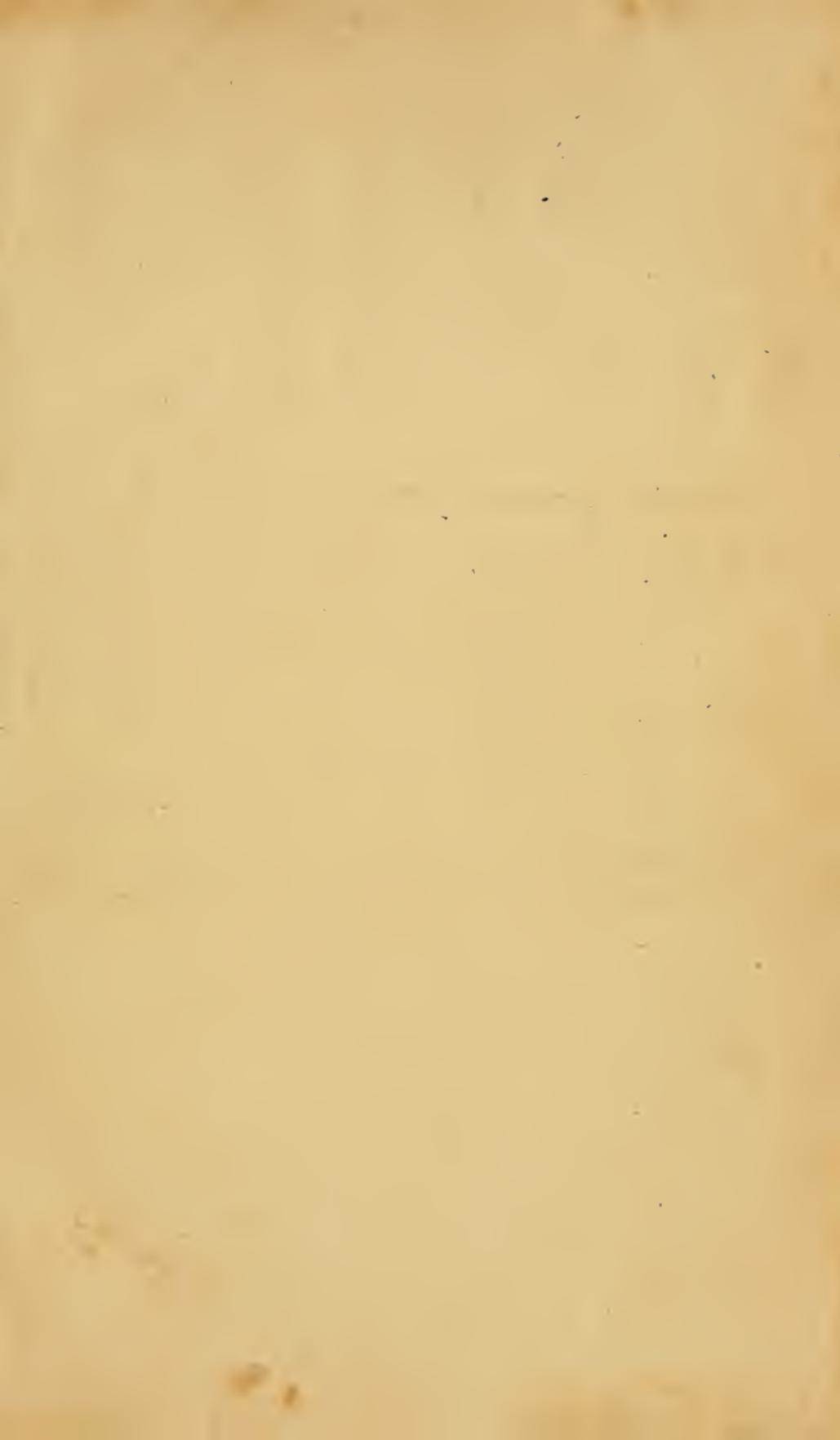


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SERMONS

BY

JEAN-BAPTISTE MASSILLON,

BISHOP OF CLERMONT.



TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.



SELECTED AND TRANSLATED

BY WILLIAM DICKSON;

AND

DEDICATED, BY PERMISSION,

TO

HER GRACE

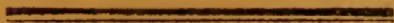
THE DUTCHESS OF BUCCLEUGH.



COMPLETE IN TWO VOLUMES.



VOLUME I.



BROOKLYN:

PRINTED FOR THOMAS S. ARDEN, NO. 186, PEARL-STREET, NEW-YORK.

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PLATE I

TO HER GRACE
THE DUTCHESS OF BUCCLEUGH.

MADAM,

IN consequence of your permitting me to address my Translation of the following Sermons to your GRACE, the general approbation will be secured to at least one part of my Publication.

It is not your rank in the world, Madam, elevated as it is, which renders your protection of any part of the amiable MASSILON'S Works so eminently proper; it is your rank in the hearts of the good and virtuous, such as he was, who will unanimously acknowledge the propriety of the Dedication.

Were

Were I at liberty to mention instances, within the sphere of my own knowledge, of your GRACE's humanity and benevolence, the pleasure with which I seize this opportunity of expressing my veneration for your character, would be little wondered at; nor would the sincerity be doubted, with which I subscribe myself,

Madam,

Your GRACE's most respectful,

And most obedient servant.

William Dickson.

TRANS-

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

P U B L I C.

IT is equally proper for a Translator, as for an Author, to give some explanation (not apology, for surely a generous Public will require none, when the dissemination of virtue is evidently the purpose) of the production which he obtrudes upon the public.

This Translation was at first undertaken, merely for the recreation, during illness, of the Translator; his admiration of Maffillon's abilities, increasing as he went on, he was induced to continue, far beyond his first intention; that animation, that unctious, as D'Alembert says, which flowed from his pen on every subject, that gentle, yet feeling address to the hearts of his hearers, and to which the most indifferent could not refuse attention, struck him so forcibly, that he could not reflect, without surprise, that no translation of his works had as yet appeared in English. Impressed with a conviction of their moral tendency, he determined, in consequence of the approbation of some respectable clergymen, his friends, to publish a selection of such as, unconnected with local or temporary events in France, would, in his opinion, be an acceptable present to Christians of every denomination. He now offers the present volume to the public; and so impressed is he with a sense of their merit, that he is convinced

vinced that the weakness, or the inaccuracy of the Translation, can alone prevent a generous Public from receiving them favourably.

In the Translation, he has endeavoured, as much as in him lay, to convey the meaning and sentiments of his Original; in doing of which, he may perhaps be thought sometimes too literal; but if the meaning be conveyed, surely the error is on the safest side; for many of our translations, may with much more propriety be called paraphrases than translations; and, (at least in the Translator's opinion), it is much better to err, in keeping rather too closely to the text, than by studiously avoiding the appearance of literality, to render the sense both obscure and unintelligible. If the Translator be mistaken, it is an error which in future may easily be corrected; and this being his first publication, he trusts that a generous Public will not cashier a subaltern, because he may not as yet be capable of discharging the duty of a general officer.

The Translator takes this opportunity of returning his acknowledgments to his friends above mentioned, from whose advice he has reaped many advantages.

L I F E
OF
M A S S I L L O N :

(*Extracted from the Discourse of Monsieur Le Marquis D'Alembert, on his admission into the Royal Academy of Paris.*)

J E A N - B A P T I S T E M A S S I L L O N was born in Provence in the year 1663. His father was a poor attorney of that inconsiderable place. The obscurity of his birth, which gives so much lustre to the splendour of his personal merit, should make a chief feature in his panegyric ; and it may be said of him, as was said of the illustrious Roman, who owed nothing to his ancestors, *Videtur ex se natus* : He seemed to have produced himself.

He entered the Oratory at seventeen : The superiors of Massillon soon saw the fame which he would bring to their congregation. They destined him to the pulpit ; but, it was from a principle of obedience alone, that he consented to second their views : He was the only one who did not foresee that future celebrity, by which his humility and his modesty were to be rewarded.

The young Massillon did every thing in his power to avoid that fame. He had already, while in the country, by order of his superiors, pronounced the funeral orations
of

of two Archbishops. These discourses, which were indeed nothing but the attempts of a youth, but of a youth, who shewed what he would one day be, had the most brilliant success. The humble orator, alarmed at his growing reputation, and dreading, as he said, the dæmon of pride, resolved to escape him for ever, by secluding himself in the most obscure retreat. He repaired to the Abbey of Septfons, where the same discipline is observed as at La Trappe; and there he took the habit.

During his noviciate, the Cardinal de Noailles addressed to the Abbé of Septfons, whose virtue he respected, a charge which he had just published. The Abbé, more religious than eloquent, but preserving still at least for those of his communion some remains of self-love, wished to return an answer to the Cardinal, worthy of the charge he had received. This office he entrusted to Massillon, who performed it with as much readiness as success. The Cardinal, astonished at receiving from that quarter, a piece so well written, was not afraid of wounding the vanity of the Abbé of Septfons, by asking, who was the author of it; when, the Abbé's mentioning Massillon, the prelate immediately replied, that such talents were not in the language of Scripture, to remain hid under a bushel. He obliged the novice to quit the habit, and resume that of the Oratory. He placed him in the seminary of St. Magloire in Paris, exhorting him to cultivate the eloquence of the pulpit, and promising to make his fortune, which the young orator confined to that of an apostle, that is, to the mere necessaries of life, accompanied with the most exemplary simplicity.

His first Sermons produced the effect, which his superiors, and the Cardinal de Noailles, had foreseen. Scarcely had

had he shewn himself in the churches of Paris, than he eclipsed almost all those who had shone in the same sphere. He had declared that he would not preach like them; not from any presumptuous sentiment of superiority, but from the just and rational idea he had formed of Christian eloquence. He was persuaded, that if a minister of the gospel degrades himself by circulating known truths in vulgar language, he fails, on the other hand, in thinking to reclaim, by profound argumentation, a multitude of hearers, who are by no means able to comprehend him; that though all who hear him may not have the advantage of education, yet all of them have a heart, at which the preacher should aim; that in the pulpit, man should be exhibited to himself, not to frighten him by the horror of the picture, but to afflict him by its resemblance; and that if it is sometimes useful to terrify and alarm him, it is oftener profitable to draw forth those extatic tears, that are more efficacious than those of despair.

Such was the plan that Massillon proposed to follow, and which he executed like a man who had conceived it, that is, like a man of genius. He excels in that property of an orator, which can alone supply all the rest; in that eloquence, which goes directly to the soul, which agitates, without convulsing; which alarms, without appalling; which penetrates, without rending the heart. He searches out the hidden folds, in which the passions lie enveloped; these secret sophisms, which blind and seduce. To combat and to destroy these sophisms, he has in general only to unfold them: This he does with an unction so affectionate and so tender, that he allures us rather than compels; and even when he shews us the picture of our vices, he interests and delights us the most. His diction, always smooth and elegant, and pure, is every where marked with that

noble simplicity, without which, there is neither good taste nor true eloquence; a simplicity, which being united in Massillon, with the sweetest and most bewitching harmony, borrowed from this latter additional graces; but what compleats the charm of this enchanting style, is our conviction, that so many beauties spring from an exuberant source, and are produced without effort or pain. It sometimes happen, indeed, that a few inaccuracies escape him, either in the expression, in the term of the phrase, or in the affecting melody of his style; such inaccuracies, however, may be called happy ones, for they completely prevent us from suspecting the least degree of labour in his composition. It was by this happy negligence, that Massillon gained as many friends as auditors: He knew, that the more an orator is intent upon gaining admiration, the less those who hear him are disposed to grant it: and that this ambition is the rock on which so many preachers have split, who being entrusted, if one dare thus to express it, with the interests of the Deity, wish to mingle with them the insignificant interests of their own vanity. He compared the studied eloquence of learned preachers to those flowers, which grow so luxuriantly amongst the corn, that are lovely to the view, but noxious to the corn.

Massillon reaped another advantage from that heart-affecting eloquence, which he made so happy an use of. As he spoke the language of all conditions, because he spoke to the heart, all descriptions of men flocked to his sermons; even unbelievers were eager to hear him; they often found instruction, when they expected only amusement, and returned sometimes converted, when they thought they were only bestowing or withholding their praise. Massillon could descend to the language, which alone they would listen to, that of a philosophy, apparently human,
but

but which, finding every avenue to the heart laid open, allowed the orator to approach without effort and assistance; and made him conqueror, even before he had engaged.

His action perfectly corresponded with the kind of eloquence he had cultivated. The moment he entered the pulpit, he seemed deeply impressed with the great truths he was about to declare; with eyes cast down, a modest and collected air, without any violent motions, with few or no gestures, but animating all by an affecting and impressive voice, he communicated to his hearers the religious sentiment which his external appearance announced; he commanded that profound silence, which is a higher compliment to eloquence, than the most tumultuous plaudits. He appeared on that great and dangerous theatre, equally devoid of pride as of fear: His first attempt was uncommonly brilliant, and the exordium of his first discourse is one of the master-pieces of modern eloquence. Lewis XIV. was then in the zenith of his power and glory; he had been victorious in every part of Europe; he was adored by his subjects, intoxicated with fame, and surfeited with adulation. Massillon choose for his text that passage of Scripture which seemed the least adapted to such a prince, "Blessed are they who weep;" and from that text he conveyed a compliment the more new, and artful, and flattering, as it appeared to be dictated by the gospel itself, and such as an Apostle might have paid. "Sire," said he, "addressing the king, "if the world were to speak
 "to your Majesty from this place, it would not say, Blef-
 "sed are they who weep. Happy, would it say, that
 "prince who has never fought but to conquer; who hath
 "filled the universe with his fame; who, in the course of
 "a long and prosperous reign, has enjoyed all that men ad-
 "mire,

“mire, the splendour of conquest, the love of his people, the esteem of his enemies, the wisdom of his laws. But, Sire, the gospel does not speak the language of the world.” The audience of Versailles, accustomed as it was to Bourdalous and Bossuets, had never witnessed an eloquence at once so delicate and noble; and accordingly, it excited in the congregation an involuntary movement of admiration.

