to redeem there, and I wish you to come with me.' And she, not being able to refuse him, followed him; so they both went, taking with them the little boy, who was then seven years of age. When therefore the abbot had fallen sick, and death was drawing near, there came to visit him from the city as many as a hundred souls. And he said, 'Bring me some live coals.' And when they had brought a censer full of coals, he took it and emptied it upon his garment, and said, 'Believe, brethren, that as God preserved the bush unburnt by fire, and as these coals have not burnt my garment, so neither have I known sin with woman since I was born.' And they all wondered that the garment was not burnt with the fire, and they glorified God, Who has His hidden servants. And influenced by the example of Pelagia, who had been formerly a harlot, other women of sinful life followed her, renouncing the world, and proceeding with her to her nunnery. For the servant of God, the monk, who had shorn her, after having satisfied all, gave up his spirit to God in peace. Therefore," he said, "I say to you, my sons, be not precipitate in judging and condemning the acts of others. For we have often heard of the sin of fornication; but we have not seen the penitence for it which was done in secret. And it has happened that we have seen some one committing a theft, but we know not of the sighs and tears which he has poured forth to God. And we hold him to be such as we have seen him, a thief, or a fornicator, or a perjured person, but

with God his secret confession and penitence are accepted ; and he is precious in His sight. Then all admired the teaching of this industrious pastor and master.”

When St. Macedonius, a simple man, and one who had not had leisure for the cultivation of the Sacred Scriptures, had been consecrated a Bishop by Bishop Flavian, without himself being conscious of it, as soon as he knew of it, he assailed every one with abuse and reproaches, and taking the staff which he carried on account of his old age, he pursued the Pontiff himself and others, as many as were present, as we are told by St. Theodoret in his History of Religion, where he records his miracles and the severity of his life.

And, in fact, it not rarely happens that the servants of God (but this must not be done without the approval of Superiors, because it is forbidden by Rule 11 of the Summary), led by a peculiar Divine instinct, intentionally adopt certain exterior practices, which, although considered in themselves they are not truly vices, are yet such as are wont to be seen in those who are imperfect, that so they themselves may be regarded as imperfect, and that they may conceal the great gifts of God in themselves by an act of humility. Such was the admirable St. Sala, by whom we know so many ridiculous things were done to this end, and yet whose holiness God has taught us and proved by so many miracles.

Such was St. Philip Neri, who, as I have heard in a public discourse delivered on his anniversary by Cardinal Baronius, the saint's confessor, “excited anger in himself, and sometimes showed forth the signs of a heated mind, that he might be regarded as a man of bad temper.” And, therefore, the same holy man often recommended this to his friends : “If any man among you wishes to be wise, let him become a fool.” And I know some in our Society, who, that they might destroy in the minds of others the good opinion in which they were held by them, and might not be regarded as saints, as they were, did some things, not

indeed wrong in themselves, but yet which are wont to be condemned by the malignant; such as more cheerful conversation, a readiness to laugh, sitting longer at table, and the like.

Abbot Agatho, when on the point of death, said to his brethren (as quoted by St. Dorotheus): "The judgment of God is far different from that of men," which words were also used by our Father John Piscator, when very near death. Let us not, then, form an evil judgment of any one from external things.

CHAPTER VIII.

Seventh reason for avoiding rash judgments.

A SEVENTH reason may be found in the fact that we see, or at least ought to see, more evils in ourselves than in others; therefore we ought to condemn ourselves rather than others. This very reason for avoiding judgments is brought forward by Christ in St. Matthew vii. and St. Luke vi. "And why seest thou," He says, "the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and seest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how sayest thou to thy brother: Let me cast the beam out of thy eye, and behold a beam is in thy own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." "He compared," says St. Dorotheus, "the sin of one's neighbour to a mote, but the judgment to a beam, because the judging of one's neighbour is so offensive and displeasing as to exceed almost every sin."

This is clear, that we know very many things of ourselves which are worthy of reprehension, and these quite certain; but this is not so respecting others; and therefore, if we were severe critics of our own faults, we should not attend to those

of others. For, as Pope St. Gregory well observes, "the consideration of our own infirmity excuses to us the sins of others." But the contrary happens. "For the wandering eye," says St. Chrysologus, "is blind to its own crimes, but is wide open to the faults of others; and, ignorant of its own sins, it becomes the accuser and witness of those of others." Let us therefore consider ourselves, and first cast out our own vices, and when we have done this, and are quite free from fault, then we may attack the blemishes of others; but since we shall never be without these ourselves, let us therefore abstain from censuring those of others. This is what St. Bonaventure advises in his Rules of Novices. "When you see the fault of a brother, before you judge, see whether there is anything similar or equivalent in yourself, and, leaving him, condemn yourself as evil." On which subject St. John Chrysostom gives this counsel: "Set your reason as a judge over your conscience, and bring before it all the things that you have committed; examine the sins of your soul, and diligently exact punishment. And say: Why hast thou dared to do this and that? And if it evades the question, and discusses the faults of others, say to it: I do not judge thee for these; thou hast not come to clear thyself of these. For what if he is bad? Why hast thou committed this and that? Answer; Do not accuse; consider thy own faults, not those of others."

CHAPTER IX.

Eighth reason against rash judgments.

AN eighth reason is found in the consideration that to judge others, and of others, belongs to God only and His Vicars ; and therefore the Apostle, after saying, "Let not him that eateth (namely a Gentile convert, who ate food forbidden to the Jews by Moses, which offended the Jewish converts, as yet not fully weaned from the Mosaic rites, the Apostles conniving at this, lest any of them should revolt from the Christian faith) despise him that eateth not ; and he that eateth not (namely the Jew), let him not judge him that eateth ;" adding the reason, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant ?"¹ as if to say—this belongs to God, Who is Lord of all.

St. Basil remarks : " Even if many have committed errors, small as well as great, in many things, and obstinately and pertinaciously persevere in them, do not you constitute yourself the judge of other men's errors, for they have a just Judge, Who will render to every one according to his works." It displeases God, if any one usurp to himself what belongs to God ; whence, as it is written in the Lives of the Fathers, when one had rashly judged his brother, this voice was heard from Heaven : " Men have intruded themselves into My judgments, and into the jurisdiction of another." And in the same place it is written of Abbot Isaac that, when he had entered a certain community, and had judged a certain person as imperfect, returning to his cell he found an angel preventing his access to it, and, when

¹ Rom. xiv. 3, 4.

he asked him the reason why he stopped his way, he heard these words—"God sent me to thee, that thou mayest decide whither thou wilt have the monk to be cast, whom thou hast judged and condemned." When he heard these words he was covered with shame, and entreated forgiveness. Then the angel said, "God hath spared thee; judge no one in future—leave it to God."

"There is a Judge appointed for the sinner," says St. Chrysostom; "do not arrogate to yourself the dignity of the only-begotten Son by your rash impulse; for him the seat and throne of judgment is reserved." And God Himself said to St. Catharine of Siena, "To judge of the intentions and minds of creatures possessed of reason, this is absolutely Mine alone."

CHAPTER X.

Ninth reason for avoiding rash judgments.

A NINTH reason is found in this, that those who avoid rash judgments, and interpret everything for the best, please God, because they attend to themselves, and do not form unfavourable judgments on others. "Those who are anxious and careful," says St. Climacus, "attend most cautiously to themselves, lest whilst, being too negligent, they judge others, they should be more severely condemned themselves. For on this account, as I think, Lot was justified, because when he was surrounded by vicious men, he was never found to have entirely judged them." And God has made this plain more than once by miraculous proofs.

Baronius quotes (under the year of our Lord 599) part of a Sermon on Holy Communion by St. Anastasius Sinaita, the Patriarch of Antioch, in which, desiring to lead his

hearers to pardon the injuries which they had inflicted on each other, he endeavoured to persuade them to this by adducing the example of a certain monk, who had spent his monastic life negligently and slothfully, and yet when he was at the point of death, was dying very joyfully, fearing nothing, and when his brethren asked whence such security proceeded, for they knew that he had lived negligently in devotion, he answered: "That is true, Fathers; but an angel has in this hour shown me my sins written out; and I, greatly alarmed, said: From the time when I left the world and became a religious, I have judged no one, and was wont to forget every injury which was inflicted upon me, and I pray that the words of the Lord may be verified: 'Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.'¹ As soon as I said this, the angel tore up that catalogue of my sins; and therefore I go with joy to my Lord;" and having said this, he yielded up his spirit to God, leaving great edification in his hearers.

In the Chronicle of the Franciscans, we read that Brothers Leo and Rufinus saw a great procession of the saints of that Order, and in it one endowed with a greater glory beyond the others, emitting from his eyes rays more bright than those of the sun. Having asked who it was, it was replied, that it was Bernard of Quintaval, the first companion of St. Francis, whose eyes were so resplendent, because he turned all that he saw to the best: if he saw a beggar, he said, he is poorer than I am; if he saw one well dressed, he would say, perhaps he wears a hair-shirt under his silk; and for this reason he was adorned with glory.

St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, as Father Virgilius Ceparius writes in her life, saw that a certain nun had been sixteen days in Purgatory for certain reasons; but that her penalties had been diminished on account of three virtues. First, on account of the solicitous care which she always had for preserving the purity and simplicity of

¹ St. Luke vi. 37.

her Order. Secondly, on account of the great charity which she exhibited to all nuns. Thirdly, because she always turned everything to the best, and interpreted everything favourably.

Amongst the means of arriving at purity of mind God gave to St. Catharine of Siena this in the second place : to judge no one. "In order," He said, "that thou mayest be able to attain to that union and purity, never judge respecting anything which thou seest done or said by any one against thee, or against another. Even if thou shouldst see an actual sin, extract from that thorn the sweet rose, by offering the offenders before Me by a true and brotherly compassion, and in that way thou wilt come to perfect purity." See then how they please God who avoid rash judgments. And from the same source we read : "Both this and every other judgment leave to Me ; because it is Mine and not yours." And again : "Thou and others ought to exercise compassion ; and leave the exercise of judgment to Me." Nor is it wonderful that such should please God Who is uncreated Wisdom, because He sees in them the wisdom which is from above, which, as St. James asserts, is "without judging ;"² that is, of the sayings and doings of others.

CHAPTER XI.

Tenth reason for avoiding rash judgments.

A TENTH reason is, that the injury suffered by those who are rashly condemned, recoils upon Christ. In the "Spiritual Meadow" it is written respecting the venerable old man St. Stephen the Presbyter : "That when once his liver was

² St. James iii. 17.

seriously diseased, by which disease his holy soul afterwards departed from the body, his physicians compelled him to eat flesh. Now he had a brother present, a man living in the world, but very religious, and living according to God. And it happened that when the Presbyter eat the meat, his secular brother arrived, and when he saw him eating flesh, he was scandalized and greatly distressed, because after a life of such abstinence and continence (for he was a monk), at the very end of it, he should have fallen so low as to eat flesh. But presently he fell into a trance, and saw some one who said to him, 'Why art thou thus scandalized about the Presbyter? because thou hast seen him eating flesh? Dost thou not know that he did it under the compulsion of necessity, and as an act of obedience? Therefore thou oughtest not to be scandalized. For, if thou desirest to see the merits and glory of thy brother, turn back and see.' And, turning back, he saw his brother crucified with the Lord, and he who had appeared to him said: 'Behold in what glory thy brother is.'" Why, think you, was the innocence of Stephen thus rashly condemned made known by such a vision, but that Christ might show that He is in a certain sense crucified, and hangs suffering on the cross, when His servants are unjustly judged?

When St. Catharine of Siena, having called her confessor Raymund to her (as he afterwards himself wrote in her Life), was explaining some things which had on that day been revealed to her by our Lord, and was recounting to others some great and unusual things, and Raymund was saying to himself of some of them: "Do you really think that all these things which she says are true?" and at the same time had looked at the face of the speaker; on a sudden he saw her face turned into the face of a bearded man, who looking at him with fixed eyes greatly terrified him. For the face was oval, of middle age, with a beard not very long, of the colour of wheat, presenting a certain majesty, whence it was manifestly shown that it was our Lord. "O who is it that looks upon me?" he asked;

and the Virgin replied : " He Who is ;" and at these words the face immediately disappeared, and the face of the Virgin returned. Which act this very Raymund records as having happened to himself, and adds, " that he speaks confidently before God ; because God Himself, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, knoweth that I lie not." ¹

So, when Sister Maria Gabriella, a nun, was doubting of the extasies of Catharine Ricci, a Dominican, and was looking at her caught in a trance, she saw the face of Catharine changed into the face of Christ ; and then Catharine taking the head of Gabriella, and laying it against her side, said to her, while still in the trance : " Do you believe me to be Catharine or Jesus ?" And this she asked three times ; and Gabriella answered her, " I believe thee to be Jesus." And thus her doubt vanished. Afterwards, Catharine being asked how that change in her countenance had come about, replied : " Do you not know that if one dwells in the Lord, the Lord also dwells in him ?"

CHAPTER XII.

Eleventh reason.

BECAUSE God has shown by miracles that we should not judge rashly. St. Ephrem, as St. Amphilochus writes in the Life of St. Basil, having seen by Divine revelation in the desert a pillar of fire, whose top touched the sky, and having heard a voice which came from above, saying, " Ephrem, Ephrem, the pillar of fire which you saw is the great Basil," when he came to the great church of Cæsarea on Christmas Day, and saw Basil going to the church, wearing a white robe, and a cleric attired in white garments, doubted of the

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 31.

truth of the vision which was shown to him. And he was saying to himself, "We who have borne the burden and heat of the day have attained to nothing, and this man, followed by such crowds, and invested with so much dignity, is, forsooth, a pillar of fire. This seems to me something prodigious." But whilst this was passing in his mind, Basil sends once and again to call to himself Ephrem by name, who was lurking in a corner, and when he heard him disclose to him his secret thoughts, and had before seen a tongue of fire speaking by the mouth of Basil, he acknowledged his error.

CHAPTER XIII.

Twelfth reason.

BECAUSE often those things are good, or are done for a necessary end, which seem evil to the inexperienced. St. Philip Neri, according to Gallonius in his *Life*, was accustomed before Mass, even when he was putting on the sacred vestments, to find leisure for distracting works, that by this pious distraction he might temper the Divine raptures which he endured. Now this custom one who was ignorant of his devotion might have attributed to a fault.

CHAPTER XIV.

We must now see when and to whom it is permitted to judge or not to judge one's neighbour.

FIRST RULE.—It is never lawful for any one to judge the internal things of the soul, which depend upon the free will of man, because these are known to God alone; they are unknown even to angels, unless God reveal them. Such are internal defects, desires, intentions. This is taught by the Apostle: "Judge not before the time, until the Lord come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts."¹ For He "alone," as Solomon remarks, "knoweth the heart of all the children of men."² As also Job says: "No thought is hid from Thee."³ And that not only at present, but at every time; "For the Lord knoweth all knowledge, and hath beheld the signs of the world; He declareth the things that are past, and the things that are to come, and revealeth the traces of hidden things."⁴ He therefore who judges rashly respecting internal intentions and defects, arrogates to himself that which belongs to God, and makes himself a prophet when he is not one. Of such persons the Wise Man speaks in Proverbs: "Eat not with an envious man, and desire not his meats; because, like a soothsayer and diviner, he thinketh that which he knoweth not."⁵

Thus Simon the Pharisee sinned when he said: "This Man, if he were a Prophet, would know surely who and

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 5.

² 3 Kings viii. 39.

³ Job xlii. 2.

⁴ Ecclus. xlii. 19.

⁵ Prov. xxiii. 6, 7.

what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him.”⁶ And those whom Christ condemns by saying: “Why do you think evil in your hearts?”⁷ Therefore it must never be thought or said of any one, He said that, he did that, with such an evil intention, that he might vindicate himself, that he might attain to this or that, that he might catch the popular gaze, and the like.

Also “Holy Church,” as St. Lawrence Justinian has remarked in his book on the *Spiritual Death of the Soul*, “relying upon humble prudence without any accepting of persons, receives in her most ample bosom of charity all who fly to her, by whom is made an oral confession of the true faith. For of the faith of the heart which justifies man she ventures to judge nothing, leaving this kind of examination to Him to Whom alone the secrets of the heart are known.” Hence the rashness of some presumptuous ones is to be condemned, who are not contented with discussing the works of their neighbours, but even make themselves judges of another man’s heart. They venture even to judge what are the thoughts of men, by what affections they are guided, with what intention they work, or by what spirit they are moved, all which is unlawful; since no one can know what passes in man but the spirit of man which is in him; nay, it oftentimes happens that he is unknown even to himself. Such men set themselves up as representatives of the Divine authority, which alone can grasp internal things, thinking that they can penetrate hidden intentions and thoughts. Of these it is said—they will walk in darkness as in the noonday. Moreover, they also must be said to walk in darkness as if it were noonday who, with inquisitive prying, try to throw light upon the deep counsels of the minds of their neighbours. And forming from this cause rash judgments, while walking in the night of ignorance, they boast that they have seen the noonday. Such men the Apostle rebukes, saying: “Judge not before the time, until the Lord come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make

⁶ St. Luke vii. 39.

⁷ St. Matt. ix. 4.

manifest the counsels of the hearts." Such judgments are specially to be guarded against by the faithful, since they cannot be formed without sin, seeing that they proceed for the most part from a certain rashness of heart. The judgments of men's hearts must be humbly reserved for Him alone Who shall judge the world in equity, and sees the secret things of every man in His own light, and discerns all things by His wisdom, so that nothing can remain hidden from Him, as the Apostle says: "The Word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword; and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature invisible in His sight, but all things are open and naked to His eyes, to Whom our speech is."⁸

Therefore, as no one is to be judged, so no one, however criminal and evil, is to be condemned by man, as long as he is in this pilgrimage. Since the judgments of God, which are exercised for the salvation of men, are incomprehensible, so that there is no one who is sure-footed in considering them. For we know that it often happens, that he who was yesterday wicked, to-day is made good; and he who was considered a son of hell, is now reckoned in the number of the sons of God. Therefore, for the cutting off of rash judgments, our Lord set the parable of the cockle before us in the Gospel, in which He restrained those who wished to gather it up before the time of harvest, saying: "Lest perhaps, gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest."⁹ And so evidently it very frequently happens in judging the merits of our neighbours, that the just is condemned, the innocent accused, and the elect of God is regarded as reprobate.

What, I ask, was Paul before his conversion? Was he not a rapacious wolf, a savage persecutor, a restless plotter, a wasting murderer? It is of him that it is said: "Saul, as

⁸ Heb. iv. 12, 13.

⁹ St. Matt. xiii. 29, 30.

yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the High Priest, and asked of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues; that, if he found any men and women of this way, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."¹⁰ But when he was cast to the ground, and smitten with blindness of body, and called from Heaven—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" he became more gentle than a lamb, and said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Who would not have thought him unworthy of the grace of God, when they saw him running about, seizing Christians, binding them, dragging them, scourging them, killing them? Nevertheless, he was a chief vessel of election, to carry the name of the Lord before Kings, and the Gentiles, and the children of Israel. A pre-eminent example is given us, in this case of Paul, to judge no one, since he with such speed, and with such abundance of graces, was changed into another man, and was made a shining light to the world, and an excellent teacher of the Gentiles, a chief colleague of the Apostles, and a careful ruler of the Churches.

Before Matthew the Publican was called, he was given up to immoderate gains, publicly employed in collecting taxes, seeking only those things which are of the world, and separated from the fellowship of the saints. When the Lord saw this man He called him to Himself, He sat down in his house, He drew him from the world, and made him an Evangelist. Why need I mention the justified woman, who was a sinner, but being by Divine inspiration changed for the better, deplored and amended her faults. For she came to Christ, while He was sitting with many at a banquet, sat at His feet, which she washed with tears, and wiped with her hair, and kissed with her lips, and anointed with ointment; nor did she depart thence until she had merited to hear her devout faith commended with the words: "Thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace."¹¹

Let no one, therefore, despair of himself, or doubt of

¹⁰ Acts ix. 1, 2.

¹¹ St. Luke vii. 37—50.

others, as to whether they can find pardon and grace with our Lord; when he knows that the wisdom of God made of Saul Paul and of the Publican Apostles, of the notorious woman who was a sinner His dearest disciple. All these, while living in the body, were dead in the soul, and yet are restored by grace to a condition much more excellent than before. Would you know how one living in the flesh, but dead in spirit, has been raised to life? Recall the parable of the young man, who, after having devoured his substance with harlots, was perishing with hunger, but returning in penitence to his father, was most kindly received, clothed with the first robe, adorned with a ring, fed with the flesh of the fatted calf; on account of which his envious elder brother was indignant, and was rebuked by his father with the words, "It was fit that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is come to life again; he was lost, and is found."¹² Oh, how greatly is this grace to be extolled, which of an impenitent man makes a penitent, of an impious a just man, and of a guilty man an innocent! And indeed, by reason of this grace, many offend and perish and are drawn to eternal ruin, while they presume that it will be granted at their pleasure. They mark how good God is, how merciful, and how He triumphs over the sins of men, and, from the daily conversions of sinners, they infer that He is placable towards the penitent, especially since He promised by the Prophet, saying, as often as the sinner repents, "I will remember their sin no more," and again, "If the wicked do penance for all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my commandments, and do judgment, and justice, living he shall live, and shall not die. I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done; in his justice which he hath wrought, he shall live."¹³

St. Isidore of Pelusium remarks, "Although the evil tree cannot now bring forth good fruit, yet it may hereafter bear; for it is not the same thing to say it cannot and to say it never can have the power; for in the one case we speak of

¹² St. Luke xv. 32.¹³ Ezech. xviii. 21, 22.

the present time, in which the slothful is slothful, and in the other case of the future, in which it may come to pass that he who a little before was evil, is now made good. And this is proclaimed by the fact that day by day men undergo such a change, and the Scriptures themselves confirm the same. For how did David, when he had fallen, raise himself! And how did Paul, after being a persecutor, repair this fault, and become the herald of Him Whom he had persecuted! In what way did Peter, after having denied Christ, wipe out that stain! In what manner did the Ninivites obtain safety! In what way was the robber sent to Paradise! When the power, then, of preventing grace is known (*μαθὼν τοίνυν, ὅτι τῆς ἄνωθεν προηγουμένης ροπῆς*), whoever wills, and labours, and uses all means (for the mere will does not suffice), then learns, then brings forth fruit, then attains salvation."

Second Rule.—As to the future. We must never judge unfavourably of our neighbour, whatever indications of evil there may be, because God alone knows this. One who had seen the robber led to punishment with Christ, blaspheming Christ on the Cross, as we read in the first two Gospels,¹⁴ would have said that he would die most wickedly, and yet he was converted. That the good robber also blasphemed is the opinion of Athanasius, Hilary, Chrysostom, Theophilus, Euthymius, and Juvenci, and it is thought probable by Ambrose, Jerome, and Bede (although others think that only one blasphemed, as Cyprian, Augustine, Ambrose, in another place, Jerome, Leo, and Maldonatus). And yet he died a better death than many just men after a long life spent in holiness, for he heard from Christ, "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise," that is, thou shalt see the essential nature of God, as the Fathers explain. The same judgment might have been formed of Saul, the persecutor of the Christians, and of Magdalen, and of so many others. On this point the Apostle warns us, saying, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To

¹⁴ St. Matt. xxvii. 44; St. Mark xv. 32.

his own lord he standeth or falleth. And he shall stand, for God is able to make him stand,"¹⁵ that is, to bring it about, that he who now lies in sin shall arise to good.

Third Rule.—From outward actions which in themselves are not intrinsically wrong, but may be done rightly or wrongly, or are doubtful, our neighbour must not be condemned nor judged, much less calumniated. "As he is foolish," says Seneca, "who, when he is about to buy a horse, does not inspect the animal itself, but only his surroundings and his bridle, so is he most foolish who judges a man either by his clothing, or from his condition and circumstances, which surround us like a garment." "Let us not judge the disposition of another," advises St. Theodore Studita, "from our own; but let us judge that every one is working out his salvation in secret, however different he appears outwardly. Have there not been many commemorated by the Fathers who seemed to be nothing, who have shone forth more gloriously than those who seemed to be something?" And St. Gregory Nazianzen says: "I think we should so act in doubtful or uncertain things as to be more inclined to kindness and humanity, and that we should acquit rather than condemn those who are in fault." If that holy man thinks that those who are guilty of a fault should be acquitted, how much more those who are free from fault, but are employed in things indifferent, which displease you and others like you!

The explanation is, that there is no reason why you should judge unfavourably rather than favourably, since the one view is as probable as the other, and charity counsels that we should think well of our neighbour, for the Apostle says, "Charity thinketh no evil."¹⁶ The children of Israel sinned against this when, on account of the great altar built by the children of Ruben and Gad beyond the Jordan, they wanted to fight with them and to destroy their possession,¹⁷ thinking that they had built it in order to offer sacrifices upon it; whereas it had been built for another object, which

¹⁵ Romans xiv. 4.

¹⁶ 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

¹⁷ Josue xxii. 12, 33.

when they learnt they were appeased. Heli sinned against this rule when, from the motion of the lips of Anna, saying many prayers without audible utterance, he thought she was intoxicated,¹⁸ although she had drunk nothing which could make her so. They also sinned against this rule who thought that those who were full of the Holy Spirit were intoxicated,¹⁹ and they who condemned Christ as evil, as a wine drinker, and the like, because He received sinners and eat with them. Of such St. Augustine says: "Such persons, when they see a grave man jesting, or prattling with boys and young people, in order by his familiar and fostering kindness to conciliate their immature minds, reproach him as one who is doting, forgetting whence they themselves have grown, or ungrateful for having grown." More remarkable is the admonition given by God to St. Catharine of Siena, "that even if the soul of another should appear to her in a vision as shrouded in darkness, it should not be judged." "Often-times," says St. Chrysostom, "human judgment is precipitate, and is deceived," especially in things which are doubtful. "Do you not hear," says the same St. Chrysostom, "that the Pharisee spoke what was true, and said what was clear to all, and did not reveal things which were hidden (of the publican), and yet he paid grievous penalty? If, then, it is not lawful to accuse men of sins which are manifest, much less of those which are doubtful: for he who has sinned has another Judge."

Fourth Rule.—From outward things which are altogether bad in themselves, as, for instance, if a private person should slay one who was innocent, if he were intoxicated, or blasphemed, although the things in themselves should be condemned, yet the person must not be condemned, but excused, not as having acted rightly, but, which is possible, as not having sinned, if he did it from the first impulse, or inadvertently, and as being capable of rising again and becoming a saint, whilst you may fall and not rise again. Thus David excused Semei, "The Lord hath bid him

¹⁸ 1 Kings i. 12, 13.

¹⁹ Acts ii. 13.

curse." "Excuse," says St. Bernard, "the intention, if you cannot the works; say it is ignorance, or a surprise; say it is an accident; and if the certainty of the fact renders extenuation impossible, nevertheless persuade yourself, and say with yourself, The temptation was too vehement; what would it have done with me if it had in like manner got me into its power?" For if even such things are condemned, it displeases God.

"Ought we not to tremble," says St. Dorotheus, "when we hear what happened to that great old man who, when he heard that one of his brethren had fallen into fornication, said, 'O how badly he has acted!' Do you not know, brethren, what a horrible thing is related of him in the Book of the Elders? For a holy angel brought to this old man the soul of him who had sinned, after he had departed from this life, and said to him, 'Behold, he whom thou hast judged has finished his life. Whither, then, dost thou order his soul to be borne, to the Kingdom of Heaven, or to eternal punishment?' By which terrible vision that most holy old man was so powerfully moved, that he spent the whole remaining time of his life in groans, in tears, in innumerable hardships and labours, imploring and importuning God with unceasing prayers, that He would grant him forgiveness for the commission of so great a crime and error. When he had in like manner cast himself at the feet of the angel, and had sought to obtain forgiveness, he heard him saying, 'Behold, God hath shown thee how grave a thing it is to judge thy neighbour, lest afterwards thou shouldst also commit the same thing.' Although, therefore, he obtained forgiveness, yet he never fully received consolation, nor did his soul ever cease from grief until he had exchanged life for death."

Consider two things here. First, the theologians say that there is no sin in judging any one as having done evil, if the thing is truly evil in its own nature. Secondly, at the utmost this judgment was a venial sin, and yet it was called a grave one by the angel, and was so long mourned by the old

man. Let us beware, then, of condemning our neighbour even for things which are evidently evil, but let us find excuses for him. "In these things," says Seneca, writing on Anger, "let us make excuses for the nature and the will of those who do them. Is it a boy who has sinned?—let allowance be made for his age: you know not whether he sins. Is it a father?—either he has by his act done so much good, that his wrong-doing is right, or perhaps this by which we are scandalized is in him a merit." Thus we may defend other things in other ways. In the Lives of the Fathers one of the elders says, "If you see any one sinning, do not attribute blame to him, but to him who tempts him, saying, 'Woe is me that he should have been conquered against his will, as I also have been,' and lament and ask consolation of God, because we are all deceived."

Fifth Rule.—Do not condemn a man for one evil act, nor draw universal conclusions respecting his wickedness from one action, or two, because he who is to-day evil may to-morrow be good, as was David; and the sign which to-day was a mark of wickedness, may not exist to-morrow. Men are not like demons, who, as St. Basil remarks, appeared in the form of a serpent to Eve, because, after their sin, they are unable to raise themselves and stand upright, just as serpents cannot. Man's changeableness, which arises from the mutability of free will, is a reason for our not being able to judge certainly of him from a very few acts. Whence the philosopher Philemon said well, that nothing exercised him more than the variable and inconstant nature of man. The lower animals are each marked by definite characters. Thus, the lion is always brave, the hare always timid, the eagle always noble, the vulture always voracious, the dove always simple, and so forth. But man is now choleric, and again phlegmatic, now cunning, and again simple, now courageous, again timid, now addicted to one thing, and again the reverse. Therefore a certain judgment cannot be deduced respecting him from one act, nor even from many.

Therefore God thus taught St. Catharine of Siena :
 " Unless I should first clearly reveal to thy mind the fault of thy neighbour expressly, not only once, but twice, and even oftener, thou oughtest not to condemn him in any particular thing in which there seems to thee to be a fault. But thou oughtest in general to correct with charity the vices of those who visit thee. Therefore, although it may seem that I lay open to thee the faults of others, unless thou knowest expressly that it is My revelation, do not accuse in particular, but walk by a safer way, that thou mayest be able to escape the cunning and fraud of the devil."

Sixth Rule.—It is lawful, however, for a master, and a judge, and a confessor, to condemn as an offender one who, either by the certain testimonies of others or by his own confession, is convicted of an offence. Yet even in this thing one should proceed with kindness. " When it seems to thee necessary to take notice of any fault in thy neighbour," says God to St. Catharine of Siena, " accuse thyself also along with him, with a kind of sweet humility. And if then that vice shall be in thy neighbour whom thou desirest to correct, without doubt he will be more quickly convicted and amended when he finds himself so sweetly reprov'd."

Seventh Rule.—It is lawful for a master and Superior, without condemning, or leaning his judgment to the one side or the other, and without coming to any certain conclusion, yet to fear and to be cautious, lest another should be deceived or suffer injury. For being taught by experience of other men's defects, they may guard against evils, not by settling that they have been committed, but by fearing lest they may have been. As it is not lawful to condemn a poor man, who enters a house, as a thief, yet it is lawful to take care of the house, lest perhaps he should have entered with the intention of stealing, and should steal. On which point see St. Thomas;²⁰ Menochius, *On Presumptions*;²¹ and Farinacius.²²

²⁰ II. 2. qu. 60. a. 3.

²¹ Book i. qu. 7. a. n. 41.

²² Tom. ii. qu. 36. n. 172 and 176.

Eighth Rule.—A Superior is bound to punish evils which are proved in such manner that evil-doers may be amended and the good may avoid them. Heli was punished because he corrected his sons coldly, and he was punished without pardon, as has already been shown.

Ninth Rule.—This one, which is in its nature more delicate than any of the others, was given by God to St. Catharine of Siena. “If at any time in prayer thou shouldst see, in one for whom thou prayest, any light of grace, and in another not, thou oughtest not and thou canst not rightly judge the latter as being subject to any grave fault, because most frequently this kind of judgment is false. For oftentimes that happens not from his own fault, but because I have withdrawn Myself from his soul by taking away sensible devotion, but not grace; as I frequently do, that the soul may attain to perfection. Whence the soul does not then feel any sweetness, and is arid, sterile, and in pain, which pain I allow also to extend to the soul of one who prays for such an one. And this I do out of the affectionate charity which I have for that soul for which the prayer is made, that he who prays to Me may both help himself and help to dispel the cloud which had overshadowed the other. Therefore thou seest how much he would be to be blamed who should choose to judge from that mere vision.” And the same is repeated elsewhere.

CHAPTER XV.

Remedies against error in the use of these rules, and against sin in rashly judging and condemning others.

FIRST.—Let us accustom ourselves not to condemn even things which are evidently wrong, unless we are bound by obligation of conscience, or by the office of a Superior. Father Peter Faber, as Orlandini writes in his *Life*, “instructed those who were about to enter any assembly or society, that if they by chance should remark any more serious blemish or fault in any of those present, they should beware of rashly judging it, not only with their tongue, but even in their mind, remembering that saying of Christ: ‘Man, who hath appointed Me judge or divider over you?’¹ and should at the same time thus admonish themselves: ‘Why dost thou judge the life of another, since that belongs to his superiors, not to you; for it is your business to judge only of your own offences, in judging which you will have employment enough, if you will give yourself no indulgence and no partiality, and will always keep before you that saying of Seneca: Spare others; never yourself.’”

This was the advice of St. Macarius, not only to religious, who ought to be more perfect in this respect, but also to seculars: “Christians,” he says, “ought to strive in all things, in no way to judge another, whether a prostitute, or sinners, or those who live irregularly; but to look upon all with a simple intention and a pure eye; so that this should be as it were natural and habitual,

¹ St. Luke xii. 14.

not to despise any one, or to judge or denounce, or make any one an object of criticism." And since human judgments and tongues are slippery, if they become accustomed to condemn defects of nature, they easily slide off to censuring the morals of others; therefore in the same place St. Macarius says that this also is to be guarded against: "If you see a one-eyed man, do not judge in your heart, but look upon him as though he were sound; regard a maimed person as if he were not maimed; a lame person as if he walked properly; a paralytic as being in good health."

Second Remedy.—If the obligation of justice, or of one's office, compels one to inquire into the actions of others, let him not be precipitate, nor easily condemn, but let him first examine well the state of the case. "Do not," said St. Isidore of Pelusium to Cyril of Alexandria, whom, however, he unjustly condemned, neglecting his own admonition, "Do not," he says, "pronounce violent sentences; but examine the charges with a just and upright judgment. Since God Himself, Who knows all things before they begin, yet willed, of His benignity, to come down and to see the city of Sodom, hence teaching us to examine and set forth things accurately." "The mind," says St. Gregory Nazianzen, "should be much and long exercised and turned about, and many things should be borne, before we condemn another of impiety." And St. Chrysostom, speaking particularly of superiors, says: "It is the duty of teachers and masters to judge others, but only in manifest sins, and those which are proved, and this at suitable times."

And thus did those good sailors act, when about to cast Jonas into the sea: although he was conscious of his guilt, they did not immediately throw him overboard, but as Rabbi Eleazar remarks (and Montanus adduces others in his Commentary on Jonas): First, they cast lots, that they might discover the guilty one, and when they had found him, and he openly confessed his guilt, they did not immediately throw him down into the sea, but endeavoured to

reach the shore that they might leave Jonas there. But because the waves did not allow the approach of the ship to the shore, they let him down bound into the sea, that they might discover whether the tempest was on his account. And when the sea became calm, they took him back into the ship; and when the sea began to rage again in consequence of his being taken back, they let him down again; and when the sea immediately became calm, they again draw Jonas back into the ship; but when for the third time the sea was troubled, they let him down bound a third time, and when for the third time the sea became calm, then at last removing the rope with many entreaties to him to provide for his safety, they committed him to the waves and to the providence of God. So also ought we to do, and not be precipitate in condemning others, even when we are bound to condemn their actions. And because Moses neglected this, he rashly condemned Aaron and his sons because they had not eaten the sacrifice for sin, as they were bound to do by the law of God; but when he learnt that it had been omitted through Aaron's sorrow on account of his two sons being put to death by God, he was satisfied.²

Even holy men overlook this admonition, because the zeal with which they burn sometimes impels them to condemn rashly those things which are reported to them as evil; therefore they should not give ready credence to accusers. Thus St. Isidore of Pelusium, being deceived by the accusations of the Nestorians, condemned St. Cyril of Alexandria, writing a grave admonition to him, as though he had been moved by private feeling to persecute some bishops at Ephesus who favoured Nestorius, as Theophilus persecuted St. Chrysostom; and, what is still worse, duped by their assertion, he thought that St. Cyril of Alexandria believed that Christ had only one nature, and therefore wrote to him, and showed him by numerous passages from St. Athanasius, that Christ consisted of two

² Levit. x. 20.

natures. But afterwards, when he is made acquainted with the innocence of St. Cyril, he exhorts him to remain unmoved in his judgment against the Nestorians. Thus also St. Cyril of Alexandria would not allow the name of St. Chrysostom, after his death, to be put on the register of the Church, and wrote a long letter against it to Atticus, which is quoted by Nicephorus. But being corrected by a Divine vision and by St. Isidore of Pelusium, he acknowledged his error, and placed the name of Chrysostom among the other Catholic bishops on the register, as Nicephorus testifies.

A third remedy is given by St. Chrysostom, in his homily on the words, *Salutate Priscam*. "If through an eagerness for judging," he says, "you wish to be a judge, I will show you a seat, which will bring great gain to you, and will stain you with no spot of crime. Let your mind and thought sit as a judge upon your own soul and conscience, bring all your offences before it, examine with your mind what you have done, and carefully demand a reason, and say: Why have you dared to do this and this? Why have you perpetrated that and that? But, if your conscience shrinks from this, and pries curiously into the doings of others, say to it: I am not a judge over others, nor are you called into judgment to defend others. What is it to you, if this or that man lives badly? For what reason have you offended in this or in that? Do not defend yourself, accuse your own vices, not those of others." And in the same place you may see several other things on this point.

St. Bonaventure teaches similarly, that when we see anything which is wrong, we should inspect ourselves, whether such things are in ourselves, or things of the same kind; and because we know many more of our own offences than of other men's, we ought to condemn our own sins rather than those of others. "Why, I pray you," says St. Dorotheus, "do we not rather judge ourselves? Why do we not endeavour to know accurately our own evils and our own errors, and especially those things for which we

must give an account to God? Why do we usurp to ourselves the judgment of God? What have we to do with His creature?" And, further on: "Those who wish to attain salvation, do not attend to the smallest offences and errors of their neighbours, nor investigate them too curiously, but giving heed to their own, they always make progress; like him who, when he perceived that his brother had fallen, and perpetrated I know not how much crime, said, with a groan: 'Woe is me! it is he to-day; to-morrow it is I.'" And Seneca says the like in his book on *Benefits*: "Perhaps the vice which you are seeking for, you will find in your heart, if you diligently examine yourself, as you can and should penetrate into your own heart, and as often as an evil thought concerning another arises, you will say: 'This I too have committed.'" And in this sense our Lord seems to have spoken, when He said: "Judge not, and you shall not be judged;" and St. Paul: "Wherefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest. For, wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself. For thou doest the same things which thou judgest, or equivalent."³

In the Lives of the Fathers, Rufinus, a presbyter of Aquileia, writes: "When a Council was once held in Scithis, while the Fathers were speaking of the life of many, and of very many things, Abbot Pius was silent; but afterwards went out, and taking a sack, he filled it with sand and carried it on his back; and again, in another little basket he put some more sand, and carried it before him. And when the others saw him, they asked him what that was intended to show. And he answered, saying: 'That sack which contains much sand represents my own sins, for my iniquities are very many in number; and behold I have put them behind my back, not wishing to see them, as then I should have to grieve and mourn for them. And behold these small sins of my brother I have put before my eyes, and I torment myself for them, condemning my brother.

³ Romans ii. 1.

But I ought not thus to judge, but rather to bring my own sins before me, and to think of them, and to ask God to spare me.' Which when the Fathers heard, they said: 'In truth, this is the way of safety.'" "Although," says St. Chrysostom, "there should be found one who had not sinned, even he would not be worthy to judge the life of others; and if Paul who said, 'I am not conscious to myself of anything,'⁴ yet thought himself guilty ('not hereby justified'), much more those who are conscious to themselves of innumerable things."

Fourth Remedy.—Let us learn, by making very strenuous efforts, to interpret all things for the best. St. Vincent advises that, when you see others erring in anything, "you should compassionate them from your heart, and pray for them, and excuse them as much as possible in your heart; thinking, that neither can you do anything, nor can they, unless as far as Christ extends His hand, Who gives not for our merits, but according to the good pleasure of His own will. When an Angel of the Lord appeared to St. Paphnutius before his death, saying to him: 'Come now, thou blessed one, and enter into those eternal tabernacles, which are due to thee; for behold the prophets are there, who will receive thee into their choir;' and when, on the following day, certain presbyters came to visit him, he made known to them all those things which the Lord had revealed to him, saying to them, that no one should be despised in this world, even if he were a robber, or acting on the stage, or employed in the cultivation of the fields, and engaged in the state of matrimony, or if he were called a trader and was absorbed in merchandise; yet in every order of human life, there are souls that please God, and practise some secret actions by which God is delighted. And when he had recounted similar things of certain individuals, he gave up his spirit. And the presbyters who were present; and all the brethren plainly saw him carried away by angels, singing a hymn and offering praises." So it is written in his life, as it

⁴ 1 Cor. iv. 4.

is contained in the Lives of the Fathers, published by a member of our Society, Father Heribert Rosweyde.