Our orator was always firm, but always respectful, while he announced to his sovereign, the will of Him who is the Judge of Kings; he fulfilled the duty of the ministry, but he never exceeded it; and the Monarch, who perhaps retired from his chapel dissatisfied with some other preachers, never left the sermons of Massillon, without being dissatisfied with himself. This the Prince was honest enough to confess to Massillon; the greatest compliment he could pay him, but a compliment which many others before and after Massillon never wished to obtain, being more anxious to send away a hearer enraptured, than a sinner converted.

Lewis XIV. died; and the Regent, who honoured the talents of Massillon, and despised his enemies, named him to the bishopric of Clermont; he wanted, moreover, that the Court should hear him once more, and engaged him to preach some Lent sermons before the King, then of the age of nine years.

These sermons composed in less than three months, are known by the name of *Petit Carême*. Though they are not in the highest degree finished, they are a true model of pulpit eloquence. The great sermons of the same author may possess more pathos and vehemence; but the eloquence

quence of these is more insinuating and delicate, and the charm resulting from them is enhanced by the importance of the subject, by the inestimable value of those simple affecting lessons, which being fitted to penetrate, as agreeably as forcibly, the heart of the young Monarch, seem calculated to procure the happiness of millions, by acquainting the Prince with what was expected of him.

The same year in which these discourses were pronounced, Massillon was admitted into the French academy. Massillon had just been made a bishop; but no place at Court, no business, no pretence of any kind, could detain him at a distance from his flock. He departed for Clermont, whence he never returned, but on account of indispensable occasions, and consequently very rarely. He gave all his attention to the happy people whom providence had confided to his care. He benevolently dedicated to the instruction of the poor, those same talents, so much esteemed by the great of this world, and preferred to the loud applauses of the courtier, the simple and earnest attention of an auditory, less brilliant, but more teachable. Perhaps the most eloquent of his sermons are the conferences he held with his curates. He preached to them the virtues of which he set an example, disinterestedness, simplicity, forgetfulness of himself, the active and prudent earnestness of an enlightened conviction, very different from that fanaticism which proves nothing but the blindness of zeal, and which makes the sincerity of it very doubtful. A wise moderation was indeed his predominant character.

Deeply impressed with a sense of the true duties of his station, Massillon fulfilled the principal function of a bishop, that which attracts love and respect from incredulity itself, the delightful exercise of humanity and benevolence. He
sent,

ent, in the space of two years, twenty thousand livres to the Hotel Dieu at Clermont. His whole revenue was at the service of the poor. His diocese retain the remembrance of his benefits, now after thirty years, and his memory is still honoured by the most eloquent of all funeral orations, the tears of an hundred thousand people whom his bounty made happy:

This funeral oration he enjoyed in his life time. Whenever he appeared in the streets of Clermont the people prostrated themselves before him, calling him father, and invoking blessings on his head. Among the immense alms which he bestowed, there were some acts of charity which he carefully concealed, not only to spare the delicacy of unhappy individuals, who received them, but to relieve whole communities from feelings of inquietude, and the fears which such alms might inspire them with.

Not only was he liberal of his fortune to the indigent, but he employed for them besides, with as much zeal as success, both his interest and his pen. Being a witness, in his diocesan visitations, of the misery under which the inhabitants of the country groaned, and his revenue not being sufficient to give bread to such a multitude of indigent creatures, that implored it of him, he wrote to the Court in their favour, and, by the energetic and affecting picture which he drew of their necessities, he obtained either actual contributions for them, or a considerable abatement of their taxes. I am assured that his letters on this subject are master-pieces of eloquence and pathos, superior even to the most affecting of his sermons; and what emotions, indeed, must not the spectacle of human nature, suffering and oppressed, have excited in the virtuous and compassionate soul of Massillon!

He died as Fenelon died, and as every bishop ought, without wealth, and without debt. It was on the 28th September 1742, that the church and eloquence, and humanity suffered the irreparable loss.

A circumstance which happened not long ago, calculated to affect every heart of sensibility, proves how dear the memory of Massillon is, not only to the poor whose tears he wiped away, but to all who knew him. Some years ago, a traveller passing through Clermont wished to see the country-house in which the prelate used to spend the greatest part of the year, and he applied to an old vicar, who, since the death of the bishop, had never ventured to return to that country-house, where he who inhabited was no longer to be found. He consented, however, to gratify the desire of the traveller, notwithstanding the profound grief he expected to suffer, in revisiting a place so dear to his remembrance. They accordingly set out together, and the vicar pointed out every particular place to the stranger. "There," said he, with tears in his eyes, "is the alley in which the prelate used to walk with us—there is the arbor in which he used to sit and read—this is the garden he took pleasure in cultivating with his own hands." Then they entered the house, and when they came to the room where Massillon died, "this," said the vicar, is the place where we lost him." And as he pronounced these words, he fainted. The ashes of Titus, or of Marcus Aurelius, might have envied such a tribute of regard and affection.

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SERMON I.

ON SALVATION.

JOHN vii. 6.

My time is not yet come ; but your time is always ready.

THE reproach which is directed by Jesus Christ, against his relations according to the flesh, who pressed him to shew himself to the world and to go up to Jerusalem, in order to acquire those honours which were due to his great talents, may, with propriety, be directed against the greatest part of this audience. The time which they give to their fortune, to their advancement, to their pleasures, is always ready ; it is always time to labour towards the acquirement of wealth and glory, and to satisfy their passions : That is the time of man : But the time of Jesus Christ, that is to say, the time of working out their salvation, is never ready ; they delay, they put it off ; they always expect its arrival, and it never arrives.

The slightest worldly interests agitate them, and make them undertake every thing : For what is the world itself, whose deceitful ways they follow, but an eternal agitation, where the passions set every thing in motion ; where tranquility is the only pleasure unknown ; where cares are ho-

nourable ; where those who are at rest, think themselves unhappy ; where all is toil and affliction of spirit ; in a word, where all are in motion, and all are deceived ? Surely, my brethren, when we see men so occupied, so interested, so patient in their pursuits, we would suppose them labouring for everlasting ages, and for riches which ought to secure their happiness : How can we comprehend, that so much toil and agitation has nothing in view but a fortune, whose duration scarcely equals that of the labours which have gained it ; and that a life so rapid, is spent with so much fatigue, in the search of wealth which must perish along with it !

Nevertheless, a mistake, which the slightest investigation is sufficient to expose, is become the error of by far the majority. In vain does religion call us to more necessary and more important cares ; in vain it announces to us, that to labour for what must pass away, is only amassing, at a great expence, heaps of sand, which tumble upon our heads, as fast as we raise them up ; that the highest pitch of elevation to which we can attain here below, is always that which verges upon our death, and is the gate of eternity ; and that nothing is worthy of man, but what will endure as long as man. The cares of the passions are always weighty and important : The steps alone which we take for heaven, are weak and languid : Salvation alone, we consider as an amusement : We toil for frivolous riches, as if we laboured for eternal possessions ; we labour for eternal possessions, as if we toiled for frivolous riches.

Yes, my brethren, our cares for this world are always animated ; obstacles, fatigues, disappointments, nothing can repulse us ; Our cares for this world are always prudent ; dangers, snares, perplexities, competitions, nothing can make us mistake our aim ; whereas our cares for salvation
bear

bear a very different character ; nothing can be more languid, or less interesting to us, although obstacles and disgusts there, are so much to be dreaded ; nothing can be more inconsiderate ; although the multiplicity of ways, and the number of rocks for us to split upon, render mistakes in it so familiar and common.

We must labour, therefore, towards its accomplishment, with fervour and prudence ; with fervour, in order not to be repulsed ; with prudence, in order not to be mistaken.

PART. I.—Undoubtedly nothing in this life ought to interest us more than the care of our eternal salvation ; besides, that this is the grand affair upon which our ALL depends, we even have not, properly speaking, any other upon the earth ; and the infinite and diverse occupations attached to our places, to our rank, to our situations in life, ought to be only different modes of labouring towards our salvation.

Nevertheless, this care so glorious, to which every thing we do, and whatever we are, relate, is of all others the most despised ; this chief care, which should be at the head of our other pursuits, gives place to them all in the detail of our actions ; this care so amiable, and to which the promises of faith, and the consolations of grace, attach so many comforts, is of all others become for us, the most disgusting, and the most melancholy. And, behold, my brethren, from whence springs this want of fervour in the business of our eternal salvation ; we pursue it without esteem, without preference, and without inclination. Let us investigate and illustrate these ideas.

It is a very deplorable error, that mankind has attached the most pompous names to all the enterprises of the passions ;

sions; and that the cares for our salvation have not, in the opinions of men, been capable of meriting the same honour, and the same esteem. Military toils are regarded by us as the path of reputation and glory; the intrigues and the commotions which contribute to our advancement in the world, are looked upon as the secrets of a profound wisdom; schemes and negociations which arm mankind against each other, and which frequently make the ambition of an individual the source of public calamities, pass for extent of genius, and superiority of talents; the art of raising from an obscure patrimony, a monstrous and overgrown fortune, at the expence often of justice and probity, is the science of business, and individual good management. In a word, the world has found out the secret of setting off by honourable titles, all the different cares which are connected with the things of this earth. The actions of faith alone, which shall endure eternally; which shall form the history of the age to come, and shall be engraven during all eternity upon the immortal columns of the heavenly Jerusalem, are accounted idle and obscure occupations; the lot of weak and limited souls, and have nothing which exalt them in the eyes of men. Such, my brethren, is the first cause of our indifference towards the business of our salvation: We do not sufficiently esteem that holy undertaking, to labour at it with fervour.

Now, I do not think it necessary to stop here, and combat an illusion, which so flagrantly violates right reason. For what is it that can render a work glorious to the person who undertakes it? Is it the duration and the immortality which it promises in the memory of men? Alas! all the monuments of pride will perish with the world which has reared them up; whatever we do for the earth, will experience the same destiny which it will one day undergo: Victories and conquests, the most splendid enterprises,
and

and all the history of the finners whose names adorn the present age, will be effaced from the remembrance of men; the works of the just alone, will be immortal, and, written forever in the book of life, will survive the entire ruin of the universe. Is it the recompense which is held out to us for it? But whoever is unable to render us happy, is consequently unable to recompense us; and there is no other who has that power but God himself. Is it the dignity of the occupations to which they engage you? But the most honourable cares of the world are merely games, on which our error and absurdity have bestowed serious and pompous names: Here, on the contrary, every thing is great; we love the Author of our existence alone; we adore the Sovereign of the universe; we serve an Almighty Master; we covet only eternal riches; we form projects for heaven alone; we labour for an immortal crown,

What is there upon earth, then, more glorious, or more worthy of man, than the cares of eternity? Prosperities are honourable anxieties; splendid employments an illustrious servitude; reputation is frequently a public error: titles and dignities are rarely the fruit of virtue, and, at the most, serve only to adorn our tombs, and embellish our ashes; great talents, if faith does not regulate their use, are only great temptations; deep knowledge, a wind which inflates and corrupts, if faith does not correct its venom; all these are only grand, by the use which may be made of them towards salvation: Virtue alone is estimable for itself.

Nevertheless, if our competitors are more successful, and more elevated than we in the world, we view their situation with envious eyes; and their aggrandisement, in humbling our pride, reanimates the fervour of our designs,
and

and gives new life to our expectations ; but, it happens sometimes, that the accomplices of our pleasures, changed suddenly into new men, nobly break all the shameful bonds of the passions, and borne upon the wings of grace, enter in our sight, into the path of salvation, whilst they leave us behind them, to wander still unfortunately, at the pleasure of our illicit desires. We view with a tranquil eye the prodigy of their change ; and their lot far from exciting our envy, and awaking in us any weak desires of salvation, only induces us, perhaps, to think on replacing the void which their retreat has made in the world ; of elevating ourselves to those dangerous offices from which they have just descended through motives of religion and faith : What shall I say ? We become, perhaps, the censurers of their virtues : We seek elsewhere than in the infinite treasures of grace, the secret motives of their change ; to the work of God we give views entirely worldly ; and our deplorable censures become the most dangerous trials of their repentance. It is thus, O my God ! that Thou sheddest avenging darkness over iniquitous passions ! Whence comes this ? We want esteem for the holy undertaking of salvation : This is the first cause of our indifference.

In the *second* place, We labour in it with indolence, because we do not make a principal object of its attainment, and because we never give a preference to it over our other pursuits. In effect, my brethren, we all wish to be saved ; the most deplorable sinners do not renounce this hope ; we even wish, that amongst our actions, there may always be found some which relate to our salvation ; for none deceive themselves so far as to believe, that, they shall be entitled to the glory of the holy, without having ever made a single exertion towards rendering themselves worthy of it ;

but

but the point in which we commonly deceive ourselves is, the rank which we give to these works, amidst the other occupations which divide our life.

The trifles, the attentions which we lavish so profusely in our intercourse with society, the functions of a charge, domestic arrangements, passions and pleasures, their times and their moments marked in our days. Where do we place the work of salvation? What rank do we give to this special care, above our other cares? Do we even make a business of it? And, to enter into the particulars of your conduct. What do you perform for eternity which you do not for the world an hundred fold? You sometimes employ a small portion of your wealth in religious charities; but what are these when compared to the sums which you sacrifice every day to your pleasures, to your passions, and to your caprices? In the morning you, perhaps, raise up your mind to the Lord in prayer; but does not the world, in a moment, resume its place in your heart, and is not the remainder of the day devoted to it? You regularly attend, perhaps, in order to fulfil the external duties of religion; but, without entering into the motives which frequently carry you there, this individual exercise of religion, Is it not compensated by devoting the remainder of the day to indolent and worldly pursuits? You sometimes correct your inclinations; you perhaps bear with an injury; you undertake the discharge of some pious obligation; but these are individual and insulated exertions, out of the common tract, and which are never followed by any regular consequences; you will be unable to produce before the Lord, a single instance of these in your favour, without the enemy having it at the same time in his power to reckon a thousand against you; salvation occupies your intervals alone; the world has, as I may say, the founda-

tion

tion and the principal: The moments are for God, our entire life is for ourselves.

I know, my brethren, that with regard to this, you feel sensibly the injustice and the danger of your own conduct. You confess, that the agitations of the world, of business, and of pleasures, almost entirely occupy you, and that a very little time, indeed, remains for you to reflect upon salvation: But, in order to tranquilize yourselves, you say, that some future day, when you shall be more at ease; when affairs of a certain nature shall be terminated; when particular embarrassments shall be at an end; and, in a word, when certain circumstances shall no longer exist, you will then think seriously upon your salvation, and the business of eternity shall then become your principal occupation: But, alas! your deception is this, that you regard salvation as incompatible with the occupations attached to the station in which Providence has placed you. For, cannot you employ that station as the means of your sanctification? Can you not exercise in it all the Christian virtues? Penitence, should these occupations be painful and distressing; clemency, pity, justice, if they establish you in authority over your fellow creatures? Submission to the will of heaven, if the success does not correspond sometimes with your expectations? A generous forgiveness of injuries, if you suffer oppression or calumny in that station; Confidence in God alone, if in it you experience the injustice or the inconstancy of your masters? Do not many individuals of your rank and station, in the same predicament as you find yourselves, lead a pure and Christian life? You know well, that God is to be found everywhere; for, in those happy moments when you have sometimes been touched with grace, is it not true, that every thing recalled you to God? That even the dangers of your
station

station became the vehicles of instruction, and means of cure for you; that the world disgusted you, even with the world; that you found continually and everywhere, the secret of offering up a thousand invisible sacrifices to the Almighty, and of making your most hurried and tumultuous occupations the sources of holy reflections, or of praiseworthy and salutary examples? Why do you not cultivate these impressions of grace and salvation? It is not your situation in life, it is your infidelity and weakness, which have extinguished them in your heart.

Joseph was charged with the management of a great kingdom; he alone supported the whole weight of the government; nevertheless, did he forget the Lord, who had broken asunder his chains, and justified his innocence? Or, in order to serve the God of his fathers; did he delay till a successor should come and restore that tranquility to him which his new dignities had necessarily deprived him of? On the contrary, he knew how to render serviceable towards the consolation of his brethren, and the happiness of the people of God, a prosperity which he acknowledged to be held only from his Almighty hand. That officer of the Queen of Ethiopia, who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, had the sole government of her immense riches; every particular with regard to tributes and subsidies, and the administration of all the public revenues, were entrusted to his fidelity; now, this abyss of cares and embarrassments did not deprive him of leisure to seek, in the prophecies of Isaiah, the salvation he expected, and the words of eternal life. Place yourselves in the most agitated stations, you will find examples of upright souls, who in them have wrought their sanctification: The Court may become the asylum of virtue, as well as the cloister;

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places and employments may be the aids, as well as the rocks of piety ; and when, in order to return to God, we delay till a change of station shall take place, it is a sure mark that we do not as yet wish to change our heart. Besides, when we say that salvation ought to be your sole employment, we do not pretend that you should renounce all other pursuits ; for you would then depart from the order of God ; we only wish you to connect them with your salvation ; that piety may sanctify your occupations ; that faith may regulate them ; that religion may animate them ; that the fear of the Lord may moderate them : In a word, that salvation may be as the centre to which they all tend. For, to wait till you shall be in a more tranquil situation, and freer from worldly perplexities, is not only an illusion which Satan employs to delay your repentance, but it is also an outrage upon the religion of Jesus Christ ; you thereby justify the reproaches formerly made against it, by the enemies of the Christians ; it would seem that you look upon it as incompatible with the duties of Prince, courtier, public character, and father of a family ; like them, you seem to believe, that the gospel proposes only maxims unfortunate and inimical to society ; and that, were it believed, and strictly observed, it would be necessary to quit all ; to exclude ourselves from the world ; to renounce all public concerns ; to break all the ties of duty, of humanity, of authority, which unite us to the rest of mankind ; and to live as if we were alone upon the earth ; in place of which, it is the gospel alone which makes us fulfil all these duties as they ought to be fulfilled ; it is the religion of Jesus Christ which can alone form pious princes, incorruptible magistrates, mild and gentle masters, and faithful subjects, and maintain, in a just harmony, that variety of stations and conditions, upon which depend the

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peace and tranquility of the people, and the safety of empires.

But, in order to impress more sensibly upon you the illusion of this pretext, when you shall be free from embarrassment, and disengaged from these external cares which at present detach our thoughts from salvation, will your heart be free from passions? Will those iniquitous and invisible bonds which now stop you, be broken asunder? Will you be restored to yourselves? Will you be more humble, more patient, more moderate, more virtuous, more mortified? Alas! It is not external agitations which check you, it is the disorder within; it is the tumultuous ardour of the passions; it is not from the cares of fortune, and the embarrassments of events and business, says a holy father, that confusion and trouble proceed; it is from the irregular desires of the soul; a heart in which God reigns is tranquil everywhere. Your cares for the world are only incompatible with salvation, because the affections which attach you to it are criminal. It is not your stations, but your inclinations which become rocks of destruction to you; now, from these inclinations you will never be able to free yourselves with the same facility as from your cares and embarrassments; they will afterwards be even more lively, more unconquerable than ever: Besides this fund of weakness which they draw from your corruption, they will have that force and strength acquired by habit through time and years. You think, that in attaining rest every thing will be accomplished; and you will feel, that your passions, more lively in proportion as they no longer find external resources to employ them, will turn all their violence against yourselves; and you will then be surpris'd to find in your own hearts, the same obstacles which at present

present you believe to be only in what furrounds you. This leprosy, if I may venture to speak in this manner, is not attached to your clothes, to your places, to the walls of your palaces, so that, by quitting them you may rid yourselves of it ; it has gained root in your flesh ; it is not by renouncing your cares, therefore, that you must labour towards curing yourselves ; it is by purifying yourselves that you must sanctify your cares : Every thing is pure to those who are pure ; otherwise your wound will follow you, even into the leisure of your solitude ; like that King of Judea mentioned in the Book of Kings, who in vain abdicated his throne, delivered up all the insignia as well as the cares of royalty, into the hands of his son, and withdrew himself into the heart of his palace ; he carried with him the leprosy with which the Lord had struck him, and beheld that shameful disease pursue him even into his retreat. External cares find neither their innocency nor their malignity, but in our own hearts ; and it is ourselves alone who render the occupations of the world dangerous, as it is ourselves alone who render those of heaven insipid and disgusting.

And, behold, my brethren, the last reason why we shew so little fervour and animation in the affair of our eternal salvation ; it is because we fulfil the duties necessary to accomplish it, without pleasure, and, as it were, against our will. The slightest obligations of piety appear hard to us ; whatever we do for heaven tires us, exhausts us, displeases us : Prayer confines our minds too much ; retirement wearies us ; holy reading, from the first, fatigues the attention ; the intercourse of the upright is languid, and has nothing sprightly or amusing in it ; in a word, we find something, I know not what, of melancholy

choly in virtue, which occasions us to fulfil its obligations only as hateful debts, which we always discharge with a bad grace, and never till we see ourselves forced to it.

But, in the *first* place, my brethren, you are unjust in attributing to virtue what springs from your own corruption ; it is not piety which is disagreeable, it is your heart which is disordered ; it is not the cup of the Lord which is to be accused of bitterness, says a holy father, it is your own taste which is vitiated. Every thing is bitter to a decepted palate : Correct your dispositions, and the yoke will appear light to you ; restore to your heart that taste of which sin has deprived it, and you will experience how pleasing the Lord is : Hate the world, and you will comprehend how much virtue is amiable : In a word, Jesus Christ once become the object of your love, you will then feel the truth of every thing I say.

Do the upright experience those disgusts for pious works which you feel ? Interrogate them : Demand if they consider your condition as the happiest : They will answer, that in their opinion you appear worthy of compassion, that they are feelingly touched for your errors ; to see you suffering every thing for a world which either despises you, wearies you, or cannot render you happy ; to see you frequently running after pleasures more insipid to you, than even virtue from which you fly : They will tell you, that they would not change their pretended melancholy for all the felicities of the earth. Prayer consoles them ; retirement supports them ; holy reading animates them ; works of piety shed a holy unctiion through their soul ; and their happiest days, are those which they pass with the Lord. It is the heart which decides our pleasures. While you
continue

continue to love the world, you will find virtue insupportable.

In the *second* place, If you wish to know why the yoke of Jesus Christ is so hard, and so burdensome to you; it is because you carry it too seldom: You give only a few rapid moments to the care of your salvation: Certain days which you consecrate to piety: Certain religious works of which you sometimes acquit yourselves; and in accomplishing their immediate discharge, you experience only the disgusts attending the first efforts; you do not leave to grace, the time necessary to lighten the weight; and you anticipate the comforts and the consolations, which it never fails to shed upon the sequel. Those mysterious animals which the Philistines made choice of to carry the ark of the Lord beyond their frontiers, emblematic of unbelieving souls little accustomed to bear the yoke of Jesus Christ, bellowed, says the scripture, and seemed to groan under the grandeur of that sacred weight: In place of which, the children of Levi, a natural image of the upright, accustomed to that holy ministry, made the air resound with songs of mirth and thanksgivings, while carrying it with majesty, even over the burning sands of the desert. The law is not a burden to the upright soul accustomed to observe it; It is the worldly soul alone, little familiarized to the holy rules, who groans under a weight so pleasing. When Jesus Christ declares that his yoke is light and easy, he commands us, at the same time, to bear it every day; the unction is attached to the habit and usage of it: The arms of Saul were heavy to David, only because he was not accustomed to them. We must familiarize ourselves with virtue, in order to be acquainted with its holy attractions; the pleasures of sinners are only superficially agreeable:

able : The first moments alone are pleasant ; descend deeper, and you no longer find but gall and bitterness ; and the deeper you go, the more will you find the void, the weariness, and the satiety which are inseparable from sin : Virtue, on the contrary, is a hidden manna ; in order to taste all its sweetness, it is necessary to dig for it ; but the more you advance, the more do its consolations abound ; in proportion as the passions are calmed, the path becomes easy ; and the more will you applaud yourselves for having broken asunder chains which weighed you down, and which you no longer bore but with reluctance and a secret sorrow.

Thus, while you confine yourselves to simple essays in virtue, you will taste only the repugnances and the bitterness of it ; and, as you will not possess the fidelity of the upright, you can have no right, consequently, to expect their consolations.

In a word, You perform the duties of piety without inclination, not only because you do them too seldom, but because you only, as I may say, half perform them. You pray, but it is without recollection ; you abstain, perhaps, from injuring your enemy ; but it is without loving him as your brother ; you approach the holy mysteries ; but without bringing there that fervour which alone can enable you to find in them those ineffable comforts which they communicate to the religious soul ; You sometimes separate yourselves from the world ; but you carry not with you into retirement the silence of the senses and of the passions, without which it is only a melancholy fatigue. In a word, You only half carry the yoke. Now, Jesus Christ is not divided : That Simon of Cyrene, who bore the only part of the cross, was overcome by it, and the soldiers were

were under the necessity of using violence to force him to continue this melancholy office to the Saviour of the world, The fulness alone of the law is consolatory ; in proportion as you retrench from it, it becomes heavy and irksome ; the more you wish to soften it, the more it weighs you down ; on the contrary, by sometimes adding extraneous rigours, you feel the load diminished, as if you had applied additional softness : Whence comes this ? It is, that the imperfect observance of the law takes its source from a heart which the passions still share ; now, according to the word of Jesus Christ, a heart divided, and which nourishes two loves, must be a kingdom and a theatre full of trouble and desolation.

Would you wish a natural image of it, drawn from the holy scriptures ? Rebecca, on the point of her delivery of Jacob and Esau, suffered the most cruel anguish : The two children struggled within her ; and, as if worn out by her tortures, she entreated of the Lord, either death or deliverance : Be not surpris'd, said a voice from heaven to her, if your sufferings are extreme, and that it costs you so much to become a mother ; the reason is, you carry two nations in your womb. Such is your history, my dear hearers ; you are surpris'd that it costs you so much to accomplish a pious work ; to bring forth Jesus Christ ; the new man in your heart : Alas ! The reason is, that you still preserve there two loves, which are irreconcilable, Jacob and Esau, the love of the world, and the love of Jesus Christ : It is because you carry within you two nations, as I may say, who make continual war against each other. If the love of Jesus Christ alone possessed your heart, all there would be calm and peaceable ; but you still nourish iniquitous passions in it : You still love the world,

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the pleasures and distinctions of fortune: You cannot endure those who eclipse you: Your heart is full of jealousies, of animosities, of frivolous desires, of criminal attachments; and from thence it comes, that your sacrifices, like those of Cain, being always imperfect, like his, are always gloomy and disagreeable.