Now the great servants of God, and the very great saints, such as St. Philip Neri, are wont to do some things which are not bad, but indifferent, for God's sake, that they may be regarded as ordinary men, and be held inferior in the opinion of others, and yet are not for this to be condemned.

Therefore, let those who are exposed to rash judgments follow the advice of Abbot Pastor. "A certain Brother asked Abbot Pastor, saying: 'How can a man avoid speaking evil of his neighbour?' The old man replied: 'I and my neighbour are two pictures; when therefore I see my picture, and I reproach myself, the picture of my brother will be venerable in my estimation. But when I praise my own, then I shall regard the picture of my brother as evil. Therefore I shall never detract from another, if I always reprove myself.'"

Let them also consider the counsel of Abbot Hyperichius, who said: "It is better to eat flesh and drink wine, than to eat by backbiting the flesh of one's brethren; for as the whispering serpent drove Eve out of Paradise, so he who detracts from his brother, destroys not only his own soul, but also the soul of him who listens to him."

And let us plant firmly in our mind the saying of Abbot John, who was wont to say: "We have thrown off a small burden, that is the reproof of ourselves; and we have chosen to bear a heavy one, that is the justifying of ourselves and the condemnation of others."

One Timothy, an anchorite, "hearing of a certain negligent Brother, and being asked by his Abbot what he should do to that Brother, gave as his advice that he should expel him from the monastery. When, therefore, he had been expelled, a temptation came to Timothy, and when he was weeping in the presence of God, and saying, 'Have mercy upon me,' there came to him a voice saying: 'This temptation hath come to thee for this reason,

that thou didst despise thy Brother in the time of temptation.

“A certain Brother asked an old man, saying: ‘How can a soul attain to humility?’ He replied: ‘By considering only its own sins, and not the sins of another.’”

“A certain old man said to a Brother: “Think every day that death is near you, and, as though shut up in a tomb, care nothing for this world. Let the fear of God abide continually in you, every hour. Believe that you are inferior to all men. Do not condemn any one, because God knows all things; but be peaceful with all, and God will always give you rest.”

A Brother asked an old man: “How does the fear of God come to a man?” And the old man said: “If a man has humility and poverty, and does not judge another, thus the fear of God comes in him.”

An old man said: “This is the life of a monk—labour, obedience, meditation, and not to judge, or to find fault, or to murmur. For it is written: ‘You that love the Lord, hate evil.’⁵ This is the life of a monk—not to have companionship with the unjust, nor to see evil things with his eyes, nor to act curiously, nor to pry, nor to hear of other people’s affairs, nor to take from another, but rather to give, nor to be proud in heart, nor to malign in thought, nor to be gluttonous, but to do all things with discretion. In these things is the life of a monk.”

An old man said: “Ask of God, to give you penitence and humility in your heart: and always have an eye to your own sins, and do not judge others; but be subject to all, and do not have friendships with a woman, nor with a boy, nor with heretics. Be not over-confiding, and restrain your tongue, and your appetite, and abstain from wine. And if any one speaks to you on any debateable question, do not contend with him; but if he says well, say: ‘Yes;’ if ill, say to him: ‘You know what you are

⁵ Psalm xcvi. 10.

speaking about.' And do not contend with him respecting those things which he has spoken, and then your mind will be at peace."

CHAPTER XVI.

What other ancient Fathers have said and done against condemnatory judgments of others.

IN the fifth book of the Lives of the Fathers, there is on this subject a whole chapter (the ninth), by an uncertain Greek author, translated by Pelagius, a deacon of the Holy Roman Church, who was afterwards raised to the Roman Pontificate, as our Rosweyde writes in his prolegomena to the Lives of the Fathers, adducing the testimony of the Rev. Father George Garnefelt.

"A certain brother had sinned, and a presbyter ordered him to leave the church. But Besarion rose and went out with him, saying: 'I too am a sinner.'

"A brother was once discovered in a fault in Scithis, and the elder monks held a chapter, and sent to Abbot Moses, saying that he should come, but he would not come. But a presbyter sent to him, saying: 'Come, because the assembly of the brotherhood are waiting for you.' And he rising came. But taking with him his oldest basket he filled it with sand, and carried it behind him. And they went out to meet him, saying: 'What is this, father?' And the old man said to them: 'My sins are running behind me, and I do not see them, and I am come to-day to judge the sins of another.' And when they heard him, they said nothing to the offending brother, but forgave him.

"Abbot Joseph asked Abbot Pastor, saying: 'Tell me how I may become a monk.' And the old man said to him: 'If you wish to find rest both in this world and in the world to come, say in every case, Who am I? and do not judge any one.'

“A certain brother asked him again, saying: ‘If I see the fault of my brother, is it good to conceal it?’ The old man said to him: ‘Every hour in which we cover the sin of our brother, God will also cover our sin; and every hour in which we lay open the faults of our brethren, God will, in like manner, make known our own.’

“A brother once offended in the community. Now there was in those parts a certain solitary, who for a long time had not gone out of doors. And the Abbot coming from that community to him, asked what he should do with the brother who had offended. And he said: ‘Expel him.’ And the brother being expelled from the community, set himself to dig, and was weeping there; and it happened that other brothers, going to Abbot Pastor, heard him weeping as he was digging. And going down to him they found him in great sorrow, and they asked him to go to that old solitary, and he did not consent, saying, ‘In this place I will die.’ But the brothers, coming to Abbot Pastor, told him of it, and he asked them to go to him and say, ‘Abbot Pastor wants you to go to him.’ And when they had told him this, he went to him. And the old man, seeing him afflicted, arose and embraced him, and welcoming him asked him to take food. And Abbot Pastor sent one of his brethren to the solitary, saying: ‘Hearing of you for many years, I have desired to see you, and on account of the sloth of us both we have not been able to see each other; but now that God wills, and that an occasion has arisen, give yourself the trouble to come hither, that we may be able to see each other;’ for the solitary did not leave his cell. And when he heard this he said: ‘Unless God had inspired that old man respecting me, he would not have sent to me.’ And he rose and came to him. And saluting each other with joy they sat down. Then Abbot Pastor said to him: ‘There were two men in one place, and both had their dead. But one of them left his own dead, and went to bewail that of the other.’ And the old man, hearing these words, made confession with sorrow, and remembered what

he had done, and said: 'Pastor is up in Heaven, but I am down on earth.'

"A certain brother asked Abbot Pastor, saying: 'What am I to do, because I am frightened whenever I sit down?' The old man said to him: 'Despise no one, do not condemn; and reproach no one; and God will grant you peace, and you will sit without alarm.'

"An old man said: 'Judge not the unchaste, if you are chaste, since you will equally break the law; for He Who said, 'Do not commit fornication,' said, 'Do not judge.'

"A presbyter of a certain church came to a certain solitary, that he might consecrate the Oblation, in order that he might communicate. And one coming to that solitary, accused the presbyter to him. When therefore he, according to custom, came to him again, in order to offer the Sacrifice, the solitary, being scandalized, did not open to him. And the presbyter, seeing this, departed. And behold, a Voice came to the solitary, saying: 'Men have taken to themselves My judgment.' And he fell as it were into a rapture, and he saw as it were a golden well, and a gold bucket, and a gold rope, and very excellent water. But he saw also a leper drawing and pouring it into a vessel, and he wanted to drink, and he could not because the man who was drawing was a leper. And behold the Voice came to him again, saying: 'Why do you not drink of this water? What reason is there in him who is filling? for he only fills and pours into the vessel.' And the solitary, returning to himself, and considering the meaning of the vision, called the presbyter, and made him, as before, offer the Sacrifice.

"There were two brothers of a very holy life in a community, and they each merited to see the grace of God in the other. But it once happened that one of them, on the sixth day of the week, went out of the community, and saw some one eating in the morning. And he said to him: 'Do you eat at this hour on the sixth day?' But on the following day there was a celebration of Mass, according to custom. And his brother, looking upon him, saw that the

grace which had been given to him had departed from him, and he was saddened. And when he had come into his cell he said to him: 'What have you done, brother, that I have not seen in you the grace of God, as on former days?' And he answering said: 'I am not conscious to myself of any evil, either in deed or in thoughts.' His brother said to him: 'And have you spoken no word of hatred?' And remembering, he said: 'Well, yesterday I saw some one eating in the morning, and I said to him, Do you eat at this hour in the morning on the sixth day?' This is my sin; but labour with me for two weeks, and let us ask God to forgive me.' They did so; and, after two weeks, the other brother saw the grace of God coming again upon his brother. And they were consoled, giving thanks to God, Who alone is good.

"Some old men came once into Scithis, and there was with them Abbot John Nanus. And while they were eating a certain presbyter, a great man, arose, that he might give to each of them a small vessel of water to drink; and no one would take it from him, except John the Short alone. And the others wondered and said to him: 'How have you presumed, being the least of all, to make use of the service of a man who is old and great?' And he said to them: 'When I rise to hand water, I rejoice when all drink, that I may have my reward; and now I have taken some, that I may make him who has risen to serve find his reward, and lest perchance, also, he should be saddened because no one takes from him.' And when he had said this, they were all surprised at his discretion.

"A brother asked Abbot Pastor, saying: "I am troubled, and I wish to leave this place.' And the old man said to him: 'For what reason?' And he said: 'Because I hear words of one of the brethren, which do not edify me.' And the old man said to him: 'The things which you hear are not true.' And he said, 'Yes, Father, they are true; for the brother who told me is faithful.' But he answering said: 'He who told you is not faithful; for, if

he were faithful, he certainly would not tell you such things. Now God, when He heard the cry of Sodom, would not believe unless he went down and saw it with His own eyes.' And he said: 'And I have seen with my own eyes.' And when the old man heard this, he looked on the ground, and took a little piece of straw, and said to him: 'What is this?' And he answered: 'It is a straw.' The old man then looked up to the roof of his cell, and said to him: 'And what is that?' And he answered: 'It is a beam, which supports the roof.' And the old man said to him: 'Lay this up in your heart; for your sins are as those beams, but those of that brother of whom you speak, as this straw.' And Abbot Sisois, hearing this speech, wondered and said: 'How shall I bless you, Abbot Pastor? for, like a precious stone, so are your words, full of grace and glory.'

"A certain monk came once from the city of Rome, where he had a high place in the palace, and dwelt in Scithis, in the vicinity of the church; and he had with him one servant, who waited upon him. And a presbyter of the church, seeing his infirmity, and knowing how delicately he had lived, used to send him what the Lord gave him, or what came into the church. And after he had spent twenty-five years in Scithis, he became a man of contemplation, and foreseeing events, and of great renown. And one of the great Egyptian monks, hearing his fame, came to see him, hoping to find him living a life of great bodily asceticism. And having entered, he saluted him; and when they had made prayer they sat down. And the Egyptian, seeing him clothed in soft raiment, and papyrus leaves and a skin spread under him, and a small pillow of paper under his head, and his feet clean and in shoes, was inwardly scandalized on his account, because in that place such a manner of life was not customary, but rather severe abstinence. But the old Roman, having the gift of contemplation, or the grace of foresight, understood that the Egyptian monk was inwardly scandalized on his account, and said to his servant: 'Let us have a good day to-day, on account of the Abbot who has

come to see us.' And he cooked some small herbs which he had ; and rising at the proper hour they eat. And he had also a small quantity of wine on account of his infirmity ; and they drank it. And when evening arrived, they said twelve psalms, and went to sleep ; and so also in the night. And rising in the morning, the Egyptian said to him : ' Pray for me.' And he departed, not edified with him. And when he had gone a little way, the old Roman, wishing to cure him of his error, sent after him and re-called him. And when he came he received him again with joy, and asked him, saying : ' From what province do you come ?' And he said : ' I am an Egyptian.' And he said to him : ' Of what city ?' And he answered : ' I have not come from a city, nor have I ever dwelt in a city.' And he said to him, ' Before you were a monk, how were you employed in the place where you lived ?' And he answered : ' I was a watcher on a farm.' And he said : ' Where did you sleep ?' He answered : ' In the field.' And he said : ' Had you any bed ?' And he answered : ' I had to have my bed where I slept in the field.' And he said : ' And how did you sleep ?' He answered : ' On the bare ground.' And he said : ' What did you eat in the field, or what kind of wine did you drink ?' He answered again : ' What is the food, or what the drink in the field ?' And he said, ' How then did you live ?' He answered : ' I ate my bread and salt fish, if I found any ; and I drank water.' And the old man said : ' A hard life !' and he said : ' Had you a bath there to wash in ?' And he said : ' No ; but I washed in the river when I chose.' When therefore the old man had obtained all this from him in reply to his questions, and knew the manner of his former life and labour, wishing to edify him, he related to him his own past life, when he was living in the world, saying : ' Miserable man that I am ; I whom you see was of that great city, Rome, and I had in the palace a very high post near the Emperor.' And when the Egyptian heard the beginning of his words he felt compunction, and listened anxiously to what he was saying. And he added :

‘I left Rome and came into this solitude.’ And again he said: ‘I whom you see had large houses and much money, and, despising these things, I came to this small cell.’ Again he said: ‘I whom you see had beds decorated with gold, and most precious furniture, and in exchange for these God gave me this papyrus bed and this skin. My garments, too, were of inestimable value, and instead of them I have these common rags.’ Again he said: ‘Much gold was spent on my dinner, and instead of that He has given me these few herbs, and this little cup of wine. I had also a great many servants who waited upon me, and instead of those God in His compassion has given me this one to wait upon me. Instead of a bath I pour a little water upon my feet, and I use shoes on account of my infirmity. And again, instead of the pipes and the cithara or any other musical instrument, in which I took delight in my banquets, I say by myself twelve psalms in the day and twelve in the night. And for my sins which I committed before, I now offer in peace a slight and unprofitable service to God. See, therefore, Abbot, that you are not scandalized on account of my infirmity.’ And hearing these things, the Egyptian, returning within himself, said: ‘Woe is me, for I came from much tribulation and from great labour in the world rather to rest in the monastic life, and what I had not then I have now; but you have come from much enjoyment in the world, by your own choice, into tribulation, and from much glory and riches you have come to humility and poverty.’ From which he departed much edified, and became his friend, and often came to him for his own profit; for he was a man of discernment, and filled with the good odour of the Holy Spirit.

“A certain old man, being asked: ‘What is humility?’ said in reply: ‘Humility is a great and Divine work; but this is the way to humility, that bodily labours should be submitted to, and that a man should account himself a sinner, and should make himself subject to all.’ And the brother said: ‘What is it to be subject to all?’ The old

man replied: 'This is to be subject to all, that one should not give heed to the sins of others, but should always have regard to his own, and pray to God without intermission.'

"The old monk Moses said 'that a man ought to be as dead to his companion, that is, die to his friend so as never to judge him in any cause.'

"He said again: 'Unless a man holds in his heart that he is a sinner, God does not hear him.' A brother said to him: 'What is it to hold in one's heart that he is a sinner?' And the old man said: 'If one carries his own sins, he does not see the sins of his neighbour.'

"A brother questioned the old man, saying: 'Suppose a man strikes his servant on account of sin which he has committed, what will that servant say?' The old man answered: 'If he is a good servant he will say, I have sinned, have mercy upon me.' The brother said to him: 'And nothing else?' The old man said to him: 'No; for when he has taken his fault upon him, and said, I have sinned, immediately his master will have mercy upon him; but the end of all these things is, not to judge one's neighbour. For when the hand of the Lord slew the first-born in the land of Egypt, there was not a house in which there was not one dead.' The brother said to him: 'What is the meaning of these words?' The old man answered: 'That if we have seen our own sins, we shall not see the sins of our neighbour. For it is folly for a man who has his own dead, to leave that, and go and weep over the dead of his neighbour; but to die to your neighbour means to bear your own sins, and to be without thought of other men, as that this one is good, and that one is bad, and to do no evil to any man, nor think evil of any, nor despise any one who does evil, nor consent to your neighbour when he does evil, nor rejoice with him who does harm to his neighbour: this is to die to your neighbour. And speak no evil of any one; but say that God knows every one. Do not, therefore, agree with a detractor, nor join with him in taking pleasure in his detraction. Do

not consent to one who finds fault with his neighbour, that is, do not judge, and you shall not be judged. Have no enmity with any man, nor retain enmities in your heart, nor have him in hatred who is hostile to his neighbour, but do not consent to his enmities. Do not despise him who is at enmity with his neighbour, and this is peace. In these things console yourself: for a little while there is labour, and then eternal rest, by the grace of God the Word. Amen.'

"While St. Anthony was praying in his own cell, a voice came to him, saying: 'Anthony, thou hast not yet attained to the measure of the tanner who is in Alexandria.' When he heard this, the old man, rising in the morning, taking his stick, went forth in haste into the city, and when he had arrived at the house of the man designated, and had entered, the tanner was confounded at seeing so great a man. To whom the old man said: 'Recount to me your works, because on your account I have left the desert and have come hither.' And he answering, said: 'I do not know that I have ever accomplished anything that is good. Whence, when I rise from my bed in the morning, before I betake myself to my work, I say that all in this city, from the least even to the greatest, are going into the Kingdom of God on account of their righteousness; and I alone shall go to eternal punishment for my sins. Which words in the morning, and the same before I go to rest at night, I feel from the truth of my heart.' And hearing this, St. Anthony replied: 'In truth, my son, sitting in your house like a good workman, you have obtained the Kingdom of God with rest; while I, spending all my time, like a simpleton, in solitude, have not yet attained to the measure of your words.'

"When Abbot Moses had asked some spiritual counsels of Abbot Sylvanus, among others he gave him this: Do not measure yourself with the great, nor think yourself just; but believe yourself to be inferior to every creature, that is, viler than any man who is a sinner. 'For if any man

thinketh himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.¹⁰ Judge not your neighbour, nor despise other men when they offend, but lament your own sins, and be anxious about the doings of no man."

And thus our holy Father St. Ignatius, as Ribadeneira testifies, "never disparaged others, and never gave ear to those who did so. In his daily conversation he never spoke of other men's vices, even though public and such as were in the mouths of all; and guarded against others referring to them. But if anything fell from others, he either extenuated it, or excused the act itself, or certainly the intention and the will. But if the heinousness of the act precluded the possibility of excusing or extenuating it, he took refuge in this: Judge not before the time. God alone sees the heart. To his own master every one stands or falls. The severest thing he said was: 'I certainly should not have done this.' So that that precept of our Lord seemed to be thoroughly settled in his mind: 'Judge not, and you shall not be judged; condemn not, and you shall not be condemned.'"

"On the faults of those of the community he preserved a wonderful silence; nor, when anything amiss was done by any one, did he make it known, unless, perhaps, for the sake of correction; and then, indeed, so gently and temperately, and with such friendly consideration for him who had sinned, that if one witness was sufficient for a remedy, he would not use two; and he would set the fault naked before his eyes without any contention or reproof of words.

"I have heard from the Father himself, that he once went in search of a confessor, to confess only one fault. And that was, that he had discovered a fault to three Fathers, when two would have sufficed for the application of a remedy: and yet he who had offended was one who would have suffered nothing in the estimation of that third Father by that one error being made known. And he so

¹ Galat. vi. 3,

spoke of all that they might each understand that he had a good opinion of them, and that they were near his heart."

Concerning St. Aloysius also, the auditors of the Rota, to prove his sanctity, allege that he always interpreted the words and actions of others for the best, or, at least, made excuses for them. And this was done, too, by a certain pious religious, of whom St. Dorotheus thus writes: "I have heard of a certain brother who, when he visited any one of the brothers, and saw his cell in a state of disorder, dirty, disarranged, used to say with himself, 'Oh, how happy and blessed is this brother; how he has cast away the care of all earthly things, and thus has raised his whole mind upwards to the contemplation of Divine things; since he bestows no pains on the arrangement and cleaning of his own cell!' Then again, if he turned to another, and saw his cell arranged, clean, adorned, in good order, he would say within himself, 'Behold, how cleansed and pure is the soul of this brother, since his cell is so clean and well arranged; for he has cleansed and arranged his cell to correspond with the state and purity of his soul.' Nor did he ever, indeed, think or speak any ill of another, as, This man is disorderly, and dirty, and indolent; or this one is forward, and vain, and talkative. Never did such words come from his mouth; but from the good and excellent state of his own mind, he judged of all well and piously, and in this way he acquired profit and made progress from all things."

St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, as Puccino writes in her Life, places second among the six things necessary for a religious, "that she should have a mind so good, that from everything which she sees in her neighbour, even from what is evil, she should draw forth good."

St. Baptista Verana, a nun of St. Clare, as Bartholomew Cimarelli writes, places second among the counsels which she gave to a certain religious the following: "From everything which you hear and see, cull some good: take the rose, leave the thorn, and although you might have a

hundred reasons and a thousand authorities of Holy Scripture, which might be perverted to evil, and only one which could be turned to good; take this alone, and leave the hundred and the thousand. Such uprightness of heart gives great courage in the presence of the Most High, and the supplications of such an one suffer no repulse."

Nor is it sufficient not to condemn: it is necessary also to defend. "Do not," says St. Dorotheus, "try to know or inquire into the evil of your neighbour, nor at all admit suspicions against him. But if they are disseminated by the malignity of any, endeavour to change them to a better meaning, to a more favourable sense and thought." It is an excellent advice which is given by Horace:

Nor should we to their faults be more severe,
 Than an indulgent father to his heir:
 If with distorted eyes the urchin glares,
 "O! the dear boy, how prettily he stares!"
 Is he of dwarfish and abortive size?
 "Sweet little moppet!" the fond father cries;
 Or, is the unshapened cub deformed and lame?
 He kindly lisps him o'er some tender name.
 Thus, if your friend's too frugally severe,
 Let him a wise economist appear.
 Is he, perhaps, impertinent and vain?
 "The pleasant creature means to entertain."
 Is he too free to prate, or frankly rude?
 "'Tis manly plainness all, and fortitude."
 Is he too warm? "No, spirited and bold."
 Thus shall we gain new friends and keep the old.

Horace, *Sat.* i. 3. 43—54 (Francis).

Fifth remedy.—Let us have this truth deeply implanted in our mind by frequent meditation, that we have found ourselves very often deceived when we condemned others, and others deceived when they condemned us and others. Therefore, on account of this danger, let us abstain from condemning others.

St. John the Almoner was wont to discourage rash judgments in his friends, and he adduced remarkable examples, as of a certain monk, who was not an old man, who, by travelling with a young woman, scandalized every one; and it was at last found out that it was a Hebrew girl, who wished to be brought by him to Baptism, and that

seeing this, he took her, and went and begged for alms, so that she might be conveyed to a nunnery.

Among other warnings which that holy man Master Avila gave to Father James Guzman, and to Father Gaspar Loartes, his disciples, when about to enter the Society (who afterwards became eminent), this was one: "Let them in no way think that they are entering to judge others, but let them bear in mind that saying of a certain monk: 'I am come to be judged, and not to judge;' and let those especially guard themselves carefully from this danger, who think they know something, because sometimes in this way the grace of God is lost, and unless they preserve that, they will live without peace or consolation." Elsewhere, and in other words, Orlandini has given the same admonition, but I obtained it, just as I have here given it, from a manuscript book at Rome, given to me many years ago, by Father Louis Masello, the Assistant for Italy.

So also, Father Peter Faber, as Orlandini tells us in his Life, instructed those who were about to enter into some Order or the Society, "that the first feeling which they entertained, and the good opinion which they imbibed in their minds respecting their companions, they should take the greatest pains to retain. But if at any time it should so happen that they should lose the one or the other, that they should never rest, until they recovered them; and that they should be fully persuaded that it was this their own fault that they came not to think well of any one. For that those companions were perhaps better now than when they had first met them, but that they had themselves changed and become worse."

Sixth remedy.—When we see a thing apparently evil, which can with difficulty be excused, still let us not, by a first impulse, or in any other way, condemn our neighbour, even in our heart, and much less with our mouth.

St. John the Almoner gave this advice, saying: "That no one ought to be swift to judge another, even in those things which he sees himself, because we see sins

which are public, but do not see the penitence of the sinner, and the rapid change which the Lord God is able to give him in his heart."

There is given, in the Life of this St. John the Almoner, by Rosweyde, the instance of St. Vitalius, a monk, sixty years of age, who, wishing to try St. John the Almoner, whether he would readily condemn any one, went to some harlots, of whom he had made a list, now to one, now to another, and gave one money, and said: "Pass this night without committing any sin," and he remained all night keeping watch that she did not sin, and he stood from the evening in one corner of the room where the woman was, saying psalms and praying for her, holding up his hands and kneeling down, even to the morning; and as he went out he made her give him her word that she would not tell any one of what he had done. This thing scandalized many, but when it was told to St. John the Almoner, he would not condemn him, because he had been once mistaken, when he had given an order to punish a certain monk for taking about a girl, having afterwards discovered that he was innocent and chaste; and was taking about a Hebrew girl whom he caused to be baptized, and for whom he was begging alms, that she might be taken into a nunnery. By this means St. Vitalius converted many harlots. And when he was dead, those who had been converted made known what he had done in secret. But before his death he left this written on the floor of his cell: "Men of Alexandria, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come." And when this was told to St. John the Almoner, the Patriarch of Alexandria, he came down to the body with his clergy, and all those harlots who had been converted went before him with tapers and torches, weeping and saying: "We have lost our saviour and our teacher;" and one who had given him a blow when he saw him coming from a harlot's house in the morning, and had been possessed by the devil, was delivered at the grave of Vitalius. And many were healed

after his death, by the venerable name of St. Vitalius. And this is confirmed by what we read in the Lives of the Fathers.² One of the Fathers said that we sometimes meet with a man who has eaten a great deal, but still has an appetite, and yet leaves off; while another eats but little and is satisfied. But he who has eaten much, and leaves off, having still an appetite, has a greater reward than he who eats little and is satisfied.

It often happens, says St. Dorotheus, that one of the brethren does something in his simplicity, which perhaps excites considerable derision in you. But perhaps he has some other gift by which he pleases God in a wonderful manner, and more than the whole course of your life has done; and lo! you at rest and at your ease are judging him, and you are injuring your soul. Besides, even if he did turn aside and slip, how do you know, pray, how much he endured before in the conflict in which he strove, or how much blood he shed; it may be, perhaps, that his error may before God be reckoned as justice. For God looks upon his combat, and the labour and affliction, which, as I said, he endured before he came to sin and to fall, and therefore He pities and pardons. So that God pities, and gives him forgiveness; but you condemn, and destroy your own soul. But how, I pray you, do you know what copious floods of tears he shed for his sin in the presence of God?

St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, as it is said in her Life, among various admonitions, gave this one: "If you see any one low and imperfect, think that she has some interior gift, on account of which God has complacency in her."

Seventh remedy.—In examen of conscience, let us scrutinize ourselves on this particular point, that we may not fall. St Dorotheus, commending the examination of conscience, as a means given by the elders for purifying and reconciling us, places this among the points which he prescribes for examination: "When I have seen my brother doing his work, have I judged him rashly or despised him?"

² Lib. vii. c. i.

Let us, then, with all our might guard ourselves against all rash judgments. And this will not be difficult if we are well affected towards him whom we think worthy of condemnation, and are not ill affected towards another on whose account we wish to condemn some one else. For, as St. Isidore of Pelusium well writes: "Partiality indeed does not see clearly; but hatred sees nothing at all." Therefore it is greatly to be wished that, as St. Dorotheus says, Almighty God would give us the best state of mind, and would make our soul piously disposed; so that we may be able to profit and to get gain by everything, and never to suspect anything or to think unfavourably or falsely of our neighbour. But if, by chance, at any time, we have thus thought or suspected, from the evil disposition of our perverse mind, let us instantly change the thought of our mind for a better one; since to be unwilling to see evil and viciousness in our neighbour, brings forth in us wonderful goodness by the aid of God, by which God is in the greatest degree propitiated. To Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER XVII.

Men who are spiritual and of good report are not to be judged, or rather not to be condemned, like imperfect men, if they labour under human imperfections ; for these have existed even in the most holy men, and are either inevitable, or such as sometimes arise from human frailty and surprise, not from badness and gross imperfection, without prejudice to their sanctity.

FOR that sometimes, and even oftentimes, the effects of certain passions must be manifested, is most certainly proved by the example of our Lord Jesus Himself. For although it was predicted of Him : "He shall not cry, nor have respect to persons, neither shall His voice be heard abroad. The bruised reed He shall not break, and smoking flax He shall not quench ;"¹ and although He proposed Himself for imitation, as being "meek,"² yet He was angry when it was necessary. Thus, He looked on the Jews "with anger ;"³ and called them "a brood of vipers ;"⁴ and when "He found in the Temple them that sold" and bought, "when He had made, as it were, a scourge of little cords, He drove them all out of the Temple, the sheep also and the oxen, and the money of the changers He poured out, and the tables He overthrew."⁵ Which He did most holily, and He was bound to do it, from zeal for the Divine glory ; forbidding them to make the house of His Father, a house of traffic. Therefore, His disciples, who did not judge rashly, when they saw His wrathful action,

¹ Isaias xlii. 2, 3.

² St. Matt. xi. 29.

³ St. Mark iii. 5.

⁴ St. Matt. iii, 7.

⁵ St. John ii. 14, 15.

remembered that it was written : "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up." "Be angry," says St. Ambrose, "where there is a fault against which we ought to be angry. For it were not right that we should not be moved by the malice of a crime ; for this would justly be considered not virtue, but laxness and remissness." And St. Bernard, generally so mild and honeyed, says more : "Not to be angry where one ought to be angry, is sin." The same is to be thought of similar external acts of natural passions, which sometimes appear in the servants of God, and look like the affections and actions of men who are very imperfect. For they moved by God, for supernatural reasons unknown to us, have at times shown such affections in word and deed. Thus holy Elias, the Prophet, killed by fire, which he had called down from Heaven, a hundred and two men sent by King Ochozias.⁶ So his disciple, the holy Eliseus,⁷ when he was called by boys, "Bald-head, bald-head!" "cursed them in the name of the Lord ;" which curse so pleased God that immediately "there came forth two bears out of the forest, and tore of them two and forty boys."

Finally, even the saints sometimes sin, and judge rashly (as has already been shown), God permitting it as well for their humiliation as that He may thus conceal their holiness from men. On which subject Pope St. Gregory wrote : "It is a great dispensation of Almighty God, and it often happens, that on those to whom He gives the greater blessings, He does not bestow some which are lesser ; that the soul may always have something whence to reproach itself, so that while they long to be perfect, and are not able, and labour for that which they have not received, and yet do not succeed in their labours, they may not unduly congratulate themselves on those things which they have received ; but may learn, that of themselves they are unable to overcome small vices and the least of their faults." Thus in St. Isaac, whom He commends as endowed with virtues, miracles, and a great gift of prophecy, God had left a

⁶ 4 Kings i.⁷ 4 Kings ii.

certain excess of joyfulness, which was deserving of reprehension.

But of such failings in the holy servants of God, that may be said which God Himself said to one of His servants concerning the defects of St. Gertrude, the Benedictine, in the book on the *Suggestions of Divine Piety*: "The defects which we see in this chosen servant of Mine, might justly rather be called marks of progress. For human frailty could hardly preserve the abundant growth of grace, which I continually work in her, from the wind of vainglory, unless her virtues were hidden from her knowledge, under such defects. For as a field, the more it is nourished by richer manure, must of necessity bring forth a richer crop; so she also, from the knowledge of her infirmity brings forth to Me a more abundant fruit of thanksgiving. Therefore also, in compensation for each particular defect for which she so humbles herself, I have bestowed upon her a particular gift, by which she may, in My eyes, blot out every imperfection. Nevertheless, at the right time, when I shall have changed all her defects into virtues, her soul will shine forth as a splendid luminary." I now come to instances of the great saints, which will show passion in them without prejudice to their sanctity.

St. Basil, a man of the most austere life, and of excelling holiness, was yet not free from those affections, on account of which others are now wont to be regarded as imperfect. Let us weigh his words. He thus writes to St. Gregory: "Whence shall I obtain the wings of a dove? or how shall my old age grow young? that I may be able to betake myself to you, dearest brethren, and satisfy my burning desire towards you, and lay down the sad cares of my soul with you, and obtain some consolation in my tribulations from you?" Mark how a man who is dead to the world seeks human solace. And, elsewhere, he says that "he is consoled in his afflictions" by the letter of Meletius. And, in a letter to Eusebius, Bishop of Samosata, he says: "Although we are miserable, there seems one solace left

to us, namely, to fix our eyes on your clemency, and to mitigate our grief from the knowledge and remembrance of your character." And, in another letter to the same, he says that, on account of the winter, he does not venture to trust himself on a journey, or even to look out of his house.

In another he mourns on account of his mother's death, saying: "Now the only solace which I had in life, even my mother, this I have lost on account of my sins: will you perhaps deride me that at such an age I am wont to weep over my bereavement." And again: "When immediately after your departure [that of Eusebius, his brother-Bishop], I came to the city, why should I tell how greatly I was dejected in my mind at losing you, to one who has no need to be taught this by words, but knows it by experience, having suffered the same things." And, writing to St. Gregory Theologus, he at great length describes the mountain, the rock, the meadow, the course of the river, by which he dwelt and found his recreation.

St. Gregory Theologus, replying to him, jestingly objects to some things in his city, in return for some things which St. Basil had remarked in his, and had in jest found fault with. And, writing to St. Basil, he says: "By all means attack and pull about our affairs with your jests and sarcasms. Whether you do it in jest or earnest will matter nothing; provided you content yourself with a little laugh and boyish sport, and enjoy our friendship. For in these things in which you might seem to cavil, you do it not for the sake of cavilling, but to draw me to yourself." And he jests a good deal about the place in which he lived, which, if any of us should do it, would be regarded by some testy critic as a proof of levity and idleness. And he concludes: "Now if you take our jokes well, you will do right: if not, we will add more." See how men who are old, and serious, and holy, disport themselves in words! And the same writer fills a whole letter to Basil in recalling ludicrous things which had passed between him and Basil.

In another place, the same saint writes thus to Basil:

“What we have hitherto written on our life at Pontus was a joke, and not serious.” And he concludes the letter as those would do who are united by close intimacy: “I breathe you rather than the air, and I live only so far as I live with you, either by presence, or in imagination when absent.” Things which, if they were read in the letters of any of us, would be ascribed by a harsh critic to an inordinate friendship.

Again, the Theologus writes to Basil: “If you accuse me for not admiring you sufficiently, in proportion to your worth, do you not accuse the world at large? But if you accuse us of despising you, why are we not at the same time accused of insanity? But you take it ill that we philosophize.”

And again, writing to Basil, he says: “My letter saddened you; but I assure you, not rightly or justly, but rather wholly without cause. And indeed you put on some sorrow, but you concealed (and you did wisely) your sorrowful countenance through shame.” The cause of his sadness was that Gregory Nazianzen had indicated to him that he, Basil, had been accused, at some banquet, as though he thought badly of the Divinity of the Holy Spirit.

Again, writing to Basil, he says: “You do not cease to assail us with reproaches, as unformed, rude, unfit for friendship, and not even worthy of life, because we have ventured to mention what we have suffered.”

And again: “You leap in your letters like an adroit horseman! I suppose it is not enough that we admire you, since you wish, now that you have recently tasted glory, to boast to us what glory you have attained, that in this way you may make yourself more important: as painters are wont to do who depict the seasons of the year.” And again he teases Basil, saying: “I hear you are upset at the change in these new matters.”

And, excusing himself to Basil for not having come to him, he gives the reason of the delay: “That I may procure for myself a certain stability, and a life free from

envy, until the shadows pass by of those who now rush in, and are incensed with anger and envy."

And again: "You resolve on things not a few, and you act more simply than cautiously. Since the more pure and free the mind is from malice, the less free it is to lend itself to suspicions and acquiesce in them."

And Basil, in one of his letters, remonstrates with Gregory for having sent him a letter, pretending that it came from his uncle: "Your forgery," he says, "is discovered. I blushed over this letter. We wished that the earth would swallow us up, because we had been exposed to the disgrace of deception, falsehood, and seduction. You have sent me another as though it came from the Bishop himself. And the Bishop had not sent it. I wished that my heart was made of stone, that I might not remember the past or feel the present, that prostrate on the ground, like cattle, we might be able to bear all this infliction." And he concludes his letter, speaking of his going to see some bishops: "If," he says, "I am not invited in proper form (namely, by the bishops), I shall not take the trouble to go."

Basil, writing to Athanasius, points out "that he has been without cause angry with him, and that he does not speak properly of him, and he says that he laughs at his threats." Hearing of the persecutions at Alexandria, and in other parts of Egypt, he says: "Those things stupefied us, and deprived us of sense itself. But as our mind was turning them over, this thought occurred to me: Has the Lord entirely forsaken His Churches?"

In Letter 75 he treats at large of those by whom, not only his faith, but his teaching, had been accused, and says "they ought not to have judged him," and calls them "contentious triflers," and speaks at length against this habit of detraction, and says "that it should not be borne, even if it came from a woman working at a mill, or one of those rascals of the worst type who stroll about the market-place."

In Letter 82, mentioning that he was regarded by some

bishops as the follower of a new faith, and having uttered some vehement words, with very much warmth of feeling, he goes on to mention the effect produced by this: "We were so agitated in mind, confounded, and dejected, that we had nothing to answer to those who questioned us." And further on: "I was so upset at such a sudden and unexpected change, that I could not even answer, my heart beat, my tongue failed me, my hand grew numb, and I seemed to suffer what happens to the mind of a man who has little courage; for I must own the truth; at the same time my emotion was pardonable. Then I almost came to entertain a great hatred against the human race, and to suspect the goodness of all men, thinking that the grace of charity did not exist in humanity; but only plausible words for adornment, and the service of those who fashioned them as with tools; but that the affection expressed by them according to truth was not in the heart of man."

Writing to Nectarius a letter of consolation on account of the death of his little son: "When I read the letter of the Bishop (which announced the death of the child), I need not recount how I groaned or how I wept; for who is so stony-hearted, or devoid of humanity, as not to be touched with a sense of this affliction? or whose mind is but lightly touched by such a grief?" And further on: "If we wished to utter complaints and to shed tears on account of this calamity, the whole time of this life would not suffice; and if all mortals should lament with us, they will not with their lamentation come up to the level of this affliction; even if they should turn the streams of rivers into tears, they will be unable to lament sufficiently this calamity."

And how St. Basil used forms of ceremony in writing appears from several of his letters⁸ to Libanius the Sophist, in which he might be condemned by an ill-disposed person as uselessly wasting time, weaving fulsome phrases, and sentences full of praises and, as it were, of adulation—

⁸ 146, 149, 151, 157, 160.

such as it is unworthy of a serious and holy man even to think.

In one letter he asks that a man should be imprisoned who had broken the doors of his houses while he was absent. "For," he says, "we not only take ill what we have suffered from him; but we have need of protection for the future."

And in his last letter he admonishes his secretary to write properly, and to make the lines straight; and he inculcates this with a good many words, and not without stinging words. But it is better to give the letter of Basil himself: "Write properly, and make your lines straight, and let not your hand be carried up above, nor down below, in a hurry, nor make your pen go crooked, like the crab of Æsop, but let it go straight as if on a ruled line. Be careful to observe equality everywhere, and whatever is unequal cut off. For whatever is crooked is ungraceful; but that which is straight is pleasant to those who see it, not making those who read cast their eyes up and down like cranes, which I have to do when I read what you have written. For the space between the lines, when you pass from one to another, ought to be straight at the end of the next line. But when no order is observed in those which follow, one must go back, seeking out the sequence by tracing back the furrow, just as they say Theseus followed up the thread of Ariadne. Write straight, therefore, and do not lead off the mind of the reader to mistakes by crossed and crooked writing."

St. Paula, according to the testimony of St. Jerome, felt so deeply the death of her husband, that she seemed to die.

St. Bernard wrote to his nephew Robert: "I am miserable without you, and because I do not see you, and that I have to live without you; since to die for you is to live, and to live without you is to die." If any of us were to say that, he would be censured for having too much affection for the tie of blood.

St. Gregory of Nyssa, in the discussion concerning the soul and the resurrection, which he had with Macrina, his

sister, writes that at first he had wept vehemently on account of the death of St. Basil, his brother, and said that when he tried to act under the influence of that sorrow, "it strove to repress and check me in prayer, by its unrestrained impulses, as with a kind of bridle, producing in me an unseemly and inordinate affection of soul; and he quotes that saying of the Apostle, that we should not be sorrowful for "them that are asleep;" for this should be the case only with those "who have no hope;" and how could I, when my heart through grief and sorrow even now was burning and boiling, how could I preach that among men, since such a natural complaining against death is implanted in every one."