Serve then the Lord with all your heart, and you will serve him with joy: Give yourself up to him without reserve, without retaining the smallest right over your passions: Observe the righteousnesses of the law, in all their fullness, and they will shed holy pleasures through your heart: For, thus says the prophet, "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart." Think not that the tears of penitence are always bitter and gloomy: The mourning is only external; when sincere, they have a thousand secret recompences: The upright soul resembles the sacred bush; nothing strikes your view but prickles and thorns; but you see not the glory of the Lord, which dwells within it: You see only fastings and bodily sufferings; but you perceive not the holy unction, which soothes and softens them: You see silence, retirement, flight from the world and its pleasures, but you behold not the invisible comforter, who replaces, with so much usury, the society of men, now become insupportable, since they have begun to taste that of God: You see a life apparently gloomy and tiresome; but you are incapable of seeing the peace and the joy of that innocence which reigns within. It is there, that the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation, so liberally sheds his favours, and that the soul, unable sometimes to support their fullness and excess, is obliged to entreat the Lord to suspend the torrent of his kindness,

kindness, and to measure the abundance of his gifts, by the weakness of his creature.

Come yourself, my dear hearer, and make an happy experience of it; come, and put the fidelity of your God to the trial; it is here he wishes to be tried; come and prove whether or not we render false testimonies to his mercies; if we attract the sinner by false hopes, and if his gifts are not still more abundant than our promises. You have long tried the world; you have found it destitute of fidelity: it flattered you with hopes of accomplishing every thing; pleasures, honours, imaginary happiness; it has deceived you; you are unhappy in it; you have never been able to attain a situation answerable to your wishes or expectations; come and see if your God will be more faithful to you; if only bitterness and disgusts are to be found in his service; if he promises more than he bestows; if he is an ungrateful, changeable, or whimsical master; if his yoke is a cruel servitude, or a sweet liberty: If the duties which he exacts from us, are the punishment of his slaves, or the consolation of his children; and if he deceives those who serve him. My God! How little wouldst thou be worthy of our hearts, wert thou not more amiable, more faithful, and more worthy of being served, than this miserable world!

But, in order to serve him as he wishes to be served, we must esteem the glory and the happiness of his service; we must prefer this happiness to all others, and labour in it with sincerity, without reserve, and with a ripe and watchful circumspection; for if it is a common fault to want fervour in the business of our eternal salvation, and to become disgusted with it; it is likewise a much more general one to fail of prudence, and to mistake our path towards it.

PART II.—An enterprife where the dangers are daily, and mistakes common; where amongst fo many different routs which appear safe, there is, however, only one true and unerring, and the success of which must, nevertheless, decide our eternal destiny: An enterprife of this nature surely requires uncommon exertions; and never had we occasion, in the conduct of any other, for so much circumspection and prudence. Now that such is the enterprife of Salvation, it would be needless to waste time in proving here, and equally so for you to doubt; the only object of importance, then, to establish, is, the rules and the marks of this prudence, which is to guide us in so dangerous and so essential an affair.

The first rule is, Not to determine ourselves by chance amongst that multiplicity of ways which mankind pursue; carefully to examine all, independent of usages and customs which may authorise them; in the affair of our salvation, to give nothing to opinion or example: The second is, When we have finally determined, to leave nothing to the uncertainty of events, and always to prefer safety to danger.

Such are the common rules of prudence adopted by the children of the age, in the pursuit of their pretensions and their temporal expectations: Eternal salvation is the only affair in which they are neglected. In the first place, No person examines if his ways are sure; nor does he ever require any other pledge of his safety, than the crowd which he sees marching before him. Secondly, In the doubts which spring up during our proceedings, the party the most dangerous to salvation, having always self-love in its favour, is always preferred: Two important and common errors

in the affair of eternal salvation, which it is necessary to combat here. The first rule, is, not to determine by chance, and in the affair of eternity to give nothing to opinion or example. Indeed, the upright is every where represented to us in the holy writings, as a judicious and prudent man; who calculates, who compares, who examines, who discriminates; who tries whatever may be the most proper; who does not lightly believe every fancy; who carries before him the torch of the law, that his steps may be enlightened, and that he may not be in danger of mistaking his way. The sinner, on the contrary, is there held out as a foolish man, who marches by chance, and who, in the most dangerous passes, advances forward with confidence, as if he was travelling in the straightest and most certain path.

Now, my brethren, such is the situation of almost all men in the affair of salvation. In every other matter, prudent, attentive, diffident, active to discover any errors concealed under the common prejudices; it is in salvation alone, that nothing can equal our credulity and imprudence. Yes, my brethren, We tell you every day, that the life of the world, which is to say, that life of amusement, of inutility, of vanity, of show, of effeminacy, exempt even from great crimes; that this life, I say, is not a christian one, and consequently is a life of reprobation and infidelity: It is the doctrine of that religion in which you are born; and since your infancy you have been nourished in these holy truths. The world, on the contrary, affirms this to be the only life, which persons of a certain rank can lead; that not to conform themselves to it, would betray a barbarity of manners, in which there would be more singularity and meanness, than reason or virtue.

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I even consent that it may still be considered as dubious, whether the world or we have reason on our side ; and that this grand dispute may not yet be decided ; nevertheless, as a horrible alternative depends upon it, and that any mistake here is the worst of all evils, it appears that prudence requires us to clear it up at least, before we take the final step. It is surely natural to hesitate between two contending parties, particularly where our salvation is the subject of dispute : Now, I ask you, Entering into the world, and adopting its manners, its maxims, and its customs, as you have adopted them, have you begun by examining whether it had reason on its side, and if we were wrong and false deceivers ? The world wishes you to aspire to the favours of fortune, and to neglect neither cares, exertions, meanesses, nor artifices to procure them ; you follow these plans ; but have you examined if the gospel does not contradict and forbid them ? The world boasts of luxury, of magnificence, of the delicacies of the table ; and in matters of expence, it deems nothing excessive but what may tend to derange the circumstances : Have you informed yourselves, whether the law of God does not prescribe a more holy use of the riches which we hold only from him ? The world authorises continual pleasures ; gaming, theatres, and treats with ridicule whoever dare venture even to doubt their innocence : Have you found this decision in the sorrowful and crucifying maxims of Jesus Christ ?

The world approves of certain suspicious and odious ways of increasing the patrimony of our fathers, and places no other bounds to our desires than those of the laws, which punish violence and manifest injustice : Can you assure us, that the rules of the conscience do not observe more narrowly, and with regard to these matters, do not

enter into discussions, which the world is totally unacquainted with? The world has declared, that a gentle, effeminate, and idle life, is an innocent life; and that virtue is not so rigid and austere as we wish to make it; before giving credit to this merely upon its assertion, have you consulted whether the doctrine brought us by Jesus Christ from heaven, subscribed to the novelty, and to the danger of these maxims?

What, my brethren! In the affair of your eternity, without examination or attention, you adopt common prejudices, merely because they are established? You blindly follow those who march before you, without examining where the path leads to which they keep? You even deign not to enquire at yourselves whether or not you are deceived? You are satisfied in knowing that you are not the only persons mistaken? What! In the business which must decide your eternal destiny, you do not even make use of your reason? You demand no other pledge of your safety, than the general error? You have no doubt or suspicion? You think it unnecessary to inform yourselves? You have no mistrust? All is good, and in your opinion as it ought to be? You who are so nice, so difficult, so mistrustful, so full of precaution when your worldly interests are in question; in this grand affair alone, you conduct yourselves by instinct, by fancy, by foreign impressions? You decide upon nothing, but, indolently, allow yourselves to be dragged away by the multitude, and the torrent of example? You who, in every other matter, would blush to think like the crowd; you who pique yourselves upon superiority of genius, and upon leaving to the common people, and to weak minds, all vulgar prejudices; you who carry to ridiculous extreme, perhaps, your mode of thinking on every other point, upon
salvation.

salvation alone, you think with the crowd, and it appears that reason is denied to you, on this grand interest alone. What, my brethren! When you are asked, in the steps which you take to ensure success to your worldly expectations, the reasons which have induced you to prefer one party to another, you advance such solid and prudent motives; you justify your choice by prospects so certain and decisive; you appear to have so maturely considered them, before adopting their execution; and when we demand of you whence it comes, that in the affair of your eternal salvation you prefer the abuses, the customs, the maxims of the world, to the examples of the saints who certainly did not live like you; and to the rules of the gospel, which condemn all those who live as you do; you have nothing to answer, but that you are not singular, and that you must live like the rest of the world. Great God! to what purpose are great abilities in the conduct of projects which will perish with us! We have reasons and arguments in support of vanity, and we are children with regard to the truth; we pique ourselves on our wisdom in the affairs of the world; and, alas! in the business of our eternal salvation, we think it no disgrace to be ignorant and foolish.

You will tell us, perhaps, that you are neither wiser, nor more able than all the others who live like you; that you cannot enter into discussions which are beyond your reach; that were we to be believed, it would be necessary to cavil at, and dispute every thing; and that piety does not consist in refining to such an extreme. But I ask you, Is so much subtilty required to know that the world is a deceitful guide? That its maxims are rejected in the school of Jesus Christ; and that its customs can never subvert the law of God? Is not this the most simple and the most common

mon rule of the gospel, and the first truth in the plan of salvation? To know our duty, it requires only to walk in simplicity of heart. Subtilties are only necessary in order to dissemble with ourselves, and to connect, if possible, the passions with the holy rules; there it is that the human mind has occasion for all its industry, for the task is difficult: Such is exactly your case, you who pretend, that to recal customs to the law is a ridiculous refinement: To know our duty, it only requires conference with ourselves. While Saul continued faithful, he had no occasion to consult the forcerers with regard to what he should do: The law of God sufficiently instructed him: It was only after his guilt, that in order to calm the inquietudes of a troubled conscience, and to connect his criminal weaknesses with the law of God, he bethought himself of seeking, in the answers of a deceitful oracle, some authority favourable to his passions. Love the truth, and you will soon acquire a knowledge of it: A clear conscience is the best of all instructors.

Not that I wish to blame those sincere researches which an honest and timid soul makes to enlighten and instruct itself; I wish only to say, that the majority of doubts with regard to our duties, in those hearts delivered up like you to the world, springs from a ruling principle of cupidity, which, on the one side, would wish not to interfere with its infamous passions; and, on the other, have the authority of the law, to protect it from the remorse which attend a manifest transgression. For, besides, if you seek the Lord in sincerity, and your lights are insufficient, there are still prophets in Israel; consult in proper time those who preserve the form of the law, and of the holy doctrine; and who teach the way of God in truth: Do not propose your doubts
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with those colourings and softenings which always fix the decision in your favour: Do not apply in order to be deceived, but to be instructed: Seek not favourable, but sure and enlightened guides; do not content yourselves even with the testimony of men: Consult the Lord frequently, and through different channels. The voice of heaven is uniform, because the voice of truth, of which it is the interpreter, is the same. If the testimonies do not accord, prefer always what places you farthest from danger; always mistrust the opinion which pleases, and which already had the suffrage of your self-love. It rarely happens, that the decisions of our inclinations are found the same with those of the holy rules; nevertheless, it is that which decides on all our preferences in the business of salvation.—Second step of our imprudence in the affair of our eternal salvation.—In effect, there is scarcely a doubt with regard to our duties, which conceals from us the precise obligation of the law on every step: We know the paths by which Jesus Christ, and the saints, have passed; they are still pointed out to us every day; we are invited by the success which they have had, to walk in their steps. In this manner, say they to us, with the Apostle, did those men of God who have preceded us, overcome the world, and obtain the performance of the promises: we see that by imitating them, we may hope for all, and in the way in which we walk, that every thing is to be dreaded. Ought we to hesitate on this alternative? Nevertheless, in every thing we resist our own lights; everywhere we prefer danger to safety; our whole life is, indeed, one continued danger; in all our actions we float, not between the more or less perfect, but between guilt and simple errors: Every time we act, the question is not to know whether we are doing the greatest good, but if we are

committing only a slight fault, worthy of indulgence : All our duties are limited, to the enquiry at ourselves, if professing such principles ; if to a certain degree, delivering ourselves up to resentment ; if employing a certain degree of duplicity ; if not denying ourselves a certain gratification be a crime, or a venial fault ; you always hang betwixt these two destinies ; and your conscience can never render you the testimony, that on any occasion you made choice of the party in which there was no danger.

Thus, you know, that a life of pleasure, of gaming, of show, of amusement, when even nothing gross or criminal is mingled with it, is a party very doubtful for eternity ; no saint, at least, has left you such an example : You are sensible, that more guarded and more Christian manners would leave you nothing similar to dread ; nevertheless you love an accommodating doubt better than an irksome safety ; you know that grace has moments which never return ; that nothing is more uncertain than the return of holy impulses once rejected : that salvation deferred almost always fails ; and that to begin to-day, is prudently assuring ourselves of success ; you know it ; yet you prefer the uncertain hope of a grace to come, to the present salvation which offers itself to you. Now, my brethren, I only demand of you two reflections, and I shall finish. In the first place, When even in this path which you tread, the balance were equal, that is to say, when it were equally suspicious, whether you are to be saved or lost ; did the smallest portion of faith remain to you, you would be plunged in the most cruel alarms ; it ought to appear horrible to you, that your eternal salvation was become a problem, upon which you knew not what to decide, and upon which, with equal appearances of truth, you might deter-
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mine for the happiness or the misery of your everlasting lot, in the same manner as upon those indifferent questions which God has yielded up to the controversies of men : You ought to undertake every thing, and to employ every exertion to place appearances at least, in your favour, and to find out a situation where prejudices would be on your side : And here, where every thing concludes against you ; where the law is unfavourable ; where you have nothing in your favour but some fallacious appearances of reason, upon which, you would not hazard the smallest of your temporal interests ; and with manners which to this period have saved none, and in which you only strengthen and comfort yourselves by the example of those who perish with you ; You are tranquil in this path : You admit of, and acknowledge the wisdom of those who have chosen a more certain one ; you say that they are praise-worthy ; that they are happy who can assume such a command over themselves ; that it is much safer to live as they do ; you say this, and you think it needless to imitate, or follow their example ? Madman ! cries the Apostle, What delusion is it that blinds thee ? and wherefore dost thou not obey that truth which thou knowest ? Ah ! my brethren, in a choice which interests our glory, our advancement, our temporal interests, are we capable of such imprudence ? Of all the various ways which present themselves to ambition, do we leave those where every appearance seems favourable to our success, and make choice of such as lead to nothing ; where fortune is tardy and doubtful ; and which have hitherto been only productive of misfortune ? Of salvation alone, therefore, we make a kind of speculation, if I may venture to speak in this manner ; that is to say, an undertaking without arrangement, without precaution, which we abandon to the uncertainty of events,

events, and of which the success can alone be expected from chance, and not from our exertions. In a word, as my last reflection, allow me to ask, Why you search for, and alledge to us so many specious reasons, as a justification to yourselves, of the manner in which you live? Either you wish to be saved, or you are determined to be lost. Do you wish to be saved? Choose then the most proper means of attaining what you aspire to. Quit those doubtful paths, by which none have hitherto been conducted to it; confine yourselves to that which Jesus Christ has pointed out to us, and which alone can safely lead us to it; do not apply yourselves to lessen in your own sight the dangers of your own situation, and to view them in the most favourable light, in order to dread them less; rather magnify the danger to your mind: We cannot dread too much, what we cannot shun too much: And salvation is the only concern where precaution can never be excessive, because a mistake in it is without remedy. See if those who once followed the same deceitful paths in which you tread, and who employed the same reasons that you make use of, for their justification, have confined themselves to them from the moment that grace had operated in their hearts, serious and sincere desires of salvation: They regarded the dangers in which you live, as incompatible with their design; they sought more solid and certain paths; they made the holy safety of retirement, succeed to the inutility and the dangers of society; the habit of prayer, to the dissipation of gaming and amusements; the guard of the senses, to the indecency of dress, and the danger of public spectacles; Christian mortification, to the softness of an effeminate and sensual life; the gospel to the world; they comprehended that it would be absurd to wish their salvation through the same means by which others are lost.

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But, if you are determined to perish ; alas ! Why will you still preserve measures with religion ? Why will you always seek to place some specious reasons on your side ; to conciliate your manners with the gospel ; and to preserve, as I may say, appearances still with Jesus Christ ? Why are you only half sinners, and still leave to your grossest passions the useless check of the law ? Cast off the remains of that yoke which is irksome to you ; and which, in lessening your pleasures, lessens not your punishment. Why do you accomplish your perdition with so much constraint ? In place of those scruples, which permit you only doubtful gains, and deny you still certain low, and manifestly wicked profits, but which place you in the number of those reprobates who shall never possess the kingdom of God ; overleap these bounds, and no longer place any limits to your guilt, but those of your cupidity : In place of those loose and worldly manners, which will equally prove your ruin, refuse nothing to your passions, and, like the beasts of the earth, yield to the gratification of every desire, Yes, sinners, perish with all the fruits of iniquity, seeing you will equally reap tears and eternal punishment.

But, no, my dear hearer, we only give you these counsels of despair, in order to inspire you with a just horror at them ; it is a tender artifice of zeal, which only assumes the appearance of exhorting you to destruction, that you may not consent yourselves : alas ! follow rather those remains of light, which still point out the truth to you at a distance ; it is not without reason that the Lord has hitherto preserved within you these seeds of salvation, and has not permitted all, even to the principles, to be blotted out : It is a claim which he still preserves to your heart : Take
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care only that you found not upon this, the vain hope of a future conversion : We are not permitted to hope, till we have begun to labour. Begin, then, the grand work of your eternal salvation, for which, alone, the Almighty has placed you upon the earth ; and on which you have never as yet bestowed even a thought. Esteem so important a care ; prefer it to all others ; find your only pleasures in applying to it ; examine the surest and most proper means to succeed, and fix upon them, whatever they cost, from the moment you have found them out.

Such is the prudence of the gospel, so often recommended by Jesus Christ ; beyond that, all is vanity and error : You may possess a superior mind, capable of every exertion ; and rare and shining talents ; if you err with regard to your eternal salvation, you are a child. Solomon, so esteemed in the east for his wisdom, is a madman, whose folly we can now with difficulty comprehend : All worldly reason is but a mockery, a dazzling of the senses, if it mistakes the decisive point of eternity : There is nothing important in life but this single object ; all the rest is a dream, in which any mistake is of little consequence. Trust not yourselves, therefore, to the multitude, which is the party of those who err : Take not as guides, men who can never be your sureties ; leave nothing to chance, or to the uncertainty of events ; it is the height of folly where eternity is concerned ; remember that there is an infinity of paths, which appear right to men, yet nevertheless conduct to death : That almost all who perish, do it in the belief that they are in the way of salvation ; and that all reprobates, at the last day, when they shall hear their sentence pronounced, will be surpris'd, says the gospel,
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at their condemnation ; because they all expected the inheritance of the just. It is thus, that after having waited for it in this life, according to the rules of faith, you will for ever enjoy it in heaven.

Now, to God, &c.

SERMON



SERMON II.

ON THE SMALL NUMBER OF THE SAVED.

LUKE iv. 27.

And many Lepers were in Israel in the time of Elifeus the Prophet: and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

EVERY day, my brethren, you continue to demand of us, if the road to heaven is really so difficult, and the number of the saved is indeed so small as we say. To a question, so often proposed, and still oftener resolved, our Saviour answers you at present, that there were many widows in Israel afflicted with famine; but the widow of Sarepta was alone found worthy the succour of the Prophet Elias: That the number of lepers was great in Israel in the time of the Prophet Elifeus; and that Naaman was the only one cured by the man of God.

Were I here, my brethren, for the purpose of alarming, rather than instructing you, I needed only to recapitulate what in the holy writings we find dreadful, with regard to this great truth; and running over the history of the just, from age to age, to shew you, that in all times the number
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of the saved has been very small. The family of Noah alone saved from the general flood : Abraham, chosen from amongst men, to be the sole depository of the covenant with God : Joshua and Caleb, the only two of six hundred thousand Hebrews, who saw the land of promise : Job the only upright man in the land of Uz : Lot, in Sodom. To representations so alarming, would have succeeded the sayings of the Prophets. In Isaiah, you would see the elect as rare as the grapes, which are found after the vintage, and have escaped the search of the gatherer ; as rare as the blades which remain by chance in the field, and have escaped the scythe of the mower. The Evangelist would still have added new traits to the terrors of these images. I might have spoken to you of two roads ; of which one is narrow, rugged, and the path of a very small number ; the other broad, open, and strewed with flowers ; and almost the general path of men. That every where, in the holy writings, the multitude is always spoken of, as forming the party of the reprobate ; while the saved, compared with the rest of mankind ; form only a small flock, scarcely perceptible to the sight. I would have left you in fears with regard to your salvation ; always cruel to those who have not renounced faith, and every hope of being amongst the saved. But what would it serve, to limit the fruits of this instruction, to the single point of proving, how few persons are saved ? Alas ! I would make the danger known, without instructing you how to avoid it : I would shew you, with the Prophet, the sword of the wrath of God, suspended over your heads, without assisting you to escape the threatened blow : I would alarm the conscience, without instructing the sinner.

My intention is therefore to-day, in our morals and manner of life, to search for the cause of this number being so

small. As every one flatters himself he will not be excluded, it is of importance to examine if his confidence be well founded. I wish not, in marking to you the causes which render salvation so rare, to make you generally conclude, that few will be saved; but to bring you to ask of yourselves, if living as you live, you can hope to be so. Who am I? What is it I do for heaven; and what can be my hopes in eternity? I propose no other order, in a matter of such importance. What are the causes which render salvation so rare? I mean to point out three principal ones, which is the only arrangement of this discourse. Art and far-sought reasonings would here be ill-timed. O attend, therefore, be whom you may! No subject can be more worthy your attention, since it goes to inform you, what may be the hopes of your eternal destiny.

PART I. Few are saved; because in that number we can only comprehend two descriptions of persons; either those who have been so happy as to preserve their innocence pure and undefiled; or those, who after having lost, have regained it by penitence:—First cause. There are only these two ways of salvation; and heaven is only open to the innocent or the penitent. Now of which party are you? Are you innocent? Are you penitent?

Nothing unclean shall enter the kingdom of God. We must consequently carry there, either an innocence unfulled, or an innocence regained. Now, to die innocent, is a grace to which few souls can aspire; and to live penitent, is a mercy, which the relaxed state of our morals renders equally rare. Who indeed will pretend to salvation, by the claim of innocence? Where are the pure souls in whom sin
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has never dwelt ; and who have preserved to the end the sacred treasure of grace confided to them by baptism, and which our Saviour will re-demand at the awful day of punishment ?

In those happy days, when the whole church was still but an assembly of saints, it was very uncommon to find an instance of a believer, who, after having received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and acknowledged Jesus Christ in the sacrament, which regenerates us, fell back to his former irregularities of life. Ananias and Saphira were the only prevaricators in the church of Jerusalem ; that of Corinth, had only one incestuous sinner. Church penitence was then a remedy almost unknown ; and scarcely was there found among these true Israelites one single leper, whom they were obliged to drive from the holy altar, and separate from communion with his brethren. But since that time, the number of the upright diminishes, in proportion as that of believers increases. It would appear, that the world, pretending now to have become almost generally Christian, has brought with it into the Church its corruptions and its maxims. Alas ! we all go astray, almost from the breast of our mothers ! The first use which we make of our heart is a crime ; our first desires are passions ; and our reason only expands and increases on the wrecks of our innocence. The earth, says a Prophet, is infected by the corruption of those who inhabit it : All have violated the laws, changed the ordinances, and broken the alliance which should have endured for ever : All commit sin ; and scarcely is there one to be found, who does the work of the Lord. Injustice, calumny, lying, treachery, adultery, and the blackest crimes, have deluged the earth. The brother lays snares for his brother ; the father

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ther is divided from his children; the husband from his wife: There is no tie which a vile interest does not dissolve: Good faith and probity are no longer virtues but among the simple people; animosities are endless; reconciliations feints; and never is a former enemy regarded as a brother: They tear, they devour each other. Assemblies are no longer but for the purpose of public and general censure. The purest virtue is no longer a protection from the malignity of tongues. Gaming is become either a trade, a fraud, or a fury. Repasts, those innocent ties of society, degenerate into excesses, of which we dare not speak. Our age witnesses horrors, with which our forefathers were unacquainted. Behold then already one path of salvation shut to the generality of men. All have erred. Be whom you may, who listen to me at present, the time has been, when sin reigned over you: Age may perhaps have calmed your passions; but what was your youth? Long and habitual infirmities may perhaps have disgusted you with the world; but what use did you formerly make of the vigour of your health? A sudden inspiration of grace may have turned your heart; but do you not most fervently intreat, that every moment prior to that inspiration may be effaced from the remembrance of the Lord!

But with what am I taking up my time? We are all sinners, O my God! And thou knowest our hearts: What we know of our errors, is perhaps in thy sight the most pardonable; and we all allow, that by innocence, we have no claim to salvation. There remains, therefore, only one resource, which is penitence. After our shipwreck, say the faints, it is the happy plank, which alone can conduct us into port; there is no other mean of salvation for us. Be whom you may, prince or subject, great or low, penitence

tence alone can save you. Now permit me to ask, where are the penitent? You will find more, says a holy father, who have never fallen, than who, after their fall, have raised themselves by true repentance: This is a terrible saying; but do not let us carry things too far; The truth is sufficiently dreadful, without adding new terrors to it by vain declamation.

Let us only examine, if the majority of us have a right through penitence to salvation. What is a penitent? According to Tertullian, a penitent is a believer, who feels every moment the unhappiness which he formerly had, to forget and lose his God; who has his guilt incessantly before his eyes; who finds every where the traces and remembrance of it:

A penitent is a man, entrusted by God, with judgment against himself; who refuses himself the most innocent pleasures, because he had formerly indulged in the most criminal; who puts up with the most necessary ones with pain; who now regards his body as an enemy, whom it is necessary to conquer; as an unclean vessel which must be purified; as an unfaithful debtor, of whom it is proper to exact the last farthing; a penitent regards himself as a criminal, condemned to death, because he no longer is worthy of life. In the loss of riches or health, he sees only a privation of favours that he had formerly abused; in the humiliations which happen to him, but the pains of his guilt; in the agonies with which he is racked, but the commencement of those punishments he has justly merited; such is a penitent. But I again ask you, where amongst us are penitents of this description? Now look around you. I do not tell you to judge your brethren, but to examine
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what are the manners and morals of those who surround you ; nor do I speak of those open and avowed sinners ; who have thrown off even the appearance of virtue, I speak only of those who like yourselves live like the generality ; and whose actions present nothing to the public view, particularly shameful or depraved. They are sinners ; and they admit of it : You are not innocent ; and you confess it yourselves. Now, are they penitent ; or are you ? Age, avocations, more serious employments, may perhaps have checked the follies of youth : Even the bitterness which the Almighty has made attendant on our passions ; the deceits, the treacheries of the world ; an injured fortune, with a ruined constitution, may have cooled the ardour, and confined the irregular desires of your heart : Crimes may have disgusted you even with crimes ; for passions gradually extinguish themselves. Time, and the natural inconstancy of the heart, will bring these about ; yet nevertheless, though detached from sin by incapability, you are no nearer your God. According to the world, you are become more prudent, more regular, more what it calls men of probity ; more exact in fulfilling your public or private duties ; but you are not penitent. You have ceased from your disorders ; but you have not expiated them : You are not converted : This great stroke ; this grand change of the heart, which regenerates man, has not yet been felt by you. Nevertheless this situation, so truly dangerous, does not alarm you ; Sins, which have never been washed away by sincere repentance, and consequently never obliterated from the book of life, appear in your eyes as no longer existing ; and you will tranquilly leave this world in a state of impenitence, so much the more dangerous, as you will die, without being sensible of your danger. What I say here, is not merely a rash expression, or an emotion of zeal : Nothing

is more real, or more exactly true : It is the situation of almost all men, even the wisest and most esteemed by the world.