St. Chrysostom shows in his epistles the affections of humanity towards the deaconess Olympia and others, and asks for frequent letters from others, and that she would write concerning her health. And, in another letter, he asks the presbyters to whom he writes to love him as much as possible.

And, writing to Olympia, he mentions among his calamities the fear of the Isaurians on the road which he had taken. And he shows that he was unwilling to be transferred from one place which was convenient to another which was inconvenient, and to painful journeys. And in one of his homilies he says: "I wished the earth would open and swallow me up, when I heard the Prince speaking to you, and assuaging this unseasonable and irrational timidity (for he had conceived fear on account of false rumours of an incursion of soldiers approaching which had been heard of)."

And again: "Nor after being thus overshadowed by sorrow through your pusillanimity, can I come back to myself, such indignation and sadness remain in my mind. For confusion at your pusillanimity has greatly cast down my mind." And in his letter to Chalcidia, he thus writes, which an ill-disposed judge might ascribe to an inordinate affection towards the woman: "We have many tokens,

many evidences, of your sincere love. Whence it has come to pass that we carry you about, as though engraved on our mind: and we so retain the remembrance of you, that no forgetfulness can efface it." And writing to Adolia, he says: "We wish and desire above all things that you would come here and see." This he wrote when he was in exile, in the ends of the earth.

Palladius writes that some disciples of St. Pacomius, when living in a monastery, seeing that they were surpassed in the length of their fast by Macarius of Alexandria, all stirred up sedition against the Superior: "Whence have you brought us this man without flesh, for our condemnation? Either cast him out hence, or, as you know, we will all depart." Which when St. Pacomius heard, he asked God to reveal to him who it was, and when he learnt from God that it was Macarius the Monk, he took him by the hand and said: "I give you thanks that you have subdued my sons, so that they shall not boast nor be puffed up on account of their discipline. I pray you, therefore, return to your place, for you have sufficiently edified us; and pray for us." So he departed.

St. Simon Stylites, wishing to deliver from strife two tribes who were contending under his pillar, called them in reproach, "dogs," as Theodoret tells us in his history. "When," he says, "he had threatened them, and called them dogs, he with difficulty appeased their strife."

St. Gregory Nazianzen, in his homily on the *Praises of St. Basil*, says "that he was affected by so great grief, that it was not mitigated by time, which is the medicine of grief; because while Basil was presiding over the great and wealthy Church of Cæsarea, he had compelled him, Gregory, to preside over the small, poor, and remote Church of the Sasimi. Although," he said, "I admire all the other acts of this man, above what I can tell, this one thing I cannot praise, namely, that distrust which he showed towards us: my grief for which time can never exhaust. Hence all this inconstancy (of mine) and perturbation have flowed, so that

I cannot philosophize, or at least am not believed to do so."

The same St. Nazianzen, in the funeral oration of St. Basil, speaks, a little before the end, the following words, which seem to savour of vanity: "These words thou hast from us, Basil; this comes from a tongue to thee in days bygone most sweet, from one thy equal in honour and in age," and so forth. "And this oration thou hast from us; but who will praise us after thee, when we exchange life for death? If, indeed, we furnish the orator with any matter for panegyric," and so forth.

St. Leo gives thanks for his election to the Pontificate, and to those who have elected him, and this election, and the favour of the electors, and their holy judgment of himself, he calls a benefit of God bestowed upon him.

Christ rebuked St. Bridget for a certain impatience. But it is better to hear the very words as they are contained in her Revelations: "My new Bride," says Christ, "thou hast now committed a four-fold sin in thine anger. First, because thou hast been impatient in thy heart on account of words; whereas I bore for thee blows, and standing before the judge did not answer one word. Secondly, because thou hast answered roughly, and hast raised thy voice too much in finding fault; whereas I, fixed to the Cross, looked up to Heaven, and opened not My mouth. Thirdly, because thou hast despised Me, for Whose sake thou oughtest to have borne all things patiently. Fourthly, because thou hast not benefited thy neighbour, for he who went astray ought to have been recalled to better things by thy patience. Therefore I will that in future thou be not angry."

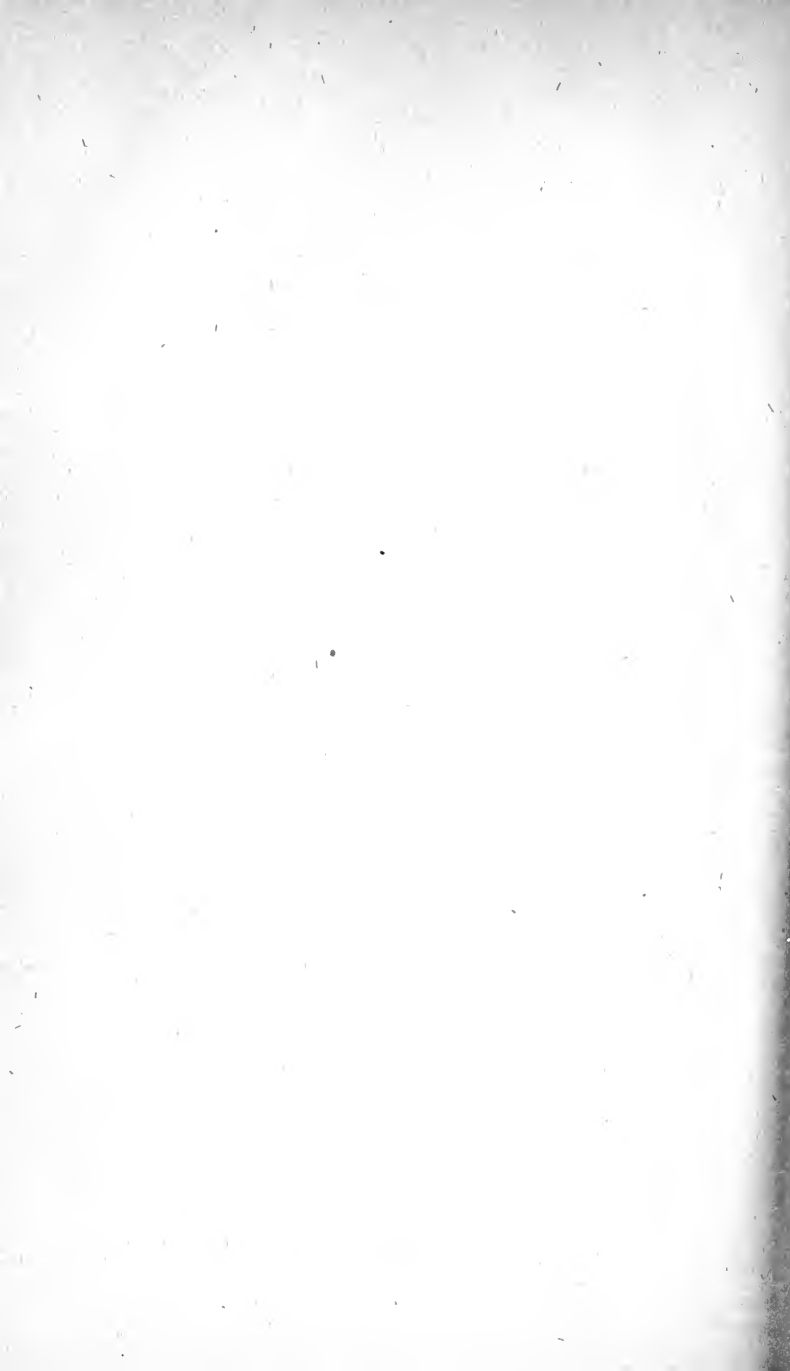
Of St. Angela of Foligno, and how she bit herself from anger, at the instigation of the demon, and was intolerable, we read in her Life published by Mark of Lisbon, and in another Life of her separately published in Italian, and in another in Latin. Similar things are told of the temptations of St. Teresa, by Father Ribera.

St. Louis Bertrand, of the Order of St. Dominic, a man

of exceeding holiness, and a great friend and defender of our Society when it was impugned by several at Valencia, as Vincent Justinian writes in his Life, when he was called a dunce (*ignorante*), out of contempt, by a certain religious, answered him "that Lucifer was learned, and yet was condemned." And although this seemed the answer of a man who was angry and impatient, yet, not long after, when that religious died, after devoutly receiving all the sacraments, he came back from Purgatory to St. Louis, compassed with fire, and said: "Father, forgive me that which I said to thee on such a day, for God will not suffer me to enter Paradise unless thou forgivest me this, and sayest one Mass for me." And he freely forgave him, and on the following day said Mass for him, on the first night after which that religious appeared to St. Bertrand in great glory.

And in another place it is written of him: "When by order of the physicians he eat and drank very sparingly, on account of the fever which was consuming him, and therefore was tormented with great hunger and thirst, he called to him the author of his Life to intercede for him, and besought him by the wounds of Christ and by the love of the Blessed Virgin, that he would ask the physicians that some crumbs of bread might be mixed with the little liquid which was given him; and when this was done, and his food was increased, he began to be better, and to become stronger. An ill-disposed person would call that slight mortification; but he had the example of Christ, Who asked for something to drink when dying and athirst on the Cross.

ON ARIDITY.



AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THERE is hardly anything which more frequently troubles those who have given themselves to the spiritual life, than a kind of barrenness and dryness of mind, which, in spite of themselves, they suffer in prayer. Being desirous of affording some alleviation to a malady and affliction so common, although the subject has been ably and carefully handled by others before me, I have also undertaken to explain it in my own manner. For in this and my other works, I desire to imitate the example of painters, who produce new pictures of the ancient Saints, each according to his own genius, although they have been represented before by painters of great name, by a different blending of colours and shadows. And, indeed, I send forth this treatise, as a kind of prelude, until I can put the last touch to another on the practice of the Divine Presence, and the various modes of prayer. In the meantime, read this, kind reader, and pray God, I earnestly entreat you, that I may be able to complete and bring to the light some other treatises which are referred to in this work, on the signs and degrees of spiritual progress. Farewell!

Prague, September 10, A.D. 1641.

CHAPTER I.

On the nature of dryness in prayer ; its various kinds ; and its origin.

MANY, especially those who are novices in the spiritual life, are greatly afflicted by reason of the aridities which they suffer in prayer ; and hence there comes to many a distaste for prayer, and they imagine that they have prayed badly when, in spite of themselves, they have to endure dryness of spirit in prayer. And this is a trial which visits even men who are more perfect. Hence Cassian, deploring his condition, once said to the Abbot Serenus : “When we have thought to direct the heart to the desired object of contemplation, the mind insensibly turns away from it, and slips off under a more vehement impulse to its previous wanderings, and, thus occupied with its daily distractions, it is constantly led into captivity in numberless ways ; so that we almost despair of the improvement which we had desired, and our watchfulness seems of no avail, since the soul each moment goes astray by the slipperiness of its action. And when it is brought back to the fear of God, or to spiritual contemplation, before it becomes confirmed in it, it again slips away like a fugitive. And when, like men awakened from sleep, we lay hold of it, after it has turned from its proposed object, and bring it back to the contemplation from which it had gone aside, and try to bind it, by the most earnest intention of the heart, as with a chain, even while we are thus striving, it glides away more swiftly than an eel from the recesses of the mind.”

To which Abbot Serenus replied that this arose from the condition of our mind : “Our mind,” he says, “is

easily moved and influenced, and this arises from its very nature; for it can never remain at rest; and unless forethought is exercised to determine the direction of its movements, and how it shall be continuously employed, it is apt to be distracted by its own volatility, and to fly about in all directions."

Moreover, Abbot Daniel, as quoted by Cassian, says: "Under the name of dryness or aridities (which he calls barrenness of mind), I do not understand those defects or faults in prayer, which St. John Climacus calls the desecration and ruin of prayer, asserting that it is a desecration 'to stand before God, and to have evil thoughts in the soul,' that is, *voluntarily*; 'and a ruin of prayer to be taken captive by unprofitable cares.' But, under the name of aridities I understand (1) distractions or wanderings of mind, by which the soul is *involuntarily* carried away to think of other things, and things quite foreign to the subject proposed for meditation; as St. Jerome says sometimes happened to himself. 'Very frequently,' he says, 'during prayer, my mind is on Change or reckoning up interest.' And St. Bernard says: 'It is well known that the variety of thoughts is manifold. Some there are which inflate the heart, as proud thoughts; others exalt it, as vain thoughts; others disturb it, as envious thoughts; others dissipate it, as angry thoughts; others confuse it, as slothful thoughts; others inflate it, as ambitious thoughts; others trammel it, as gluttonous thoughts; others defile it, as luxurious thoughts; others contract it, as timid thoughts; others corrupt it, as malicious thoughts.'" It is no wonder, then, that we are often distracted, since we have within us so many sources of distraction.

(2) Under the name of dryness, moreover, we understand a state not of distraction of mind, but of absence of all relish for Divine things, and consolation in them; when the mind, incapable of meditation, is like earth without the water of pious affections, and like a log of dry wood, sometimes unable even to reason.

(3) Or, again, when one is disturbed by inordinate motions of corrupt affections, as of anger or sadness, and is by them enticed or incited to any sin.

(4) Or if, by reason of any such state of mental dryness or disquietude, weariness is felt in prayer, and for this reason there is a disposition to break it off, which, in the wider sense of the word, may be called sloth; a passion which, in its strict sense, means a voluntary sadness in the presence of the Divine Goodness, in which, as St. Thomas teaches, charity finds its joy.

(5) Or, if one who prays is overcome by a spirit of drowsiness. All these are comprehended under the name of dryness, the effects of which are commonly the same as those of spiritual sloth, and are practically enumerated by St. John Climacus: "If you carefully consider the nature of spiritual sloth, you will find how variously it assails men. One who is standing on his feet, it assails with fatigue; one who is sitting, it will persuade to lean against a wall. When it is questioned, it will say: I dwell with those who yield to me; but with those who are truly obedient, I have not where to lay my head. I have received my name from an insensibility of soul, a kind of forgetfulness and oblivion of heavenly things, sometimes too from an immense (that is an excessive and unwise) multitude of labours. And my offspring are, changing of place, disobedience to my spiritual father, forgetfulness of the future judgment, sometimes also, desertion of my profession."

And now we must see how a man ought to bear himself in such aridities, in order to which two things must be considered—(1) Whence they arise, and (2) what we must do while they last.

As for the first, I say that aridities arise in two ways—(1) from immediate or direct causes, and (2) from mediate or remote causes. The Abbot Daniel, in discussing this question, assigns three immediate causes of dryness, from the doctrine of the Fathers; but in fact, as will presently

appear, there are four: Nature, the Demon, God, and Man; all which are, in different ways, the causes of dryness; either positively, as Nature, the Demon, and Man; or negatively, as God, when He deprives us of His consolation and effectual aids, although, we must remember, He withholds from no man that which is necessary and sufficient.

The mediate causes are all those things on account of which God is moved, or the Demon by the Divine permission, to disturb the heart by aridities. On which subject Abbot Daniel treats in the following manner, although not exhaustively: "A threefold reason," he says, "has been handed down to us by the Fathers for this sterility of mind. It arises either from our own negligence, or from the assault of the devil, or from the dispensation and probation of the Lord. And first, from our negligence, through our own fault, when we become lukewarm, and live without circumspection and care, and through idleness and sloth are fed with hurtful imaginations, and so cause the soil of our heart to bring forth thorns and thistles, and their growth is the cause that we become barren, and are deprived of all spiritual fruit and vision. Next from the assault of the devil; for even when we are engaged in holy studies, the enemy may penetrate our mind by his cunning subtlety, and we are thereby either in ignorance, or involuntarily, drawn away from our best intentions." But, besides these three causes of dryness, there is a fourth, arising from our natural disposition, as will presently appear.

CHAPTER II.

On the first cause of aridities.

THE first cause of dryness is Nature, whose power is so great in this respect, that Cassian considered that all aridities, especially wanderings of mind in prayer, proceeded from nature. For having deplored, in the presence of Abbot Serenus, his distractions in prayer, and how strongly, when one set of them are driven away, the soul is drawn off from its proposed contemplation to others, so that the mind can by no effort be fixed on the proposed subject of contemplation, he goes on: "Tormented thus every day with these feverish watchings over thoughts, as we discerned no stability of heart resulting to us from them, we were driven by sheer necessity to the conviction, that these wanderings of mind arise not from our own fault, but from the fault of nature, and are inherent in the human race." It is, however, certain, as will appear below, that these wanderings of mind do not arise merely from the nature of the mind, as Abbot Serenus well observes. Sometimes, however, they have their origin from nature, and this in six ways: (1) From disease, especially from indisposition of the head. (2) From a natural dulness of intelligence, and from an obtuseness of understanding which is in itself ill fitted for reflection. (3) From fatigue of the head applied to matters of speculation, studies, and the like. (4) From want of sufficient sleep. (5) From dwelling in a solitary locality, as Cassian says, and St. John Climacus. (6) From a natural, culpable negligence.

If they arise in the first, second, third, or fifth manner, we have no reason to be distressed, because the reason of our

dryness is not a culpable one, as St. Teresa has well written in her biography, and as all the masters of the spiritual life, as well the ancient as those more recent, teach: "The love of God (or devotion to Him) does not consist in tears, delights, and tenderness of heart, although we greatly desire these and are solaced by them, but in serving God with justice, and fortitude of mind, and humility. That we abound in delights, this is rather to accept from God than to give anything to Him: which is fitting for feeble women, that they may be able to bear labours and tribulations. But that the servants of God, especially those who are versed in learning and are of great intelligence, should think so much of God's withdrawing from them sensible devotion, is not to be endured. I do not say that they should not enjoy it, and esteem it, when God gives it; but that they should not be distressed when He denies it. Let them be masters of themselves. And it is to be observed, not only by beginners, but by those who have advanced through many years, that the reason of their being saddened by this cause is, that they have not embraced the cross from the beginning. They are apt to be afflicted at this, as though they were doing nothing, when the mind was incapable of meditation, and this they cannot endure; when, perhaps, the will meanwhile is being nourished, and growing in strength, though they are not aware of it. Dryness itself (as I have gathered from experience, as well as from the learned) often proceeds from bodily indisposition, because the soul feels all the miseries of the body, and the changes of the seasons and weather; so that the soul cannot give effect to its own purposes."

Now therefore let it humble itself, and in place of sensible devotion, which it desires but has not, it will, by self-humiliation, refresh the heart of God, drawing near to Him and holding converse with Him. This our Lord showed to St. Gertrude; for once, "when the bell rang for Communion, and she was moreover required to join in the choir duty, feeling herself insufficiently prepared, she said to our Lord:

‘Behold now, O my Lord, Thou comest to me, and why hast Thou not, as Thou well canst, prepared me with the ornaments of devotion, with which I should be able to meet Thee in a more becoming manner?’ To which our Lord answered: ‘Every bridegroom delights more to look upon the pure, white neck of his bride, than to see it covered with a necklace; and to look upon her clean and graceful hands, than to see them adorned with gloves. So do I delight more in the virtue of humility than in the beauty of devotion.’ Another time, when she saw one alarmed for a similar reason, and was praying for her, our Lord answered: ‘I would that My elect should not think Me so cruel, but would believe that I will accept it for good, even for the very best, if, at their own cost, they will render Me some service.’ And he offers a sacrifice to God at his own cost who, when he has not the relish of devotion, yet no less serves God in prayer and genuflexions, and the like, and, besides this, trusts in the loving compassion of God, that He accepts this service with satisfaction.”

When, therefore, dryness is seen to arise from one of these first three causes, then, instead of those consolations and affections, which flow from pious considerations or contemplations, in order to attain the fruit of meditation, repeat some ejaculatory prayers, uttering them at least mentally, with the desire of glorifying God by them, whether you feel delight or not. And this may be done in two ways: (1) By often repeating one and the same short prayer. Thus St. Francis spent the whole night in only saying: *Deus meus et omnia*—‘My God, and my all.’ So too Gregory Lopez, a layman, living in the world a holy life, for three consecutive years perpetually revolved in his mind nothing else but this: “Thy will be done;” God requiring this of him. In reference to this subject, that saying of Christ to St. Bridget is of importance: “Whosoever, out of a perfect faith and will, says these three words, *Jesu, miserere mei*—‘Jesus, have mercy upon me,’ pleases Me more than he who has read thousands of verses without attention.”

Secondly, this may be done by the use of several different prayers, either repeated without order, as they shall come into the mind, or else in order. Thus, for example, in accordance with the counsel of St. Basil, during the first quarter of meditation, before all things, "glorify God with humility of mind." And this may be done by the words either of Holy Scripture or of the Church; in which we are wont to adore and glorify God, saying, "Blessed be the Holy Trinity," &c.; or, "We adore Thee, O Christ," &c.; or, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;" or, as St. Basil there advises, "I bless Thee, O Lord, gracious and patient, because Thou patiently bearest me, who am sinning daily, and givest us all opportunity for penitence. For on this account, O Lord, Thou art silent, and Thou bearest with us, that we may glorify Thee." But after you have glorified Him from the Scriptures as you are able, then add thus with humility of mind: "I indeed, O Lord, am not worthy that I should speak to Thee, who am so great a sinner," and the like.

In the second quarter, according to that counsel of the Holy Spirit: "The just is first accuser of himself,"¹ draw forth acts of contrition, saying with the pious publican, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner."² So did St. Thais, once a courtesan, when converted to the Lord. For having, by the advice of Abbot Paphnutius, entered a convent, where she was forbidden by him to take the Holy Name of God on lips which had been stained by vice, and ordered only to utter these words: "O Thou Who didst form me, have mercy upon me:" after having spent her nights and her days for three whole years in the constant repetition of those words, she died a most holy death, and her soul, after being translated to Heaven, was placed on a couch shining with gold and gems, and guarded by four holy virgins, as was revealed to St. Paul the Simple in prayer before his death.

In the third quarter, according to the well-known counsel

¹ Prov. xviii. 17.

² St. Luke xviii. 13.

of St. John Climacus, give thanks to God for the benefits received from Him, as well those which are common to you with others as those which are proper and personal to yourself. Among those which are common, give thanks also for the blessings conceded to the Sacred Humanity of Christ, and to His most holy Mother, and to the other saints.

In the fourth quarter, say, invoking the aid of God, *Deus, in adiutorium meum intende*—"O God, incline unto my aid;" which words Abbot Isaac (in Cassian) says are most helpful. And this mode of prayer, St. John Climacus says, "is the best, namely, that which begins with giving of thanks, and humble contrition of soul, which proceed from inward affection, and is united with our petitions; and this, he asserts, had been shown to one of the brethren by an angel of God." "If, on the other hand, any one began his prayer with a petition," says St. Basil, "he would betray the disposition of his soul, namely, that he is one who prays to God under the constraint of necessity. When thou art about to pray, therefore, leave thyself, forsake the earth, rise through the heavens, leave behind thee every creature visible and invisible, and begin by glorifying Him Who made all things."

Cassian, discussing this manner of praying by short aspirations, writes that, in the opinion of the Egyptian monks, "it was more profitable to use short prayers, but with great frequency; for one reason, that, by praying to the Lord very frequently, we may be thus enabled to be constantly united to Him, and further, that, by their condensed brevity, we may avoid the darts of the insidious demon, which he is ready to cast at us chiefly when we pray." So St. Climacus says: "With one word, the publican in the Gospel, and the Prodigal Son, too, reconciled God to themselves, and one word of faith saved the thief on the cross. To speak only one little word in prayer has often availed to collect the mind." And therefore, Abbot Isaac (as we learn from Cassian) with propriety calls such short prayers "pure

libations, a true sacrifice, true and rich victims, holocausts full of marrow." And St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom teach, with St. Thomas, that "frequent prayers are necessary, lest devotion once kindled should become wholly extinguished. For as wood," says St. Thomas, "when it has been once kindled, is more easily kindled a second time, so the mind, once stimulated to devotion, is afterwards more easily recalled to its previous devotion," and this by means of frequent ejaculations.

And therefore St. Teresa rightly bequeathed this admonition to her nuns in the way of perfection: "Apply yourselves, dearest Sisters, to mental prayer; and, if any one is unable to do this, let her exercise herself in vocal prayer, and addict herself to spiritual reading and to pious colloquies with God. Let her not suffer the hours of prayer to slip by; for she knows not in what hour the Bridegroom shall call her, lest that happen to her which befell the foolish virgins; or perchance His will may be to lay upon her a greater burden, although tempered with some sweetness."

Such short prayers, moreover, are more useful if they are not expressed in our own words, unless they were inspired by a great ardour kindled in us by the Holy Spirit, as were those of St. Ignatius when, raised from the earth, he said: "O Lord, if men knew Thee, they would never offend Thee"—*O Domine, si te homines nossent, nunquam te offenderent*; but ordinarily, and for the most part, they should be expressed in the words of Holy Scripture. And thus St. Basil, when treating of a manner of prayer, says: "Select what thou sayest from the most Sacred Scriptures;" and he sets forth a form of thanksgiving, woven from the words of Holy Scripture, which is to be offered to God. And this, too, was in the manner of the ancient Church, as the same St. Basil writes in an Epistle to the Clergy of Neo-Cæsarea, and we see that the same has been done by the Church in our Missals. And so it was formerly the custom among the Egyptian monks, as Cassian testifies, while they were incessantly working with their hands privately in their

cells, that the meditation of Psalms, or of other passages of Scripture, was never wholly laid aside. And St. Jerome, writing from the monastery of Bethlehem, says : " Wherever you turn, the ploughman, while he holds the handle of his plough, sings Alleluia ; the weary reaper refreshes himself with psalms ; and the vine-dresser, shearing the grapes with his hook, sings something from David."

· When, however, the time of prayer is to be spent in these short forms of speech, the single words should be uttered with great ardour of spirit, and should be, as it were, instinct with life ; to which St. John Climacus thus stirs us up : " If ever you have stood before an earthly judge, you will have no need of any other form for imitation now when you present your prayer to God. But if you have never yourself been accused, nor have seen others tried, you may, even from the prayers which sick persons pour forth to physicians when they are about to be cut or burnt, learn something of this kind : Do not care to use choice language in prayer, for often the simple and pure and stammering words of infants have reconciled their Father Who is in Heaven. Do not endeavour to speak much, lest your mind be inflated by a curiosity about words. A single sentence of the Publican appeased God ; one word of faith saved the Thief. To speak much in prayer has often deluded the mind with imaginations and relaxed the intention."

If, however, distractions arise from want of sleep, then rise later. Thus St. Ignatius, when once he had slept less than was his wont, and saw that he was unfit for prayer, went to bed again, and afterwards devoutly prayed. Hence the ancient monks, according to the testimony of St. Chrysostom, after singing the praises of God at night in the choir, again went to bed, that, when the day afterwards dawned, they might be the more fitted for their monastic exercises. This cause moved St. Teresa, that most wise Superior of convents, to leave it written in her *Book of Foundations* : " It would be much better if the nuns, after saying their nocturnal Matins, all went to bed," in oppo-

sition to what is done by those indiscreet prioresses (whom she there rebukes) who, themselves addicted to severities, would unwisely lead all others in this their own way.

To this head belongs infirmity of body, which hinders our wonted meditations and other exercises of devotion, in which we should otherwise, if we could, like to employ ourselves. But when we cannot, we must bear it with equanimity, as our Lord taught St. Gertrude. "For when, on a certain occasion, she was prevented from a strict observance of her rule by reason of infirmity, and had sat down to hear Vespers, out of the longing and grief of her mind she said to our Lord: 'Would it not be more to Thine honour, O Lord, that I should now be in the convent choir, applying myself to prayer, and could devote myself to the other regular exercises; whereas now I am hindered by this infirmity, and waste so much time doing nothing?' To whom the Lord answered: 'Does the bridegroom seem to thee to delight less in the bride when he enjoys her familiar converse in the house, than when with pride he sees her going forth adorned to be looked upon by the multitude?' By which she understood that the soul then goes forth, as though adorned in public, when she is exercised in good works to the glory of God; but that she rests as in her chamber with her spouse when she is hindered from such work by bodily sickness; because, being then deprived of the delights of her own senses, she is left to the Divine support alone. And hence it is that our Lord takes so much the more pleasure in a man, the less a man finds in himself matter for vain delight or glory." And at another time, "when by hindrance of a bodily infirmity she had waited upon God with less alacrity, at last being restored to herself, and feeling her conscience burdened, she desired humbly to confess her fault to the Lord. And when she was fearing that she would have to toil for a long time before she should recover the sweetness of Divine grace, suddenly in an instant she felt in herself the benignity of God, inclining to

her His most loving embrace, and saying : ' Daughter, thou art always with Me, and all that I have is thine.' By which words she understood that, although a man may sometimes, through human weakness, fail to direct his intention to God, yet the loving compassion of God does not fail to regard all our works as worthy of an eternal reward, if only the will be not turned away from God, and if the man frequently repents of all those things of which his conscience accuses him. And once, when before a festival she felt sickness coming on, and she desired of our Lord that He would preserve her in health until after the festival, or at least would so temper her sickness that she should not be prevented from keeping that festival, she at the same time gave herself up entirely to the Divine will. Upon which she received from our Lord the following answer : ' By thus seeking this blessing of Me, and yet giving thyself up to My will, thou leadest Me to a garden of delights planted with beds of flowers, and very pleasant to Me. But know that, if I hear thee in this, that thou shouldst not be hindered from My service, then I follow thee to the garden in which thou dost more delight. But if I hear thee not, and thou perseverest in patience, then shalt thou follow Me to that in which I take greater delight, because I find more pleasure in thee, if thou hast desire with affliction, than if thou hadst devotion with enjoyment.' "

But if dryness arise from our negligence (a point to be explained in our fourth chapter), then we must be careful not to fall into any of our negligences.

Finally, there is an unblameworthy instability of our nature which is of itself sometimes the cause of distractions and wanderings of mind. Therefore St. Ambrose, treating of the ordinary condition of men, says : " Frequently the enticement of earthly desires has crept in, and an overflowing of vanities occupies the mind, so that the thing which you study to avoid, this you think of, and revolve in your soul. To guard against this is difficult for a man ; to get rid of it, impossible. And the Prophet testifies that

this is a matter of desire rather than of effort, saying: 'Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.'³ For our heart is not in our own power, and our thoughts which flood unexpectedly and confound the mind and the soul, draw one off in a direction different from that which he had purposed, calling him away to secular affairs, bringing worldly things into the mind, suggesting voluptuous thoughts, weaving enticements; and at the very moment when we think to raise our mind aloft, we are often cast down to earthly things by the intrusion of vain thoughts." But how distractions which thus arise are to be driven away, will be considered hereafter.

CHAPTER III.

On the second cause of aridities.

THE second cause of dryness is the Demon. "The whole of the war," says St. Nilus, "which is carried on between us and the demons, is about nothing else than prayer. For to them prayer is very hurtful and odious, but to us it is salutary and our best friend." Hence the Abbot Marcellus, while abiding in the desert, when one night he had arisen to sing psalms, and had begun to sing them, heard the sound of a horn, as though proclaiming war, and was wondering how the sound of a horn came to be heard in that place, since there was there neither war nor soldiers. As he was revolving these things with himself, the demon came near and said to him: "Assuredly it is war; if therefore thou art unwilling to be assailed, or to fight, go, sleep, and thou shalt not be assailed." And things like this, concerning a trumpet which was heard summoning the demons to attack those who were praying, are related by St. John Climacus, and in the *Spiritual Meadow*.

³ Psalm cxviii. 36.

Now, dryness, like every temptation which proceeds from him, may be caused by the demon in two ways, as St. Syncletica has said, from within and from without: "As a ship," she says, "is sometimes crushed by the motions of the waves from without, and sometimes is sunk by the water filling her hold within." And, first, the demon assaults those who pray, externally and immediately, when, by the Divine permission, he himself molests us in our prayers. Of which St. Athanasius gives examples in his Life of St. Antony, and St. Jerome in his Life of St. Hilarion, and St. Gregory in his Dialogues, and Cæsarius the Cistercian in his 5th book on Miracles. And that is a well known history which we read in different places in the lives of the Fathers, concerning St. Macarius the younger, of Alexandria, as related by himself: "That at a certain time of the night the demon knocked at the door of his cell, saying, 'Rise, Abbot Macarius, and let us go to the choir, where the brethren are assembled in vigil.' And when he said, 'O liar and enemy of truth, what fellowship hast thou with the choir of the saints?' the demon replied: 'Art thou ignorant, O Macarius, that there is no meeting and no choir of monks held without us? Come, then, and thou shalt see our works.' Hereupon, having first uttered a prayer, he went to the choir, where vigil was kept by the brethren; and he saw throughout the whole church as it were a number of small loathsome Ethiopian boys, passing hither and thither, as though they were borne about on wings. And as they ran about, these Ethiopians kept teasing the different monks as they sat; and if they pressed their two fingers against the eyes of any one, he instantly fell asleep; and if they put their finger into the mouth of any one, they made him yawn. And when, after the psalm, the Brothers had prostrated themselves for prayer, they still ran about each one; and before one who was kneeling in prayer they appeared in the form of women, and before another as though building and carrying something, and doing all

kinds of different things. And whatever the demons represented in their antics, the same was reflected in the hearts of those who were praying. By some, indeed, when they began to do any of these things, they were forcibly repulsed and cast down headlong, so that they did not venture even to stand by them or to pass near them. But with others, and even with some who were sick, they played on their necks and backs because they were not intent on their prayers. And when St. Macarius saw these things, he groaned aloud, and shedding tears, he prayed; and after prayer, that he might examine into the truth of the matter, having called those Brothers aside, one by one, before whose faces he had seen the demons in different attitudes and with different representations, he asked of them what thoughts they had, and each of them confessed that he had had in his heart such things as he conjectured. And thus he understood that corrupt thoughts in prayer are wrought by the tricks of demons."

But since it cannot be discerned without the peculiar light of God, whether the corrupt thoughts which arise in us and cause aridities, and whether these aridities themselves, proceed from the demon tempting us inwardly or outwardly, we need not dwell on this question. For in whatever manner he produces this dryness, we must follow the advice of St. Basil: "If at any time the devil attempts to ensnare us, and strives by a violent onset to implant thoughts which he has fashioned, like burning arrows, in the quiet and peaceable state of our soul—and endeavours to set it on fire by an unexpected assault, and when he has once driven his shafts in, to keep alive a long remembrance of them most difficult to be effaced—certainly snares of this kind are to be guarded against and resisted with special vigilance, and with most earnest endeavour: and the method of skilled athletes should be imitated, who elude the assaults of their adversaries by the greatest attention of mind, as well as by agility and swiftness of body. So ought we to avoid the onset, and escape from

such weapons by prayer and by imploring the Divine aid. For this St. Paul taught us when he said, 'In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one.'¹

The second manner in which aridities proceed from the devil is mediate or remote, and arises from corrupt habits acquired through evil acts—which have been committed by the instigation of the devil, such as conversations idle, or on secular matters—or through a previous defective custody of the senses: or those things which we have seen out of curiosity, or which we have at any time done by our own fault, find their way into our mind at the time of prayer by corrupt suggestions, which St. Macarius calls "thefts of thought," and St. Lawrence Justinian "a theft from the soul in prayer," because they steal those portions of time which they occupy while we pray. On which subject the same St. Macarius thus speaks in the same place: "The soul which has been involved in sin (that is, in consequence of sins yielded to in the past) is like a great wood on a mountain, or like reeds in a river, or a thicket of thorns and underwood, which if any one will pass through, he must keep his hands extended, for he will not without effort and labour keep back the matter which presses upon him. In some such way, a crowd of thoughts welling up through the power of the adversary press in upon the soul. But the true foundation of prayer is to watch diligently over our thoughts," that is, lest those which are foreign to the proposed matter of meditation invade and carry us off in another direction. But if such thoughts, by the influence of the demon, invade you against your will, "strive," says St. Nilus, "to keep your mind deaf and dumb at the time of prayer;" that is, do not listen to those things which he puts into the mind. Do not inquire what he suggests, do not try to recall what you had forgotten, as the same writer counsels in the same place.

When we are harassed by such dryness, there are three

¹ Ephes. vi. 16.

things to be done: (1) Let us humble ourselves before God. (2) Let us grieve over the occasions that we have given for them. (3) If we are urged by thoughts of blasphemy against God and Divine things, let us not be terrified, nor let us dispute with the devil, but, as St. John Climacus advises, "let us despise him. For," he says, "he who despises this spirit, escapes free; but he who endeavours to struggle with him in another way, will at last succumb. And he who thinks to restrain the spirit of blasphemy by words, is like one who strives to hold the winds and the lightning in his hands. And a demon of this kind is wont to tarry for the most part in the minds of the more simple and pure, because these are wont to be more vehemently shaken and troubled by such thoughts than others." (4) Nevertheless, let us still endeavour to pray, and to sail against the wind; for, as St. Macarius teaches, "men are able to obtain such things as they desire in prayer, by driving forth imaginations as they arise, and walking according to the will of the Lord." Concerning which thing St. Basil thus writes: "Although the demon during prayer presents corrupt images of things to our minds, yet must we not for that reason desist from prayer, nor must we think that the corrupt seed which is sown by the enemy, or the suggestions introduced by this many-faced juggler, are our own; but rather, when we have considered the matter with ourselves, and have attributed the causes of such corrupt thoughts to the author of evil, we must then use more earnest efforts, and implore of God to cast out of our soul as an affliction every such evil imagination, that our minds may thus be enabled freely and swiftly to come to Him without any delay or impediment, and not be hindered from their proposed course by any incursions of evil thoughts. But if, through the audacity of the adversary, the force of such wicked thoughts rises to still greater violence, neither are we then to succumb, or be dejected in spirit; nor are we to abandon the conflicts which we had taken in hand, when they are but half

accomplished, but we must endure firmly, until God, having seen our constancy, shall shine upon us and illuminate us with the grace of the Holy Spirit, so as to put the adversary to flight, and purify our mind, and fill it with Divine light, and give to our reason, established in most peaceful tranquillity, freedom for worshipping God."

But if God, for reasons known to Himself, leave us against our will in wanderings and aridities of mind, let us not be saddened, because even then our prayer and meditation, although arid, will yet please God. For temptations which afflict us in prayer are even beneficial. For, as St. Hilary observes, in the fifth book of his homilies on Job, a work which has perished, but which is quoted by St. Augustine, "so great and so admirable is the goodness of the mercy of God towards us, that even through him by whom, in the sin of Adam, we lost the splendour of that first and blessed creation, we may again merit to regain that which we have lost. For then the devil through envy injured us, but now, when he strives to injure, he is vanquished. Through the weakness of the flesh, indeed, he sets in motion all the weapons of his power, when he inflames us to lust, when he entices us to drunkenness, when he excites us to hatred, when he provokes us to avarice, when he leads us to murder, when he embitters us to cursing. But when, through the strength of the soul, the stealthy incentives to all these crimes are repressed, we are freed from sin by the glory of this victory."

Concerning which subject there also exists an excellent lesson given by the most Blessed Virgin to St. Bridget. For, when St. Bridget was tempted in her prayer, the most Holy Mary said to her: "The devil is like a hostile spy, seeking to accuse the good, and to hinder them from being heard by God in their prayers. Wherefore, with whatever temptation thou art assailed in prayer, nevertheless pray, and endeavour to pray, because the desire and good endeavour will be reckoned as effectual prayer. And if thou art unable to cast out evil things which

come into the mind, then the effort itself will be imputed to thee unto a crown, so long as thou dost not consent to the temptations, and they are against thy will." And Christ our Lord taught her similar things in another place.

And so in aridities caused by the demons, if we resist them, that is most true which was said by St. Chrysostom, "that the demons often aid us when they assail us." With reference to which Abbot Moses, when he heard from Cassian² that he had been freed from spiritual sloth by recourse to the Abbot Paul, rightly observed: "You have not freed yourself from it; but rather you have shown that you are delivered up and subject to it. For the adversary, since he has seen you suddenly flying, vanquished, from the conflict, will henceforth assault you more fiercely, as a deserter and fugitive, unless, when the attack is made, you refuse to escape at the moment its violent assaults, by deserting your cell or by the torpor of sleep, and learn to triumph by bearing and opposing it. Whence it is proved by experience that the attack of spiritual laziness is not to be avoided and fled from, but is to be overcome by resistance. And this too is taught by St. Thomas. "Sin," he says, "is always to be fled from, according to the passage in Ecclesiasticus: 'Flee from sin as from the face of a serpent.'³ But the assaults of sin are to be overcome sometimes by flying and sometimes by resisting: by flying, when continuous thought increases the power of temptation, as in the case of lust. Hence it is said, 'Flee fornication.'⁴ By resisting, when persevering in thought diminishes the power of temptation, which arises from slightness of apprehension; and this is the case with sloth; because the longer we think of spiritual blessings, the more attractive do they become to us; and thus our indifference ceases."

And therefore St. Bernard has with propriety admonished us: "When you feel yourself affected with torpor, sloth, or weariness, do not for that reason become dis-

² *Conferences*, bk. x.

³ *Eccles.* xxi. 2.

⁴ *1 Cor.* vi. 18.

trustful, or desist from your spiritual study; but ask for the hand of God to help you, imploring to be drawn, like the bride⁵; until, by the renewed assistance of grace, you become more prompt, and run with greater alacrity, and say, 'I have run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart.'⁶ And, in another place: "When you begin, sadness will fill your heart; but if you persevere, your sadness will be turned into joy. For then your affections will be purified, and your will freshened, or rather it will be created anew; so that in all things which at first seemed difficult, or even impossible, you will run with much sweetness and avidity."