The morality of the younger stages in life is always lax, if not licentious. Age, disgust, and establishments for life, fix the heart, and withdraw it from debauchery : but where are those who are converted ? Where are those who expiate their crimes by tears of sorrow, and true repentance ? Where are those, who having begun as sinners, end as penitents ? Shew me, in your manner of living, the smallest trace of penitence. Are your graspings at wealth and power ; your anxieties to attain the favour of the great, (and by these means an increase of employments and influence), are these proofs of it ? Would you wish to reckon even your crimes as virtues ? That the sufferings of your ambition, pride, and avarice, should discharge you from an obligation which they themselves have imposed ? You are penitent to the world ; but are you so to Jesus Christ ? The infirmities with which God afflicts you ; the enemies he raises against you ; the disgraces and losses with which he tries you ; do you receive them all as you ought, with humble submission to his will ; and far from finding in them occasions of penitence, do you not turn them into the objects of new crimes ? It is the duty of an innocent soul, to receive with submission the chastisements of the Almighty ; to discharge, with courage, the painful duties of the station allotted to him ; and to be faithful to the laws of the gospel ; but do sinners owe nothing beyond this ? And yet they pretend to salvation ; but upon what claim ? To say that you are innocent before God, your own conscience will bear testimony against you. To endeavour to persuade yourselves that you are penitent, you dare not ; and you
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would condemn yourselves through your own mouths. Upon what then dost thou depend, O man! who thus livest so tranquil?

And what renders it still more dreadful is, that acting in this manner, you only follow the torrent: Your morals are the morals of almost all men. You may, perhaps, be acquainted with some still more guilty, (for I suppose you to have still some sentiments of religion, and regard for your salvation); but do you know any real penitents? I am afraid we must search the deserts and solitudes for them. You can scarcely particularise among persons of rank and usage of the world, a small number whose morals and mode of life more austere and more guarded than the generality, attract the attention, and very likely the censure of the public: All the rest walk in the same path. I see clearly that every one comforts himself by the example of his neighbour: That in that point, children succeed to the false security of their fathers; that none live innocent; that none die penitent: I see it; and I cry, O God! if thou hast not deceived us; if all thou hast told us with regard to the road to eternal life, shall be fulfilled to a point; if the number of those who must perish, shall not influence THEE to abate from the severity of thy laws, what will become of that immense multitude of creatures which every hour disappears from the face of the earth? Where are our friends, our relations who have gone before us; and what is their lot in the eternal regions of death? What shall we ourselves be one day? When formerly a Prophet complained to the Lord, that all Israel had forsaken his protection; He replied, that seven thousand still remained, who had not bowed the knee to Baal: Behold the number of pure and faithful souls which a whole kingdom then contained.

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But couldest thou still, O my God ! comfort the anguish of thy servants to-day by the same assurance ? I know that thine eye discerns still some upright amongst us ; that the priesthood has still its Phineas' ; the magistracy its Samuels ; the sword its Joshuas ; the Court its Daniels, its Esthers, and its Davids ; for the world only exists for thy chosen ; and all would perish were the number accomplished : But those happy remains of the children of Israel who shall inherit salvation, what are they, compared to the grains of sand in the sea ; I mean to that number of sinners who combat for their own destruction ? You come after this, my brethren, to enquire if it be true, that few shall be saved. Thou hast said it, O my God ! and consequently it is a truth which will endure for ever.

But, even admitting that the Almighty had not spoken thus, I would wish, in the second place, to review, for an instant, what passes among men : The laws by which they are governed : The maxims by which the multitude is regulated : This is the second cause of the paucity of the saved ; and, properly speaking, is only a developement of the first : The force of habit and customs.

PART II. Few people are saved, because the maxims most universally received in all countries, and upon which depend, in general, the morals of the multitude, are incompatible with salvation. The rules laid down, approved, and authorised by the world, with regard to the application of wealth, the love of glory, Christian moderation, and the duties of offices and conditions, are diametrically opposite to those of the Evangelists ; and consequently can lead only to death. I shall not, at present, enter into a detail too extended for a discourse, and too little serious, perhaps, for Christians:

I need not tell you, that it is an established custom in the world, to allow the liberty of proportioning expences to rank and wealth ; and provided it is a patrimony we inherit from our ancestors, we may distinguish ourselves by the use of it, without restraint to our luxury, or without regard in our profusion, to any thing but our pride and caprice.

But Christian moderation has its rules : We are not the absolute masters of our riches ; nor are we entitled to abuse what the Almighty has bestowed upon us for better purposes : Above all, while thousands of unfortunate wretches languish in poverty, whatever we make use of beyond the wants and necessary expences of our station, is an inhumanity to, and a theft from the poor. These are refinements of devotion, say they ; and in matters of expence and profusion nothing is excessive or blameable, according to the world, but what may tend to derange the fortune. I need not tell you, that it is an approved custom, to decide our lots, and to regulate our choice of professions or situations in life, by the order of our birth, or the interests of fortune. But, O my God ! does the ministry of thy gospel derive its source from the worldly considerations of a carnal birth ? We cannot establish all, says the world, and it would be melancholy to see persons of rank and birth in avocations unworthy of their dignity. If born to a name distinguished in the world, you must get forward by dint of intrigue, meanness, and expence : Make fortune your idol. That ambition, however much condemned by the laws of the gospel, is only a sentiment worthy your name and birth.

You are of a sex and rank which introduce you to the gaities of the world : You cannot but do as others do :

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You must frequent all the public places, where those of your age and rank assemble; enter into the same pleasures; pass your days in the same frivolities; and expose yourself to the same dangers; these are the received maxims; and you are not made to reform them: Such is the doctrine of the world.

Now permit me to ask you here; Who confirms you in these ways? By what rules are they justified to your mind? Who authorises you in this dissipation, which is neither agreeable to the title you have received by baptism, nor perhaps to those you hold from your ancestors? Who authorises those public pleasures, which you only think innocent, because your soul, already too familiarized with sin, feels no longer the dangerous impressions or tendency of them? Who authorises you to lead an effeminate and sensual life, without virtue, sufferance, or any religious exercise? To live like a stranger in the midst of your own family, disdainng to inform yourself with regard to the morals of those dependent upon you! Through an affected state, to be ignorant whether they believe in the same God; whether they fulfil the duties of the religion you profess? Who authorises you in maxims so little Christian? Is it the gospel of Jesus Christ? Is it the doctrine of the Apostles and saints? For surely some rule is necessary to assure us that we are in safety: What is yours? Custom: That is the only reply you can make. We see none around us, but what conduct themselves in the same way and by the same rule. Entering into the world, we find the manners already established: Our fathers lived thus, and from them we copy our customs: The wisest conform to them: An individual cannot be wiser than the whole world, and must not pretend to make himself singular, by acting contrary

trary to the general voice. Such, my brethren, are your only comforters against all the terrors of religion: None act up to the law. The public example is the only guarantee of our morals. We never reflect, that, as the Holy Spirit says, the laws of the people are vain: That our Saviour has left us rules, in which neither times, ages, nor customs, can ever authorise the smallest change: That the heavens and the earth shall pass away; that customs and manners shall change; but that the Divine laws will everlastingly be the same.

We content ourselves with looking around us: We do not reflect, that what at present we call custom, would, in former times, before the morals of Christians became degenerated, have been regarded as monstrous singularities; and, if corruption has gained since that period, these vices, though they have lost their singularity, have not lost their guilt. We do not reflect, that we shall be judged by the gospel, and not by custom; by the examples of the holy, and not by mens opinions; that the habits, which are only established among believers by the relaxation of faith, are abuses we are to lament, not examples we are to follow: That in changing the manners, they have not changed our duties: that the common and general example which authorises them, only proves that virtue is rare, but not that profligacy is permitted: In a word, that piety and a real Christian life are too unpalatable to our depraved nature, ever to be practised by the majority of men. Come now and say, that you only do as others do: It is exactly by that you condemn yourselves. What! the most terrible certainty of your condemnation, shall become the only motive for your confidence! Which, according to the Scriptures, is the road that conducts to death? Is it not that

that which the majority pursues? Which is the party of the reprobate? Is it not the multitude? You do nothing but what others do: But thus, in the time of Noah, perished all who were buried under the waters of the Deluge: All who, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, prostrated themselves before the golden calf: All who, in the time of Elijah, bowed the knee to Baal: All who, in the time of Eleazar, abandoned the law of their fathers. You only do what others do; but that is exactly what the Scriptures forbid: Do not, say they, conform yourselves to this corrupted age: Now, the corrupted age means not the small number of just, whom you endeavour not to imitate; it means the multitude whom you follow. You only do what others do: You will consequently experience the same lot. Now, “Mifery to thee, (cried formerly St. Augustine,) fatal torrent of human customs; wilt thou never suspend thy course? To the end wilt thou drag in the children of Adam to thine immense and terrible abyfs?”

In place of saying to ourselves, “What are my hopes?” “In the church of Jesus Christ there are two roads; one broad and open, by which almost the whole world passes, and which leads to death; the other narrow, where few indeed enter, and which conducts to life eternal; In which of these am I? Are my morals the usual ones of persons of my rank, age, and situation in life? Am I with the great number? Then I am not in the right path: I am losing myself: The great number in every station is not the party of the saved.” Far from reasoning in this manner, we say to ourselves, “I am not in a worse state than others; those of my rank and age live as I do: Why should I not live like them?” Why, my dear hearer? For that very reason: The general mode of living cannot be

be that of a Christian life : In all ages, the holy have been remarkable and singular men : Their manners were always different from those of the world ; and they have only been saints, because their lives had no similitude to those of the rest of mankind. In the time of Esdras, in spite of the defence against it, the custom prevailed of intermarrying with stranger women : This abuse became general : The priests and the people no longer made any scruple of it : But what did this holy restorer of the law ; or did he follow the example of his brethren ? Did he believe that guilt, in becoming general, became more legitimate ? No. He recalled the people to a sense of the abuse : He took the book of the law in his hand, and explaining it to the affrighted people, corrected the custom by the truth. Follow, from age to age, the history of the just ; and see if Lot conformed himself to the habits of Sodom, or if nothing distinguished him from the other inhabitants : If Abraham lived like the rest of his age : If Job resembled the other princes of his nation : If Esther conducted herself in the court of Ahasuerus like the other women of that Prince : If many widows in Israel resembled Judith : If, among the children of the captivity, it is not said of Tobias alone, that he copied not the conduct of his brethren ; and that he even fled from the danger of their commerce and society. See, if in those happy ages, when Christians were all saints, they did not shine like stars in the midst of the corrupted nations ; and if they served not as a spectacle to angels and men, by the singularity of their lives and manners : If the Pagans did not reproach them for their retirement, and shunning of all public theatres, places, and pleasures : If they did not complain that the Christians affected to distinguish themselves in every thing from their fellow-citizens ; to form a separate people in the midst of the

the people ; to have their particular laws and customs ; and if a man from their side embraced the party of the Christians, they did not consider him as for ever lost to their pleasures, assemblies, and customs : In a word, see, if in all ages, the saints whose lives and actions have been transmitted down to us, have resembled the rest of mankind.

You will perhaps tell us, that all these are singularities and exceptions, rather than rules which the world is obliged to follow : They are exceptions, it is true ; but the reason is, that the general rule is to throw away salvation ; that a religious and pious soul in the midst of the world, is always a singularity approaching to a miracle. The whole world, you say, is not obliged to follow these examples ; but is not piety the general duty of all ? To be saved, must we not be holy ? Must heaven, with difficulty and sufferance, be gained by some ; while with ease by others ? Have you any other gospel to follow ; other duties to fulfil ; other promises to hope for, than those of the Holy Bible ? Ah ! Since there was another way more easy to arrive at salvation, wherefore, ye pious Christians, who at this moment enjoy in heaven, that kingdom, gained with toil, and at the expence of your blood, did ye leave us examples so dangerous and useles ?

Wherefore have ye opened for us a road, rugged, disagreeable, and calculated to repress our ardour, seeing there was another you could have pointed out, more easy, and more likely to attract us, by facilitating our progress ? Great God ! how little does mankind consult reason in the point of eternal salvation !

Will you console yourselves after this with the multitude, as if the greatness of the number could render the guilt unpunished

punished, and the Almighty durst not condemn all those who live like you? But what are all creatures in the sight of God? Did the multitude of the guilty prevent him from destroying all flesh at the Deluge? From making fire from heaven descend upon the five iniquitous cities? From burying in the waters of the Red Sea, Pharaoh and all his army? From striking with death all who murmured in the desert? Ah! The kings of the earth may have regard to the number of the guilty, because the punishment becomes impossible, or at least dangerous, when the fault is become general. But God, who wipes the impious, says Job, from off the face of the earth, as one wipes the dust from off a garment; God, in whose sight all people and nations are as if they were not, numbers not the guilty: He has regard only to the crimes; and all that the weak and miserable sinner can expect from his unhappy accomplices, is to have them as companions in his misery. So few are saved; because the maxims most universally adopted, are maxims of sin: So few are saved, because the maxims and duties most universally unknown, or rejected, are those most indispensable to salvation. Last reflection, which is indeed nothing more than the proof, and the explanation of the former ones.

What are the engagements of the holy vocation to which we have all been called? The solemn promises of baptism. What have we promised at baptism? To renounce the world, the devil, and the flesh: These are our vows: This is the situation of the Christian: These are the essential conditions of our covenant with God, by which eternal life has been promised to us. These truths appear familiar, and destined for the common people; but it is a mistake: Nothing can be more sublime; and alas! nothing is more generally unknown: It is at the court of kings, and to the

the princes of the earth, that without ceasing we ought to announce them. Alas! They are well instructed in all the affairs of the world, while the first principles of Christian morality are frequently more unknown to them than to humble and simple hearts. At your baptism, you have then renounced the world. It is a promise you have made to God, before the holy altar; the Church has been the guarantee and depository of it; and you have only been admitted into the number of believers, and marked with the undefeasible seal of salvation, upon the faith that you have sworn to the Lord, to love neither the world, nor what the world loves. Had you then answered what you now repeat every day, that you find not the world so black and pernicious as we say; that after all it may innocently be loved; and that we only decry it so much, because we do not know it; and since you are to live in the world, you wish to live like those who are in it: Had you answered thus, the Church would not have received you into its bosom; would not have connected you with the hope of Christians, nor joined you in communion with those who have overcome the world: She would have advised you to go and live with those infidels who know not our Saviour. For this reason it was, that, in former ages, those of the Catechumen, who could not prevail upon themselves to renounce the world and its pleasures, put off their baptism till death; and durst not approach the holy altar, to contract by the sacrament, which regenerates us, engagements of which they knew the importance and sanctity; and to fulfil which, they felt themselves still unqualified. You are therefore required, by the most sacred of all vows, to hate the world; that is to say, not to conform yourselves to it: If you love it, if you follow its pleasures and customs, you are not only, as St. John says, the enemy of

God, but you likewise renounce the faith given in baptism: You abjure the gospel of Jesus Christ: You are an apostate from religion, and trample under foot the most sacred and irrevocable vows that man can make. Now, what is this world which you ought to hate? I have only to answer, that it is the one you love: You will never mistake it by this mark: This world is a society of sinners; whose desires, fears, hopes, cares, projects, joys, and chagrins, no longer turn but upon the successes or misfortunes of this life. This world is an assemblage of people, who look upon the earth as their country; the time to come as an exilement; the promises of faith as a dream; and death as the greatest of all misfortunes. This world is a temporal kingdom, where our Saviour is unknown; where those acquainted with his name glorify him not as their Lord; hate his maxims; despise his followers; and neglect or insult him in his sacraments and worship. In a word, to give a proper idea at once of this world, it is the great number; behold the world, which you ought to shun, hate, and combat against by your example,

Now is this your situation with regard to the world? Are its pleasures a fatigue to you; do its excesses afflict you; do you regret the length of your pilgrimage here? Are not its laws your laws? Its maxims your maxims? What it condemns, do you not condemn? Do you not approve what it approves? And should it happen, that you alone were left upon the earth, may we not say, that the corrupted world would be revived in you; and that you would leave an exact model of it to your posterity? When I say you, I mean and address myself to almost all men.

Where

Where are those who sincerely renounce the pleasures, habits, maxims, and hopes of this world? We find many who complain of it; and accuse it of injustice, ingratitude and caprice; who speak warmly of its abuses and errors; but in decrying, they continue to love, to follow it; they cannot bring themselves to do without it; in complaining of its injustice, they are only piqued at it, they are not undeceived; they feel its hard treatment, but they are unacquainted with its dangers; they censure, but where are those who hate it? And now, my brethren, you may judge, if many can have a claim to salvation.

In the second place, you have renounced the flesh at your baptism; that is to say, you are engaged not to live according to the sensual appetites; to regard even indolence and effeminacy as crimes; not to flatter the corrupted desires of the flesh; but to chastise, crush, and crucify it. This is not an acquired perfection; it is a vow; it is the first of all duties; the character of a true Christian, and inseparable from faith. In a word, you have anathematized Satan and all his works: And what are his works? That which composes almost the thread and end of your life; pomp, pleasure, luxury, and dissipation: Lying, of which he is the father; pride, of which he is the model; jealousy and contention, of which he is the artisan: But I ask you, where are those who have not withdrawn the anathema they had pronounced against Satan? Now consequently, (to mention it as we go along), behold many of the questions answered.

You continually demand of us, if theatres and other public places of amusement, be innocent recreations for Christians. In return, I have only one question to ask
you,

you. Are they the works of Satan, or of Jesus Christ? For there can be no medium in religion. I mean not to say, but what many recreations and amusements may be termed indifferent: But the most indifferent pleasures which religion allows, and which the weakness of our nature renders even necessary, belong in one sense to Jesus Christ, by the facility with which they ought to enable us to apply ourselves to more holy and more serious duties. Every thing we do; every thing we rejoice or weep at, ought to be of such a nature, as to have a connection with Jesus Christ, and to be done for his glory. Now, upon this principle, the most incontestible, and most universally allowed in Christian morality, you have only to decide whether you can connect the glory of Jesus Christ with the pleasures of a theatre. Can our Saviour have any part in such a species of recreation? And before you enter them, can you, with confidence, declare to him, that in so doing, you only propose his glory, and to enjoy the satisfaction of pleasing him? What! The theatres, such as they are at present, still more criminal, by the public licentiousness of those unfortunate creatures who mount them, than by the impure and passionate scenes they represent: The theatres are the works of Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ would animate a mouth, from whence are to proceed sounds, lascivious, and intended to corrupt the heart? But these blasphemies strike me with horror. Jesus Christ would preside in assemblies of sin, where every thing we hear weakens his doctrines; where the poison enters into the soul by all the senses; where every art is employed to inspire, awaken, and justify the passions he condemns? Now, says Tertullian. if they are not the works of Jesus Christ, they must be the works of Satan: Every Christian ought, therefore, to abstain from them: When he par-

takes

takes of them, he violates the vows of baptism: However innocent he may flatter himself to be, in bringing from these places an untainted heart, it is sullied by being there; since by his presence alone he has participated in the works of Satan, which he had renounced at baptism, and violated the most sacred promises he had made to Jesus Christ and to his Church.

These, my brethren, as I have already told you, are not merely advices, and pious arts; they are the most essential of our obligations: But alas! who fulfils them? who even knows them? Ah! my brethren, did you know how far the title you bear, of Christian, engages you; could you comprehend the sanctity of your state; the hatred of the world, of yourself, and of every thing, which is not of God, that it ordains you; that life, according to the Gospel, that continual watching, that guard over the passions: in a word, that conformity with Jesus Christ crucified, which it exacts of you: could you comprehend it; could you remember, that as you ought to love God with all your heart, and all your strength, a single desire that has not connection with him defiles you, you would appear a monster in your own sight. How! would you say to yourself, duties so holy, and morals so prophane! A vigilance so continual, and a life so careless and dissipated! A love of God so pure, so complete, so universal, and a heart the continual prey of a thousand impulses, either foreign or criminal: If thus it is, who, O my God! will be entitled to salvation?

Few indeed, I am afraid, my dear hearer: at least it will not be you, (unless a change takes place,) nor those who resemble you: it will not be the multitude. Who shall
be

be saved? those who work their salvation with fear and trembling; who live in the midst of the world, but not like the world. Who shall be saved? that Christian woman, who shut up in the circle of her domestic duties, rears up her children in faith, and in piety; divides her heart only betwixt her Saviour and her husband; is adorned with delicacy and modesty; sits not down in the assemblies of vanity; makes not a law of the ridiculous customs of the world, but regulates these customs by the law of God; and makes virtue appear more amiable, by her rank and example. Who shall be saved? That believer, who, in the relaxation of modern times, imitates the manners of the first Christians; whose hands are clean, and his heart pure; watchful; “who hath not lift up his soul to vanity;” but who, in the midst of the dangers of the great world, continually applies himself to purify it: Just, who swears not deceitfully against his neighbour, nor is indebted to fraudulent ways for the innocent aggrandisement of his fortune: Generous, who with benefits repays the enemy who fought his ruin: Sincere, who sacrifices not the truth to a vile interest, and knows not the part of rendering himself agreeable, by betraying his conscience: Charitable who makes his house and interest the refuge of his fellow-creatures, and himself the consolation of the afflicted; regards his wealth as the property of the poor; humble in affliction, christian under injuries, and penitent, even in prosperity. Who will merit salvation? You, my dear hearer, if you will follow these examples; for such are the souls to be saved. Now these assuredly do not form the greatest number: while you continue, therefore to live like the multitude, it is a point of belief, that you cannot pretend to salvation.

These,

These, my brethren, are truths which should make us tremble; nor are they those vague ones which are told to all men, and which none apply to themselves: Perhaps there is not in this assembly, an individual, who may not say of himself, "I live like the great number; like those of my rank, age, and situation: I am lost, should I die in this path." Now can any thing be more capable of alarming a soul, in whom some remains of care for his salvation still exist? It is the multitude, nevertheless, who tremble not. There is only a small number of just, which operates apart, its salvation, with fear and trembling: All the rest are tranquil. After having lived with the multitude, they flatter themselves they shall be particularised at death; every one augurs favourably for himself, and chimerically thinks he shall be an exception.

On this account, it is, my brethren, that I confine myself to you, who at present are assembled here; I include not the rest of men; but consider you as alone existing on the earth. The idea, which occupies and frightens me, is this, I figure to myself the present, as your last hour, and the end of the world: That the heavens are going to open above your heads: Our Saviour in all his glory, to appear in the midst of this temple; and that you are only assembled here to wait his coming, like trembling criminals, on whom the sentence is to be pronounced, either of life eternal, or of everlasting death: For it is vain to flatter yourselves, that you shall die more innocent than you are at this hour: All those desires of change with which you are amused, will continue to amuse till death arrives; the experience of all ages proves it; the only difference you have to expect, will most likely be only a larger balance against you than what you would have to answer for at present;

present: And from what would be your destiny, were you to be judged this moment, you may almost decide upon what will take place at your departure from life. Now I ask you, (and connecting my own lot with yours, I ask it with dread,) were Jesus Christ to appear in this temple, in the midst of this assembly, to judge us, to make the dreadful separation betwixt the goats and sheep, do you believe that the greatest number of us would be placed at his right hand? Do you believe that the number would at least be equal? Do you believe there would even be found ten upright and faithful servants of the Lord, when formerly five cities could not furnish so many? I ask you. You know not: and I know it not. Thou alone, O my God! knowest who belong to thee.

But if we know not who belong to him, at least we know that sinners do not. Now, who are the just and faithful, assembled here at present? Titles and dignities avail nothing: You are stripped of all these in the presence of your Saviour: Who are they? Many sinners, who wish not to be converted; many more who wish, but always put it off; many others, who are only converted in appearance, and again fall back to their former courses: In a word, a great number, who flatter themselves they have no occasion for conversion: This is the party of the reprobate. Ah! my brethren, cut off from this assembly these four classes of sinners, for they will be cut off at the great day: And now appear, ye just: Where are ye? O God! where are thy chosen? And what a portion remains to thy share!

My brethren, our ruin is almost certain; yet we think not of it. When even in this terrible separation, which
will

will one day take place, there should be only one sinner in this assembly, on the side of the reprobate; and that a voice from heaven should assure us of it, without particularising him: Who of us would not tremble, lest he should be the unfortunate and devoted wretch? Who of us would not immediately apply to his conscience, to examine if his crimes merited not this punishment? Who of us, seized with dread, would not demand of our Saviour, as the Apostles formerly did, and say, "Lord, is it I?" And should a small respite be allowed to our prayers, who of us would not use every effort, by tears, supplications, and sincere repentance, to avert the misfortune? Are we in our senses, my dear hearers? Perhaps, among all who listen to me, ten just would not be found; perhaps fewer: What do I know, O my God! I dare not with a fixed eye regard the depths of thy judgments and thy justice. More than one perhaps would not be found amongst us all. And this danger affects you not, my dear hearer? You persuade yourself, that in this great number who shall perish, you will be the happy individual; you, who have less reason perhaps than any other to believe it; you upon whom alone the sentence of death should fall, were only one of all who hear me, to suffer? Great God! How little are the terrors of thy law known to the world! In all ages, the just have shuddered with dread, in reflecting on the severity and extent of thy judgments upon the destinies of men: Alas! What do they prepare for the children of Adam!

But what are we to conclude from these grand truths? That all must despair of salvation? God forbid: The impious alone, to quiet his own feelings in his debaucheries, endeavours to persuade himself, that all men shall perish as well as he.

This idea ought not to be the fruit of the present discourse. It is meant to undeceive you with regard to the general error, that any one may do whatever others do ; to convince you, that in order to merit salvation, you must distinguish yourselves from the rest ; in the midst of the world, lead a life to the glory of God, and resemble not the multitude.

When the Jews were led in captivity from Judea to Babylon, a little before they quitted their own country, the Prophet Jeremiah, whom the Lord had forbid to leave Jerusalem, spoke thus to them : “ Children of Israel, when
 “ you shall arrive at Babylon, you will behold the inhabitants of that country, who carry upon their shoulders
 “ gods of silver and gold : All the people will prostrate
 “ themselves, and adore them. But you, far from allowing
 “ yourselves by these examples, to be led to impiety, say
 “ to yourselves in secret, It is thou, O Lord ! whom we
 “ ought to adore.”