CHAPTER IV.

On the third cause of aridities.

ARIDITIES, moreover, often proceed from God. "God tries us with one view," says St. Ambrose, "the devil with another; the devil tries that he may destroy, God tries that He may crown." Now, among temptations we must place dryness in devotion. "It has sometimes happened," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "by the just and loving permission of God, that the mind has been afflicted with a kind of spiritual lukewarmness, and with a certain privation of Divine delights, so that it could in no way raise itself aloft. When it wants to apply to reading, it is oppressed with sleep; when it endeavours to remember the inevitable dissolution of the body, and the hour of its departure, or the terror of the Last Judgment, and the fire of eternal torment, so as to feel compunction, it is not able; when it ardently strives to give itself to prayer and medita-

⁵ Canticles i. 4.

⁶ Psalm cxviii. 32.

tion, and, lying prostrate before God, with frequent strikings of the breast and bitter groanings, it implores the favour of Heaven, it is almost entirely dried up and destitute of the sweetness of charity." And this happens generally in the following ways, in which Abbot Theodore teaches us, that men are tried by God, as Cassian tells us.

(1) As a punishment for some sin, or tepidity in spiritual studies or exercises, as our holy Father St. Ignatius says, or because of pride or presumption. "Sometimes it happens," says St. Gregory, "that this grace is profitably withdrawn, so that the mind which is guilty of presumption may be shown its own infirmity. For it is then that we know whence our blessings proceed, when, by losing them, we learn that we are unable to preserve them." And St. John Climacus says, "Sometimes even tears are wont to puff up some who are light-minded, wherefore they are sometimes withdrawn by the Divine dispensation, that, when they see themselves deprived of them, they may seek them more earnestly, acknowledge their misery, and exercise contrition with groans and grief and sorrow of mind, and profound sadness and self-distrust; all which things do the work of tears, although they are by us regarded too lightly, and as of no worth." And St. Bernard says the like. Therefore St. Lawrence Justinian writes with truth: "As there is no one, who does not offend at least by many venial sins, so no one is found (except some divinely privileged) from whom heavenly consolation is not often withdrawn."

(2) God permits temptations and aridities for an increase of merit, which we acquire by resisting them and by humbling ourselves, on such occasions, before God. And therefore St. John Climacus says well, "Nothing procures so many crowns for the monk as temptation to sloth. If you consider carefully, you will find that it assails those who are standing on their feet by weariness, and those who are sitting it persuades to lean against a wall." But if these inclinations are resisted from reverence towards God, merits are accumulated. And this was revealed to St. Catharine

of Bologna, as will hereafter be quoted. Whence St. Teresa rightly admonished her nuns : " If, after we have done our part, God does not always bestow upon us delight and sweetness, it is because He reserves it for the future, that He may give it to us unceasingly in Heaven ; and because He wishes to treat us as brave soldiers, by laying upon us the Cross in this world, even as His Divine Majesty bore it while He lived on earth. For what purer and better love can He show us, than to give us that very thing which He elsewhere chooses for Himself? And indeed it is possible that contemplation itself should not yield us such a reward." Truly, therefore, the most Blessed Virgin Mary said to St. Bridget, " Thou oughtest not to be troubled if sometimes thy heart is hard, for this is in order to a greater crown," as well because of patience, as because of the humiliation of ourselves, which is wont to follow in us. And this was declared by a certain old man, in the Lives of the Fathers, by the following similitude : " If the miller," he said, " were not to cover the eyes of the animal who goes round in the mill, the animal would turn and eat up the fruit of his labours ; so also we are blinded, by the dispensation of God, lest we should see the good things which we work, and perhaps, by thinking ourselves blessed, should lose our reward. For this reason then are we left, through intervals of time, beset wholly by sordid thoughts, that, when we look upon those same thoughts, we may condemn ourselves by our own judgment. For those very thoughts are as a veil over our little measure of good works ;" and so, by not knowing them, we humble ourselves, and thus acquire merit.

(3) " In order," says Abbot Daniel, according to Cassian, " that our perseverance, or constancy of mind, and our desire may be tried, and that it may be shown in us with what earnestness of heart, or perseverance in prayers, we seek for the visitation of the Holy Spirit, when He is forsaking us." " When a man begins to make progress," says St. Bernard, " that is, to live piously in Christ, it is

necessary, according to the testimony of Scripture,¹ that he 'suffer persecution;' that the joy which he has begun to experience should be turned into grief, and that the sweetness of grace which has scarcely touched his lips be turned to bitterness, so that he shall feel inclined to say, 'My harp is turned to wailing, and my song to weeping.' Therefore he more bitterly laments the sweetness which he has lost, than he had previously in confession wept over the bitterness of his sins; and this he continues to do until, through the compassion of God, consolation returns. And when that returns anew, he knows that the temptation which he has endured was a probation and not abandonment. And, moreover, that the probation was for instruction and not for destruction, as it is written: 'Thou visitest him at daybreak, and suddenly thou provest him.'"²

(4) "In order," as the same Abbot Daniel observes in the same place, "that, knowing with how great labour that lost spiritual joy and gladness of purity is acquired, we may strive more anxiously to preserve it when it is found, and to keep it more carefully. For we are accustomed to guard with less care anything which we think can be easily recovered."

(5) For the trying of ourselves, whether we will serve God in the time of desolation, and, as our holy Father St. Ignatius says, "that we may be proved, what we are, and how we spend ourselves in the service and for the honour of God, without any present reward of spiritual consolations and gifts. "Sometimes the Bridegroom does not return," says St. Bernard, "at the voice and prayer of her who recalls Him (that is, of one who implores the help of God in a time of dryness). Wherefore? That the desire may increase, that the affection may be proved, that love may be exercised. Surely this is simulation and not indignation. But it remains that He be sought, if perchance He may be found when He is sought for, Who does not come when He is called. As our Lord saith, 'He that seeketh

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 12.

² Job vii. 18.

findeth.’³ For which cause Moses has forewarned us : ‘The Lord your God trieth you, that it may appear whether you love Him with all your heart, and with all your soul, or no.’⁴ “And this,” says Abbot Daniel, “we see mystically prefigured in the Book of Judges, concerning the extermination of the spiritual Gentiles who are opposed to Israel. For these,” he says, “are the nations whom the Lord left, that by them He might teach Israel, and that they might have the habit of fighting with their enemies.” And shortly afterwards: “The Lord sent them that by them He might make trial of Israel, whether they would hear the commands of the Lord, which He had commanded to their fathers by the hand of Moses, or not.” And this battle God reserved for them, not as hating them, or thinking evil towards them, but as knowing it to be most profitable for them ; so that, when they were at any time oppressed by the attack of their enemies, they might feel that they could not dispense with the assistance of the Lord ; and that, by always for that reason continuing in meditation upon Him, and invocation of His name, they might not grow relaxed through want of opportunity of meritorious combat, nor lose the habit of fighting, and the exercise of virtue ; for frequently security and prosperity have cast down those whom adversity has not been able to overcome.

(6) That we may acknowledge that it is not in our own hand and power to pray well, but that this depends entirely on the bounty of God. “Very many,” says St. Bernard, “when they are fed with the bread of the children (that is, by that pleasant sweetness in prayer), think themselves to be of the children ; and falling away by the very means by which they ought to go forward, from the very visitation of grace they grow more dark in conscience, thinking themselves to be something when they are nothing, and so are not improved by the blessings of God, but hardened.” And so it is that, after sweetness in prayer which is not

³ St. Matt. vii. 8.

⁴ Deut. xiii. 3.

accepted with a humble mind, God sends the affliction of dryness, that it may be acknowledged that the sweetness of prayer and the affections of Divine consolation are His work and blessing. "The Redeemer Himself," says St. Macarius, "by coming, changes the thoughts of the soul, and makes them Divine, heavenly, and good, and teaches the soul the true manner of prayer, which is neither distracted nor wandering; still, the soul itself, on its part, can do something, like one that collects her wandering children, and, chastening the thoughts that have been dissipated by sin, leads them back into the home of the body." And as this cannot be done without Divine assistance, let us fortify ourselves against elation of mind, which might assail us if we never suffered aridity. "How many," says St. Bernard, "have not been benefited by receiving grace, because they have not at the same time received the chastening of truth. For from this cause they have taken much pleasure in the grace which they had received, forgetting to look upon the truth. And hence it came to pass that they were, by grace, deprived of those things in which they chose selfishly to exult; to whom it might be said too late: Go and learn what this is—'Serve ye the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto Him with trembling.'⁵ For a certain holy soul had said in its abundance, 'I shall never be moved,' when suddenly it felt the face of the Word turned from it, and itself not only moved, but even 'troubled';⁶ and thus it learned, in sadness, that it needed, along with the gift of devotion, also the steadying ballast of truth."

(7) A seventh cause is assigned by Abbot Daniel (in Cassian): "In order," he says, "that when we are for a season forsaken by the Lord, we may, by humbly contemplating our weakness, escape being exalted by our previous purity of heart, which is bestowed upon us by His visitation; and that, while we try ourselves when forsaken by Him, we may understand that we cannot recover that state of joy and purity by our groans and our industry, but that our past joy

⁵ Psalm ii. 11.

⁶ Psalm xxix. 8.

of heart was conferred upon us, not by our own efforts but by His favour, and that our present joy must be sought for by the renewal of His grace and His illumination." And our holy Father St. Ignatius teaches the same thing in his Exercises: "That we may be quite sure that it is not of our own strength either to acquire or to retain the fervour of devotion, the vehemence of love, the abundance of tears, and every other internal consolation, but that all these things are the free gifts of God, which, if we claim as our own, we shall incur the guilt of pride and vainglory, not without grave peril of our salvation." And this is the doctrine of Christ our Lord Himself, which was delivered to St. Bridget: "Evil thoughts, although they do not enrich and satisfy the soul, like the unction of good thoughts, yet profit to the purification of the soul, as mustard to the clearing of the brain. For if evil thoughts did not sometimes intervene, a man would be an angel, and not a man; and man would think he had all things from himself. Therefore, that a man may understand his weakness, which he has from himself, and the strength which he has from Me, it is necessary that he should be permitted, in great mercy, sometimes to be tempted by evil thoughts; to which, if a man does not consent, there is a purification of his soul and a confirmation of his virtues; and although, like mustard, they are sometimes sharp to endure, yet they greatly heal the soul, and draw it to eternal life and health, which cannot be accomplished without bitterness. Therefore let the vessels of the soul, in which good thoughts shall be stored, be carefully prepared and continually cleansed, because it is useful that even evil thoughts should come, for its probation and greater merit. But let the soul labour diligently, that it do not consent to them, or delight in them." But, by humbling itself before God, let it implore His aid, and, as St. Macarius advises, "Let us take our body, and build an altar, on which we may place all our thoughts, and let us ask of the Lord that He will send from Heaven His invisible and most powerful fire, to consume both the altar

and all that is on it, and that all the priests of Baal (that is, the powers of the adversary), may be destroyed. And then shall we feel the spiritual rain coming upon our soul, at first 'like a man's foot,'⁷ so that the Divine promise may be fulfilled in us, which is spoken by the Prophet,⁸ 'I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and I will close up the breaches of the walls thereof, and repair what was fallen,' that the Lord may through His loving kindness illuminate the soul which lies in night, in darkness, and in the intoxication of ignorance (as happens to the mind which remains in aridity); so that, being awakened (by the grace of devotion sent down from Heaven), it may walk without stumbling, doing the works of the day and of life." And to this effect our Lord beautifully replied to St. Gertrude, "Out of my great concern for thy salvation, I sometimes raise thee through contemplation, and admit thee to My secrets; at other times, for the preservation of thy humility, I shut thee out from them, that when thou receivest, thou mayest discover what thou art from Me; and again, when thou lackest, thou mayest acknowledge what thou art of thyself." And at another time, "when, on the occasion of a festival, she was hindered in singing by a pain in the head, she asked of the Lord why He frequently allowed this to happen to her in the time of festivals. To which she received this answer, 'Lest, perchance, being lifted up by the delights of melody, thou shouldst be found less meet to receive grace.' And she replied, 'But Thy grace, O Lord, could ward off this fall in me.' To which the Lord made answer, 'It conduces more to a man's progress that the occasion of falling is taken from one by suffering from sickness, because there thus accrues to him a double merit, namely that of patience and that of humility.'" And thus St. Lawrence Justinian wrote: "Wisdom also withdraws itself, that it may preserve by humbling him whom it loves. For it is the deepest kind of humiliation for one who loves purely and vehemently to be deprived of the presence of the

⁷ 3 Kings xviii. 44.

⁸ Amos ix. 11.

beloved one. And it is better to be humbled innocently than with just cause, for innocence accumulates merit."

(8) Finally, God sends dryness for His own honour and pleasure. For, as St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi was divinely taught in a rapture: "The Holy Spirit so orders it with the reasonable plants which He has planted in the holy Church, by a kind of spiritual exchange, that the juicy plant partakes of the aridity of the dry one, and conversely; from which greater honour redounds to God than if each plant remained always in its own condition of dryness or richness." And as St. Chrysostom observes: "God deals with all His saints, suffering them to have neither continual tribulations nor continual sweetness, but He weaves the life of the just now from prosperity and again from adversity, with a kind of admirable variety." And he notes that this was done by God in the life of Christ. But when He wills that we should be arid in prayer, and sees us conformed to His will, He takes pleasure in such resignation and in our perseverance in dryness, and at the same time in prayer, although He does not concede to us the sense of devotion which we ask of Him; for this is honourable to us. Hence St. Nilus solaces his friends, and counsels them in the following manner: "Seek not of God too earnestly that you should have an immediate answer to your prayer, for He wishes to bless you more lastingly while you persevere in prayer. For what is more excellent than to converse with God, and to be detained in intercourse with Him?" Several other causes of the withdrawal of devotion, and of dryness, given by St. Bonaventure and Gerson, will be mentioned hereafter in this treatise. Nearly all of these are suggested by St. Bernard in the following words: "Fear not, O bride, do not despair, think not thyself despised, if for a little while the Bridegroom withdraws His face from thee. All these things 'work together unto good' for thee, and thou gainest both by His approach and by His departure. He comes to thee: He also leaves thee. He comes to console thee: He departs to warn thee, lest the greatness of thy

consolation should puff thee up ; lest, the Bridegroom being always with thee, thou shouldst begin to despise thy companions, and shouldst attribute this continuous visitation not to grace, but to nature. Now this grace is not possessed by right of inheritance ; but the Bridegroom bestows it on whom He wills and when He wills. It is a common proverb that too much familiarity breeds contempt. He withdraws therefore lest He should be despised on account of His too great assiduity, that, when absent, He may be the more desired ; that, when desired, He may be the more eagerly sought ; that, when long sought, He may at last be the more graciously found. Besides, if consolation were never lacking to us here (which in comparison with the glory which shall be revealed is now bestowed 'in a dark manner,' and 'in part'),⁹ we should perhaps think that we had here a 'lasting city,' and should the less 'seek one that is to come.'¹⁰ Let us not then mistake the land of exile for our native country, nor the pledge for the whole reward ; the Bridegroom comes and He departs, at one time bringing us consolation, at another turning our whole bed to sickness ; for a little while He permits us to taste how sweet He is, and before we have fully felt it, He withdraws ; and thus, as it were, flying over us with outstretched wings, He challenges us to fly likewise. But, assure thyself, O bride, when the Bridegroom absents Himself, He does not go far away, and if thou see Him not, yet He, Who is full of eyes before and behind, sees thee always. He ever has about thee too His ministering spirits like wise and prudent watchers, that He may see how thou bearest thyself when the Bridegroom is absent, and that they may accuse thee before Him if they detect any signs of impurity or levity in thee. For this Bridegroom is jealous. If thou shouldst perchance receive another lover, if thou shouldst study to please others more than Him, He would immediately depart from thee, and give Himself to others. This Bridegroom is choice and delicate ; He is noble and rich ;

⁹ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.¹⁰ Heb. xiii. 14.

He is 'beautiful above the sons of men,'¹¹ and therefore it is fitting that He should have no other than a beautiful bride. If He should see in thee 'spot or wrinkle,'¹² immediately He turns away His eyes. For He can endure no uncleanness. Be thou therefore chaste; be modest and humble, that thus thou mayest deserve to be often visited by thy Bridegroom."

And this is the cause of the withholding of sensible devotion which is touched upon by St. Lawrence Justinian, in his treatise on the *Interior Conflict*. "Spiritual sweetness," he says, "is to be taken sparingly, lest disgust should be engendered by immoderate enjoyment. This is suggested by the Wise Man, who says:¹³ "Thou hast found honey, eat what is sufficient for thee, lest being glutted thou vomit it up." Spiritual devotion therefore is not to be pursued to satiety, lest contempt be engendered of too great familiarity, or weariness of imprudent assiduity."

If dryness arise in the first manner, that is, as a punishment for some sin, or for pride or presumption, we ought to be glad, because satisfaction for the offence is thus, to a certain extent, given to God. For this cause Father Louis de Ponte rejoiced that Hell and Purgatory existed; and such a joy arises from a solid love towards God, and from a righteous hatred of sin, and from high thoughts of the Divine excellence, and a reverence of His majesty. Besides, as St. Diadochus warns us: "We ought to give thanks to God because, by depriving us of consolation, He has chastened the intemperance of our will, that, like a good Father, He may teach us the difference between virtue and vice."

If dryness arise in other ways, we should likewise rejoice, because it is the will of God thus to deal with us; and conformity to His will is not of less but of greater importance, and is a heroic act of the obedience which we owe to God, as well as an act of charity; whence we see that the great servants of God have been troubled with

¹¹ Psalm xliv. 3.¹² Ephes. v. 27.¹³ Prov. xxv. 16.

such aridities. St. Teresa suffered them for eighteen years, as she writes of herself in her Life, and as Father Ribera relates of her. So St. Francis, during two years pined away in the greatest sadness, even in time of prayer, and seemed to be forsaken by God, so that he could not conceal his sorrow, and he could hold no converse with the brethren, nor could he drive it away by prayer. St. Clara of Montefalco was for eleven consecutive years variously tormented by demons, and deprived of celestial visions, in which she had previously abounded. Father Alvarez had sixteen years of aridity. St. Catharine of Bologna was very desolate for five years, and tormented with illusions of the demon, as she writes of herself, and as Father Grassetto tells of her in her Life. But the most remarkable example of the kind is that of St. Angela of Foligno, as she tells us of herself, relating unheard of aridities of spirit, and temptations of the demon which she suffered in body and soul for the space of two years. So also St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, first for five years, and afterwards for other sixteen consecutive years, suffered the greatest aridity, even unto death, so that it seemed as though she were forsaken by God, and without any sense of the Divine grace; which God Himself had forewarned her would happen to her. "Let him not despair," says St. Lawrence Justinian, writing on the triumphant agony of Christ, "who suffers in this way, let him persevere in good, so that by good he may learn to do well. For God does not leave those who are occupied in that which is good. He is wont to visit them in darkness, when they hope not for it, and when they know not of it."

CHAPTER V.

*With what disposition aridities of soul in prayer
are to be received.*

EVEN beginners must know whence aridities arise ; and that we ought not, on account of them, to break off our meditations and prayers. It is the object of the demon to induce us to leave off when we pray without the relish of devotion. Let us, therefore, at such times persevere in it, taught by the example of Christ ; Who “being in an agony (a time of the greatest aridity) prayed the longer.”¹ “For a grateful mind,” says St. Lawrence Justinian, “and one that is truly wounded by the dart of charity, neglects nothing which it is its duty to perform. It exercises the same virtues, and is as earnest in prayer, when it suffers the deprivation of spiritual joy, as when it is replenished with Divine warmth, although it does not do it with the same enjoyment. For it is taught by the instruction of wisdom to know that it becomes more worthy of greater gifts after labours and conflicts. And this is what the Prophet meant when he said : ‘According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart Thy comforts have given joy to my soul.’”² But this is the case with few ; for it is the most conspicuous proof of perfect charity not to lose one’s confidence in adversity, and always to exercise virtues uniformly, and to persevere under the discipline of God with the same mind and the same countenance.” It often happens that, after aridities have been courageously borne, whilst praying and meditating in a state of dryness, as the same Saint elsewhere remarks, “and one persevering

¹ St. Luke xxii. 43.

² Psalm xciii. 19.

in prayer knocks so that it may be opened, suddenly he is filled with sweetness, and radiant with light, and a flood of tears begins to flow forth in rich abundance ; and he who had been hard at heart as a stone is now melted by a look from above, so that he is now unable to refrain from tears because of the sweetness and joy produced by the presence of the Word, as it is said in the Psalms, 'Who shall stand before the face of His cold? He shall send out His Word, and shall melt them: His wind shall blow, and the waters shall run.'"³ "Thou oughtest chiefly to humble thyself," says Thomas à Kempis, "when thou feelest little or no devotion within, but not to be too much cast down, nor inordinately saddened." For if these things arise from our own present fault, we should rejoice that God is by them punishing our sins. In this sense David said, "It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn Thy justifications."⁴

But if God sends dryness on account of a past fault, even then, when we have done our part and used every means for praying well, we must not desist from prayer. For as St. Nilus remarks, speaking of the promise of Christ: "He who seeketh long and much, findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."⁵ Cry to God, implore His aid ; because, as St. John Climacus tells us, "If you continually ask help of your King against your enemies, be confident that when they come, you will not have to struggle much. They will depart from you of their own accord ; nor can impure and corrupt spirits bear to look upon you when you receive your crown after their assaults." And St. Bernard speak to the same effect in his twenty-first Sermon on the Canticles.

If, however, aridities do not arise from your own fault ; first of all, remember the advice of St. Diadochus: "It behoves us," he says, "to grieve in moderation that we find ourselves forsaken, that we may be the more submissive, and more subject to the glory of God." Secondly, as he

³ Psalm cxlvii. 17, 18.

⁴ Psalm cxviii. 71.

⁵ St. Luke xi.

further remarks in the same place, "We ought to rejoice on such occasions, exulting in a good hope," that is, in the hope of future devotion. Which is also commended by our holy Father St. Ignatius in the Book of Exercises. Besides, we ought to rejoice, because they give occasion for merits; which are often greater when we pray and communicate in dryness of spirit. On which subject there is an admirable counsel and example given by St. Catharine of Bologna in an Italian treatise, written, as she tells us, by Divine inspiration, concerning the arms which are necessary for the spiritual combat. In this little book she writes: "After she had been long and grievously tempted concerning the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and had been Divinely taught to know the truth of this dogma, God showed her how a person who communicates without the relish of devotion, yet truly receives the grace of the Sacrament, so long as one has a good conscience, although the spirit be tried with reference to the faith; or again, so long as one does not consent to the doubt, if he communicates in spite of the assaults spoken of, bearing patiently the trial of the spirit, this is a greater merit of the soul than if one were to communicate with much sweetness and enjoyment."

And the Lord gave a similar testimony to St. Gertrude: "When she was praying for one who alleged that the grace of devotion was more sparingly infused into her on a day in which she was about to communicate than on some other ordinary days, the Lord answered her, 'This is not by accident, but by dispensation; because, when on ordinary days, and at unexpected hours, I pour forth the grace of devotion, I strive in this way to raise the heart of man to Myself, which otherwise would at that time perhaps remain in its insensibility. But when, on festal days or at the time of Communion, I withdraw grace, the hearts of My elect are more exercised by intensity of desires, or by humility. And such a desire and such a contrition avail more for their salvation than would sometimes the grace of devotion.'" And, at another time, "desiring to know what fruit would

result from the direction of the thoughts to God, she was instructed to this effect, that when a man, by meditation or by intention, directs his thoughts to God, he presents before the throne of God a mirror of wonderful splendour, in which God beholds with great delight His own image, because He is the Giver and Director of all good things. But when a man through hindrances labours at this work with greater difficulty, the more difficult his labour is, so much the more delightful and ornate is that mirror in the sight of the ever Blessed Trinity and of all the saints. And this will remain for ever to the glory of God and the eternal delight of the soul itself." And at another time the Lord said to her: "I am very often wont to afflict my special friends with infirmity of body and desolation of mind, and the like, so that when they desire the blessings that are opposed to these afflictions, the burning love of My heart may be able to reward them more copiously according to the good pleasure of My bounty."

And Christ our Lord, teaching St. Bridget how she ought to drive from her soul those things which trouble it, says: "But if it cannot remove those things, let it bear them patiently, although involuntarily, as enemies, knowing most surely that they are profitable to it for a greater crown, and in no way tend to condemnation." "For God looks continually upon our conflicts," says Abbot Isaac (in Cassian), speaking of slothful thoughts in prayer, "and is not far from those who supplicate Him." Rufinus writes, in the Lives of the Fathers, "That a certain Brother was so harassed by his thoughts for nine years that from very fear he despaired of his salvation, and pronounced judgment against himself, saying, 'I have lost my soul; and because I have perished, I will go to the world.' And as he was going, there came a voice to him, saying, 'The temptations which thou hast borne for nine years will be thy crown. Return, therefore, to thy place, and I will deliver thee from evil thoughts.'" The mind must not therefore despond, when God seems to have deserted us in the time of dryness, and has withdrawn

from us, or not granted to us, the pleasure of devotion ; but must cry with the humble bride to the Bridegroom, "Return, return, my Beloved." "The word of recall," says St. Bernard, "is return. And perhaps He has for this reason withdrawn Himself, that He may be the more eagerly recalled and the more forcibly retained. For sometimes He would make as though He would go farther, not because He so intends, but because He desires to hear the words, 'Stay with us, O Lord, because it is towards evening.'⁶ And again, on another occasion, when He was walking on the sea, and the Apostles were 'labouring in rowing,' He appeared as though 'He would have passed by them,' not intending to do so, but rather to try their faith, and to draw forth their prayers. And, as the Evangelist tells us, they 'were troubled,' and 'they cried out,' thinking that 'it was an apparition.'⁷ And the same kind of pious simulation and salutary dispensation which the Word then exhibited in the body, the Word as a Spirit does not cease continually to practise earnestly in the soul which is devoted to Him in His own spiritual manner. Passing by, He desires to be retained ; departing, to be recalled. For by no means unalterable is His purpose. He goes, and He returns, at His own good pleasure, as visiting 'early in the morning,' and 'suddenly' proving.⁸ And thus He says, 'I go,' and 'I will come again ;'⁹ and again : 'A little while, and now you shall not see me ; and again a little while, and you shall see me.'¹⁰ And the Prophet Habacuc says : 'If it [the vision] make any delay, wait for it : for it shall surely come, and it shall not be slack.'¹¹ But how shall it not be slack, if it make delay, unless because it comes quick enough for merit, but not quick enough to meet your wish ? And so the loving soul is led by its wishes, is drawn by its desires, and seeks with confidence its delights, calling, with its wonted liberty, not its Lord, but its Beloved, 'Return, my Beloved.'

And this doctrine is confirmed by Louis of Blois, a

⁶ St. Luke xxiv. 29.

⁷ St. Mark vi. 48—50.

⁸ Job vii. 18.

⁹ St. John xiv. 3.

¹⁰ St. John xvi. 16.

¹¹ Habuc. ii. 3.

great master of the spiritual life, who writes: "Let a man be careful how he abandons prayer because he feels no consolation in himself; for assuredly as distraction of mind which takes place against the will of him who prays, does not take away the fruit and utility of prayer; so neither does dryness of heart, so long as a good will is there. Hence the Lord once said to St. Gertrude: 'I wish My elect to believe that their holy exercises and works are altogether pleasing to Me, when they serve Me at their own cost. And they render Me service at their own cost who, although they feel nothing of the savour of devotion, yet faithfully, according as they are able, offer their prayers and other pious exercises, confiding in My compassion that I will receive them willingly and graciously. There are very many to whom, if unction and internal consolation were afforded, it would not be profitable for their salvation, and would greatly diminish their merit.'" When, then, our devotion, through no fault of our own, is hindered or driven away by involuntary thoughts, we must not be discouraged, but must resist them; for as often as we resist them, we gain so many crowns prepared for us in Heaven. And the same must be said when we repel sleep which harasses us in prayer, for we are gaining so many crowns, as was revealed to an old man in the Thebaid; so we read in the Lives of the Fathers. And this is confirmed by the teaching of St. Thomas, who says "that out of the same amount of good works a greater quantity of merit is gained after the sin of Adam than before, on account of man's weakness. For the work does more exceed the power of him who performs it with difficulty, than a greater work does the power of him who performs it without difficulty." So that Thomas à Kempis wrote well in the name of God: "When thou thinkest that thou art far removed from Me, I am often nearer. When thou thinkest that all is well-nigh lost, then often is greater merit being acquired. All is not lost because a thing happens contrary to our desires."

In this sense wrote St. John Climacus: "It is chiefly

in these times of slothfulness that men of holy violence are recognised. For nothing prepares so many crowns for the monk as this. If you carefully consider the matter, you will see that sloth oppresses those who are standing on their feet with fatigue, and those who are sitting it induces to lean against a wall." And the same Saint illustrates the point by this similitude: "As a commander does not dismiss from his service the soldier who in battle has received the severest wounds in the face, but rather promotes him, and heaps the greatest honours upon him, so the Heavenly Commander crowns with greatest glory the monk who has endured the greatest dangers from demons"—such as aridities and temptations which distract his prayers, but are unable to interrupt them. He crowns him in this life with many a crown. The first crown is an increase of grace, and of virtues and gifts which ever accompany grace, when it is divinely infused on account of any supernatural work. The second crown is spiritual dominion over himself; whereby, a man, disregarding sensible consolations, is untroubled when they are absent, and, as if he were quite independent of them, serves God with a tranquil heart, even while he feels himself arid and desolate. A third crown is that which is woven from many virtues, which follow the alternation of sensible devotion, and dryness or insensible devotion. For, as St. Lawrence Justinian well remarks: "This alternation is indeed grievous to those who love, but most useful to those who are exercised by it. For it brings forth humility, it preserves innocence, it cleanses away offences, it kindles the spirit, it produces sorrow, it perfects prudence, it strengthens perseverance, it adds diligence to watchfulness, it drives away insensibility, it extinguishes the flames of concupiscence, it incites to self-knowledge, and it sufficiently teaches in what way it may be found;" namely, by humility, prayer, patience, resignation, and conformity to the Divine will.

But how can this be true? I answer, first, because

one who thus prays and communicates, is greatly humbled, by communicating and praying in aridity; a humiliation which is not produced by affectionate prayer and communion. "It is a greater benefit of God," says St. Teresa, "to pass a day in the humble knowledge of ourselves (although it cost us much affliction and labour) than to spend many days in prayer. I see indeed that such cannot pass many hours or a long time in prayer; but what power, O Lord, with Thee has a single sigh put forth from the depths of a labouring and afflicted heart!" And in another place, when treating of prayer, and exhorting us to be contented with that kind of prayer which God gives us, and to bear it patiently, even if He gives no enjoyment with it, she adds: "Humility itself requires us to be contented with that which is given to us."

Secondly, patience is exercised, as it is not in prayer and communion with sensible affection, because, as St. Catharine of Bologna well judged, in a treatise written by her under Divine inspiration: "There is no more bitter grief than that which the soul suffers from the absence of sensible love, when it thinks it has lost the grace of God, because it does not taste its wonted internal sweetnesses, and experiences the greatest grief on account of this loss. But while it endures this patiently, it acquires much merit, as the same Saint adds: "The love is proportioned to this grief; and therefore the soul which grieves because it does not feel love, possesses at the same time love with grief; since it could not grieve about that which it did not love; but this is not understood by those who are imperfect, that is, by those who love the gift more than the Giver;" loving the consolations of prayer more than the bitterness which God sends and wills us to bear for our good.

Thirdly, there is greater love shown towards God in drinking His bitter cup than His sweet one. Therefore St. Catharine of Siena pleased God more when she chose a crown of thorns than if she had chosen one of gold.

Fourthly, for another reason greater love towards God is shown in arid prayer, because he who perseveres in it, then fights with the demon or with nature, which would drive him from prayer by the arrows of aridity. And he who from the love of God wards off these, and does not abandon the field of battle, manifests his generous love towards God, like those servants of David, who broke through the camp of the enemy in search of water for their master. And therefore Thomas à Kempis has well written: "To contend against the evil motions of the mind when they arise (such as ordinarily accompany dryness), and to despise the suggestions of the devil, is a mark of virtue and of great merit. Be not, therefore, troubled by foreign imaginations from whatever cause they arise. Preserve thy courageous purpose and thy right intention towards God. Neither is it an illusion when thou art sometimes raised to a rapture, and suddenly brought back to thy ordinary trivialities of heart. For in these thou art rather enduring than acting; and as long as they displease thee, and thou resistest them, it is a merit, and not a cause of loss." And further on: "There is not so much progress in the spiritual life when thou hast the grace of consolation, as when thou humbly, self-denyingly, and patiently endurest its withdrawal; and art not then hindered from the endeavour to pray, nor allowest the other works which thou oughtest to perform to be neglected; but, according to thy best power and understanding, willingly doest what in thee lies; nor wholly neglectest thyself on account of the dryness or anxiety of mind which thou feelest."

Fifthly, conformity to the will of God in things which are displeasing to our soul, shows a greater obedience than in things which are pleasing to it. Whence Christ commends this in His disciples: "You are they which have continued with Me in My temptations."³ And He esteems such more highly. Thus Christ, addressing Antonia, a Roman widow of great sanctity, highly esteemed by St.

³ St. Luke xxii. 28.

Philip Neri, as Baccius testifies, commended by Bosio for the holiness of her life, and a spiritual daughter of our Society (since her regular confessor to the time of her death was the holy man, Father John Baptist Alexander), said to her: "That He gives not so many delights and consolations in prayer to His labourers who are employed in the conversion of souls, as to some women. But although He does not admit to His lips those who are like hunting dogs (who, from catching bears and wild boars, that is converting sinners, come to Him sometimes with soiled feet), as He does the small dogs, which are beautiful and do not labour; yet the Lord esteems them more highly than those weak women to whom He communicates Himself more freely in extraordinary prayer, by spiritual enjoyments and, as it were, embraces."

"The life of contemplation," says St. Lawrence Justinian, on prayer,⁴ "is the more pure. 'I have washed my feet,' for contemplation, says the bride in the Canticles,⁵ 'how shall I defile them?' But she brings forth fewer sons to God; the worker brings forth more, although she contemplates less;" she is dear to God, although she has distractions.

Christ explained this truth to St. Gertrude, comparing, under a similitude, those souls which are given to consolation alone, to girls, but others who, from the love of God, are occupied in external things, to princes, generals, and soldiers of kings. "As," He says, "a powerful Emperor delights to have in his palace not only delicate and ornamental girls, but also appoints princes, generals, and soldiers, and other ministers adapted for various works, whom he has ready in his palace for the discharge of various duties; so also I not only delight in the interior joy of the contemplative, but also am drawn by the different exercises of useful duties, which are performed for the sake of My honour and love, to abide and to banquet joyfully with the sons of men in such duties, because they are exercised in charity, patience, and humility, and

⁴ Chap. viii.

⁵ Cant. v. 3.

in other virtues." And then she saw one who had greater pastoral responsibility, lying down before God, leaning, as it were, on his left side, who often lifting himself with difficulty to God, offered to Him with his left hand, on which he was leaning, a piece of gold money enriched with precious gems. And the Lord said to her: "Behold, if I were to lighten this man's burden, for whom thou prayest, then I should be deprived of this beautiful gem, which so greatly pleases me, among those pieces of money, and he would be defrauded of his reward; because then, with his right hand only he would offer Me a piece of money without a gem. For he offers, as it were, a simple piece of money, who in all his works serves God, in accordance with the Divine will, but without adversity; but he who in each of his works is weighed down by adversity, and yet does not depart from the Divine will, offers to God a golden piece of money along with a most approved gem."

So, too, a king values more highly a soldier whom the enemy strikes, and endeavours to withdraw from the obedience of his lord, or from conference to which he is summoned by him, than another who confers with him when no one hinders. So, in our case, prayer is a conference with God, as the saints teach; aridities are the assaults of an infernal enemy, by which he endeavours to withdraw us from converse with God. Those who pray in aridity are like volunteers, who, although they have received no pay from their king, yet fight for him and accompany him. "War shows the love of a soldier for his commander," says St. John Climacus, "but the love of a monk towards God is best shown when he prays." Abundance of consolations is large pay. Therefore we must persevere in our efforts to procure devotion, whether we have consolation or not, as we are taught by the twenty-second rule of the Summary. And sometimes as an act of obedience, or as an exercise of charity towards our neighbour, prayer itself is to be omitted. As St. Teresa says: "Love shines in public and in our intercourse with others, and not in corners

and in hidden places, but in the midst of opportunities. Be it that various imperfections there occur (such as slight falls and shocks), yet our gain is incomparably greater, if we are acting under the command of our Superior and are moved by charity;” and this the more, if, after many labours undertaken from obedience and charity, from the pure intention of a more perfect service of God, aridities succeed in prayer. Hence it was not without reason that Father Balthasar Alvarez left it written in his Diary of heavenly lights, as is mentioned in his Life: “Any disquietude which meets me in prayer (supposing it is not caused by myself), I will regard as a martyrdom, and as such will bravely bear it, giving a specimen in this slight trial of the many things which I have offered in other prayers to endure and bear for the love of Thee.” Nor does it matter that in the time of aridity that fervour of devotion is not felt, which is wont to be felt in the time of consolation, as well because, when aridity which does not proceed from our own fault is courageously borne, it is endured through the grace of fervour, although that fervour be not then felt, as because the disposition to worship and love God fervently, if it be present, is fully accepted by God, no less than a devotion full of consolation. For, as St. Leo says, “In our spiritual husbandry we shall not be distressed by the scantiness of the fruits, if the fertility of our souls is not dried up. Let there arise from the soil of the heart that which earth has not given. He always finds something to give who is not lacking in good will.” And in another place: “Our Lord, because He is a just inspector of souls, will reward not the mere value of the work done but also the affection of the worker.” Finally, although we may think that we perceive no fruit in prayer, let the true admonition of St. John Climacus solace us: “Say not, when you persevere in prayer, I have profited nothing. For you have already profited enough. For what can be more noble than to cleave to the Lord, and continually to persevere in union with Him?”

CHAPTER VI.

Some things to be remarked with regard to aridities and delights in prayer.

It must be evident that those do not speak well who say that their prayer has not succeeded, when they have had no delight in it, but only involuntary dryness and distractions. "When on a certain occasion St. Gertrude was not visited by our Lord, and yet bore this deprivation without difficulty, finding opportunity she asked our Lord how this was. He replied: 'Too great nearness is wont sometimes to prevent friends from being able to see each other perfectly. Thus, if one embraces a friend when he approaches, it comes to pass from their close union that the pleasure of seeing each other is interrupted.' When she heard this, she immediately understood that by the withdrawal of grace the merit of a man is sometimes greatly increased, if only, when that grace is withdrawn, the man by acting well, and by mortifying himself, is not found more slothful, although he then toils in working and feels a heavier burden." And St. Teresa taught the like. "I have met with some," she says, "whose whole concern seemed to be fixed on their thoughts alone; and when they are able to have them earnestly fixed in God, although by exercising the greatest effort, they immediately think themselves to be spiritual; but if their thought is turned another way (because they cannot help it) even though it be to things which are very good, they are immediately saddened and pained, and think they must be lost. But those who are theologians will not labour under such ignorance, although I have even met with one such who was the slave of this very gross ignorance. I do not deny

that it is a signal grace of God that a man should have his thought ever fixed upon Him and occupied with Him, and should be able to meditate continually upon His works: it is undoubtedly a good thing to strive after this. But we must know that all imaginations are not naturally suited and adapted for this; yet all souls have the power of loving. And therefore the advancement and fruitfulness of the soul consist not so much in thinking a great deal, but rather in loving much. And if you ask how this love may be acquired; I reply, By purposing seriously and effectually to labour and suffer for God's sake, and by carrying your purposes into execution whenever occasion offers."

Since, then, these attacks of involuntary dryness and distractions, because they are painful, give occasion for the exercise of patience to the servants of God who are desiring to delight the Lord their God by the exercise of prayer; if this affliction, coming against their will, is borne with equanimity, and the mind does not desist from its excellent work of prayer, but still sails against the wind, then it will "labour and suffer effectually for God's sake;" and such a prayer, other things being equal, is better because of the reasons assigned, than that which has sensible consolations; for these often spring from the demon, or from the sensitiveness of our temperament (as happens with sanguine persons and with those who are prone to love); and, as St. John Climacus remarks, "Sometimes the demons, when we have eaten to satiety, give us compunction; and again, when we have fasted, harden us, so that we may be deceived by our tears, and may expose ourselves to the palate, the parent of vices, and to its pleasures." And in another place: "At times, in drinking wine," he says, "we are joyful, and prone and disposed for compunction." Whence that skilful master of the spiritual life, Richard, teaches well: "A sweet affection towards God, is in some degree sensuous and fallacious, and sometimes the product of human nature rather than of grace; of the heart, rather than of the spirit; of sense,

rather than of reason ; so that it is sometimes more connected with a less good, and less with a greater good, and is a thing which is enjoyable rather than beneficial. In this the disciples erred, loving our Lord with human love and loth to be deprived of His presence ; whence it was no proof of their love that they embraced that which pleased them more than that which profited them. And it is in this way that a carnal and imperfect man is sometimes moved with affection to God, not because he really loves Him, but because he tastes the sweetness of His grace ; and, as long as this lasts, he rejoices ; as long as sweetness endures, love endures. But a friend will not be known in prosperity. In that day, indeed, the Lord shows His compassion, but in the night of temptations and labours He makes plain how much a man loves Him." And St. Bernard says the like, declaring that Christ was "loved by the Apostles sweetly, but not wisely ;" carnally, but not rationally ; and such a love he calls "sweet indeed, but seductive."

To this head must be referred that forced and, as it were, constrained devotion, which incautious beginners, even with injury to their health, endeavour to excite in themselves, by fatiguing the head and the heart. Such devotion, being indiscreet and inordinate, is not from God, but either from nature, or from the demon, and mixes itself up with pious thoughts which are wont to be inspired gently by God. And this is thus beautifully described by Thomas à Kempis : "Some incautious persons," he says, "have destroyed themselves for the very grace of devotion, because they have wished to do more than they were able, not considering the measure of their own insignificance, and following the impulse of their heart, rather than the judgment of their reason. And because they have presumed beyond what was pleasing to God, therefore they have soon lost His grace. They have become spiritually destitute, and have been left as worthless, who made their nest on high,¹ that, being humbled and im-

¹ Hab. ii. 9.

poverished, they may learn not to fly on their own wings, but to put their trust under the shadow of My wings. Those who are still inexperienced and unskilled in the way of the Lord, unless they govern themselves by the counsel of the wise, may be easily deceived and destroyed." Therefore, as Cassian tells us, Abbot Isaac advised: "By no means should a flow of tears be forced out, nor are the weepings of the outer man to be affected, which, even if this be by some contrivance brought forth, will never resemble the spontaneous outflow of tears. They will rather, by distracting the soul of the suppliant through these efforts, draw it downward, and sink it to the lowest depths."

For this reason the saints have sometimes been suspicious of sweetnesses and consolations in prayer. Hence St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi "did not advise that they should be wished for, but only such as excite to the love of labours and of the cross, and to the fulfilling of the Divine will, and the desire of honouring God." And she said that God was not found in things which were agreeable, but in true virtue, and that this was not acquired by sweetness, even in spiritual things, but that the place of true virtue was rather in cares, anxieties, and in more intense tribulations. Nor had she confidence in those souls who were said to have arrived at perfection by sweetnesses enjoyed throughout their whole life; for she was wont to say she knew that there was no true patience, humility, purity, meekness, charity, which was not tested by some tribulation inflicted either by God, or by creatures, or by demons; and that without such trial there would be no true virtues in the soul, but only feigned ones; and that the image of virtue would not in that case live through the lapse of time." Such was the admirable teaching of that Saint under Divine inspiration. Let us therefore be content when God, against our wills, and without any present fault of our own, sends desolations, aridities, distractions, which are a hindrance to concentrated prayer. For this reason St. Thomas, considering the question whether it was a

necessary element in prayer that it should be continuously attentive, replies: "In order to the merit of prayer, it is not absolutely necessary that attention should be continued throughout, but the force of the first intention, when one begins to pray, renders the whole prayer meritorious, as is the case in other meritorious actions. And in order that prayer may have its power of *impetration*, the first intention is sufficient, and it is to this that God chiefly has regard; but if the first intention is lacking, prayer neither *merits* nor *impetrates*. For this reason, he who in the time of involuntary aridities and distractions, which he earnestly resists, perseveres in prayer, shows a solid love for God, even if he prays without the attention which he desires.

And that such a prayer is *satisfactory*, we are taught by Navarrus in his Treatise on Prayer, and other moderns who have written on that article of St. Thomas, as well as by Suarez. This St. Nilus seems to suggest: "When thy mind, through much desire of God, gradually withdraws itself from the flesh, and rejects all thoughts which have arisen from sense, or memory, or the constitution of the body, then consider that you have come into the region of prayer," that is, that you have attained the three ends of prayer, which are *merit*, *impetration*, and *satisfaction*. Out of these three follows the introduction of all virtues, and from an earthly man is made a heavenly one. And therefore we must not ever come to meditation with the desire for enjoyments and the fear of aridities, but with indifference and generosity of mind, which greatly displeases the demon and pleases God; and thus great peace of soul is acquired, and a certain mastery over oneself, and liberty of spirit. And such persons the demon does not easily overcome, because he sees them courageous, as our holy Father St. Ignatius has well observed, writing on the different operations of the soul. "For the Holy Spirit," as St. Nilus remarks, "bemoaning our infirmity with us, comes even to us who are impure (that is, who are full of thoughts excited by the demon); and if He only finds in us the mind

earnestly praying, He ascends into it, and destroys the whole multitude of thoughts and notions which were encompassing the mind." And if, in order to try our humility and patience, He does not destroy them, let those console themselves who, being for God's sake distracted in this way, by harassing duties, do not feel a sweetness of spirit—let them console themselves, I say, with that beautiful similitude spoken by our Lord to St. Gertrude: "If the bride sometimes prepares food for the hawks of the Bridegroom, she is not for that reason at all disappointed of His embrace."

To complete this portion of our treatise two things are carefully to be noted.

First, we must observe, when in the time of aridities any pious act is elicited, whether of hope, or of faith, or of humiliation, or of resignation and conformity to the will of God, that this itself is a devout prayer, containing consolation; not indeed that sensible consolation which is in the inferior part of our soul, and which, as I have pointed out, may proceed from nature or from the demon, but a consolation of the inward mind where sensible enjoyment cannot reach, which is more perfect than that which is only sensible. And thus St. Ignatius, in a certain illustration which he employed, left it on record that he had felt a kind of devotion after the manner of angels, not less vivid than he was wont to experience when he wept in prayer. And of such mental consolation Peter Maffei and Peter Ribadeneira speak when they say that our holy Father St. Ignatius, even when he did not weep, that is when he did not feel the sensible pleasures of prayer, yet had the spirit of devotion. For true devotion does not consist in delights, and may exist, and does commonly exist, without these; but it is placed in "the readiness of the will for all those things which belong to the service of God," as the theologians teach with St. Thomas; and this may be without any relish, or even with the greatest weariness of mind, as it was with Christ, when, praying in the garden, He endured sadness, fear, weariness, and agony;

and yet was most devout, because He was conformed to the will of God ; so that He said : “ Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”² And thus our holy Father St. Ignatius well remarks, “ that any increase of faith, hope, and charity,” may be called consolation. And these are increased, even in the time of dryness, when it is borne patiently and willingly for God’s sake. In this sense St. Lawrence Justinian said : “ This must be laid down, that neither can a praiseworthy life exist without devotion, nor can true devotion subsist without a right life.”

And this doctrine may be confirmed by the Divine vision which the celebrated commentator on the Holy Scriptures, and master of theology, Louis of Leon, thought fit to add to St. Teresa’s autobiography, after the fortieth chapter : “ One day,” says St. Teresa, “ the Lord said to me : ‘ Thinkest thou, My daughter, that merit consists in enjoyment and gladness? By no means ; for it consists only in working, suffering, and loving. Only once dost thou hear of the Apostle Paul enjoying heavenly delight, but often of his suffering ; thou seest that My life too was full of suffering, and only once thou hearest of My having been in joy, on Mount Tabor. Think not, when thou seest My Mother holding Me in her arms, that she enjoyed that delight without great bitterness and suffering ; for from the time when Simeon told her that the sword of sorrow should pierce her soul,³ My Father infused a clear light into her by which she might understand what she had to suffer for Me. Illustrious saints also, who lived in the desert, being thereto directed and impelled by God, were wont to suffer grievous conflicts as well from the demon as from themselves ; and in all these things for a long time they were destitute of all spiritual consolation. This therefore receive as certain, My daughter, that to him whom My Father loves the best, does He send most labours and afflictions, and that His love is proportioned to the labour He imposes.’ ” And further on : “ When on that

² St. Matt. xxvi. 39.

³ St. Luke ii. 35.

day I began to give myself to prayer, my head pained me so, that it seemed impossible for me to continue my prayer. Then our Lord said to me: 'From this thou wilt gather the reward of suffering and affliction; for since thou wast unfit and disqualified for converse with Me, for this reason I have spoken to thee, and consoled thee.'"

For the confirmation of this truth may be adduced the words of St. Catharine of Genoa, whose Life was so much valued by St. Aloysius Gonzaga. This Saint, in the first part of her dialogues, left these words written, as by the Spirit speaking to her soul: 'Know that in the perception and enjoyment of spiritual things, a snare is much more to be feared than in things corporal; for spiritual things attract a man under the appearance of good; and it is difficult to persuade him that there is anything in them, but what is good; and thus a man regales himself and nourishes himself with these things as coming from God and as His gifts. But I tell you the truth, that one who would enjoy God as purely and simply as may be, ought of necessity to avoid such things, for they are poison to the true love of God. In truth that spiritual relish is more to be watched than the devil,⁴ since, wherever it fastens on a soul, it generates an incurable disease without a man's knowledge; and when he fancies that it is going well with him, he does not perceive that this is hindering in him the perfect good, which is God Himself, pure and simple, without admixture of man. But bodily enjoyments, because they are evidently contrary to the spirit, cannot hide themselves under the appearance of good; and therefore I do not fear them so much.' Such were those enjoyments which the demon offered to our holy Father St. Ignatius when he was studying grammar, seeking to draw him off

⁴ St. Catharine is here warning souls against an inordinate craving for sensible consolation. Her words will be better understood if compared with St. Ignatius' doctrine on consolation and desolation in the Spiritual Exercises; also with the teaching of the *Imitation of Christ*. See also what the author writes at the end of this chapter and in the next.—ED.

from his studies ; but he drove him away by prayers and humiliation, as Maffei and Ribadeneira write in his life. But even in presence of Divine consolations we must use that safeguard recommended by St. John Climacus : "Cast from you with the hand of humility the joy which comes to you, remembering your unworthiness, lest haply by receiving it too lightly, you receive the wolf instead of the shepherd."

Secondly, it is to be noted that even holy men are wont to suffer great aridities without prejudice to their virtue and perfection ; and thus it is true which was written by Thomas à Kempis : "There never was any saint however highly lifted up and illuminated, who was not before or afterwards assailed by temptations. For he is not worthy of the lofty contemplation of God, who is not, for God's sake, exercised in some temptation." And before him St. Bernard had said : "It is well known that the soul has vicissitudes of this kind from the Word going and returning ; as He says : 'I go,' and 'I will come again ;'⁵ and further, 'A little while, and now you shall not see Me ; and again a little while, and you shall see Me.'⁶ And the Saint says the same thing elsewhere, and even tells us of himself : "Yesterday and the day before I was invaded by languor of mind and dulness of soul, a certain unwonted sluggishness of spirit. My heart dried up, and was curdled like milk ; it became like earth without water. Nor can I feel compunction unto tears, such is the hardness of my heart. There is no pleasure for me in a psalm, no inclination for reading, no delight in prayer. I cannot practise my accustomed meditations." Hence St. Lawrence Justinian says that, "No one is so holy, so preeminent in love, so kindled by spiritual affection, as not to experience at times vicissitudes in love." And he speaks there of sensible devotion, with which the sweet relish and affection of love is wont to be conjoined. "When, therefore, thou art arid," counsels Thomas à Kempis, "do not immediately despair,

⁵ St. John xiv. 2, 3.

⁶ St. John xvi. 16.

but wait for the heavenly visitation with humility and patience; since God is able to bestow upon thee more abundant consolation." And in another place he writes, speaking on the part of God: "I am wont to visit My elect in two ways—by temptation and by consolation; and I read them two lessons daily, one by chiding their vices, and the other by exhorting them to the increase of virtues." It is certainly true that to some of the servants of God perpetual devotion, even sensible, and full of consolations in prayer, has been given through many years, and that they have never suffered aridities, but as St. Dionysius the Areopagite says: "Divine wisdom provides and supplies for those who come to it, the rich abundance of plentiful and lasting banquets."

Such, among many other illustrious saints in the Church, was our holy Father St. Ignatius, who, at any hour of the day that he chose, was devout even with sensible devotion, as he related of himself to Father Louis Consalvo, his minister, who left it written in his Life. Such too St. Francis Xavier, according to the testimony of Tursellini in his Life, and the process of his canonization.

CHAPTER VII.

Who they are to whom God is wont to concede the gift of prayer without aridities.

GOD gives this grace of sensible devotion, as St. Lawrence Justinian expresses it, "to taste Divine things with relish and enjoyment," to four kinds of men.

First, to those who are adorned with innocence of life and virginal purity; not, indeed, to all such, but to some, as He sees best. "For," says St. Bernard, "to walk in the fervour of conversion with a heavy weight of sins is impossible. The Church of God," he says, "has its spiritual children, who deal with God not only faithfully, but also trustingly, as though conversing with a friend—their sense of His glory furnishing them with a testimony. But who these are depends upon God alone: but do thou observe what manner of man it behoves thee to be, if thou wishest to be one of them. Give me a soul that loves nothing besides God, and that which should be loved for God's sake; to whom to live not only now is Christ, but has long been so; whose labour and rest it is to set God always in his sight, with whom to walk carefully with his God is, I say not his great, but his one purpose, and who has moreover learned how to do this. Give me, I say, such a soul, and I do not deny that it is worthy of the care of the Bridegroom, of the regard of His Majesty, of the favour of its Monarch, of the solicitude of its Ruler, and if it will glory, it will not be foolish, but he who glories, glories in the Lord." And further on: "As thou hast prepared thyself for God, such ought God to appear to thee. Good art Thou, O Lord, to the soul that seeketh Thee: Thou meetest it, embracest it, and showest it the Bridegroom."

And this is chiefly experienced by those who, along with virginal innocence, have conjoined a full renunciation of all creatures. "For this," writes St. Teresa in her *Book of Foundations*, "is what joins and unites the soul to its Creator more than anything else, when, namely, it strives to have a pure conscience. It was not necessary that I should say this, because it seems to me impossible that those who have true abnegation should offend God, seeing that all their words and deeds depart not in the least degree from Him ; whence also His Majesty seems unwilling to withdraw itself from them."

This grace of devotion God bestows also upon those who with their whole earnestness, preserve in the greatest purity, far from all sins and imperfections, their body and soul, their powers, senses, and members. "Who," asks St. Bernard, "can pretend to know what the bride, out of her great affection for her Beloved, glories in having expended upon Him, or what she is repaid by Him, but he who, by his pre-eminent purity of mind and sanctity of body has deserved in himself to experience something of the kind? It is a thing of the affections, and it cannot be attained by reason, but by conformity." For this cause St. Lawrence Justinian said : "This must be set down, that neither can there be a praiseworthy life without devotion, nor can true devotion subsist without a good life. For the proof of holy devotion is a commendable life ; and the support of praiseworthy conduct is internal and spiritual devotion." "Give me a soul," he says in another place, "polluted with no stain of sin, as was the Mother of God, and you will find in it an active relish for wisdom."

To this grace of devotion, promised to a life innocent and pure from sins, may be referred those words of the forty-fourth Psalm : "Thou hast loved justice, and hatedst iniquity ; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows ;"¹ that is, thy companions who have not disposed themselves, as thou

¹ Psalm xliv. 8.

hast, to receive the divinely given joy and relish of affectionate devotion, which excludes aridity and sloth. But the heart which is filled with the love of earthly things is wont to be unfit for receiving Divine consolations. "Whence is it," St. Bernard says, "that the dearth of spiritual grace is in some as great as its abundance in others? Certainly the Giver of grace is neither indigent nor niggardly; but where there is a want of empty vessels, the oil must stand. Holy delights turn away from the mind which is pre-occupied with secular desires, nor can truth be mingled with vanity, nor things eternal with those which are fleeting, nor spiritual with carnal things, nor the highest with the lowest; so you cannot have both enjoyment of the things which are above and of those which are upon the earth." Hence, God is represented by Thomas à Kempis as thus speaking: "In proportion as thou hast withdrawn thyself from all consolation of creatures, wilt thou find in Me sweeter and more intense consolations. But thou wilt not attain to them at first without some sadness and the labour of a conflict." Wherefore Abbot Isaac (in Cassian) says: "The mind of each one in his prayer is always elevated and moulded according to the measure of its purity, and soars so far above the contemplation of earthly and material things as the state of its purity carries it. Those only look with a clear vision upon His Divinity who, rising from low and earthly things and thoughts, go apart in the lofty mountain of solitude with Him, who, free from every tumult of earthly thoughts and perturbations, separated from the mixture of all vices, and rendered celestial by the purest faith and the pre-eminence of all virtues, reveals the glory of His countenance and of the brightness of His Image, to those who merit to behold Him with the pure eyes of the soul." And the Abbot Chæremon: "In proportion as the mind has advanced to greater purity, the more nearly will it behold God." St. Dionysius the Areopagite illustrates this truth under the following similitude: "We well know that the most Divine Jesus is above measure and abundantly

replenished with the odour of sweetness, and that by His spiritual largesses He fills our minds with Divine pleasure. For if the perception of those things which fall under our senses and have an agreeable smell affects us pleasantly and feeds and gratifies that sense of ours which discerns odours, provided that sense is in a healthy state, and by a right formation corresponds with the object which yields this sweet odour; in the same way, the faculties of our mind, if they are not affected to evil, through an adapted action of Divine grace and a corresponding turning of the mind to God, receive the delight and sweetness of a Divine odour, and are filled with holy pleasure and with Divine nourishment."

Secondly, God gives this habitual relish of devotion to those who, in the beginning of their conversion and long afterwards, have led a severe life, self-inflicted, through the extraordinary rigour of their penances. Such were, besides many other saints, our holy Father St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier, whose prayers were filled with perpetual Divine consolations and fervour.

Thirdly, this blessing is granted by God to those who are harassed by the persecutions of men, endured with very great patience, and which are both painful and hurtful to their reputation. For He usually gives to such a greater tenderness of devotion at these times than when the persecutions cease. Therefore St. Nilus said truly: "Whenever thou shalt bear with patience anything which is hard and harsh, thou shalt find the fruit of thy labour in the time of prayer; and if thou hast been patient, thou shalt always pray with joy." But it is great gain to have the grace of perpetual devotion, by which a man is stimulated to a courageous resistance to sin, and to the diligent performance of all those things which are pleasing to God, as well His precepts as His counsels and His internal holy inspirations. It is not wonderful, then, that the monk Abbacyrus, though an imperfect man who had an unbridled tongue, yet because for fifteen years he bore perpetual insults

from all the brothers of a certain monastery, of which St. John Climacus was an ocular witness, and was sometimes even driven by the attendants from table and deprived of his supper, said, when dying: "I give thanks to the Lord, and to you, my Fathers, because you have continually chastened me for my salvation, for on this account I have hitherto remained free from the temptation of the demons." Now the devil chiefly tempts men during prayer, as we have shown above from the same St. Climacus and from St. Nilus.

And for this reason too, as St. Climacus writes in the same place, the Archdeacon Macedonius, when he was expelled from the monastery by his Abbot because he had returned too late from a journey, and after bearing this exile for forty days, was at last recalled by the Abbot and restored to his former place, after one day requested of the Abbot, "that he would restore him to the same ignominious position;" and that he might obtain his request, he pretended (an example not to be imitated) that he had committed "a great and heinous sin" on his journey. He disclosed to St. Climacus this reason for his request: "I never felt myself so relieved from all external war (as, for instance, dryness and distractions), nor felt so much the sweetness of Divine light." There is a promise of God left to such in Holy Scripture: "She will bring upon him fear and dread and trial; and she will scourge him with the affliction of her discipline, till she try him by her laws and trust his soul. Then she will strengthen him, and make a straight way to him, and give him joy, and will disclose her secrets to him, and will heap upon him treasures of knowledge and understanding of justice."² In which passage the literal meaning is: That Divine wisdom first tries its disciples by adversity, by injecting fear and alarm through scruples, and by permitting various afflictions, by which they are taught, as by a kind of lesson, that they may learn to avoid what is evil and follow what is good, and practically to

² Eccles. iv. 19—21.

believe in God, with a faith in Him "working by charity"³ good things. And when He has long seen them constant and firm in such trials, cooperating with His grace, and all this His own work, He will come to them by a straight road, having removed the difficulties of temptations and aridities, and will gladden them with the joys of heavenly devotion; and sometimes so familiarly and intimately, that He makes known to them His celestial secrets for their own profit, and that of others, in order to stimulate them, and others by them, in the way of justice and holiness, as we read in the Psalms: "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul."⁴

Hence, our holy Father, St. Ignatius, having suffered many persecutions, "esteemed them so highly, that he said, if all things that God had created were placed on one side of the balance, and on the other a prison, chains, and disgrace, he would set little or no value on the former in comparison with the latter." And he assigned as one of his reasons for this estimate: "That no created nature can produce such joy in the soul as can equal that delight of the Holy Spirit, and that most pure joy which God infuses into the souls of those who have borne many great trials for love of Him." "But," says St. Bernard, "to this perfection of devotion, in which men run, like veteran soldiers, in the way of the commandments of God, and accomplish with hearts expanded with the utmost sweetness and delight those things which they were previously doing with bitterness and constraint of spirit, few, if I mistake not, attain in this life. And if any one at any time seems to have it, he is not obliged straightway to believe his impressions, especially if he is a novice and has not ascended by the aforesaid steps; for though our gracious Lord Jesus Christ is wont to entice those who are fainthearted by such allurements; yet these must know who are thus favoured that this grace is lent to them, not given: so that in the day of prosperity they may be

³ Galat. v. 6.

⁴ Psalm xciii. 19.

mindful of adversity, and in the day of adversity they may not be unmindful of prosperity. Far otherwise do those who have had their senses well trained enjoy the happy sweetness of this devotion. And even he who attains to this grace of devotion, must beware, lest, doing all things with so great pleasure, he should, while he follows his affection, destroy the body by immoderate labour, and then find it necessary, not without great loss of spiritual exercise, to be occupied in caring for his infirm body. Therefore, in order that he who runs may not dash against ruin, there is need that he be illuminated by the light of prudence, which is the mother of virtues and the consummation of perfection. And it teaches us this: "Not too much of anything!"—*ne quid nimis*.

And thus it is true which was written by St. Catharine of Siena in her Dialogues, "that she had heard from God the Father that from some perfect ones He never withdrew the gift of sensible devotion." And in the following chapter the Lord says again: "I said that from these most perfect ones I never sensibly withdraw Myself, yet in some way I withdraw Myself; since the soul which is still imprisoned in the body could in no way have power to sustain continuously that union which I effect with the soul. And because it has not this capacity, I sometimes withdraw Myself, not My grace, nor My sensible presence, but the union." And this, because inevitably the occupations of this life, like sleep and other things, turn away the attention of the mind from actual union with God.

With this Divine response agrees what St. Augustine left written: "Weariness which dims that cheerfulness for which God loves the giver creeps on more on one who has made less progress in spiritual things, and less on the more advanced; and conversely." And Christ our Lord said to St. Bridget: "Love Me alone, and thou shalt have whatever thou wilt, and in abundance. If thou trustest My words, and dost accomplish them, joy and gladness shall not be wanting to thee through all eternity." As also in another place the Blessed Virgin Mary said to the same St. Bridget:

“Thou wilt be worthy of the comfort of God, because thou seekest no other comforter but God.”

Finally, God gives the grace of devotion to souls that are adorned with great virtues. “The affections of pure prayer,” says St. Bernard, “and that blessed sweetness of prayer, is wont to be given as the prize of sanctity, to the merits of the perfect.” For, as St. Macarius remarks: “As in the palace of a king fair and beautiful girls, who are defiled by no blemish, are admitted to the royal society, so, in the spiritual palace, souls which are adorned with all kinds of good things have communion with the Heavenly King.” But to this conduces, above other virtues, as St. Teresa thought, “the abnegation of all creatures, which more than anything else joins and unites the soul to its Creator.” And in such, says St. Climacus, “spiritual sloth is unknown;” that is, they are not infected by it. And the mind, burning with lasting and unshaken love to God, is wont to glow with perpetual devotion. “To these,” says St. Lawrence Justinian, “the Word comes, and does not depart: and if for a time, it is by dispensation, but not for long. For vehement love soon recalls what a slight fault drove away. The Word cannot be long absent from those in whose heart He has set up His fixed abode; for mutual love does not allow this: neither discord nor absence can continue where the spark of true love has remained. But he who loves more ardently is the sooner reconciled. Hence it is that the Bridegroom cannot be long absent from the heart of the perfect.”

And all these things are to be understood as coming from the blessing of Divine grace, not to every individual of a class, as we say in the schools, but to that class of individuals.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the fourth cause of aridities.

MAN, or, as Abbot Daniel says, "the negligence of man," is the fourth cause of aridities. And when we consider this cause, we may with propriety use the words of St. Bernard: "We are all accustomed to complain that grace (the grace of devotion) is lacking to us, but perhaps grace more justly complains that men are lacking. For this grace, which we covet, has its home in the heart; and he defrauds himself of this gift who provides no fitting inner habitation for it." For our negligence shuts out devotion from its dwelling-place, and drives it away, and introduces aridities; and this negligence is six-fold.

The first kind of negligence is remote and indirect, namely, a life given up to vices. "We must know," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "that there is a double preparation for prayer, namely, a remote and a near preparation; the remote preparation is the praiseworthy life of him who prays. For it helps much to purity of prayer, if in every place, action, and time, we restrain ourselves from unlawful works and obey the Divine precepts: if we always keep our ears and our tongues from idle discourses. For whatever things we have been accustomed to do, to speak, or to hear often, must frequently come back to the mind as to its own accustomed abode; for just as swine are accustomed to go to their wallowing-places in the mire, and doves to the limpid streams, so impure thoughts trouble the mind, and a praiseworthy life cleanses and sanctifies the soul, and makes the petition of one who prays acceptable." Therefore the slightest sins are to be avoided by one who is in

earnest about prayer, if he wishes to be free from dryness. For venial sins, especially those which are committed deliberately, says St. Augustine, "are like a scab: where they are numerous they bring on death; and they so destroy our beauty, that they separate us from the most chaste embraces of that Spouse—Who is 'beautiful above the sons of men,'"¹—"not indeed entirely, as is the case with mortal sin," says St. Thomas, "but partially, because by venial sin the affection of man is clogged and cannot be promptly directed to God," or, as St. Cæsarius of Arles remarks, who, using a similar phrase, call venial sins "pimples which cover the soul with a shocking scab, and make it frightful, so that they hardly allow it to come at all, or only with great confusion, to the embraces of the Heavenly Bridegroom."

It is therefore necessary that he who desires to pray devoutly shall bring with him a pure conscience. "For purity," as St. Lawrence Justinian remarks, "is of much avail (and he places it first among those things which dispose the mind for prayer, and render it capable of prayer)—purity, I say, avails very much to make prayer acceptable, and to render the mind of him who prays fit for prayer. 'Blessed,' says the Lord, 'are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.'² Aaron was not allowed to enter the Holy of Holies until after he had washed thrice." And in another place, treating of the hindrances to contemplation, which do not permit the mind to raise itself to God in prayer, he says: "The mind has its chains, which hold it down when it is rising. Thus the soul is bound by the chains of carnal prudence: it is also bound by the ropes of sins. So many transgressions, so many ropes. Those who are free from this kind of chains are able to soar freely above themselves on the wing of contemplation, and to discern the presence of the Spouse and the place of the habitation of the glory of the Word. Let him therefore cleanse his heart, who desires to contemplate the presence of the Word." And therefore he calls purity of mind "the

¹ Psalm xlv. 3.

² St. Matt. v. 8.

eye of contemplation, the tabernacle of wisdom, the house of mysteries overflowing with joy." "For when," as St. Diadochus remarks, "our conscience is troubled by self-reproach (on account of sins which are wont to be deliberately committed), the mind is not allowed to perceive the odour of heavenly blessings, but rather is dragged in two directions; for, from its previous experience of faith, it yearns for the same blessing now, but on account, as I have said, of the frequent gnawings and accusations of conscience, is not permitted to feel its heart inflamed with love. But when we have cleansed ourselves by more fervent prayer and attention, we obtain our desire with a larger experience of the ways of God."

Whence, although the Holy Eucharist be of the greatest efficacy, and its effect, as St. Thomas teaches, "a very banquet of spiritual sweetness," yet he says this is hindered "if one comes to this Sacrament distracted in mind by venial sins." And much more if other sins and a dissipated life have gone before. "For," says St. Basil, "as this visible light does not rise equally upon all, but only on those who have their eyesight and are awake, and to those who are hindered by no impediment from enjoying the brightness of the sun when he first rises; so also the 'Sun of Justice,'³ the 'true Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world,'⁴ does not show His splendour to all, but to those who seek to live in a manner not unworthy of it. 'Light,' he says, 'is risen, not to the sinner, but to the just.'⁵ For as the sun is risen not for night birds like the bat, nor for those creatures which go about in the dark seeking their meat,⁶ so also, although light is in its own nature bright and shining, and is endowed with the power of lighting, yet all are not partakers of its brightness; 'for every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reprov'd.'⁷ Nay, bad works shut out light, and place an obstacle

³ Mal. iv. 2.⁴ St. John i. 9.⁵ Psalm xcvi. 11.⁶ Psalm ciii. 21.⁷ St. John iii. 20.

before the eyes of the mind, so that they cannot see it; or rather, they close the eyes themselves, or at least dim them, like an internal hurtful humour, or dust cast into them. Which is thus beautifully explained by St. Bernard: "Hateful is the stain which deprives us of the beatific vision, and execrable the negligence through which we defer the cleansing of our eye; for as our bodily vision is obscured by an internal humour, or by dust thrown into it from without, so our spiritual perception is disturbed sometimes by the allurements of our flesh, sometimes by secular curiosity and ambition. But in both cases the only thing which deadens and confuses the sight is sin; nor is there anything else but sin which seems to raise a barrier between the eye and the light, between God and man," when he addresses God in prayer.

Even when past sins have been corrected, and are now being earnestly avoided, there remain certain remnants of former sins, which disturb the eye of the mind and its devotion in prayer. On which subject St. Bernard remarks, in the same place: "Sometimes the bodily eye, when not even a mote remains in it, but every particle has been removed or blown away, yet for a long time seems to be darkened; and this same thing is still more frequently experienced in the interior eye, which belongs to the spirit. For even when you have extracted the barb, the wound is not at once entirely healed, but it becomes necessary first to apply fomentations, and to take pains to heal it. Let no one, then, imagine that, when he has ejected the defilement from his mind, he is immediately restored to purity; but let him know that he still has need of many purifications. Nor is it enough to be washed with water, but he must also be cleansed and tried by fire, that he may say: 'We have passed through fire and water, and Thou hast brought us out into a refreshment.'"⁸

Among the sins which impede devotion and induce aridity, there is one which is common, namely, when we

⁸ Psalm lxxv. 12.

offend any one without a cause, and know that he feels offended. "For this reason alone," says St. Diadochus, "the mind has to forego contemplation, because the Word of knowledge, which necessarily is begotten of charity, does not allow the agitated mind to expand and dilate, so as to become fruitful in contemplations, unless we first reconcile him who, even hastily and without cause, is incensed against us. But if he will not be reconciled, or, again, is at a distance from the place where we are living, then it is of necessity that we should represent in our mind the form of his countenance, and in that way make our peace with him. Thus (if he cannot have him present) in the depth of our heart let us fulfil the law by love.⁹ It is necessary then," he says, "that those who wish to have the perception of God should with thoughts of peace mentally look upon the faces of those who have been unseasonably displeased with them. And when this is done, the mind will not only expatiate in theology, that is, in the science of Divine things without wandering (caused by distractions), but it will rise to the love of God with great confidence, hastening from the second degree to the first without impediment." For sins, whether those contrary to charity, or others, oppose to the mind a great impediment in the way of its seeing clearly, and perceiving Divine things with delight in prayer. "For as light," says St. Bernard, "is in vain shed around eyes which are blind or closed, so 'the sensual man¹⁰ perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God;' for the holy spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful, that is, from an incontinent life; nor will He ever have part with the vanity of the world, since He is the Spirit of Truth. For what fellowship can the wisdom 'that is from above'¹¹ have with 'the wisdom of this world,' which is 'foolishness with God,'¹² or with 'the wisdom of the flesh,' which is 'an enemy to God.'¹³ In order, then, that we may feel the relish of devotion,

⁹ Romans xiii. 10.¹⁰ 1 Cor. ii. 14.¹¹ St. James iii. 17.¹² 1 Cor. iii. 19.¹³ Romans viii. 7.

which excludes aridities, before prayer we must seek for purity of life. For, as St. Bernard testifies, "To him alone is the experience of Divine sweetness conceded, who is of pre-eminent holiness of mind and purity of body." Whence Hugo of St. Victor says, "that God does not grant the sweetness of His affection except to men like St. John the Evangelist, that is, to 'the clean of heart.'" For although the devil imitates the works of God, and sends his pleasures into the hearts of men, so that he may entice and possess their hearts, yet this cannot long endure, nor can it be in the same way in which God solaces with His sweetness the hearts which are humbly pious. So that this is most true, which St. Cyprian thought, as the Deacon Pontius testifies in his life, "that even the hearts of old men may be made fit to receive the full range of truth, if they tread down the concupiscence of the flesh with the whole strength and vigour of purity." And therefore it is with propriety that St. Teresa wrote in her *Book of Foundations* that the minds of those "who strive to have a pure conscience are by this means, more than by anything else, united to God."

Among those stains on our lives which hinder the flow of devotion and of Divine consolations in prayer, the last place must not be assigned to those private friendships which arise from an ill-regulated natural affection. For such intimacies, as St. Lawrence Justinian remarks, "take pleasure in jests, like to rove about, and want to be always hearing and seeing something new, and do not refrain from a busy curiosity about the affairs of others." And in this way, as St. Dorotheus teaches, the tears of devotion are dried up, or rather obstructed; "for it is good," he says, "for a monk who desires to make progress, not to be too intimate with one of his own age, since associations of this kind and prolonged familiarity with our friends and those of our own age commonly destroy the spirit of tears and the fervent purpose of the soul." And St. Lawrence Justinian sets forth the same more clearly,

saying, "the minds of such are distracted, and their compunction dissipated, and grace is withdrawn, their neighbour is not edified, prayer is disturbed, and conscience is darkened." For, as St. Bernard says, "Love is wont to efface love," the human the Divine, the carnal the heavenly. And certainly, if Aristotle considers that it is neither expedient nor possible that there should be perfect friendship with several friends, inasmuch as no one can be possessed by the love of many persons at the same time; so the perfect friendship with God, which very ardent devotion engenders, cannot consist with inordinate affection towards another, but is hindered by it, as we are taught by our daily experience in such matters. For God wills to be loved and worshipped alone. "Thou shalt serve Him only," He said by Moses,¹⁴ and in the Gospel.¹⁵ And St. Bernard testifies: "This Bridegroom is jealous: if perchance thou receivest another lover, if thou art more desirous to please another, He will immediately depart from thee, and will become attached to other brides." And Father Balthasar Alvarez, speaking on the same subject, remarked, "that the heart is captivated by too great affection for creatures, and loses that liberty of the free-born with which God endowed it when He made man; and it becomes incapable and unfit for familiar intercourse with the Lord our God Himself. For such attachments draw our thoughts after them to the person who is loved, and they consume time, and leave no place for God to abide in the heart, so that it cannot adhere and be united to its Creator alone." And for this reason St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi, as our Father Ceparius writes in her Life, inculcated to her nuns, that they should have no excessive affection for anything, even though it were not evil, and that they should examine themselves every month on this point, and should deprive themselves of those things which they had loved in excess.

A second kind of negligence which gives birth to aridities is our coming to prayer with unallayed perturbations

¹⁴ Deut. vi. 13.¹⁵ St. Matt. iv. 10.

of mind which trouble us. "It is requisite," says St. Basil, "that he who desires thoroughly to follow the contemplation of truth, should have the greatest possible freedom from every external disturbance, and that he should enjoy peace and tranquillity within the secret place of his heart, as in an innermost council-chamber. Do you hear the prophet confessing his sin? 'My eye is troubled through indignation.'¹⁶ But it is not only indignation or anger which troubles the soul, but concupiscence and fear and envy also. And generally, all perturbations and immoderate motions confuse and disturb the keenness and clearness of the soul. And as we cannot clearly perceive visible things with a dimmed eye so no one is enabled to attain to a knowledge of truth with a troubled heart."

For this reason St. John Climacus exhorts: "When you come to stand before the presence of God, let your soul have on a tunicle made throughout of the thread *ἀμνησικακία*, that is, the forgetfulness of injuries. Otherwise you will gain nothing even from prayer." And further on: "If you are clothed with all meekness and freedom from anger, you will not have to labour to free your mind from captivity." And St. Diadochus explains this very thing beautifully in another similitude: "When the sea is calm, the fishermen can see to the bottom of it, so that none of the fish are then hidden from them; but when it is tossed by winds, it hides under its turbid waves those fishes which it allows to be seen far and near when it is calm and tranquil. Whence it comes to pass that the fisherman cannot exercise his craft; and this, too, is wont to happen to the mind which is engaged in contemplation, when its depths are troubled by unjust anger."

But it is not anger alone which produces this effect; but other things as well, which, however, can be repressed by the aid of Divine grace. "When the soul is stirred by anger," says the same St. Diadochus, "or is clouded from the effect of gluttony, or is affected with grievous anguish,

¹⁶ Psalm vi. 8.

the mind is unable to retain the remembrance of God, even though the soul strive to compel it to do so. In fact the whole mind, darkened by the vehemence of its perturbations, entirely loses, in consequence, for a time its power of perception. And thus the desire of the soul is unable so to imprint its seal (that is, move the will to desire efficaciously to avoid that which is evil, and to seek that which is good), so that the mind shall retain faithfully the scene of its contemplation, so much is the memory impaired by the violence of its perturbations. But if it is once set free from such perturbations, although for a little time distractions may steal in upon the fervour of the soul, yet soon, by using its best skill, it ardently lays hold of its salutary and most desirable prize; for now it has grace itself (the Holy Ghost) meditating along with the soul, and crying out: 'Lord Jesus.' Even so the mother teaches her little boy, and practises with him his father's name, until she accustoms him to it, till at last the little boy, even in its sleep, instead of some other infantine cry, pronounces clearly the name of father. Therefore the Apostle says: 'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings.'¹⁷ For as regards the attaining of perfection in the virtue of prayer, we are but little children, and are entirely dependent upon His aid; so that when His sweetness, greater than can be described, mingles with all our thoughts and overflows them with delight, we are roused with all our affection to the remembrance and the love of God; so that as it is in Him we call God our Father, as St. Paul testifies in the same place, so through Him we are enabled to cry, without intermission, *Abba, Father.*"

A third kind of negligence which gives birth to aridities is an excessive dissipation of mind over earthly things, generally caused by an inordinate affection for them; for, as Pope St. Gregory says, "the mind can never be drawn to

¹⁷ Rom. viii. 26.

vigorous internal contemplation, unless it is first by a great effort made insensible to the tumult of earthly desires." But when to the inordinate desire of earthly things there is added an effusion of the mind on external things, then still less can devotion in prayer be expected on our part. "It is our own fault," says Thomas à Kempis, "that we are destitute of Divine consolations, or that we experience them too seldom, because we do not seek compunction of heart, nor entirely cast away vain and external things." And elsewhere: "A man is hindered and distracted according as he draws earthly things to himself." And in another place: "Whoever raises his intention with a simple heart upwards to God, and empties himself of all inordinate love to, or dissatisfaction with, any earthly thing, will be most fitted for the reception of grace, and worthy of the gift of devotion." And again: "Many are found to desire contemplation, but are not in earnest to practise what is required for it. It is a great hindrance, that we set too much store on signs and sensible things, and value little perfect mortification." And he had said before: "Few contemplative persons are found for this reason, that few know how to withdraw themselves fully from creatures and perishable things." This separation from creatures, upon which the undevout heart is poured forth, is that wilderness spoken of by the Prophet Osee: "I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart"¹⁸ "For as long," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "as the soul is mingled with crowds, and is tossed about among those who are driven like the waves, it has not a place for God alone, nor is it separated from the mob" of creatures or of unprofitable cares. Even a small attachment to such things, and an excessive care with regard to them, hinder the relish of devotion.

"A small mote," says St. John Climacus, "troubles the eye, and a little care destroys repose; for repose is the laying aside of the senses, the abnegation of unreasonable cares. He who is agitated by cares is like him who, after

¹⁸ Osee ii. 14.

firmly binding his feet, endeavours to walk fast." For that is true which Abbot Daniel says (in Cassian): "Through our own fault, by reason of our previous lukewarmness, because we walked uncircumspectly and remissly, and in our idleness and sloth fed our souls with hurtful imaginations, we have made the soil of our heart bring forth thorns and thistles; and when these grow upon it we are in consequence made sterile, and deprived of all spiritual fruit and contemplation." And Abbot Isaac confirms this, saying: "That prayer may be offered with due fervour and purity, these things are by all means to be observed: First, solicitude about carnal things generally is to be laid aside. Next, not only the care, but the very remembrance of every matter of business is to be entirely dismissed. Detractions also, idle words, excess in speaking, and scurrilities are equally to be cut off. Anger, above all things, and even the perturbation of sadness, must be thoroughly extirpated, and the destructive passion of carnal concupiscence and avarice must be plucked up by the roots."

He explains the same thing admirably in the following chapter: "The condition of the soul," he says, "has been not unfitly compared to the finest down or the lightest feather, which, if they have not been spoiled or damaged by some foreign moisture that has fallen on them, are, by reason of the mobility of their substance, borne aloft naturally by the slightest breeze into the sky; but if they have been rendered heavy by the aspersion or effusion of any moisture, not only will they not be wafted through the air by their natural mobility, but they will be brought down to the ground by the weight of the moisture which they have received: so also our mind, if it has not been weighted by vices and by worldly cares, or corrupted by its own habit of hurtful lust, will, as though raised by the natural power of its purity, be lifted by the slightest breath of spiritual meditation to the things that are above; and leaving low and earthly things, will be borne up to those which are heavenly and invisible." And this doctrine he confirms in another place. And Pope

St. Gregory says: "We are often willingly occupied with the cares of the world; and after this we endeavour to pray; but in vain the mind raises itself to heavenly things; because the weight of earthly anxiety has sunk it into the depths, and its face does not show clean in prayer, because it is stained by the mire of thoughts most base." Hence Abbot Moses (in Cassian), discussing the various methods and subjects of Divine contemplation, "by which God is seen or held by the pure soul's eyesight," says, "no one will long retain these, in whom there still lives anything of carnal affections; for God says: "Thou canst not see My face: for man shall not see Me and live;"¹⁹ that is, when given to this world and to earthly affections. And Abbot Serenus says: "We shall know by our own experience that we can adhere to the Lord, if once we have mortified our wills and cut off the desires of this world." And St. Thomas names as the second of two hindrances to contemplation "the disturbances of our external occupations." But even without occupations, mere thoughts about the world, if wilfully indulged, hinder the course of prayer. For St. Macarius testifies, "that thoughts of this kind distract the mind to earthly and corruptible things, and suffer us not to love God or to retain the remembrance of the Lord." Therefore St. Leo wishes "our soul to keep silence from all the noise of earthly cares, that it may rejoice in holy meditations and delights. But if in this life it is difficult to abide in this state, yet it may frequently be resumed, so that we may be oftener and longer engaged in spiritual things than in carnal. And when we spend longer time on these better cares, even our temporal actions turn into incorruptible riches."

To this head we must refer the tendency of the tongue to loquacity; for this too hinders the pious relish of prayer. Therefore St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi was wont to say, "that it was impossible for a religious soul which does not delight in silence to have a relish for Divine things." But

¹⁹ Exodus xxxiii. 20.

as the tendency of the mind to creatures hinders the devotion of prayer, so the contrary disposition greatly aids in uniting the mind to God.

CHAPTER IX.

Distracting occupations not to be declined from fear of aridities.

You will say, if these things are true, neither our Superiors, nor our Procurators, no, nor scholastics intent upon learning, will ever be able to pray devoutly. For, before entering upon their prayers, they are bound to be anxious about the right performance of their duties; and these cannot be performed without care for earthly things. And the same must be thought of lay-brothers who are employed about temporal things. Whence St. Basil says, "that anxiety and care about those things which are material, greatly distract the mind and soul."

I answer first: If we have taken pains and discharged our duties with care and diligence, according to the counsel of St. Bernard, and the example of our holy Father Ignatius, who, as Maffei testifies in his Life, "was accustomed not to give himself up to business, but to lend himself to it;" we shall be able to pray no less devoutly than if we were settled in the most remote wilderness, and separated from every distracting occupation. For, as Pope St. Gregory says, "There is a necessary agreement between these things, so that work is sustained by prayer, and prayer by work. Hence Jeremias says: 'Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to the Lord in the heavens.'¹ He lifts up his heart with his hands who strengthens his prayer by works. For whoever prays, but refuses to work, lifts up his heart, but not his hands. And whoever works, but does

¹ Lam. iii. 41.

not pray, lifts up his hands, and not his heart." It is, therefore, possible for those who are occupied in distracting works, to be very devout in them. And this Cassian shows from the example of the Egyptian monks. "Thus," he says, "the work of their hands is incessantly plied by them privately in their cells, but yet so that the meditation of Psalms or of other Scriptures is never wholly omitted." Yea, by the very labours of their hands they prepared themselves for consolations and for concentrated contemplation. "For they believed," says the same writer, "that the longer they were intent upon their work and labour, the more they were earning for the eye of the mind a high purity in spiritual contemplations." For the judgment of St. Bernard is true: "A serious and prudent mind prepares itself for every labour, and yet is not dissipated in it, but rather is thereby more collected into itself; since it always has before its eyes not so much its action as what it intends by its action, and therefore it has regard to the end for which every work is completed."

And the truth of this St. Bernard proved in himself; for although he was not a hermit, but was employed by the Supreme Pontiffs in laborious legations, and was drawn away in various directions in the government of his Order, yet, as we read in his Life, "in the strength of the Spirit, he was at the same time wholly employed in external labours, and yet had his heart wholly free for God; on the one side nourishing his sense of duty, on the other his devotion. In the time of labour, he was also inwardly praying or meditating, without intermission of his outward labour; and he laboured outwardly without loss of interior sweetness." And in another place his recollectedness of mind in the midst of distracting labours is thus commended: "He had made himself so entirely the servant of all, that he seemed to belong to the whole world; yet had such care of his conscience, that he might have been given to the care and custody of his heart alone."

And in this respect the promise of our Lord to St. Gertrude may bring comfort to those who, for God's sake, discharge distracting duties in religious houses, while their companions are free for sacred duties, whether the celebration of Masses, or the recitation of the Divine Office, and the like. For when St. Gertrude was praying in a certain chapel, and saw Christ our Lord at the time of the Sacrifice of the Mass, "shedding rays of wonderful splendour over some persons in the community, and felt wonderful joy and delight at the sight, she, being anxious about other persons in the community, said to the Lord, 'Since, O Lord, Thine abounding compassion hath now bestowed upon me the grace of incredible sweetness, what dost Thou give to those who have to labour incessantly in external things, and enjoy less of these gifts?' To which the Lord replied: 'I anoint them with balsam even when they are, as it were, asleep.' And when she began to meditate upon the efficacy of this balm, and wondered greatly how they who did not exercise themselves in spiritual things could have equal fruit with those who did; because balsam, which renders bodies anointed with it incorruptible, has much the same effect whether it is applied to those who are asleep, or those who are awake; she received a more simple similitude as an illustration of what was meant, in this way: When a man eats, his whole body is strengthened in each of its members, yet only his mouth is gratified by the taste of the food; so too when a special grace is given to the elect, through our Lord's boundless mercy, merit is increased in all His members, and especially in those who belong to the same community, because their labours are united to the devotions of their companions; except, indeed, those who defraud themselves of it by envy (because they see that they are not clerics nor have a place in the choir), or through an evil will." Moreover, involuntary distraction, which arises from labours which are enjoined, will not injure the spiritual man.

And hence St. Teresa, although she prescribed to her

nuns that, whilst they were engaged in external employments by command of the Superior, and from a motive of charity, they should not long for solitude as though it were better for them, yet very properly adds immediately: "I consider it a greater blessing from the Lord to have passed one day in the lowly knowledge of ourselves (even although it may have cost us many afflictions and labours), than to have spent many in prayer; and this so much the more, because one who truly and sincerely loves, can never be without a present memory of the object beloved. It would certainly be hard if prayer could be made only in corners and in solitude. If a convenient place for solitude is denied us, we can yet be alone, O Lord, delighting with Thee, in the solitude and cell of our heart." "When the Saviour," remarks St. Ambrose, "tells us, 'Enter into thy chamber,'² you must understand not a chamber shut in by walls, in which your members are confined, but the chamber which is within you, in which your thoughts are shut up, in which your mental powers reside. This chamber for your prayer is with you everywhere, and is everywhere secret: no one sees or knows it but God alone."

St. Chrysostom taught the same: "Let no one tell me," he says, "that a man who is engaged in secular affairs, and in the market-place, cannot pray continually throughout the day (not only for an hour or two, as we do), for he can, and quite easily, even although he is seated on the tribunal. Wherever thou art, thou canst set up thine altar—if thou only offerest a fervent mind, thou hast attained to perfection in prayer. Wherever thou art, pray. Thou art a temple, seek not for a place of prayer. For God has not regard to the place: one thing He requires: a fervent mind and a pure soul." And St. Basil, who both lauded for many years and practised the life of solitude, withdrawn from the business of the world, testifies the same: "He who is truly a philosopher, as his body is the home of

² St. Matt. vi. 6.

his cares, and the strong castle of his soul, whether accident take him to the market-place, or he is in the most splendid assembly, or on a mountain, or in the fields, or in the thickest crowd, always remains unmoved in this natural monastery of his ; since his mind is inwardly self-recollected, and philosophizes on the matters which pertain to his office. And whereas it may easily be that he who keeps himself within private walls, if he is negligent, may be carried abroad by the disturbance of his mind ; so, on the other hand, he whose business is in the market-place, if he keep watch within his mind, may be as though he were placed in the greatest solitude ; if he have his thoughts turned only on himself and on God, and admit through his senses absolutely none of those perturbations which arise from things sensible, and are wont to make their way into our minds." And therefore Abbot Ampo said well : "As the bee, wherever it goes, makes honey ; so the monk, wherever he goes, if only he goes for the work of God, may bring home the honey of good deeds." And that which Quintilian advises in order to happy success in studies, should be observed in prayer : "If you direct your attention to your work with all your might, none of those things which come before your eyes or your ears will reach your mind."

For this reason our holy Father St. Ignatius, as Ribade-neira tells us, "was never disturbed in prayer by any noise (if it came from no fault of his own)." Greater is the power of Divine grace than that of human genius and industry. Wherefore, if Seneca, trusting only in the power of nature, was never distracted from his studies by any voice, or noise, or groaning, or hissing, as he tells us himself ; much more may we, by the help of Divine grace, have our mind collected and ordered in distracting duties and disturbing labours, provided that while engrossed in such duties, as St. Nilus observes, "we only give to earthly things for the sake of the body so much care as necessity requires." As, on the other side, he says further on in the same place : "If, through sloth, we leave the right hand of action unem-

ployed, we at the same time extinguish even the lustre of contemplation." St. John Climacus writes, respecting the cook of a certain monastery, who had to provide for two hundred and thirty (besides guests), that he had the gift of tears in that distracting occupation, and when some one entreated him, that he would vouchsafe to explain to him how he had merited such a grace, he thus replied: "I have never considered that I was serving men, but God, and holding myself unworthy of any repose, from the contemplation of this fire I constantly experience contrition at the remembrance of the everlasting fire." And thus the duty of the kitchen, leaving no day free from its distracting labour, does not distract if its work is properly performed. A like example is contained in the Franciscan Annals: "A certain cook had been accustomed, after he had discharged the duties of the kitchen, to betake himself to a hill, for the purpose of prayer, at which time a great sweetness of heavenly consolation was poured out upon him. And he began to think that this might be attained in richer abundance if he were freed from the distractions of the kitchen. He goes therefore to his Superior, and asks to be released from the duties of the kitchen. But when he was freed from them, and gave himself up to the meditation of Divine things, he felt none of those Divine consolations in which he abounded when he was engaged in the labours of the kitchen. Wherefore, acknowledging his error, he returned to his culinary duties, and when he had done this, the heavenly grace of the devotion which he had lost returned again, and even in greater plenty, when he discharged anew the duties of brotherly charity and humility." Let no one then ascribe his aridities in prayer to his distracting duties, but to some negligence, either in the discharge of those duties, or to some fault which has been committed in meditation itself.

We have other examples amongst ourselves of the same thing, both past and present. For who doubts that our holy Father St. Ignatius, when he founded the Society, and

after founding governed it, was engaged in numerous affairs of great importance, and this with the closest application of mind, and yet he was so devout, that not only in the secret recesses of his chamber, but "from looking at a flower, or a herb, or the most insignificant thing, he was immediately carried most sweetly to the thought and love of God," as we read in his Life ; and, what is more remarkable, even when he was eating, when he was walking through the city, when he was conversing with others, and conducting business, he saw Divine lights and celestial visions which in no way hindered the works which he had in his hand ; as we are told by Ribadeneira and Orlandini. Father Polanco, although he was Secretary of the Society, and at the same time a preacher, and taught catechism, as Orlandini tells us, and besides, at the same time, discharged the duties of Procurator General of the Society and of the house, and all the while did work in the kitchen and the refectory, and was besides all this engaged in writing the history of the Society, and had to answer all letters in the name of St. Ignatius ; yet, as I have heard from the old Fathers of the Society, he suffered no wanderings of mind in prayer.

Father Paul Camers, when he was sent to the East Indies as companion of St. Francis Xavier, and sometimes had to replace him there in his absence, was immersed in so many cares in propagating the glory of God, and in caring for the salvation of all, that, as Sacchini writes, it could hardly even be imagined how many labours he underwent, and this with great constancy and cheerfulness of mind, not only in governing the members of our Society who were dispersed throughout India, but also in gaining many worldly men from a sinful to a holy life, and teaching day and night the rules of a virtuous life to the young men of various nations who were drawn to the Seminary, enduring all the while all the annoyances which resulted from the education of a number of youths of tender age and different nationalities, and bearing with a maternal sweetness the discord and clashing of barbarous manners and languages.

Besides this, he watched over the instruction of the catechumens with exceeding care, and baptized them with his own hand, so that hardly any one begot more to Christ ; and afterwards he joined many of them in holy matrimony, and protected them from the injuries of the powerful, and strove to elevate, to train and civilize them. As long as he lived, moreover, he superintended the hospital with watchful care and earnest labour. Moreover, the chief management of the house of the catechumens, both men and women, was committed to him. And in addition to all these labours, he was as constant in hearing confessions as though he had no other charge. "And yet," says Sacchini, "he attended to all these duties in such a manner that his soul seemed to be removed far from earth and from the body, and to be living rather in Heaven." For the Divine Goodness makes use of such charges, when undertaken not by one's own will, but by the will of one's Superiors, as faggots for enkindling, not for extinguishing, the fervour of intense devotion. To which purpose St. Thomas has a pious reflection, when speaking of the passage of the Apostle, in which he says : "No man, being a soldier of God, entangleth himself with secular businesses, that he may please Him to Whom he hath engaged himself."³ "He does not say," remarks St. Thomas, "simply 'is entangled,' but 'entangleth himself.' For a man entangles himself when he assumes business without piety and without necessity ; but when a duty is fulfilled which is imposed by piety, or by authority (as of one's superiors), then a man does not 'entangle himself,' but he 'is entangled' by this obligation." And to such an one God affords succour, that his devotion may not be hindered, and if it is hindered, no harm will be done, for the reasons which have been mentioned, and for others which have still to be stated. Our St. Aloysius, although most diligent in his studies, prayed so devoutly, that he was never interrupted by distractions, and [abounded in heavenly consolations, and he felt as much difficulty in

³ 2 Tim. ii. 4.

calling his mind away from the consideration of heavenly things, as others do in collecting themselves and fixing their attention. We read the same of St. Stanislaus in his novitiate. Father Francis Suarez, although he was all his life long more immersed in books than any other member of our Society, yet because he only lent himself to his books, and did not give himself to them, whenever he took his Breviary in his hands to say his Hours, after the custom of priests, found that all cares departed from him, so that no business of whatever importance distracted his mind or his thoughts from attention to prayer; to such an extent he had mastered the agitations of the stormy soul."

Alphonsus Rodriguez, who discharged the office of porter for almost forty years, had his mind so fixed on God in all his actions, although they were very distracting, that all the distractions of a day put together hardly took up as much time as a single recitation of the Apostles' Creed. And, indeed, once when ordered by his Superior to withdraw his mind from the contemplation of heavenly things, when he was afflicted with a dangerous disease to which such mental attention was injurious, he was quite unable to comply, finding his mind involuntarily carried away to heavenly contemplations; on which account he obtained that he might be released from this command of his Superior. It is, therefore, no wonder that Father Jerome Natalis, (who was the first whom St. Ignatius chose to promulgate and explain his Constitutions, and whom he had also made Vicar General of the whole Society when he was himself indisposed, and who was afterwards made Assistant of the Society, and sent by Father Laynez as Visitor of the Spanish provinces with the power of the General himself), it is no wonder, I say, that he was wont to envy both the novices and our lay-brothers, as Father Rodriguez tells us, since they were free from studies and cares, and able to give themselves to prayer throughout the whole day; although these latter had, in an especial manner, to discharge perpetually distracting duties.

And therefore, distracting duties and employments are not to be avoided in order to get rid of distractions. Neither must we hope that they will all be cut off by the help of solitude, because, although, as St. Basil writes, "solitude contributes great assistance to outward work, inasmuch as it usually allays the perturbations of the mind, and thus gives opportunity for eradicating them from the soul by the power of reflection;" yet by itself alone solitude cannot accomplish this. And hence the same Saint, at the beginning of the Epistle from which we have quoted, writing from his solitude, thus speaks: "Although I spend my days and my nights in this remote retirement; although I regard all civic employments as left behind me, as well as six hundred other sources of misery, I have not yet been able to leave myself behind. For I am affected much as those are, who, unaccustomed to the sea, are sorely afflicted by sickness. For such men when they have been disturbed by a great vessel striking violently against their boat or skiff, and have got clear, yet they do not escape from sickness, for the discomfort will follow them wherever they go. And something of the same kind happens to us, since we take with us our domestic troubles among whatever people we go, and in every place we find disturbance. And therefore we are not greatly helped by this solitude. And the reason is this, that solitude by itself does not destroy the roots and springs of distractions and aridities, which for the most part proceed from the unregulated motions of passions implanted in us and from former evil habit."

"For the plagues of vices of this kind," says St. Bernard, writing on the solitary life to the monks of Mont de Dieu, "follow the solitary, even into the most remote solitude. And as solid virtue, which is firmly established in the mind, does not desert its possessor in a crowd, so vice confirmed by habit does not leave its slave free in a solitude. For unless habits are combated with continued effort and wise labour, they may be restrained,

but can hardly be conquered; and however the mind may arrange for itself, in whatever solitude it may dwell, they will not allow the privacy or silence of the heart to exist"—such as is found in devout prayer, and sensible devotion. Hence St. John Climacus, having experience of the advantages and disadvantages both of the solitary and of the conventual life, writes: "Conventual life offers resistance to spiritual sloth (which is essentially a source of aridity and prayer); but this inseparable companion is everlastingly present with the solitary man, nor will it forsake him before death, but will daily assail him as long as he lives. It has looked into the cell of the anchorite and has laughed; and it has come near and set up its tent beside him." For this reason distracting duties and places need not be avoided in order to escape from dryness and spiritual sloth, and in this respect are not less eligible than solitude. Hence, Abbot Moses, as quoted by Cassian, says: "It is proved by experience that the assault of sloth is not to be avoided by flight, but is to be overcome by resistance." And certainly distracting duties, if they are rightly discharged, are so far from hindering the devotion of prayer, that they rather dispose us for it.

And therefore St. Lawrence Justinian, who was experienced in contemplation, when enumerating those things which "dispose the mind for prayer and incline God's mercy to hear," rightly puts in the third place distracting occupations which are undertaken for God: "Exercise in the works of an active life," he says, "prepares, in no small degree, the mind for the gift and relish of prayer and contemplation; so that he who first makes good progress in an active life, rises easily to the life of contemplation; and he is rightly raised up to this who is found useful in the other." And all those are useful to others who are engaged either in the office of Martha or in the providing of things which are necessary for the Community, from the love of God, or from the duty of holy obedience. So that the most simple Religious, I mean

the least educated lay-brothers who cannot even read, may, according to the judgment of St. Macarius, be most devout in their distracting duties, as well as others who are priests and are employed in the ministries of religion in the service of the people, so long as they have custody of themselves. And of what nature this should be we are told by St. Basil in the epistle already quoted: "A calm state of mind," he says, "is attained when neither the tongue speaks those things which are merely human (such as idle, curious, and useless things), nor the eyes look upon the brightness of colour in bodies, nor the graceful proportion of limbs; neither do the ears make the intention of the soul to languish because they are kept on the stretch to listen to melodies which are arranged merely to bring pleasure, nor by giving heed to the ridiculous or scurrilous words of jocular men, a thing which has a great tendency to destroy the intention or attention of the mind. For the mind, which is neither dissipated from without, nor poured out through the senses on the outer world, returns to itself, and of its own accord (yet by the blessing of Divine grace, not otherwise) immediately rises to the thought of God. Whence it happens that the intellect, thoroughly enlightened by the beauty of God and illuminated from above, is seized with a forgetfulness of nature itself, and never lets the mind sink down to any anxiety about food, or concern about clothing; since, free and disengaged from the care of earthly things, it transfers all its desire to those good things which are acquired by the great conflict."

Hence it happens that rude and uneducated men, uncultivated by learning, often receive by Divine grace more light and solace than those who are endowed with worldly knowledge and learning. "I have seen illiterate men," says St. Mark the Hermit, "who had a relish for humble employments, made wiser than the wise." "For love itself," as St. Gregory teaches, "is the knowledge of God," that is, by producing it, and by bringing to the mind, which is of itself uncultivated, Divine light and an enjoyable

knowledge of Divine things. And St. Bonaventure, in his *Life of St. Francis*, speaks of Brother Giles as one who was illiterate, but wonderfully devout. The same recollectedness of mind had been obtained from God by a member of our Society of holy memory, John Berchmans,⁴ as is related in his Life.

So St. Catharine of Siena, when driven by her mother from her cell, whither she had betaken herself for prayer, and discharging, by her mother's command, the duties of the maid-servants in the house, kept her mind in union with her Heavenly Spouse, because, in the midst of engagements and disturbances, she entered within herself as into the cell of her soul (which by Divine inspiration she had spiritually raised within herself), and there devoutly prayed. And St. Ambrose observed that David knew and possessed such a cell: "The Prophet David," he says, "has taught us to walk about in our heart, as in a spacious house, and to converse with it as with a good companion, even as he said to himself, and talked with himself: 'I said, I will take heed to my ways.'" And elsewhere the same St. Ambrose writes: "Thy chamber is the secret place of thy heart: thy conscience is thy chamber. There, then, pray in secret." And St. Bernard, recommending such a cell, says: "Go apart, but with the mind, not with the body; by your intention, by devotion, in the spirit: it is the solitude of the mind and spirit alone which is commended to thee. Thou art alone, if thou dost not think on common things, if thou dost not affect things present, if thou dost despise what many regard, if thou dost disdain what all desire; if thou avoidest disputes; if thou dost not feel losses; if thou dost not remember injuries: otherwise, even when thou art alone in body, thou art not really alone. Dost thou see that when alone thou mayest be in a crowd, and when thou art in a multitude thou art alone?" And such recollectedness he elsewhere calls the "chamber of the heart." And St. Lawrence

⁴ Since beatified by Pope Pius IX.

Justinian gives it the same name in his book on chaste wedlock and on the solitary life.

In this sense, perhaps, it was that Clement of Alexandria wrote: "Man, consecrate thyself as a temple." And St. Peter Chrysologus taught the same, recommending a man "to come from himself into himself." And St. Basil speaks of "a natural monastery;" and referring to the forty-third Psalm, speaks of "the secrets of the heart" and "an inward chamber of consultation."⁵ Such a cell Abbot Abraham calls "a beautiful abode which David, desiring to fashion in his heart for the Lord, said: 'I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth.'⁶ And St. Basil teaches us how this may be done, in commenting upon those words of the Psalm, "Adore ye the Lord in His holy court,"⁷ saying: "As a man adorns himself and furnishes a house for the Lord, that he may be a temple of God, so also he can inclose on all sides the outer court and vestibule, protecting himself, as it were, with a wall, and adoring God in himself by his life, by his discourse, by Divine thoughts; since he has in himself a sufficient and suitable means of offering that worship, as well from the structure of his body as by governing the actions of the powers of the soul." And St. Nilus gave this counsel to others: "Since each one of us has a church at home in his own mind, we ought also to offer sacrifices in that church." And St. Chrysostom says: "Wherever thou art, thou canst set up thine altar; if thou can only show fervour of soul, thou wilt attain to the perfection of prayer. Wherever thou art, pray: thou art a temple: seek no other place." And St. Climacus: "If any one can command the tears of the soul, he will find every place suitable for weeping; but if, when alone, he is still occupied in external affairs, let him not cease to look out for fitting places and states of mind. And the like is taught by Abbot Isaac (in Cassian) and by Pope St. Gregory. And thus oftentimes,

⁵ Psalm xliiii. 22.

⁶ Psalm xxv. 8.

⁷ Psalm xxviii. 2.

as St. Macarius has observed, "an illiterate person kneels and falls to prayer, and his mind experiences delights and digs so deep that the obstructing wall of vices is broken down, and he penetrates to spiritual vision and wisdom, such as the powerful and the wise, or great orators do not attain to, since they never reach or understand the keenness of that mind which is occupied with Divine mysteries." And Vincentius Mainardus, in his *Life of St. Antoninus, Bishop of Florence*, writes of him in the following manner: "Never was there such a pressure of business, or such a complexity of affairs rushing in, as could in the least prevent the man who was full of God from being wholly borne up on high to behold heavenly things. For he always had some hidden corner in his mind which he preserved inviolate, into which the noise of business and the anxiety of pastoral cares were never allowed to creep; so that whenever he desisted from the transaction of business, he might have recourse to it as an asylum of perfect safety, turning from this 'outward man' to what St. Paul calls the 'inward man.'"⁸

I answer in the second place: When distractions arising from the discharge of our duties, through no fault of our own destroy the sweetness of devotion in prayer, they in no way injure such prayer; on the contrary, they often render it no less meritorious than is prayer which is full of spiritual sweetnesses, as well because of the struggle which is undergone in expelling the distractions, as because of the sense of weariness which is overcome, and because of the conformity to the Divine will which pours out this dryness as a bitter chalice offered to us, and also because of the perseverance in this trial which is kept up by the love of God, and is more noble and heroic than perseverance in meditation which is overflowing with every consolation, as has already been pointed out. Let such console themselves with that counsel of God which was given to Father Balthasar Alvarez, who, when he was lovingly complaining

⁸ 2 Cor. iv. 16; Ephes. iii. 16.

before God of the want of time for prayer, heard the Lord saying to him : "Be at peace, and hold it sufficient for thee that I use thy labour, although thou art not with Me." After hearing this voice of God, he remained peaceful and joyful.

And on this subject St. Lawrence Justinian has written : "When holy men are intent upon spiritual exercises and are unable, at pleasure, to raise themselves on high, but are, even against their will and effort, dragged down to 'the things that are upon the earth' by the susceptibility of the flesh, or through the use of the senses and the things of sense, or by the assaults of impure spirits, as well as by the daily necessity of providing for bodily wants, this is appointed for them by the goodness of God, so that the duties which they cannot discharge directly towards God, it may be sufficient for them to exercise, for His sake, towards their neighbour. For the same commandment requires us to love God and our neighbour, the merit is equal, the affection the same, the end identical, although the works by which we reach it are different." And to this head also belongs the consolation given by St. Climacus to those who discharge distracting duties which are enjoined by Superiors : "From those," he says, "who live in obedience to His laws, God does not require prayer without any confusion of thoughts. Be not therefore saddened if, whilst you pray, the enemy creeps in most craftily, and secretly, like a thief, draws aside the intention of the mind ; but be of good courage, so long as you always strive to bring back your slippery mind. For to angels alone it is given not to be exposed to thieves of this kind."

This indeed St. Climacus says with some degree of exaggeration ; for it is certain, from our ecclesiastical histories, that some servants of God (such as our St. Stanislaus Kostka, and others whom I have mentioned in my treatise on Perfect Prayer) spent many days and many years, without being drawn away from fervent attention of mind, giving many hours each day to meditation ; but even if they had been distracted, it would not have hurt them. "O blessed

obedience!" once exclaimed St. Teresa, "and blessed distraction which has been caused by obedience!" And therefore St. Basil rightly warned us: "If any monk says that his going into public, or journeys undertaken on account of the necessary and common wants of the brotherhood, are a hindrance to him in the practice of piety, and therefore refuses to go out of doors, he has not attained to the knowledge of perfect obedience, nor ever will until he perceives that he can never arrive at the perfection of this virtue by softness of this kind. Let him for the future contemplate the examples of holy men, and consider how those who cultivated most perfectly this virtue were they who, when ordered to accomplish anything, however difficult, never refused even the least command, or struggled against it; and, taught by their example, let him learn the perfection of obedience."

And further, it will conduce to the consolation of those who are appointed to distracting duties in the house of God or elsewhere, and cannot experience that sweetness of devotion in which others abound, to remember the revelation made to St. Gertrude, when praying for a certain illiterate person "who was distressed because she seemed to be hindered in prayer by the various cares of the office committed to her. Whence, when the Saint prayed for her, she received this answer from our Lord: I have not chosen her in order that she should serve Me only one hour of the day, but rather for this, that she should be with Me the whole day without any interval; that is, that she should perform all her works continually to My praise, with the same intention with which she wished to pray. And over and above, let her add this devotion, that in all her works with which she labours in the discharge of her duty, she shall always desire that those who make use of her labours may not only be refreshed in body, but also be drawn in spirit to My love, and be strengthened in every good thing. And as often as she does this, so often she seems to Me to be seasoning, as it were, each particular

dish of her works and labours with a most savoury condiment."

Finally, if from the infirmity and unwatchfulness of our nature distracting duties should lead us into any slight negligence, by our own fault, St. Basil offers this consolation: "If through continuous debility you are unable to pray, force yourself as much as possible, and place your mind constantly before God, intent on Him and collected within itself, and God will forgive you, for this reason, that it is not from irreverence, but through infirmity, that you cannot appear before Him as you ought." And let us remember, that not only does the inroad of involuntary distractions, occasioned, without fault on our part, by the demon, or by any other cause, not hinder the fruit of prayer, as was shown above; but even the total omission of prayer, when it happens either by the command of a Superior, or on account of any pressing necessity of serving a neighbour which does not admit of delay, is highly acceptable to God.

For, as St. Teresa well wrote, although herself addicted in the highest degree to the most excellent kind of prayer and the most perfect contemplation: "Let not the exercise of obedience nor the advantage of our neighbour, to which charity obliges us, be hindered by prayer. For if even the least occasion presents itself of exercising these two virtues, it demands of us to take from ourselves and give up to it that time which we desire so much to offer to God—that is, as we think we are doing while we meditate on Him in solitude, and are eager to rejoice and delight in those delights which He pours forth upon us. But to leave such prayer for any opportunity of exercising those two virtues, is to refresh God Himself and to pour out delights upon Him, and to do for His sake that which He once described with His own most holy mouth, when He said: 'As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me.'⁹ And as regards obedience, He will have us take no other way. For whoever desires to love Him well must follow

⁹ St. Matt. xxv. 40.

Him Who became 'obedient unto death.'¹⁰ Now if this be the case, if this be true, whence come that weariness and that peevishness which we often feel when we have not been for the greater part of the day with a recollected mind absorbed in God, although we have in the meantime been occupied in those other duties? There are two causes of it. The first and chief is self-love, which insinuates itself here and mixes itself up with our thoughts in so subtle a manner that it can hardly be perceived: so that we wish to please ourselves rather than God. For it is certainly more sweet and pleasant for any soul, after it begins to 'taste and see that the Lord is sweet,'¹¹ to have the body at rest and free from labour, and that it should enjoy inward delights. Oh, the charity of those who love this Lord truly and sincerely! They wish not to enjoy this rest, if so they may hope to help even a little, or in any way, even one only soul to progress in spiritual things and to love God more, or cause some consolation to come to it, or that it may be delivered from any danger. And when they can do nothing by deeds or by working (as hermits and nuns), leaving that sweetness of contemplation, "they take care to do it, at least by prayers (poured out for others), compassionating the loss of those souls, and rejoicing that for their sakes they are deprived of the delights of contemplation; and this loss they count gain, because, forgetting their own joys, they think of nothing else than how they may better and more perfectly fulfil the will of the Lord, Who 'gave to every one commandment concerning his neighbour.'¹² And thus, too, it is in the matter of obedience. For, even although the Superior himself be not solicitous to lead his brethren by the paths in which the soul gets greater gain, but only to see those things carried out which he judges necessary and expedient for the community, yet Thou, my God, hast a care of that (obedient) soul, and so orderest those things which have to be done, that souls find that they grow in spirit, and have made

¹⁰ Philipp. ii. 8.¹¹ Psalm xxxiii. 9.¹² Eccles. xvii. 12.

great progress, by faithfully obeying commands of this kind; and, indeed, they are afterwards not a little astonished at it, not understanding whence it has come. Therefore, when obedience has required you to give attention to external things and so wholly to spend yourselves, be persuaded that the Lord is present with you, even in the kitchen amidst the jars and pots, and works with you both outwardly and inwardly."

She adds further that, by leaving prayer and solitude, the mind is disposed for perfect contemplation and union with God, as a reward for that loss and abandonment of prayers, which is undergone from obedience. "I tell you," she says, "that you are not, by this loss, the less disposed for obtaining that true union of which we have spoken, which consists in this, that my will is conformed and identified with the will of God. This is the union which I desire, and which I wish that you should all have; not some delicious absorptions to which some have given the name of union. But even this state will be true union, provided it follows after that which I have described. But if after this state of rapture only very little obedience is attained, and self-will is still ruling, then this is union with self-love and not with the will of God." And at the end of the chapter she sets this forth more forcibly: "Believe me," she says, "the soul does not gain profit from many hours and a long space of time spent in prayer, when either the will of our Superior or charity towards our neighbour calls to other works, or requires it to give itself earnestly to works of obedience or charity; for these wonderfully contribute to its being rendered, in the shortest possible space of time, better disposed for the kindling of God's love than if those duties were neglected and it were to spend much time and many hours in meditation."

This truth is confirmed by a remarkable story told by Father Anthony de Balinghem, concerning Clement Caponius, a lay-brother of the Order of St. Dominic, "who, although he was of a very noble family, yet lived contented

with the lot of Martha and of a lay-brother. He delighted in all the more humble services: whence Christ our Lord, Master of humility, and Angels who love that virtue, frequently appeared to him. On one occasion—when he was more occupied than was his wont in these exercises, and so before the dinner hour had been unable to discharge the duty of prayer—while the others were dining he was kneeling and saying his prayers before an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and there he heard a voice, coming forth from the image, which told him to go to the refectory and do as the other brothers were doing, for his good will would be most pleasing to her when he was occupied in the duties of charity, particularly by the order of his Superiors, even though he had been unable to finish the saying of his prayers. There would be time enough for him to finish that duty after dinner.”

CHAPTER X.

The neglect to prepare the points of meditation often a cause of aridities.

A FOURTH and direct kind of negligence arises from our not having pre-arranged or carefully prepared the points which are to be considered in meditation, so that we come to it unprepared, against the admonition of the Holy Spirit: "Before prayer prepare thy soul; and be not as a man that tempteth God."¹

Now he tempts God, according to the judgment of St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure, who betakes himself to prayer without preparation. "Those who intend to come into the presence of an earthly king," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "ought so to dispose themselves that there may be nothing disorderly in their deportment or language, which should displease the mind of the prince; and this should be much more carefully attended to by those who desire to stand before the King of men and angels." "It is certain," says St. Teresa, "that we ought not to speak to a prince with the same want of pre-meditation and preparation as might be suitable in conversing with a clown." How much more when we have to address Him Who is King of kings and Lord of lords! "Let none of us," says St. John Climacus, "who may set out to appear in the presence of our King, or to hold converse with Him, make this approach without preparation, lest perchance He, seeing us from afar without proper equipments and the apparel which is fitting for the eye of a king, should order

¹ Ecclus. xviii. 23.

His servants and attendants to bind us and cast us far from His presence into exile, and upbraid us to our face with our disconnected prayers." And to avoid this, our holy Father Ignatius has forewarned us in the Book of Exercises to prepare certain points for each meditation, after the model of the points which he has prescribed in that Book of Exercises.

Hence St. Charles Borromeo, although he was endowed with a great gift of prayer, when he went through the Exercises of St. Ignatius twice every year, or was visiting holy places, used to beg that one of our Society would give him points of meditation for each hour of his meditations, as is testified in his Life by Jussanus, his domestic chaplain. And in the same way, in his household, the points of meditation for the following day were by his orders read over, the evening before, in the domestic chapel after the examination of conscience. And in the same way he ordered that the points of meditation should be read every evening to his guests, cardinals, bishops, and prelates, as well as secular persons whom he entertained in his palace (of whom there were sometimes as many as thirty or forty). Also when he held provincial synods, he caused the points of mental prayer to be read every evening in his chapel to his suffragan bishops who were present. So too in the time of the plague, the people were assembled in the churches, and meditations read by his order. Sometimes he read them to his household himself. And after his death there were found three or four volumes of points of meditation collected by him for mental prayer, which are now preserved as sacred relics in the library of the Church of Milan, as the same Jussanus tells us.

Thus also that virgin of wonderful sanctity, St. Mary Magdalen dei. Pazzi (as Father Virgil Ceparì writes in her Life), every morning herself gave points of meditation to those virgins whom she superintended in their novitiate. St. Teresa did the same, reading some spiritual book, from

which she culled points to be meditated upon, before she had received that sublime gift of prayer from our Lord, to which she was afterwards elevated. And thus she writes in the *Way of Perfection*: "For more than fourteen years I was in the position of not being at all able to exercise meditation without at the same time reading in a book. And there will be many others in this state and frame of mind; and others too, who cannot meditate, even though they read in a book, but can only pray vocally, and so they stop at this and make no further progress. And some have such volatile minds that they cannot keep fast or hold themselves to anything; but are always restless, and this to such an extent, that when they try to restrain their thoughts so as to think upon God, they immediately run off to six hundred trifles, scruples, and doubts. I know a woman, advanced in years and holy (and God grant that my life may be equal to hers), who has undergone many austerities, and is an eminent handmaid of God. In order to this she has spent very many hours, and even years, in vocal prayer, but can in no way attain to mental prayer; at the utmost she can only attain to this, that she has accustomed herself by degrees to persevere in vocal prayer. And it would be easy to find many others in the same condition; and, if they have humility, I believe it will turn out that these will have gained in the end not less but perhaps quite as much as those who enjoy great consolations; and in one way they are far more safe. For we cannot tell whether those sweetnesses are from God, or whether they are caused by the demon. But the others who receive no sweetness or relish walk in humility, and fear lest they are deprived of enjoyment through their own fault, and are always anxious for further progress; and when they see another shedding but one tear, which they cannot do, they immediately think that they are among the most backward in the service of God; when possibly they are greatly in advance of such an one. For tears, although good, are not in all respects

the best gift ; for there is more security found in humility, mortification, abnegation, and other virtues. And therefore you have no reason for fearing, as though you could not hope to arrive at perfection as well as those who are intensely contemplative. Martha was holy, although she is not said to have been given to contemplation. What, then, do you want more than that you should come to be like that holy virgin who merited so often to receive Christ our Saviour into her house, and to prepare His food, and to wait upon Him, and to sit at table with Him? If, like Magdalene, she had always been absorbed in contemplation, there would have been no one to entertain this Divine Guest at table."

This St. Teresa wrote, and much more to the same effect. Let us therefore leave it to God to lead us in prayer by that way which pleases Him ; while we, on our part, do what we ought, especially by coming to meditation with the matter well prepared. "After the manner of merchants who are seeking earthly gain," says St. Macarius, "we must in many ways and with skill prepare our souls that we may acquire the true and great gain, namely God, Who teaches us to pray in truth. For on this condition God reposes in the good purpose of the soul, making it the throne of His glory, abiding and resting in it." Wherefore, when Cassian, in conversation with Abbot Serenus, complained of his volatility of mind and the wanderings which he suffered in the time of prayer, and attributed this not to his own fault but to the fault of nature, Abbot Serenus, in refuting this opinion, gave as a first remedy for this evil, the preparation of the subject to be meditated upon. "Our mind," he says, "from the very constitution of its nature, can never remain at rest, but must of necessity, unless forethought is used as to where it is to exercise its movements, and on what subjects it is to be continuously employed, from its own mobility, run to and fro, and fly everywhere, until, trained by long exercise and daily practice, it learns by experience what matter it should prepare for its memory,

around which it may revolve in its unwearied flights, and acquire strength by lingering upon it, and so may be able to thrust out the adverse suggestions of the enemy, by which it was distracted, and to remain in that state and condition which it desires." To the same effect is that excellent teaching of St. Bernard: "In such manner as thou hast prepared thyself for God, so will God appear to thee. With the holy He will be holy; with the loving, loving; with the disengaged, disengaged; with the earnest, earnest; with the solicitous, solicitous. Finally He says: 'I love them that love Me; and they that in the morning early watch for Me, shall find Me.'² Thou seest how He not only assures thee of His love, if at least thou lovest Him, but also of His solicitude, which He bears for thee, if He has found thee to be solicitous for Him. Dost thou watch? He also watches. Make what haste thou wilt to anticipate even the early watches, thou wilt find Him, thou wilt not be before Him." But it is a sure sign of solicitude to worship God aright by prayer and in prayer, if he who prepares himself for it, shall have the matter well arranged in points before meditating.

Cicero advises this preparation of matter in other things: "In all business," he says, "before beginning, careful preparation is to be employed." But if this must be done in secular things, how much more in spiritual things, and especially before prayer, which no one can well accomplish by the strength of nature alone. For the Apostle testifies: "We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings," that is, makes us ask, as St. Augustine explains, as well as St. Gregory and others. But the best of all preparations is by the reading of the words (especially those of Sacred Scripture) which are to be meditated upon; because, as St. Basil well says, "Prayers which follow readings, find the mind fresher and more active, as beginning already to burn with desire." And so St. Bernard. "Reading," he says,

² Prov. viii. 17.

“does as it were place solid food before the mouth, meditation breaks and masticates it; prayer creates the relish, contemplation is sweetness itself which delights and refreshes.” And, writing to his sister, he says: “Reading prepares us for prayer.”

The necessity for this preparation is well explained by Abbot Moses (in Cassian) by the illustration of a water-mill. “This exercise of prayer,” he says, “is not unsuitably compared to the action of water-mills, which the rapid flow of water turns round by its force. These can in no way cease from their work while they are driven by the rush of the water; but it is in the power of the miller to decide whether he will have wheat ground, or barley, or darnel. And of course that particular kind of grain will be ground which is thrown in by him who is entrusted with the charge of that work. In the same way the mind, whirled about through the inroads of this present world, by the torrents of temptations which flow in from all sides, can never be without a tide of thoughts, and therefore it must arrange beforehand by careful and diligent study what thoughts it ought either to admit or to provide for itself. For if, as we have said, we continually have recourse to the meditation of Holy Scriptures, and stir up our memory to the remembrance of spiritual things and the desire of perfection, and the hope of future blessedness, of necessity the spiritual reflections which have thence arisen, make the mind linger on those subjects which we have meditated. But if, overcome by sloth or by negligence, we are occupied with vices and idle conversation, or are involved in worldly cares and unnecessary anxieties, a kind of tares will in consequence be generated, which will furnish a hurtful labour to our heart; so that, according to the saying of the Lord our Saviour,³ where the treasure of our works or of our intention shall be, there will our heart of necessity abide.”

Moreover, these admonitions respecting the preparing of points of meditation, are necessary not only for novices,

³ St. Matt. vi. 21.

but also for those who are advanced in the exercise of prayer. For it not seldom happens, even to those who are endowed with the gift of prayer, when they come to meditation without having prepared the points, that they wander to and fro in meditation, without gathering the wished for fruit; and, as Abbot Germanus says (in Cassian): "With a mind astray, and as it were intoxicated, they are tossed about in all directions, nor can they long and firmly retain that spiritual good which has come to them by chance rather than by their industry; because they take in one thought after another, and do not perceive either the entrances and beginnings of them or their end and departure."

CHAPTER XI.

Wandering of the mind and senses before meditation produces aridities in the exercise of meditation.

A FIFTH kind of negligence, which is also proximate, arises from this, that when the points of meditation have been well pre-arranged and prepared, both on the previous day and again in the morning, the mind is allowed to wander in foolish thoughts, or to be distracted by talkings, and other wanderings of the senses, and is not collected for the practice of meditation. "It belongs to the proximate preparation for prayer," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "that the mind be recalled from outward things to inward things." For the inordinate gratification of the senses and members of the body diminishes and extinguishes the sense of devotion; and in order that this may be acquired, it is necessary that those be extinguished, or at least weakened, according to the opinion expressed by St. Diadochus. "As the senses of the body," he says, "in a certain manner incite us by their power to those things which appear beautiful to us; so the sense of the mind, when it has tasted the Divine Goodness, is wont to draw us to those good things which do not fall under the eye. For everything longs chiefly for that which is allied and congenial to itself; the soul, when free from the power of the body, for heavenly good things; the body, as of the earth, for earthly pleasures (about which our senses, when they are suffered to wander, occupy themselves). We shall therefore come, without fail, to experience that sense (of internal devotion) which is separated from matter and from ma-

teriality, if we subdue the material body by labour; that is, by the mortification of the bodily senses, and by withdrawing our mind from wanderings, and by turning it to reflect upon Divine things.

Therefore St. Basil says well: "It behoves us to separate from the things of this world, and not introduce foreign thoughts into the mind either through the eyes, or the ears, or the other senses. For those which spring rebellious from the pride of the flesh and make war against the soul, fill the inward man with a noisy and restless tumult, and with disturbance never lulled to rest." The same St. Basil had explained this by a beautiful comparison in another place. "It is necessary," he says, "if the counsel of God is to be established and confirmed in our souls, that human thoughts should first be put to flight in us. For as one who intends to write upon wax first cleanses it, and then arranging the letters, impresses the forms which he wishes to produce; so also it is necessary that our heart, which is to receive clearly and distinctly Divine communications, should first be rendered pure and free from every contrary thought." "If you always so train yourself," says St. Climacus, "that your mind shall never wander too far, it will be near you even when you are only laying a table, but if it is allowed to wander free and unbridled, it will never be able to remain with you."

For this reason our holy Father Ignatius, in the Book of Exercises, gave some rules on this subject: and first, "that before going to sleep, while we are lying in bed, we should think of the hour at which we have to rise, and of the meditation which we have to make." Next, "that when we awake, we should immediately shut out all other thoughts, and turn our mind to the subject which we are about to contemplate." And further, "that, at a distance of a pace or two from the spot in which we are to meditate, we should raise our minds aloft and consider our Lord Jesus as present, and beholding that which we are about to do." Therefore St. Basil warns us: "Our heart must

be guarded with all care, nor must we allow the continuous meditation upon God to slip from our minds; and we must strive incessantly that we may bear about with us like an indelible seal the pious thought of God, impressed upon our minds by a most pure and incessant recollection." And Abbot Moses, whom we have often quoted, says (in Cassian): "That this will be greatly assisted by frequent reading, and continual meditation on pious books, and also by ruminating, as it were, on the Scriptures. And, on the contrary," he says in the same place, "that it is greatly hindered by recent idle conversations. For there remains in the soul, after actual previous thought upon God, a certain readiness, something like a habit, to unite the heart to God, and for those devout affections which give no place to aridities and the pains of involuntary distractions." Hence St. Thomas has well observed, that this is beneficial not only to ordinary men, but even to the prophets themselves. "As," he says, "in the body, when suffering departs, there remains a certain tendency to suffer again; and as wood when it has been once kindled is more easily kindled again; so also in the intelligence of the Prophet, when the actual illumination ceases, there remains a certain aptitude for its being again more easily illuminated afterwards. So too the mind, when once trained to devotion, is more easily recalled afterwards to its former devotion. On account of this St. Augustine says that there is need of frequent prayers, lest devotion once kindled should be totally extinguished."

So far St. Thomas; and St. Macarius beautifully explains his words: "As when fire is placed externally around a brazen vessel, if you lay on faggots of wood, they are kindled, and when the fire is kindled from without, that which is within the vessel is cooked and boils; but if you neglect to supply wood, the fire begins to grow cold and soon to go out; in the same way grace, which is a heavenly fire, is within you; and if you then pray and turn your thoughts to the love of Christ, you have in a manner

put on wood, and your thoughts are turned to fire, and are imbued with a desire for God. But if, on the other hand, any one labours slothfully, and gives himself up by degrees to secular affairs and occupations, vice returns anew, and entangles the soul, and begins to harass the whole man. Then again the soul rises towards God, and its previous peace begins to return; it begins to seek more vehemently: 'I beseech Thee, O Lord,' it says; little by little the fire grows within him, which kindles and renovates the soul; and by degrees, like a hook it draws the fish up out of the deep."

It is not sufficient then, in order to ward off aridity, to have prepared well the points of meditation in the previous day; but it is necessary that immediately before the meditation the mind should be recollected, and disposed by pious thoughts for devout meditation; because, as Abbot Isaac well remarks (in Cassian): "Such as we would be found in prayer, that we must be before the time of prayer. For the mind in the time of its supplication must take its form from its previous condition; and during prayer must either be lifted on high to heavenly things, or sunk down to earthly things, by those thoughts on which it was dwelling before the time of prayer." Wherefore let us say, with St. Bernard, before our meditation: "Cares, solitudes, anxieties, labours, the penalties of our servitude, 'stay you here with the ass,' my body, 'while I and the boy,' reason and intelligence, 'will go with speed as far as yonder, and after we have worshipped, will return to you.'¹ Yes, we will return; and alas, how soon!"

And for this reason our holy Father Ignatius, although he was endowed with a rare gift of prayer and contemplation, yet was wont to collect his mind with care before his meditation; whence (as Father Bartholomew Ricci writes) as often as he was about to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, a little before prayer he was accustomed to look at certain pictures of them, which he had laid out on a

¹ Gen. xxii. 5.

frame close to his bed prepared for that purpose. I saw those pictures as late as the year 1593, hanging on the outer wall of that room in which the holy Father was wont to meditate. And this was the reason why Father Jerome Natalis, through James Ximenes, the Secretary of the Society, had engraved on copper plates all the mysteries of the life of Christ our Lord, and printed at Antwerp, that the sight of them might increase concentration of mind before meditation, and dispose it for praying attentively and fervently, and for checking aridities of mind.

And what is still more wonderful, although our holy Father St. Ignatius was so recollected in mind, that as often as he chose, at any time, he could have his mind united to God, as Father Conzalvo writes of him, "and was passive in Divine things rather than active, and when in prayer was not disturbed by any noise, if it occurred without his own fault, and no outward occupations hindered the course of his devotion;" yet, as the same Conzalvo has left on record in his Diary respecting him, "he was wont to collect himself and beforehand to prepare himself a little, even when he was about to say grace; and this was his custom in all things which had relation to the worship of God."

How much more should we, then, if we wish to pray without aridity, recall before meditation our thoughts from foreign things, which have not regard to God, and our senses from their wanderings, and with recollected mind go over the pious points that are to be meditated upon. For, as St. Basil says, "As far as we give place to those things which are out of harmony with God, so far are we unable to receive the knowledge of God. For who that is anxious about those things which are of the world, and immerses himself in every kind of distraction of the flesh, can attend to the words of God, or rightly attain to an exact comprehension of so many and so great contemplations? Do you not see that the word which falls among the thorns is choked by the thorns? And the thorns are the cares of this world. He who desires the knowledge of

God must be placed apart from all these things, and should be free from all perturbations and vicious affections, thus at last to lay hold of the knowledge of God. For how shall the knowledge and the thought of God penetrate the mind which is oppressed by so many distractions of thoughts which have preoccupied it? Even Pharaoh knew this, that it is those who enjoy greater freedom and leisure who most seek God. And therefore he reproached Israel, saying, 'You are idle, and therefore you say, Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.' Such leisure, then, is good and useful to him who possesses it, as producing quiet and a preparedness for salutary doctrine."

Wherefore also St. Bernard rightly counsels: "Sit thou solitary as a turtle-dove; have nothing to do with the crowds, nothing with the common multitude: 'Forget thy people and thy father's house; and the King shall desire thy beauty.'² O holy soul, be thou alone, that thou mayest keep thyself for Him alone of all, Whom out of all thou hast chosen for thyself. Fly from public life, fly also from family life; separate thyself from thy friends and companions, and from him who serves thee. Knowest thou not that thou hast a modest Spouse, Who will in no way indulge thee with His presence when others are present?" By which words St. Bernard does not intend to persuade us that we should retire into a desert, for he was addressing his own friends, whom he certainly did not want to become hermits; but he recommends simply a flight from all those kinds of intercourse which dissipate and distract the mind, so that it cannot be recollected and self-possessed, so as to approach to God in prayer and hold converse with Him; and he advises that we should have a kind of cell within our mind, within which we may shut up our thoughts and employ ourselves in meditating upon Divine things: which we might be able to do in the midst of turmoils and occupations, as by Divine inspiration St. Catharine of Siena did, at the same time that she discharged the common duties of the house.

² Psalm xliv. 11, 12.

Or at least, as St. Teresa counsels when giving instruction respecting the prayer of recollection: "Let us believe that we have within ourselves a palace of the greatest splendour, of which the whole fabric is made up of gold and the most precious gems, as being prepared for the habitation of so powerful a Master; and that thou art in part the cause why this fabric is such as it really is (since it is most certain that there is no house which shows such beauty or splendour as a soul which is holy and pure and full of virtues); and that the greater and brighter these are, the more or the less they glow and shine; and that this great King tarries in that palace, and that He condescends to be thy Guest, and to sit there as in a most precious throne, which is thy heart." And we shall attain to this if we apply our whole mind to converse well with God: "For as the body," says St. Macarius, "when it is engaged in any work gives itself wholly to that work, and all its members help each other; in the same way let the whole soul be entirely devoted to the Lord, to prayer and charity, so that it do not wander, and be not carried about by other thoughts, and has its hope placed in Christ. Then He will shine upon it, and will teach it the true manner of asking, and will grant it prayer pure, spiritual, and worthy of God, and adoration in spirit and in truth."

Wherefore, as St. John Climacus advises, "Contend with the whole earnestness of your soul, and indefatigably restrain your mind, which is always restless and wandering, collecting yourself within yourself." And this recollection is made in the cell of conscience. "You have one cell without you," says St. Bernard, "and another within. That which is without is the house in which your soul dwells along with your body. That which is within is your conscience, which ought to be inhabited by Him Who is within all your innermost thoughts—God with His Spirit. Love, therefore, your inner cell; love also your outer one; give to each its own worship."

A sixth and immediate kind of negligence is a negligent

custody of the senses or mind in the very course of our prayer. For if such negligence is allowed, the past preparations will not suffice. "Our curiosity is daily tempted by many most minute and contemptible things," says St. Augustine, "and who can count how often we slip? And when at last our heart becomes a receptacle for things of this kind, and carries within it crowds of vanities, by this means our prayers are often interrupted and disturbed." "Prayer mingled with study is the light of the mind and of the soul," says St. Chrysostom, "a light inextinguishable and perennial. And therefore the devil injects numerous impure thoughts into our minds, and things which we had never thought of he collects and pours into our soul in the time of prayer. And as winds rushing against a lighted lamp blow about and extinguish the flame, so also the devil, when he sees in us the lighted flame of prayer, blows us here and there with numberless solitudes, and gives us no rest until he has extinguished the light. But let us do the same which is done by those who light their lamps. Now, what do they do? When they perceive that a strong wind is blowing, they put their finger against the opening of the lamp, and so prevent the entrance of the draught. As long as the attack is only external, we shall be able to resist it; but when we open the door of the mind to it, and let the enemy inside, then we have not the very least power of resistance; but thought of God is extinguished, and our mouth gives out (the fumes of) foolish words. But as they put their finger on the opening of the lamp, so let us set reason over our mind, and shut out the approach of the evil spirit, lest he extinguish the light of our prayer." And therefore, that this negligence may be kept at a great distance, our holy Father Ignatius orders, that those who are preparing for meditation should think of "the Lord Jesus as present and looking on;" for he who rightly discerns this, will guard well his mind and senses; and either will escape aridity, or will not be injured by it.

Hence St. Chrysostom gives a good warning: "When

we are about to address men who are superior to us, we arrange our deportment and walk, and clothing, and everything about us ; but when we come to God, we yawn, and rub ourselves, and turn hither and thither, and are negligent and slothful, and even when our knees are bent on the ground, we are wandering in the market-place." And he adds : "When we draw nigh to God, let us think that an audience is gathered from the whole world, or rather, from the hosts of Heaven, and that the King is seated in the midst, Who is about to hear our prayer. Let no cithara-player, or flute-player, who carefully prepares himself when about to appear on the stage, for fear of producing sounds which are disagreeable or inharmonious, be so careful as those who are about to enter this theatre of angels." If then we shall thus pray, we shall not be liable to this negligence, which is the most certain cause of aridity ; and that we may avoid it, let that more than golden counsel which came from the same truly golden mouth of St. Chrysostom, be ever impressed upon our mind : "We ought to be more solicitous about Divine worship than for our life." But when we perceive that we are called away from attention, by importunate thoughts, let us set against them that honeyed word of the mellifluous Bernard : "Lest a tumult of thoughts should rush in, like the common mob breaking into a Court, and drive God from the memory, let a janitor be placed at its gate, whose name is, Remembrance of our profession ; and when the mind feels itself encumbered with those thoughts, let it rebuke itself, and say to itself : 'Oughtest thou to think these things, who art a priest, who art a cleric, who art a monk ? Ought he who studies justice to allow the entrance of anything unjust into himself ?'" Wherefore, since these are hindrances to the devout prayer which excludes aridities, they must be avoided. "For as he who cultivates the land," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "ought carefully to eradicate the thorns, that he may be able to collect a more abundant fruit, so let him who desires to taste the sweetness of devo-

tion in prayer, exercise the greatest care to remove all hindrances in himself ; for he runs in vain to the harbour of prayer who does not with all earnestness avoid the things which oppose him." Now, then, that we have exposed the maladies and their manifold fountains, let us endeavour to prescribe some remedies.

CHAPTER XII.

Of the remedies against aridities given by the ancient Fathers.

BESIDES those remedies which have been suggested in the course of the previous chapters, those also which I am about to enumerate will be found useful.

First of all, let us do as St. Macarius advises : "Skilful husbandmen (according to general custom), when the produce of the year is abundant, in no way desist from their care, but look forward to future famine and sterility ; nor, on the other hand, do they greatly despair when they suffer from famine and sterility, because they have large experience of such vicissitudes. So in spiritual things ; when the soul falls into various temptations, let it not be surprised, or despair, because it knows that it is left for a while by permission, to be tried and taught by the evil one ; nor, on the other hand, when it enjoys much plenty and peace, is it free from solicitude, but it expects a change."

It is also a chief help to obtaining the grace of devotion which is free from aridities, if, when the signal is given for beginning prayer, it is begun with great speed and readiness of mind and body, from a great affection towards God and that holy obedience which prescribes it. "I have seen some," says St. John Climacus, "eminent in the virtue of obedience, and according to their strength not neglecting

the remembrance of God, running eagerly to prayer, and quickly collecting their mind, and shedding floods of tears." And he says that this was the cause of their ready sensible devotion, "that they were prepared by holy obedience." Therefore we must lay aside every other work when we hear the signal for prayer. For, as St. Climacus says in the same place, "he who begins any kind of work, and goes on with it when the hour of prayer arrives, is deluded by the demons. For it is the intention of those thieves to rob us of hour after hour."

And St. Climacus in the same place tells us of another means of attaining the grace of devotion: "Be exceedingly compassionate, if you really have prayer at heart. For in prayer monks will receive a hundredfold, besides what follows in the next life." And in another place he mentions the same antidotes to aridities which he advises us to use against spiritual sloth: "Let this tyrant be vanquished," he says, "by the remembrance of sins, let it be put to flight by the work of the hands, let it be driven away by intense consideration of good things to come." And he adds: "That in those who are truly obedient it hath not where to lay its head."

And Abbot Serenus (in Cassian), when discussing the natural volatility and wandering of the mind, says that this will not cease "until accustomed by long exercise, and daily habit, it learns by experience what subjects to prepare for its remembrance, around which it may ply its unwearied flights, and acquire strength by lingering about them, and thus succeed in thrusting out the adverse suggestions of the enemy, by which it was distracted, and abide in that condition and disposition which it desires."

And Abbot Isaac says: "Who can sufficiently explain, with whatever experience he may be endowed, the diversities and the true causes and origins of the compunctions, by which the mind is kindled and inflamed, and thus incited to pure and fervent prayers? For sometimes, when we were singing, a verse of some Psalm has given occasion to the kindling

of prayer. Sometimes the tuneful modulation of the voice of a brother has stirred up minds that were benumbed to intense supplication. We have known, too, the clearness and earnestness of a singer produce the greatest fervour even in bystanders ; and also the exhortation of a perfect man, or a spiritual conference, has frequently raised the affections of those who were prostrate to the most fruitful prayers. We have known ourselves, too, no less carried away by the death of a brother, or of some one dear to us, to entire compunction. Sometimes, too, the remembrance of lukewarmness and negligence has brought us a salutary ardour of spirit. And in this way, as no one can doubt, there are not wanting numberless occasions on which, by the grace of God, we may be aroused from the lukewarmness and lethargy of our minds."

It is also of great service, when you are praying alone, to drive away the weariness of aridity and to excite the affection of devotion in yourself, by vocal prayer and the external raising of the hands, or by putting them into the form of a cross. "Therefore," says St. Thomas, "in private prayer the voice should be used in order to excite interior devotion, by which the mind of him who prays is raised to God ; because by means of external signs, whether of words or even of acts, the mind of man is stirred up as well to apprehension, as also afterwards as a consequence to affection. Whence Augustine says to Proba : 'That by words and other signs we excite ourselves more keenly to the increase of holy desire. And therefore in each prayer we should use spoken words and signs of this kind as far as they help to stirring up the mind inwardly. But if the mind is by such means distracted, then they should be relinquished. And this is the case chiefly with those whose mind is prepared for devotion without signs of this kind. Whence the Psalmist said, 'My heart hath said to Thee : My face hath sought Thee.'¹ And of Anna it is said, in the first Book of Kings, that 'she spoke in her heart.'²

¹ Psalm xxvi. 8.

² 1 Kings i. 13.

Again, the Abbot Nesteros (in Cassian), when he was asked by Abbot Germanus how he could succeed in forgetting secular songs and stories, so that things of that kind should not intrude on his memory and call away his mind in the time of prayer, replied: "Those songs will inevitably keep hold of your mind until by similar study and assiduity it shall store up within itself some of a different kind, and, instead of those unfruitful and earthly thoughts, it brings forth those which are spiritual and Divine. But when it has once deeply and intimately penetrated these, and been nourished by them, the former ones will be gradually expelled, or entirely blotted out. For the human mind cannot be entirely free from thoughts, and therefore, as long as it is not employed in spiritual studies, it must be involved in those which it previously learnt. For so long as it has not something to which it can have recourse, and on which it can exercise its unwearied motions, it must of necessity slip away to those things with which it has been imbued from its infancy, and ever revolve those things which it has acquired by long use and meditation. In order, therefore, that this spiritual knowledge may be strengthened in you, with lasting solidity, and that you may not only enjoy it for a time—as it is with those who obtain their knowledge not through their own efforts, but through hearing of it from another, and merely perceive it, so to speak, like an evanescent odour—but that you may have it, as it were, wrought into your whole nature, and laid up as a thing which you have seen and handled, you must guard it with all care. So that if you perchance hear in a conference those things set forth with which you have most intimate acquaintance, you will not, because they are already known to you, listen to them contemptuously or disdainfully, but will lay them to heart with that eagerness with which we should ever be either letting the precious words of salvation pour into our ears, or out from our mouth. For although the oft-told tale of a holy life be repeated, yet satiety will never produce distaste in the soul which is thirsting for true knowledge;

but receiving them daily as things fresh and desirable, the oftener it drinks, the more eagerly it will hear or speak; and it will draw from their repetition a confirmation of knowledge already gained, rather than disgust from frequent conference upon them. For it is an unmistakeable sign of a proud and lukewarm mind when it receives disdainfully and carelessly the medicine of salutary words, even although applied with too great eagerness and assiduity. For the soul which is in a state of satiety scoffs at honeycombs; but to the hungry soul even bitter things seem sweet. If, therefore, these things are earnestly received and laid up in the recesses of the mind, and sealed with the prescribed observance of silence, they will afterwards be brought forth from the vessel of thy heart with great fragrance, like delicious wines that 'cheer the heart of man,'³ matured by the hoary years of understanding, and by the old age of patience, and like a perennial fountain, they will flow out from the veins of experience, and from the soul's well-watered beds of virtues, and will pour forth continuous streams as from the abyss of thy heart."

Finally, the best remedies against aridities are found in the removal of those things which are the cause of distractions and the hindrances of quiet contemplation; such as St. Bernard mentions in his twenty-third Sermon on the Canticles: "The busy senses, stinging care, remorse for sin, or those things which are removed with greater difficulty when once they break in, the invading phantoms of corporeal images." And in another place he says: "It would help towards obtaining devotion and compunction if you were in such solitude that, while lifting up pure hands to God, you might also be able to hear your own voice. And sometimes, in order to raise your intention, you should look up into Heaven, that your heart may be there, 'where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God.'"⁴

But since aridities are wont not seldom to arise from the remembrance of past faults, or from a fall into present ones,

³ Psalm ciii. 15.

⁴ Coloss. iii. 1.

St. Lawrence Justinian gives this excellent advice: "The adversary of mankind, the devil, is accustomed to assail the mind of one who is praying with the remembrance of a fault committed in the past, so that from this he may lose confidence, and may not have power to perform the exercises of devotion according to his wont. But we must yield no belief to this fallacious advice. Let the valiant soldier of Christ then take heed that he be not confounded, but when he knows that he has sinned, let him humbly prostrate himself in spirit before the feet of our Lord, let him confess his fault to the Lord, and with propitiatory words soothe the Beloved One Whom he has offended, and he will immediately become aware of the presence of grace, by which, resuming the strength of his soul, and having confidence begotten afresh, he will be able for the rest to have his mind peaceful and free for the service of his Lord. Such (gloomy) thoughts, then, are not to be readily adopted, but are to be examined by prudent reason; because the evil spirits very frequently, under the appearance of compunction, dissipate and extinguish the ardour of desire and the grace of devotion from the heart of one who prays."

Another remedy he gives in the same chapter: "When the spirit waxes cold, and returns from exterior things to interior things, a useful help for exciting devotion is vocal prayer. But when the fire of devotion is kindled, let silence be imposed upon the mouth, and let vocal prayer be stopped (he is speaking of vocal prayer to which we are not bound by law, for then the omission of it would be a sin), lest the highest good be sacrificed for one of much less value. For we must strive in all ways, and use every means, whether vocal prayer, or prostrations, or stretching out of the hands, or any other means, in order that the mind may without hindrance be raised to God, when it comes to pray. For this is the end of prayer, that the soul be united to God by the affection of charity, being first illuminated by the knowledge of God."

CHAPTER XIII.

Of other remedies against aridities prescribed by more recent masters of the spiritual life.

FIRST comes the advice of Father Stephen Tucci, a holy man, who was accustomed to spend five hours daily in prayer, and said that perseverance and humility had the greatest power against difficulty in praying; so that one who is sensible of distractions, should find fault with himself in the very act of prayer, should accuse himself of lukewarmness, should invoke the saints, should stir up his soul; and he said that time was not spent uselessly in this manner. For all those acts are meritorious, and arise from the impulse of religion or of the love of God. "Think not," says St. Teresa, discussing this subject, "that thy labour will be useless and vain; for this cannot be attained in a single year, or in two, or in ten years." Far be it then from you to cease from prayer or meditation on account of aridities. For St. John Climacus well advises: "As long as we have not prayer steady and stable (that is, free from distractions), we are like those who train infants to begin to walk. Strive to raise your intelligence to the things that are above, yea, even to expand it by the words of the prayer. But if through the weakness of infancy it falls, take pains to raise it up again, since instability is a characteristic of the mind; whereas it is the characteristic of God that He is able to give stability to everything. If you contend unweariedly, He Who has set bounds around the sea of the mind will come within you, and will say, 'Hitherto thou shalt come, and shalt go no further.'¹ It

¹ Job xxxviii. 11.

is not possible to bind a spirit; but where the Creator of spirits is, they are altogether obedient to His behest."

Moreover, that the Creator of spirits may be present with His aid, implore His aid by not desisting from the prayer which has been begun, according to the counsel of St. Bernard: "When you feel yourself affected by insensibility, sloth, or weariness, do not for that reason distrust, or desist from spiritual effort, but ask for the hand of Him Who gives aid, entreating that you may be drawn, like a bride, until at last, by the stirring of grace, you may run with more readiness and alacrity, and say: 'I have run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart.'"²

In the second place, the judgment of Father Peter Faber, the first companion of our holy Father St. Ignatius, and his manner of proceeding in the time of aridities, may be useful. "For he considered it to be a benefit," as Orlandini writes in his Life, "that one should sometimes be left to himself, and should be distressed by sterility and hunger; and taught by his own experience, he said, that sometimes grace departs and withdraws itself (which the ancient Fathers also taught), in order to instruct a man, so that he may learn by experience how much difference there is between his own spirit and the Spirit of God, between the ebb and flow of grace; also that when that very great ardour of devotion has decreased, he may, by still continuing to labour, correspond with the lesser measure of grace which he enjoys, and also seek with greater zeal the blessing which he feels that he has lost. For it is the purpose of God that every one should, even with these lesser supports, strive at least to preserve his will warm, to give to his work the effort of a ready mind, offered with a kind of loyal fear, which is more excellent than all devotion. And even then, the Wise Man thought that we are not to be too much grieved by a decrease of grace, but he approved of a certain moderate degree of sadness; which

² Psalm cxviii. 32.

also St. Diadochus speaks of as a kind of despair kept within due bounds, so that whilst, by the coming and going of grace, we are made now joyful, now sad, we may be constantly exercised in meditating either upon future misery or eternal felicity. For if now His brief absence or presence either contract the mind or expand it; if He pour out upon us so much grief or pleasure, what, then, are we to think either of enjoying or being without the Divine presence, not for a short space of time only, but for a real eternity? since the latter is Hell itself, whilst the former is perfect felicity."

As to the manner in which Father Faber consoled himself in desolations and temptations and sorrows of mind, the same Orlandini writes in his *Life*, as follows: "There were not wanting to the holy man various and manifold ways of consoling himself, when, in the use of Divine things, either his mind involuntarily went astray, or the rich unction of devotion had dried up. * Sometimes he solaced his mind, when distracted by a crowd of thoughts, by the contemplation of Christ Jesus, Who lived so long among men, parted as it were, and torn away from the glory of His Body—a glory which His Soul, the Body's consort, was enjoying. And in the same way he thought of the most holy Mother of God, who, although no stain of evil had ever touched her, yet had to be deprived so long of the glory of body and soul, and often even to be separated from intercourse and intimacy with her most sweet Son. Both time and place furnished him with matter of consolation. When they were keeping the festival of the Nativity of Christ our Lord, and he was himself offering the Holy Sacrifice, and partaking of the Holy Mysteries, all sweetness of mind had left him, and he was overwhelmed with grief that while the heavens were dropping down dew, and the clouds were raining the Just One, he was himself so dry, when suddenly this consolation came strongly upon him: 'Why art thou consumed with useless grief, when Christ is coming to a stable? Thou shouldst now see Him being born in the manger of thy

breast, if thou wouldst prepare a fit inn for Him.' These words afforded him so much consolation, that he even shed tears of devotion.

Next year, when he was commemorating the ardent piety with which the royal Magi adored the infancy of Christ our Saviour, his heart suddenly became hard, and followed most languidly and far off the feeling of so great joy, and that most suitable gladness. And when he was grieved at this, the thought occurred to him, 'It is the day in which the kings adore your true King; therefore you must be tried, to see whether you are a king. For it is not much that you should rule yourself, that you should conquer yourself, whilst you are placed, by the sense of devotion, close beside Christ, Who is wont to order our wars, until He has made us kings.' At Aschaffenburg he was once engaged in the Sacred Mysteries in the chapel of the Bishop of Mayence, which was then decorated more beautifully than was usual, with a great many lights, and with the cases of the holy relics set forth in splendour for veneration. And yet that outward beauty did not soothe his heart. So throughout the whole duration of the Mysteries, he the priest was grieving at this, that he never felt colder in himself, and that he went out of the chapel just as he had entered it, so that he might easily understand that the grace of devotion was not to be sought so much without as within, and that it did not depend upon outward causes, but was instilled by God. So that from that day the desire for going after so many external things, and adventitious aids to devotion, completely cooled down, and he meditated escaping from every kind of human favour and respect. For he remarked that it often happened in his experience that the more he found favour among men, the less he was fed in his soul by Christ and His Holy Spirit; and that nothing was so efficacious for increasing and accumulating the grace of God as that a man when stripped and deprived of all his goods, should endeavour to be like Christ on the Cross; since we must first covet to share

the strength of Christ crucified and afterwards his glorified state, and not inversely and foolishly, as is the way with many."

Thirdly, the opinion of Rusbroch is also true and in agreement with the teaching of our holy Father Ignatius, as laid down in the Book of Exercises: "Whoever," he says, "suffers this desolation and penury, let him be glad to seek for good men, and lay open to them and bewail his misery, and implore their prayers and the prayers of all good men, and those of the whole Church. Let him mark meanwhile with a humble heart, and know that he has nothing of himself except vices and defects; and with patience and resignation let him use those words of the holy Job: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord.'³ Let him forsake and resign himself in all things, and let him say from the conviction of his soul, 'Lord, I am as ready to bear the loss and deprivation of all those things of which I feel myself stripped, as far as it pleases Thee, and conduces to Thy glory, and the salvation and profit of my soul, as I am willing to abound in them. Not my natural will, O Lord, but Thy will and my rational or spiritual will be done! For I am altogether Thine, and if it could be to Thy praise, I would as freely be plunged into Hell as taken up into Heaven. Do with me, O Lord, according to the will of Thy most excellent Majesty.' In this way let him sometimes, from all his affliction, suffering, and desolation, draw out and work for himself joy, placing himself wholly in the hands of God, and let him rejoice that he is able to suffer anything for His honour. In good sooth, if he has thus borne himself well, and shall succeed in doing this with all his heart, in no other way will he be able to experience so great internal joy. For nothing is more pleasant to one who loves God than that he should feel himself the property of his Beloved. But if he ascends to this level by the path of virtues, although he may not have passed through

³ Job i. 21.

all the degrees which have been mentioned, that does not matter, nor is that necessary: let him only feel that he is endowed with the true foundation of virtues, which is humble obedience in action and patient resignation in suffering: in which two things this mode or degree is established in lasting security." And further on he says: "To the man who, in this degree, is strongly tried and visited, tempted and assailed by God, by himself, by the demon, and by all creatures, to him the virtue of resignation, in its high and special perfection, may be rightly assigned."

Fourthly, Father Balthasar Alvarez, as is written in his Life, "for sixteen years had to endure great clouds and aridities of spirit, hardnesses, distractions, depressions of mind, and other afflictions and trials; yet he never laid aside the desire for prayer nor the performance of what was required in its exercise, but persevered in it with as much diligence and constancy as if he always found it pleasant and easy to begin. For he placed his chief trust in the infinite mercy and goodness of God, before Whose presence he placed himself. Like the woman of Canaan, he said, he was as a whelp waiting for the crumbs that fall from the table of its master;⁴ and like that friend in the Gospel, though repulsed,⁵ he did not desist from knocking at the door of God through many years, until at last he was heard, and admitted to intimacy, with great abundance of heavenly gifts"—as is fully explained in his Life.

And St. Basil recommends the same: "God," he says, "Who benevolently inspires the prompt and ready will of those who seek good things, will surely hear them, since it is He Himself Who exhorts us to ask, and said: 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.'⁶ And in another place: 'But if any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, Who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not, and it

⁴ St. Matt. xv. 27.

⁵ St. Luke xi. 8.

⁶ St. Matt. vii. 7, 8.

shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.⁷ And finally, in all things where the mind wavers, or Satan impedes the readiness of the soul by deadening it or retarding it, let us apply this remedy, that we supplicate God, and ask that He would vouchsafe to grant us the power of acting aright."

The same Father Alvarez, giving some persons precepts respecting the manner of praying, among other things left this written: "In dryness, darkness, or hardness of heart, or in any other internal hindrance, remember that your sins are making themselves felt there; and if you do not acknowledge them, as far as they have offended God, yet acknowledge them from the hardness and hindrance which they have left behind them in you; humble yourself, and say to God: 'This, O Lord, is the harvest which I have sown, this the fruit of my past years: if, indeed, this impediment proceed from my sins, by which I have given Thee displeasure, which Thou didst never deserve, which I ought never have caused; I grieve and I repent, and I could wish to have the tears and the sensibility of those who have most pleased Thee. But as far as it is a penalty and a punishment of my offences appointed by Thee, I am glad that he who has done such things should thus expiate them. Let this state last as long as it shall please Thee, even through my whole life, if that should be stretched out to a thousand years. And since God is in His creatures, so long as they abide in their own proper places, if you rightly humble yourself, and willingly receive the punishment which He sends, you will feel great peace and consolation."

Fifthly, Father Joseph Anchieta, in an epistle to Anthony Ribera, gives this remedy against aridities: "If at any time you feel your mind grow faint when deprived of Divine solace and afflicted with weariness, let your remedy be to lay hold of the garment of Christ, and to invite Him to you with words like these: 'Stay with us, O Lord, because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent,⁸ and the

⁷ St. James i. 5, 6.

⁸ St. Luke xxiv. 29.

night of temptations is rushing in,' and obtain permission to come more frequently than is your wont to the Holy Table. For I trust in the virtue of that Divine food, that, when you retire from that Table, you will be full of joy, and prosecute your journey to the end with great alacrity, until you reach the Heavenly Jerusalem."

Sixthly, it is of great service towards obtaining the grace of devotion if at fixed times conversations are introduced, not on the things of the world, but on the things of God. "Speak willingly of God," says St. Bonaventure, "and listen more willingly, because it stirs the heart to the study of virtue and the affection of devotion." And St. Nilus teaches that prayer is nourished by spiritual conversation, and this by prayer.

Seventhly, our Very Reverend Father General Claudius has left these excellent counsels in his golden book of *Industries*, in which among other things he has the following: "Whether aridity arises from natural instability and volatility of nature, which is unable as it were to remain at peace, you will be able to infer from its being continuous; if it have lasted from the time of your novitiate, or through several years; then, if it go on without cause or occasion on the part of the sufferer; if remedies are applied, and without effect; if these remedies are used not by fits, or for a short time, but with persevering diligence. If any one should be in this condition, he should be encouraged to endurance, and with great patience and constant endeavour to devote himself to the attainment of true and solid virtues (as the Constitutions express it), and take pains to make progress in the way of Divine service: let him compensate by more frequent and more fervent ejaculations, and with a kind of spiritual mendicity (concerning which Gerson has written admirably) commend his poverty to his most merciful Father and God, and all the Saints. Let his spiritual reading be not diffuse or too extended, but short, with his thoughts and attention wide awake. Let him go through the various mysteries of the

Rosary, of the Life and Passion of our Lord, giving thanks, making petitions, and with much self-abasement proposing imitation; offering the Mysteries on his own behalf to the Eternal Father; and if he shall piously persevere in this meditation of the Passion, and ever knock for admission, he will without doubt receive very great light for the intellect, and that stability which is wont to be given to the affections, whereas our ways, when we are left to ourselves, are altogether dark and slippery. If it still continues for a long time, so that in his daily meditations and exercises he suffers dryness and distractions, he must be exhorted to greater retirement and to the use of the Spiritual Exercises for several weeks, for that constancy in meditation and reading conduces exceedingly to the obtaining of quiet of soul, and recalls the mind in a wonderful manner from its wanderings, as experience has very often taught. And in these Exercises, it will be of the greatest advantage to note down the illustrations and resolutions, and to cull out something by which, when the retreat is finished, progress may be made, whether in the exercise of virtues or in the elevation of the soul and its union with God.

“But if this aridity has been felt only in morning prayer, it may sometimes happen that either from heaviness of the head or some other affection of that kind, he will find himself at that time less ready for meditation; or it may result from the protracted attention which he is unable to continue for a whole hour; then his meditation will have to be divided, so that it may be made at different times, and the arrangement of the time will have to be altered (a thing, however, which must be allowed with consideration, and not lightly), and the interval filled up throughout the day by repeated intentions and elevations of the soul: let him arouse himself with verses of Psalms, now to compunction, now to humility, now to petitions, now to praises; finally, let him turn himself to various affections, as his special need or the state of his mind suggests.

“If dryness proceed from an ill-regulated affection and

desire for anything, he must then labour earnestly and assiduously, that the root of the evil may either be plucked up, or at least deadened and dried up, so that it may not sprout forth. Occasions of dryness arising from chance circumstances may be easily avoided, for they do not proceed from any special affection or inclination, and therefore they are the more easily shunned, nor do they affect the mind so much, and they are put away without difficulty; provided caution be not wanting, and moderate attention, and custody of oneself.

“If aridity come from want of the power of reasoning and lack of matter, let him first prepare the points of meditation carefully, let him read meditations on that subject (for reading assists in a wonderful manner), and let him be taught to develop the points in considering the Life and Passion of our Lord: Who it is, what He did, for whom, with what love, with what fruit He suffered; by attending to the persons, words, actions, and so forth; by turning back his thoughts on himself; by comparing and contrasting greatness with lowliness, piety with ingratitude, and other things of this kind, which afford endless matter for meditation and consideration. Finally, let him always have ready some points in greater abundance than seems actually necessary, so that if he cannot go on with one, he may with another.

“If it proceed from want of watchfulness, let him be more watchful, let him examine himself more carefully, let him beware of those things which may injure him; for that remark of Cassian is true, which occurs in a Conference already quoted: ‘Whatever our mind has received before the hour of prayer, will necessarily be present to us when we pray by the suggestion of memory. And therefore such as we would be found in prayer, such we ought to prepare ourselves to be before the time of prayer.’ So far Cassian.

“If it arise from idleness and frivolity, let him avoid trifles, let him often raise his mind through the day, let him

visit the Most Holy Sacrament, let him salute the Wounds of our Lord, by repeating once at least the Lord's Prayer, or the image of the Blessed Virgin with an *Ave* or a *Salve Regina*; let him pray earnestly, using the intercessions of the Saints; let him have frequent communication on all matters with his director; let him remember that which Cassian has wisely taught: 'For although it be impossible that the mind should not be occupied by thoughts, it is yet,' he says, 'in a great measure in our power that the quality of our thoughts should be improved, and that either holy and spiritual thoughts, on the one hand, or, on the other, those which are earthly or carnal, should increase. And for this reason frequent and habitual reading of the Scriptures is to be used, that from thence a facility of remembering spiritual things may be acquired. Finally, he is to be carefully warned that he should seriously avoid a certain very foolish notion, and the hurtful mode of speaking adopted by those who, while using no care, or very trifling care, in the custody of their senses, act too freely and laxly in all things, and are tepid and very slothful in managing their spiritual concerns, and yet ascribe their dryness of spirit and distractions in prayer, and that kind of insensibility which prevails in their heart, to a Divine probation, which, according to the expression of some, weans them from milk and nourishes them on bread and 'strong meat,' like 'older children.'

"For the rest, let him reflect upon that which St. Gregory writes against men of this kind: 'For,' he says, 'we wish by contemplation thoroughly to explore heavenly things, although we have no custody, not only of our heart, but even of our body. For instance, we often use our eyes with a want of decorum, and listen to idle words, and speak useless ones, and use sleep and food, not for the refreshment of the body, but in order to enjoyment. Therefore, when we wish to ponder on mysteries, to contemplate the things that are above, to escape from our darkness, to taste the relish of internal sweetness, we are very justly repelled

from the hidden treasure, since we so negligently weaken the strength of our fortification; and now it is so much the more difficult for us to climb high, because we have fallen back upon ourselves, and have not attained to the heights of vigilance in guarding the stronghold of our heart. Therefore examination is diligently to be employed, and even venial and minute faults are to be guarded against, for even these offer no slight impediment.' And therefore the same Saint gives this excellent counsel: 'Since even elect men,' he says, 'cannot be without sin, what remains but that they daily strive to be delivered from the sins by which human frailty does not cease to stain them?' For he who does not daily remove the things in which he transgresses, although the sins which he collects are the smallest, gradually has his soul filled with them, and they deservedly rob him of the enjoyment of internal abundance.

"If dryness come from too numerous occupations, let him carefully avoid those which are unnecessary, or not useful to his neighbours. Let him take away something from his voluntary relaxations; let him steal from the midst of his occupations some time, even the shortest space, in order to raise his mind to God, and to look around himself; let him take care to have his mind free, and, according to the counsel of St. Bernard, let him not give himself up to business, but lend himself to it; let him request of his Superior some moderation of active duty, and for a short time even an entire cessation; for he will afterwards return more vigorous and more useful.

"Lastly, if it proceed from the Divine dispensation and withdrawal, then he must be encouraged to patience, and gently comforted, lest he be dejected in mind. But let him first take care to humble himself before God, and ascribe the cause of this withdrawal to himself, and not indulge in self-complacency, but accuse himself, as often as he feels grace in any degree grow lukewarm. 'For I have learnt in truth,' says St. Bernard, 'that nothing is

so efficacious towards the acquiring, retaining, and recovering of grace, as when at all times you are found before God, not thinking high things, but fearing.' And the same Saint lays down the effects and signs of this withdrawal. 'My heart dried,' he says, 'and was curdled like milk, and became like earth without water; nor can I feel compunction unto tears, such is the hardness of my heart: a psalm has no relish, reading no pleasure, prayer no delight, my wonted meditations are gone. Where is that inebriation of the spirit? where that serenity of mind, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost?' And the cause this Father refers to pride, either that which has been, or that which would be, unless we were thus humbled. But St. Bonaventure, speaking of progress in religion, adduces five reasons for this sterility and loss of devotion. 'The first,' he says, 'is for humiliation. The second for purgation, for the less one has been purified, the less anxious has he been in seeking devotion, and the less grateful in receiving it. The third for instruction, that he may know that devotion depends not upon himself, or on his own merits, but on the grace and free will of God. The fourth from the indiscreet impulse and effort of the heart, by which the liberty of the mind is, as it were, crushed, and an attempt is made to squeeze out devotion as by violent pressure. A fifth reason is in order to the meriting of greater grace and glory, when the desire is not fulfilled, and the mind is purified by affliction, and patience under desolation; and the humble endurance of grief, like a file, makes the soul brighter and more susceptible of the Divine splendour.' Thus St. Bonaventure.

"But the Chancellor Gerson more copiously, although in very few words, lays down seventeen causes for this withdrawal of devotion. (1) The first is that which we have drawn from St. Bernard, whom he quotes, namely, for beating down or guarding against pride. (2) In order more vehemently to inflame desire. (3) In order to the knowledge of one's own weakness, that a man may become

vile in his own eyes. (4) That he may put on 'bowels of mercy' in view of the desolation of others. (5) In order to satisfaction by means of the sensible grief which he suffers. (6) That those who are able to help others, may not so give themselves up to internal consolations as to withdraw themselves from the works of charity and from assisting others. (7) That being taught by experience through this trial, one may the better learn, and the more efficaciously teach, other virtues. (8) That a man may not, for this sweetness of devotion, forsake the commands of God. (9) For the punishment of venial sins, as though a father were to show his face less pleasant to his son, that he might be rendered the more diligent in all watchfulness and carefulness. (10) That a man may understand that this is not possessed by his own industry, nor is 'of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.'⁹ (11) In order to the purification of the spiritual sea, which from too much rest is apt to gather filth, which is cleared away by tossing and commotion. (12) That it may be seen whether he is fearing God gratis,¹⁰ whether he is prepared to serve his General without the pay of consolations and sweetnesses. (13) Lest he should begin to love the gifts of God instead of Him, adhering to them, and delighting himself in them. So that He withdraws them by His dispensation, like an indulgent father taking away food or an apple, preparing for him, in the meantime, an inheritance and a kingdom. (14) Sometimes for the preservation of the body and the strength, lest it should pine away and faint in tears and groans and sensible sweetness. (15) That God may challenge him to fly, as an eagle does her young; as a mother leaves her child for a time, that it may cry more urgently, and seek more diligently, and clasp more closely, and that she may in her turn fondle it more sweetly. (16) For the exercise of patience, since thus to be tried is not without great tribulation and anxiety. (17) Lastly, that the soul may

⁹ Romans ix. 16.

¹⁰ Job i. 9.

hence infer how much bitterness would result from perpetual separation, if but a little affects it so greatly.

“But in this withdrawal, in which the Lord, by the privation of consolation, as St. Diadochus remarks, chastens our inordinate wills, that He may teach us the difference between virtue and vice; this is always to be held, as he also remarks, that we should always hope in the Divine compassion, with grief, humility, and becoming subjection; for this is the instruction which is intended to be conveyed by the withdrawal of grace.

“But in all these things, one point should be carefully considered which Theodorus lays down (in Cassian), ‘that we should be ambidextrous, that is, whether our spiritual affairs are in a prosperous or an unprosperous condition, we should ever stretch ourselves forth to those things that are before.’¹¹ So that, whether we are fervent in spirit, and raised above earthly things, and are nourished with spiritual meditations, or have all spiritual fervour withdrawn, and are chilled by a kind of lukewarmness and sadness, and all the practices of virtue seem to lose all relish and only provoke intolerable and dark disgust, we should then use both hands in order to obtain a victory.’ Whence he adds: ‘He therefore who using the weapons which we have prescribed for the right side, shall not be at all elated by the entrance of vainglory; and, on the other hand, using those of the left side, manfully contends, and does not give way to despair, but rather, on the contrary, takes the arms of patience, in order to the exercise of virtue, this man uses either hand as a right hand, and coming off victorious in either way, he will obtain the palm of victory on the right hand and on the left.’” Thus far Father Claudius.

But since among aridities I have placed also the distractions by which men are troubled in their sacred prayers, especially in reciting the Canonical Hours, it will be of advantage to know what helps Father Peter Faber employed when he recited the Divine Office. On which

¹¹ Philipp. iii. 13.

subject Orlandini thus writes: "He sought out certain excellent aids for himself, in order that he might give closer attention to the psalmody. He was accustomed, between one psalm and another, hastily to ejaculate a short prayer, such as that well known and familiar one: 'Heavenly Father, give me Thy good Spirit.' In which prayer, uttered with his whole heart, he felt that there lay great efficacy, for recalling and collecting his mind. Sometimes he would invoke ten times the most august names of Jesus and His Mother in each of the Canonical Hours of prayer, that he might bring to his remembrance these ten things, and set them before him in the psalms as objects to be kept in view. First, he set before him the glory of God alone; next, the honour of the saints; then the increase of the just; afterwards the liberation of those who were enslaved by mortal sins; then the advancement of Catholicity; then mutual peace and concord between Christian princes; next the relief of those who at that hour were afflicted by pain of body, or desolated by any anxiety of mind, or were assailed by the fear of approaching death, or were enduring purgatorial fire. These ten intentions he piously and devoutly renewed when reciting each Canonical Hour: with these he curbed the volatility of his mind, to prevent its being dissipated. Nor was it less efficacious to the concentration of his attention, that at the beginning of the same Canonical Hours, he fixed his look upon the most bitter sufferings of Christ, and the undeserved agony of His soul, and as he proceeded with the hymns and psalms, so he advanced in the meditation of His most bitter pains and griefs. And as our Lord's sorrows were the more deepened as He drew nearer to the close of His life, in the same proportion Faber felt that he ought to increase in attention throughout the Hours, and that the power of his mind should be bent on the deepening and increase of those sorrows; so that when he came to None he might himself be able to feel, as it were, those terrible torments and supreme agonies with which Christ in that hour gave

up His Spirit into His Father's embrace. He thought, too, that it was salutary, especially for novices and beginners, when they come to recite the Office, that they should at once prescribe to themselves four boundaries or landmarks, as it were, beyond which they must not stray. First, a convenient place, where they may discharge the duty of reciting. For it is of great importance, when the mind prays, not to go where the senses may drink in matter that would distract the thoughts and carry them off elsewhere. Next, the persons and saints who are commemorated either in forms of prayer and collects, or in the sacred lessons at nocturns. Thirdly, the words out of which the sacred songs and the whole prayer is woven. Lastly, the deeds which are performed, and the variety of actions which the daily change in the Office supplies. Whoever shall keep himself within these bounds and fences, Faber thinks, will have put a barrier to wanderings of mind.

“He had been accustomed, when the time for his Office approached, to withdraw for a little while from other business, and to turn to it in thought before he began the recitation; lest if he went at once from business to the psalms, the traces of the work which he had been carrying on should remain in his mind, and be a germ of continual wandering. Sometimes too he pleasantly beguiled his mind to prevent it from flying about freely, and made a kind of covenant with it that it should remain motionless and silent at least in this or that psalm, or in part of a psalm; and when he had thus kept it constant, according to the agreement, he renewed the compact, and admonishing himself again for the following psalm, he would say, ‘See that you give a present mind to this also, be attentive.’ And when he had been satisfied in that, he went forward with the same admonition to the next, until to the end of it he obtained in every part of his Office that constancy which he sought.

“And that which Basil formerly taught his monks, that sloth of mind was generated in prayer for this reason,

that the presence of God is not sufficiently recognized, Faber too learnt by his own experience, and in his writings he taught that it was of great avail to restraining the mind in prayer, if we acknowledged God and the angel of God as present to mark how one bore himself in prayer : and also the evil angel as standing over against us, watching with an envious and inquisitive eye, observing and spying out all our errors, that he may have the more handles of accusation. And he taught, as of prime importance, that solicitude for the morrow should be cast away by one who prays, and all anxiety about the business which he has to transact, even the most important, for this would entirely destroy the attention and not allow the mind to rest in the prayer which had been begun ; because the mind, when divided among many and distant matters, cannot be steadily and constantly occupied with that which it has in hand. Wherefore, he who would pray in spirit must take care so to draw up and arrange the whole course of the day, and so to order all its actions, that the mind may not, by looking forward to what is about to happen, be interrupted in prayer by recurrence to those actions. And he had persuaded himself that in this way the business which he had to transact would become rather the care of God, so that he might thus transfer his care during prayer from them to God.

“And when he had discharged the duty of praying and saying his Office, he endeavoured not to lose the spirit of this duty. And lest his mind should continually go abroad and get entirely dissipated, he kept recalling it to the psalms and prayers he had been saying. And this was also his custom with regard to the daily Sacrifice of the Mass, and every other pious exercise, to bend back his mind to them with attentive thought after they were ended, and recall with himself each part of the work, and go over it again like a prudent and skilful workman. And in so much esteem did he hold careful attention, especially in the Canonical Hours, that

he said that the time of prayer should often be recalled to memory, and that before prayer there should be conceived both an eager desire of saying the Divine Office rightly, as well as a fear and solicitude lest in saying or singing the Office one should commit sin; and that when the duty of saying the Office was discharged, and had not succeeded according to one's intention and wish, grief should be awakened, which should be lasting, and should consume the innermost heart until the next time of prayer. But he wished this grief to be excited not so much because of the unseasonable thoughts by which the mind is carried away in other directions, as by the love and charity of God, because the sense of prayer was absent from the use of the most sweet words of God and the sentiments of the Psalms; for that many are often distressed in discharging the duty of prayer, not so much because they are deprived of its fruit, as because the very time in which they stand before God is disturbed by foreign thoughts and such as have but little reverence for the majesty of so great a Presence. He said however that this fear and the avoiding of such thoughts paved the way to love. And when that is obtained, and is once infused into the soul, then at last attention in those sacred duties follows, from love of the Divine voice and words, and from the sweetness of those thoughts and deeds which are contained in the sacred song." Such is the testimony of Orlandini respecting Faber.

Other devotions for the recitation of the Canonical Hours were taught by Christ our Lord to St. Gertrude, which, if it is desired, can be read in book iii. chap. xlvi. of the *Suggestions for Divine Piety*, edited by Tilmann Bredenbach.

Moreover, St. Clare of Monte Falco, a Virgin of the Order of St. Augustine, not of St. Francis (as is evidently shown by Baptista Pergilius in her Life, and by the Cardinals of the Sacred Rites, and by Urban VIII. in an Apostolic Brief), had set apart for each Canonical Hour some mystery of our Lord's Passion to be then considered.

For Matins, the flagellation of Christ at the pillar; for Prime, the condemnation of Christ to death and His being tied by a rope and dragged with great indignity; for Terce, the way of Christ our Lord bearing His Cross from the palace of Pilate to Mount Calvary; for Sext, the fixing of Christ naked to the Cross, and the Mother of God standing by, full of sorrow; for None, the thirst and death of Christ endured without any good comfort; for Vespers, the deposition of Christ from the Cross, and His Mother receiving Him full of sorrow; for Compline, the burial of Christ.

CHAPTER XIV.

A summary of the foregoing, drawn up for the sake of beginners and the scrupulous, for their consolation; with some teachings of the saints added to confirm the same.

NOTE I.—Those meditations alone are undeserving of the name of a good meditation (and it is the same with Communion), which succeed badly on account of our negligence. And one succeeds badly when, on account of his negligence, he does not find himself excited, even in his intellect, to the love of anything which is good, either in general or in particular, or to the hatred and horror of anything which is evil.

NOTE II.—Now our negligence in respect of meditation consists in these things: (1) If we come to meditation with the points not well prepared, or without serious reading or consideration beforehand. (2) If, after having well prepared the points to be meditated, we are voluntarily distracted immediately before meditation. (3) If, while we meditate, we purposely neglect to keep our senses (especially our eyes) from attending to things which are then

not necessary. (4) If, in meditation itself, we do not immediately repel the distractions which arise, when we perceive that they have invaded us against our will. (5) If we do not fill up the whole time prescribed for meditation by our Superiors. (6) If we meditate in an unbecoming posture, like men lying down or lolling against a bench, or in any other way in which we should not like to be found at prayer by those whom we most reverence and fear. He who does not transgress in these six things, has no reason to accuse himself of being negligent in his meditation or prayer, nor need he have any scruple, although he may not have felt any pious affection.

NOTE III.—If you are not conscious of any negligence such as has just been mentioned, even although during the whole time of meditation you should feel no consolation, but should be assailed by perpetual involuntary distractions or temptations, or if you should feel your heart arid, like a stone; be not saddened on this account, but persist in prayer, and struggle with distractions in the manner which will presently be explained. For such a prayer is often more pleasing to God, and more meritorious, than that (other things being equal) in which Divine consolations are felt, and in which there are no unseasonable distractions. God Himself taught this truth to St. Catharine of Bologna, to whom, when she was most grievously tried, in the time of Communion, concerning faith in the presence of Christ our Lord in the Eucharist, but was repelling the temptation, He said: "It is a greater merit of the soul if it communicate with the aforesaid assaults, bearing patiently this disquietude of spirit, than when it communicates with much sweetness and enjoyment." And this St. Catharine left recorded in an Italian treatise, written by Divine inspiration, concerning the arms necessary for fighting. This is implied by St. Lawrence Justinian when he says: "According to the measure of charity the effect of this sacrament is received, sometimes insensibly (that is, in the

time of aridities), sometimes sensibly." And Christ our Lord, teaching St. Bridget how she should drive from her soul the things which disturb it, says: "If she is unable to remove that perturbation, let her bear it patiently against her will, as an enemy, knowing most surely, that such things conduce to the obtaining of a greater crown, and in no way to condemnation."

Now, that a prayer which is arid and involuntarily distracted should be more meritorious (other things being equal) the following reasons will show: (1) Because such prayer excites humility, which that which is sensibly devout does not excite, but rather gives occasion for pride, or vainglory, as is plain from experience. "Since the mind is prone," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "when it is touched with a relish for devotion, to be elated by the boon." (2) Because patience is exercised in arid prayer, when the attacks of the demon are patiently borne, or those of nature, if aridities and wanderings of mind arise from infirmity of nature. (3) Because heroic fortitude is exercised in arid prayer, when, notwithstanding the assault of distractions and temptations, a man perseveres in his prayer, although it is exceedingly bitter and insipid on account of distractions and aridities. (4) Because a greater love towards God is shown, when one perseveres in conference with God, although he be by the demon persecuted with distractions and temptations; just as a soldier who, under the window of the palace whence his general watches him, stands firm, and endures the burning heat of the sun, or the rain or snow, shows far more love than another, who, safe inside the palace, suffers nothing at all. Let those therefore who are involuntarily arid and distracted in prayer hope, after death, for that solace of Christ our Lord which He gave to His disciples: "You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations."¹ "War," says St. John Climacus, "brings out the love of a soldier towards his general; but the love of a monk to God is

¹ St. Luke xxii. 28.

chiefly discovered during the time which he spends in prayer." Finally, on this account also (other things being equal) arid prayer, if it is such without our own fault, is more meritorious, because it is more difficult, than that which is full of consolations. Hence St. Thomas teaches: "That, where the quantities (of work done) are equal, the merit is greater after the sin (of Adam), on account of man's weakness, than before. For a work done with difficulty is more beyond the power of the doer, than a greater work is if done without difficulty." And therefore Thomas à Kempis has well written, speaking in the name of God: "When thou thinkest thyself far removed from Me, thou art often nearer; when thou thinkest thyself almost wholly lost, then often thou art gaining more merit." In this sense St. John Climacus says: "The time of desolation best shows forth the violent (that is, those who do violence to themselves for God's sake, by resisting those things which they endure unwillingly). For nothing prepares so many crowns for the monk as temptation to sloth." And the same Saint illustrates this statement by this similitude: "As the commander does not remove from the army that soldier who has received the most serious wounds in the face, but rather promotes him in it, and heaps the greatest honours upon him, so also the heavenly Commander does most gloriously crown the monk who has suffered the most dangers from demons (such as aridities and temptations, which disturb prayer, without, however, interrupting it)." For every supernatural good work of a just man (as is prayer) merits a crown. "In order to the merit of prayer, however," says St. Thomas, "it is not required of necessity that attention should be throughout; but the power of the first intention, when one begins to pray, renders the whole prayer meritorious, as is the case in other meritorious actions. And that prayer may avail the first intention suffices, which God principally regards. But if the first intention is lacking, prayer is neither meritorious nor availing."

But those who come to prayer with the desire to do it well, and not to suffer distractions, and who repel them when they perceive that they are assailed by them, most certainly have that intention which suffices, and which is required for the merit of a just man. Nay, such a prayer with involuntary distractions even satisfies for sins, as Navarrus well teaches, and other theologians who write on that article of St. Thomas, as well as our Suarez. In connection with which we should also note an excellent instruction of St. Nilus, who asserts the same: "When your mind, through much desire of God, withdraws itself by degrees from the flesh, and rejects all the (distracting) thoughts which have arisen from sense, either through the memory, or from the state of the body, then consider that you are within the region of prayer," that is, that you have attained those three things which are the immediate ends of prayer, "to merit, to obtain, and to satisfy," even though you are not aware of any pious affections. It is enough that you desire them, and, as far as in you lies, seek for them, although, by reason of involuntary aridities and distractions, you are not able to enjoy them, you will yet not be without the spiritual fruit which is known to God. "Our Lord," says Pope St. Leo, "because He is a just Overseer of souls, will not only reward the value of the work, but also the affection of the worker." Wherefore God accepts your affection, although your meditation has not succeeded as you would wish. Bend yourself therefore, like the ass and the ox, at the manger of your Lord, desiring to worship Him and to love Him supremely; or at least bow your knees in His honour in aridity, and, like the mendicant who has not the bread of consolation, stand before the palace of God, and wait at least for some crumbs of spiritual nourishment, and some particles of bread. "Christ," says Hesychius, "is willingly laid up in the manger, that those who are like cattle (that is, who think themselves to be praying with aridity, like irrational animals unable to reason with their mind), may run up, and find *λόγον*—that is, the

Word and Reason—placed in the crib, that they may receive from it that nobility which becomes a rational creature. Thus those who run to the chaff (of spiritual consolations) obtain the corn (of merits); and, like animals (who are pleased with sweet things, not with bitter), they make haste, thinking that they will find in the manger handfuls of barley (the relish of devotion), but will eat true bread, the nourishment of life." That bread which nourishes the life of the soul is merit, which is acquired by constant perseverance in prayer which is arid in spite of ourselves, and not watered with spiritual consolations.

Therefore, as St. John Climacus advises: "Say not, when you persevere in prayer (that is, when you do not desist from prayer on account of distractions and aridities), I have profited nothing. For you have already profited sufficiently. For what can be more sublime than to adhere to the Lord, and to persevere continuously in prayer with Him?" "It is better," says Clement of Alexandria, "to be engaged in prayer with God, and to obtain nothing, than to obtain what you wish without prayer." This is confirmed by the excellent observation of St. Lawrence Justinian, who, treating of the three kinds of love—namely, of carnal love, which is foul, and "indulges in the pleasures of lust; and of spiritual, which belongs to perfect and apostolic men, by which a man gives himself wholly to God, and directs himself to Him, and rests in Him"—says "that the third is sensuous, intermediate between carnal and spiritual; which indeed has for its object that which is good, and loves it, and is attracted by that which is good, and in its origin is altogether holy and pure, and yet is not perfect, as is spiritual love, because it loves itself along with its beloved, and it loves its own enjoyment in loving, and only with difficulty endures the want and absence of that which it loves; and it may be known from its grief at the absence of the thing loved, and therefore is called sensuous, because it is nourished and fed by the senses of the body. And," he says, "that with such love,

before the day of Pentecost, the Apostles and St. Peter loved Christ, and were delivered from it by the Holy Spirit Who was then sent down."

Wherefore, even those who seek sensible devotions, and are saddened whilst they are without them, and whilst in them they do not feel Christ present as by a sensible relish, love Christ with an imperfect love, and ought therefore to cast it out, and to be contented to adhere to Christ, even in the time of aridities and temptations, and, as it were, to assist Him in bearing His Cross. And it may serve to console those who (without their own fault) suffer aridity in prayer, to remember what Vincent Justinian writes respecting Blessed Louis Bertrand, that when, on a certain day, after reciting Matins in the choir, he returned to his cell, and was harassed by a troublesome thought, he heard these remarkable words: "God is better pleased with affliction of heart, contrition, and tribulation, than with sweetness, solace, and consolation." And Christ told Blessed Baptista Verana, as we learn from Bartholomew Cimorelli, "Remember that God has made thee clearly understand that thou hast more merit when thou standest before the Divine Majesty without devotion, than when thou standest with much weeping, tears, and devotion, because then thou art paying some part of thy debt; but when thou standest with so many tears, thou departest more laden with debt than thou camest. Therefore, learn to have patience in the day of sterility and penury. Remember that this withdrawal is not of hatred, but of love, because God does not choose to give thee Paradise in this world." And we may also derive help by having well imprinted on the mind an example in a similar matter which is related in the Lives of the Fathers. "A certain old man was sorely tempted by his thoughts (as happens also in aridity) for ten years, so that he began to despair, saying, 'Now I have lost my soul; and, because I have now perished, I will return to the world.' But as he went, there came to him a voice saying, 'The ten years in which thou hast contended will be thy crowns; return

therefore to thy place, and I will free thee from every evil thought.' And immediately returning he continued in the work which he had begun. It is not therefore good that anyone should despair on account of his thoughts ; for these rather procure crowns for us, if we go on our way bearing them manfully."

Wherefore, as a good state of life is not to be forsaken on account of unsuitable thoughts, because they supply the means of gaining crowns, so neither is prayer to be neglected on account of aridities, which proceed from the spirit of involuntary sloth. "Hence, when the Abbot Anthony was dwelling in the desert, being tried in his spirit, and involved in thoughts of distraction and desolation, he said to the Lord, 'Lord, I desire to be saved, but a crowd of thoughts do not allow me. Deign to show me what I am to do in my tribulation, or how I shall be able to be saved.' Then rising after a little, he sees some one like himself sitting, twisting a rope, and then rising from his work, and praying. This was an angel appointed for the correction of Anthony, from whom also he heard these words: 'Thou also, Anthony, thus doing, shalt be saved.' And he, overwhelmed with the greatest joy, resuming confidence, was saved." Consider the same thing said to yourself. Do what you ought to do ; pray when you ought to pray. Although prayer should not succeed as you wish, on account of the assault of aridities, desolations will do no hurt, if you suffer them unwillingly, and if no cause for them has been given by yourself. But you have given none, if you are free from the negligences noted above.

Finally, that is a great solace to those who are oppressed by involuntary aridities, which is given by the same St. John Climacus : "Of those who live under the law of obedience (he is speaking of those who are occupied from obedience in distracting duties) God does not require prayer without any disturbance. Be not therefore saddened if, when you pray, the enemy creeps in most cunningly, and stealthily, like a thief, turns away the intention of the soul ; but be

of good courage when you recall your slippery mind, for it is given to angels alone not to be exposed to thefts of this kind." But if, through infirmity of nature and the creeping in of temptation, some slight stain of negligence is contracted while aridities assail you, let St. Basil console you with these words: "If, being continually weakened by sin, you are unable to pray, compel yourself as much as you can, and continually come before God, having your soul intent upon Him, and collected within itself; and God will pardon, since it is not from irreverence, but from infirmity, that you are not able to abide with Him as you ought."

This also may come by way of solace to those who are distracted and arid, that aridities happen by the will of God, sometimes even to this extent, that the heavenly Spouse (as in addition to experience St. Lawrence Justinian teaches) "is wont frequently to absent Himself from the perfect, and from those who enjoy ardent love (namely, through sweetness of devotion); and this He does, not in hatred, nor in contempt, but in love; and whilst He withdraws Himself, He guards those whom He loves by humbling them." And, as he says elsewhere: "Not without reason does He sometimes feign to disregard the requests of those who pray, the desires of those who love, and the supplications of those who entreat; but He withdraws Himself for a time, that He may at the fitting season return. He makes as though He did not understand, that He may more richly illumine, and more ardently inflame."

And this God showed to St. Gertrude, a virgin of the Order of St. Benedict, "who, whilst she was praying for some one who complained that the grace of devotion was more sparingly poured out upon her on the day in which she was going to communicate than on some ordinary days, our Lord replied: 'This is not by accident, but by dispensation, for when on ordinary days, and even at unexpected hours, I pour out the grace of devotion, I strive by this means to raise the heart of man to Myself, because then perhaps it would remain in its lethargy. But when on

festival days, or at the hour of Communion, I withdraw grace, the hearts of My elect are then more exercised by the earnestness of their desires or by humility. Whence, such desire and such contrition (that is, affliction of mind, which wears the heart, because it feels pains, on account of being vexed with aridities and temptations and distractions), is of more advantage sometimes to their salvation than the grace of devotion.'” For God accepts the desire for the work, if a man is unable to have and to offer to God the work itself such as he would.

God Himself delivered this lesson to St. Gertrude, through a certain devout woman who wrote it to her by Divine revelation: “Because in all thy works thou seekest the honour of God and not thine own, therefore with holy fervour thou bringest fruit to thy Beloved a hundredfold. And this not only in the holy works which thou dost accomplish, but also in all those good things which thou wouldest perform, or promote among others, albeit thou art not able. For nevertheless, our Lord Jesus Himself supplies to God His Father every need and every deficiency, on account of which thou art troubled, whether in thyself or in others. For He is ready to render thee a reward for every holy endeavour of this kind, just as if thou didst accomplish the work. Whence also the whole Court of Heaven exults, congratulating thee, and giving thanks by praising God on thy behalf.”

And this teaching is confirmed by that of the Ever Blessed Virgin Mary, who thus instructed St. Bridget: “With whatever temptation thou art tried in prayer, nevertheless pray, and strive to pray; because desire and good endeavour will be reckoned for the effect of prayer.” And, “If, when base thoughts come into thy mind, thou shalt not be able to cast them out, then that effort will be reckoned to thee for a crown, so long as thou dost not consent to the temptations, and they are contrary to thy will.” And Christ Himself said similar things to St. Bridget.

In confirmation of this truth we have a remarkable

example in the annals of the Capuchin Fathers, related by Zacharias Boverius, concerning Alexander a Butrio: "That, when he was a novice, Mario a Forasarzinio, his master, saw a brilliant crown descending from Heaven upon his head, while he was in church with the others at prayer. Wherefore when, at the end of prayer, Mario inquired of him what Divine things he had been meditating in that prayer, he replied: 'Alas, Father, so many evil thoughts invaded my mind at the time of prayer as to drive from it every meditation on Divine things, and this the more earnestly I strove against them and gave them battle.' Then Mario understood that that heavenly crown had descended upon Alexander from no other cause than from his victory over evil thoughts, and that it was the reward of his having conquered in the battle. But when his year of probation was finished, and he was living at Cæsena, under the discipline of Constantine of Mutina, a man famous for his sanctity, on a certain ferial day, he was at prayer with the rest in the church, at which time Constantine, casting his eyes upon him, remarked three successive crowns drop down from Heaven upon his head; and when he could not understand the mystical significance of these crowns, he inquired of him after prayers what his prayer had been in his meditation. And Alexander answered him: 'Barren,' he said, 'Father, was my meditation during that prayer, for Satan set in motion against me three most terrible temptations, which, by disturbing the mind, called it off from the tranquillity of meditation; and so it came to pass that, throughout the whole course of that prayer, I had a perpetual conflict with the infernal enemy.' Constantine, therefore, understood that those three distinct conflicts against the temptations of the demon, in which he had overthrown the proud foe, had procured for him three celestial crowns; so that from hence those who are either tempted by the devil, or who endure various vexatious thoughts produced by him, may take greater courage, and learn to struggle more bravely with the demon, since they

prepare for themselves so many celestial crowns, and carry off victories over the tempter."

NOTE IV.—As for the manner in which you ought to resist aridity and distractions, and any kind of temptations, it is not necessary that it should be so fervent and so efficacious that the trial should at once yield to it and depart, whether it be aridity, or distraction, or temptation, but it is sufficient if you have these dispositions: First, that all those things displease you, which disturb your devotion in the time of meditation. But it is a most sure sign of their displeasing you, if those things are painful to you, and if you suffer them and experience them against your will, or if, in such a case, you wish to have tranquillity and prayer free from distractions and temptations. Secondly, it will be sufficient if you feel all these things in the mind alone; therefore there is no need either to move the head or any other member of the body in repelling those thoughts which hinder your devotion, but it is sufficient so to carry yourself as though you had no head or body, refusing with your mind alone to consent to those temptations or to give place willingly to distractions, and willing the contrary, yet with resignation and submission to the good pleasure of God. By thus bearing yourself, you will neither weaken nor weary your head. And as there is no need to weary your head in driving darkness from your chamber, if against your will and consent, by your lamp going out, it were to spread over your room, but it is sufficient if it is disagreeable to you, and that you wish for light when it can be had; so, if you bear yourself in the same way with distractions, it will suffice to assure you that you do not sin, and that you need have no scruple, as though it was through your own fault that your meditation has had no success.

NOTE V.—Moreover, if, when you repel distractions with your mind alone, without the effort of the head, they do not retire, and aridity lasts, and no pious thought occurs with reference to the points prepared for meditation, but you remain dry like wood, feeling no pious affection in you

coming from the subject which you have prepared, then proceed in the following manner: (1) Humble yourself before God, saying that you are unworthy to pray devoutly, and that for your sins you are worthy that they should be punished in you with this aridity and inquietude. (2) Give thanks to God that He humbles you by these means, and punishes your sins, so that He may have less to punish in the other life. (3) Pray God that He would remove that aridity from you, if He sees that it would be more pleasing to Himself; but, if not, (4) offer yourself to God, as willing to bear such aridity throughout your whole life, so long as God shall give you efficacious grace to endure it without any sin, in a manner pleasing to God.

NOTE VI.—When either disease or any great fatigue of the body, or of the head, does not permit you to meditate, and to go through the points which you have prepared, or when you are on a journey, or are walking, and are forced in the time of meditation to turn your attention to yourself, to prevent your falling, or running against a stone, or the carriage being upset, at such a time the best manner of praying will be by means of mental ejaculations, according to the advice of St. Augustine, St. Basil, St. Climacus, and Cassian; to spend the time of meditation in often repeating short versicles from Holy Scripture or from the prayers of the Church, in this manner: (1) In the first quarter, adore the Divine Majesty as it exists in Heaven and in the other parts of the universe. (2) In the second quarter, humble yourself before God, acknowledging that you are most vile, and most unworthy of every good thing on account of your sins, and at the same time grieve for them and resolve to detest them, and to guard against them as the greatest evils, because of your loving God above all things; saying often: “O God, be merciful to me a sinner,” or as St. Catharine of Siena was wont to say: “I have sinned, O Lord, spare and pity.” (3) In the third quarter, give thanks to God for all His benefits, as well those which are common, as those which He

has granted to you personally; and particularly for the blessings granted to the Humanity of Christ our Lord, to the Blessed Virgin, and to all the other saints, and which shall hereafter be granted by God to you and to others. (4) Offer to the Divine Majesty spiritually the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His merits, to the praise and glory of God, in giving thanks for the blessings already received, for the obtaining of those things which are necessary for yourself and for others, for the living and the dead, and in satisfaction for your sins. And to these acts add the oblation of your vows and of the good resolutions which you have at other times made. And offer all things in union with the merits of Christ; because they will thus better please God. After this, ask of God that He will grant to you and to others those things of which you have need. And in addition to this, commend the present needs, whether of the Church, or of the Kingdom, or of the State, or of the house in which you dwell, as well those which are recommended to you in the monthly list, as the persons who have commended themselves to you by letters or in any other way, and those whom your superiors commend to you in the refectory or elsewhere, and the like.

Moreover, you will be able to extend these acts in those ways which are set forth in my treatise on the *Manner of assisting at Mass*, and they will not weary the head, if you do not try to practise them all at once with an effort of memory, but little by little, now these, now those, either by reading from a paper, by impressing upon the memory, now one part this week, and again another part in another week. This manner of prayer, by the repetition of the same short versicles, was used not only by the Egyptian monks, but by various other saints whom I have mentioned in my treatise on the *Practise of the Divine Presence*, and on the manner of saying the Rosary.

Finally, when the temptations of the demon and aridities in prayer are being bravely resisted by just men, and

by those who shrink from and avoid every grave offence against God, this itself is a sign that God is present in the soul, although His presence is not felt by the sensible relish of devotion. "When you see the soul," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "after being long exercised by various temptations, after a long experience of evil spirits, obtaining a triumph in every spiritual conflict, understand that it (that is, the soul) possesses the presence of the Eternal Word. For it could not prevail otherwise than by the grace of the indwelling Bridegroom, so gloriously, so prudently, so stoutly, and so perseveringly, against the most bitter, experienced, and cruel opponents. For such a victory must be ascribed to the indwelling, invisible, Eternal Word, and not to the visible, mortal instrument, and to man."

These words are spoken for the removal of the scruples of beginners, and to prevent their injuring the head, by wishing as it were to compel the mind, in order to force sensible devotion out of it. As for the rest, it cannot be doubted, since it is given by God, that His gift should be received with humility and thanksgiving, and should be turned not to vain complacency (which is displeasing to God) but to the exercise of virtues, that they may be practised more readily and fervently, on occasions which offer themselves, or which are willingly sought, according to the words of David: "I have run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart," that is, with the pious affections of devotion and consolation. But, as St. Lawrence Justinian advises: "First a commendable life must be secured, and then devotion. For such a life without this devotion does much; but without such a life devotion is nothing. Let no one of the servants of God withdraw himself entirely from this Sacrament, although actual devotion may be lacking. For the wisdom of God produces diversely the effects of His grace in those who serve Him: and it is not right for any one to pry into the secrets of the Divine judgments; and therefore one who

is without devotion should not be driven from the Holy Banquet of the Lord, while he lives justly, is of virtuous life, has a humble estimation of himself, and comes with pure confession and humble approach. Such an one, although insensibly, is yet spiritually nourished and lives on this Sacrament," although he may be arid.

But as the same writer says in another place: "To the newly converted (as are novices) and to those who are yet in spiritual infancy, the food itself has a relish, and they are nourished by it, as by milk, and they grow. They come to it for their own sakes," that is, in order to receive spiritual sweetness from the eating of this food, "and they frequent it as long as internal delight remains. But when this fails, they become faint-hearted because, after being accustomed to the breast, they are unable to bear hardness of diet. They wish to measure spiritual things by their own sense, and think it an evil that they are not overflowed with internal delight: they have need of milk, they ask for milk, they are nourished with a cup of milk, they fear the solid food of trial. It is not thus with those who are progressing. For when they see themselves in the midst of the sea, and feel themselves frequently driven hither and thither by contrary winds (of temptations, aridities, desolation), they despair of being able to escape by themselves, if they are not supported by Divine assistance. Therefore often, when engaged in prayer, although they taste no heavenly sweetness, yet they fill Heaven with the cries of their desires, imploring assistance from the throne on high. And they receive the greatest strength from the reception of this venerable Sacrament, and recover their wasted forces (although they do not perceive it by sensible enjoyment) as often as they are thought worthy of the participation of so great a mystery. They do not seek relish so much as fruit, nor do they desire to find delight in the food, but nourishment. The first (beginners), like weakly persons, long for the relish of the Sacrament, but the perfect, higher than these, embrace the Presence

of the Bridegroom in the Sacrament. They seek not their own like the first, they do not think of preserving themselves like the second, they delight to rise above themselves, like the perfect." That is, they come to the Eucharist neither for the enjoyment of it, nor for the fruit which they are to receive from it, but are contented that in taking it they have present in their soul and in their body the Bridegroom Jesus, contented with His presence which alone they have asked of Him ; which, however, is never without fruit, although they do not receive it for the sake of the fruit.

CHAPTER XV.

Counsel given to one who, through weakness of body after a long sickness and languor of head, was unable to reason out the points in time of meditation.

GENERALLY speaking, I say that for one who is weak or infirm, it would be sufficient if, without any effort of head or heart, he should think of some pious subject, set forth in points prepared, looking at them, as it were, in the same way that we are wont to look at a beautiful picture by a great painter ; by such a look we do not fatigue the head, and yet we excite in ourselves most sweetly some pious affections, either of joy, or of admiration, or of praise, or of love towards the sacred persons depicted, or of desire of imitating them, and the like. But when, in connection with the points of meditation, some pious affection is drawn forth, either the desire of avoiding some sin or imperfection, or of doing some good work, or of persevering in it, or an act of faith, or of hope, or of any other virtue, it will be a very good meditation, even although no fervour is felt, or sensible consolation affecting the body, or even although aridity of heart be felt. For, as a sick

man is benefited by taking food and medicine, even although he does not feel the taste, but is rather sickened by taking them; so also the mere remembrance of any pious subject on which we meditate benefits the soul, although consolation may not be felt on account of disease or from some other unblameworthy cause. Let the weak and infirm, without attempting prolonged processes of thought, occupy themselves in meditating by the application of their senses, as it is called, which is treated of in the Exercises of our holy Father St. Ignatius; for that is easier, if it is well done, and is like looking at some beautiful clock, or building, or field, or garden, or picture; and at the same time furnishes pious affections for a good soul, and sweet considerations by which the soul is fed, as the body is by choice morsels of soft food, which we do not need to grind with the teeth, so as to fatigue them with chewing and masticating.



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