Let me now finish, by addressing to you the same words :

At your departure from this temple, you go to enter into another Babylon : You go to see idols of gold and silver, before which all men prostrate themselves : You go to regain the vain objects of human passions, wealth, glory, and pleasure, which are the gods of this world, and which almost all men adore : You will see those abuses, which all the world permits ; those errors, which custom authorises ; and those debaucheries, which an infamous fashion has almost constituted as laws. Then, my dear hearer, if you wish to be of the small number of true Israelites, say in the secrecy of your heart, It is thou alone, O my God ! whom we ought to adore. I wish not to have connection
 with

with a people, which knows thee not : I will have no other law than thy holy law : the gods, which this foolish multitude adores, are not gods : they are the work of the hands of men ; they will perish with them : Thou alone, O my God ! art immortal ; and thou alone deservest to be adored. The customs of Babylon have no connection with the holy laws of Jerufalem : I will continue to worship thee with that small number of the children of Abraham, which still in the midst of an infidel nation composes thy people : With them, I will turn all my desires towards the Holy Sion : The singularity of my manners will be regarded as a weakness ; but blessed weakness, O my God ! which will give me strength to resist the torrent of customs, and the seduction of example : Thou wilt be my God in the midst of Babylon, as thou wilt one day be in Jerufalem.

Ah ! The time of the captivity will at last expire : Thou wilt call to thy remembrance, Abraham and David : Thou wilt deliver thy people : Thou wilt transport us to the holy city : Then wilt thou alone reign over Israel, and over the nations which at present know thee not. All being destroyed ; all the empires and sceptres of the earth ; all the monuments of human pride annihilated ; and thou alone remaining eternal, we then shall know, that thou art the Lord of hosts, and the only God to be adored.

Behold the fruit which you ought to reap from this discourse ; live apart ; think without ceasing, that the great number work their own destruction : Regard, as nothing, all customs of the earth, unless authorized by the law of God : and remember, that holy men have in all ages been always looked upon as singular.

It is thus, that after distinguishing yourselves from the sinful on earth, you will be gloriously separated from them in eternity,

Now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON

SERMON III.

THE DISGUSTS ACCOMPANYING VIRTUE.

JOHN x. 31.

Then the Jews took up stones again, to stone him.

BEHOLD then, my brethren, the marks of gratitude which Jesus Christ receives from men; behold the consolations which Heaven prepares for him in the painful exercise of his ministry. There he is treated as a Samaritan, and possessed by the devil: Here they take up stones to stone him. It is thus that the Son of God has passed all the time of his mortal life, continually exposed to the most obstinate contradiction, finding only hearts insensible to his kindnesses, and rebellious to the truths which he announced to them, yet never did he allow the smallest sign of impatience, or the least complaint to escape him.

And we, my brethren, we, his members and his disciples; alas! the smallest disgusts, the smallest contradictions we experience in the practice of virtue, revolt our delicacy; from the moment we cease to relish those attractions, that sensibility which softens every thing to be found painful in duty, there is nothing but complaint and murmurs; troubled, discouraged, we are tempted almost to abandon
God,

God, and to return to the world, as a more agreeable and commodious master : In a word, we would wish to find nothing in the service of God, but pleasure and consolation.

But our divine Master, in calling us to his service, has he not declared, in express terms, that the kingdom of heaven is only to be gained by conquest ; and that none but those who do violence upon themselves, can force it ? And what do these words signify ? Unless, that entering into the service of God, we are not to promise ourselves, that we shall always find in it a certain sweetness, a certain relish, which deprives it of all pain, and causes it to be loved ; on the contrary, it is almost certain, that in it we shall experience disgusts, and contradictions which will exercise our patience, and put our fidelity to frequent trials ; that we shall often feel the weight of the yoke, without feeling the unction of grace, which renders it light and easy ; because piety essentially opposes the gratification of our former tastes, and original inclinations, for which, we always preserve some unhappy remains of tenderness, and which we cannot mortify, without making the heart suffer ; that besides, we shall have to undergo the eternal caprices of an inconstant and volatile heart, so difficult to fix, that without reason or foundation, it is disgusted in a moment with what it formerly loved most. Behold, my brethren, what we ought to have expected, when we embraced the cause of virtue : Here, it is the time of combat and trials ; peace and felicity are only for heaven ; but notwithstanding this, I say, that it is unjust to form the disagreeable circumstances which may accompany virtue in this life, a pretext either to abandon God when we have begun to serve him ; or to be afraid to serve him, when we have begun to know him.

Behold

Behold my reasons : In the first place, because disgusts are inevitable in this life : Secondly, because those of piety are not so bitter as we imagine them to be : Thirdly, because they are less so than those of the world : Fourthly, because, were they equally so, they yet possess resources which those of the world have not. Let us investigate these edifying truths, and implore the assistance of divine grace towards their proper explanation.

REFLECTION I. I say, in the first place, because disgusts are inevitable in this life. Alas ! We complain, that the service of God disgusts us ; but such is the condition of this miserable life. Man born fully to enjoy God, cannot be happy here below, where he never but imperfectly possesses him ; disgusts are a necessary consequence of the inquietude of a heart which is out of its place, and is unable to find it on the earth ; which seeks to fix itself, but cannot with all the created beings which surround it ; which, disgusted with every thing else, attaches itself to God ; but being unable to possess him as fully as it is capable of doing, feels always that something is wanting to its happiness ; agitates itself, in order to attain it, but can never completely reach it here ; finds in virtue almost the same void and the same disgusts it had found in sin ; because, to whatever degree of grace it may be exalted, there still remains much to accomplish before it can arrive at that fulness of righteousness and love, which will possess our whole heart ; will fill all our desires ; extinguish all our passions ; occupy all our thoughts ; and which we can never find but in heaven.

Were it possible to be happy in this world, we should undoubtedly be so in serving God ; because grace calms our passions ; moderates our desires, consoles our sufferings, and gives us a foretaste of that perfect happiness we expect

expect; and which we shall not enjoy, but in a blessed immortality. Of all the situations in which man can find himself in this life, that of righteousness undoubtedly brings him nearest to felicity; but as it always leaves him in the path which conducts to it, it leaves him likewise still uneasy, and in one sense miserable.

We are therefore unjust to complain of the disgusts which accompany virtue. Did the world make its followers happy, we should then have reason to be dissatisfied, at not being so in the service of God: We might then accuse him of using his servants ill; of depriving them of an happiness which is due to them alone; that far from attracting, he rejects them; and that the world is preferable to him, as a more consoling and faithful master. But examine all stations; interrogate all sinners; consult in rotation the partizans of all the different pleasures which the world promises, and the different passions which it inspires; the envious, the ambitious, the voluptuous, the indolent, the revengeful; none are happy; each complains; no one is in his place; every condition has its inconveniencies; and sorrows are attached to every station in life: The world is the habitation of the discontented; and the disgusts which accompany virtue, are much more a consequence of the condition of this mortal life, than any imperfection in virtue itself.

Besides, the Almighty has his reasons for leaving the most upright souls below in a state, in some respects, always violent and disagreeable to nature: By that, he wishes to disgust us with this miserable life; to make us long for our deliverance, and for that immortal country, where nothing shall more be wanting to our happiness.

I feel

I feel within me (says the Apostle) a fatal law in opposition to the law of God ; the good that I would, I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man ; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? Behold the most natural effect which the disgusts attached to virtue ought to operate in a Christian heart : Hatred of ourselves ; contempt of the present life ; a desire for eternal riches ; an eager anxiety to go and enjoy God, and to be delivered from all the miseries inseparable from this mortal life.

Besides, were virtue always to be accompanied with sensible consolations ; did it continually form for man an happy and tranquil state in this world, it would become a temporal recompense ; in devoting ourselves to God, we should no longer seek the good of faith, but the consolations of self-love ; we would seek ourselves, while pretending to seek God ; we would propose to ourselves, in virtue, that conscious tranquillity, in which it places the heart, by delivering it from those violent and restless passions which tear it continually, rather than the observance of the rules and the duties which the law of God imposes on us. The Lord would then have only mercenary and interested worshippers, who would come, not to carry his yoke, but to repose themselves under the shadow of his voice ; workmen, who would offer themselves not so much to labour in his vineyard, and support the fatigues

of the day, and the oppression of the heat, as in order to taste in tranquillity the fruits : Servants, who, far from improving their talent for the benefit of their master, would turn it to their own utility, and employ it only for their own advantage.

The upright live by faith ; now faith hopes, but enjoys not in this world ; all is yet to come for Christians ; their country, their riches, their pleasures, their inheritance, their kingdom ; the present is not for them. Here, it is the time of tribulation and affliction ; here, it is a place of exile, and a foreign country, where tears and sighs become the only consolation of the faithful ; it is unreasonable to expect delights in a place where every thing recalls the remembrance of our miseries ; where every thing presents new dangers to us ; where we live surrounded by rocks ; where we are a prey to a thousand enemies ; where every step indangers our destruction ; where all our days are marked by some new infidelity ; where, delivered up to ourselves, and without the assistance of heaven, we do nothing but evil ; where we spread the corruption of our heart over the small portion, even of good, which grace enables us to accomplish ; it is unreasonable, I say, to seek felicity and human consolations in a residence so melancholy and disagreeable to the children of God. The days of our mourning and sadness are in this world ; those of peace and joy will come afterwards : If, by abandoning God, we could acquire real happiness, our inconstancy would seem at least to have an excuse ; but as I have already said, the world has its disgusts as well as virtue ; by changing our master, we only change our punishment ; in diversifying our passions, we only diversify our sorrows. The world has more smiling aspects, I confess, than vir-
tue ;

tue; but everywhere the reality is only trouble and vexation of spirit; and since cares are inevitable in this life, and we must encounter disgusts either on the part of the world or of virtue, can we balance for a moment? Is it not preferable to suffer meritoriously than to suffer in vain; and be able to place our sufferings only amongst the number of our crimes? First truth: Disgusts are inevitable in this life.

REFLECT. II. But I say, in the second place, that those of piety are not so bitter as we represent them to ourselves.

For, my brethren, although we agree that the kingdom of God suffers violence; that Jesus Christ is come, in order to make separations and retrenchments which cost much to our nature; that the period of the present life is the time of the birth of the new man, and always followed by pain and sorrows; and that in order to reconcile us to God, we must begin by waging a cruel war against ourselves; yet it does not follow, that the lot of a soul, who serves the Lord, is to be pitied, and that the disgusts which accompany virtue are so bitter as the world represents. . . Virtue has only the prejudices of the senses, and of the passions against it; it has nothing melancholy but the first glance; and its bitterness is not such as to render it a condition which we ought to fly from as insupportable and wretched.

For, in the first place, we are sheltered in it from the disgusts of the world and the passions; and were virtue to possess only the single advantage of placing us safe from the tempests of the passions; from phrensies, jealousies, suspicions, and bitterness of heart; from the void of a worldly

worldly life; when, by turning to God, we should gain only our freedom from the yoke of the world; our being placed above the reach of its hopes; of its revolutions, troubles, and eternal changes; the becoming masters of our own hearts, and being dependent on none but ourselves; our having none but God to account with; our no longer fatiguing ourselves in vain, by running after phantoms, which continually elude our grasp; alas! The lot of a just soul would always be worthy of envy; whatever might be the bitter circumstances accompanying virtue, they would still be a thousand times more supportable than the pleasures of the world; and to mourn with the people of God, would be infinitely preferable to participating in the insipid and childish pleasures of the children of the age.

Secondly, If virtue does not protect us from the afflictions and disgraces inevitable upon this earth, it at least softens their asperity; it makes our heart submissive to God; it makes us kiss the hand which is raised up against us; it discovers in the blows with which the Lord afflicts us, either a cure for our passions, or the just punishment of our crimes. And were virtue to have only the privilege of diminishing our griefs, by diminishing our attachments; of rendering us less feeling to our losses, by gradually detaching us from all the objects which we may one day lose; of preparing our soul for affliction, by keeping it continually submissive to God; were virtue to possess this consolation alone; alas! ought we to lament and complain of any bitterness which attend it? What more can be desired in this miserable life, where almost all our days are distinguished by new afflictions and adversities; where every thing escapes our grasp; where our relations, friends
and

and protectors, are every moment snatched from us, and continually falling around us ; where our fortune has no settlement, but changes its appearance every day ; alas ! what more can be desired than a situation which consoles us on these events ; supports us in these storms ; calms us in these agitations ; and which, in the eternal changes which take place here below, leaves us at least always the same ?

Thirdly, Those reluctances and disgusts which revolt us so strongly against virtue, in reality consist only in representing the passions which render us unhappy, and are the source of all our pains ; they are remedies a little grievous to be sure, but they serve to cure evils which are infinitely more so ; it is a constraint which fatigues us, but which, in fatiguing, delivers us from a slavery which weighed us down ; it is a bitterness which mortifies the passions, but which in mortifying, weakens and calms them ; it is a sword which pierces the heart to the quick ; but which makes the corrupted and defiled matter to flow out from it ; in so much, that in the very moment of the wound's greatest agony, we experience the comfort and certainty of a cure : These are maxims which revolt our nature and inclinations ; but which, in revolting, recal them to order and rule. Thus, the bitterness and the thorns of virtue have always at least a present utility, which recompenses their harshness ; in disgusting, they purify us ; in probing, they cure us ; in paining, they calm us. These are not like the disgusts of the world, of which nothing remains to us, but the bitterness of those fatigues, of those constraints which our passions impose on us ; and whose only fruit is, that of augmenting our miseries, by fortifying our iniquitous passions : these are not the worldly violences which lead to
nothing ;

nothing; are of no value; and frequently serve only to render us hateful to those whom we would wish to please; which remove to a greater distance from us, the favours we wish to merit by them; which always leave us our hatreds, our desires, our uneasinesses, and our pains: These are violences which advance the work of our sanctification, which by degrees destroy within us the work of sin; which perfect, which adorn us; which add every day a new splendour to our soul, a new solidity to our virtues, a new force to our faith, a new facility to our approaches towards salvation, a new firmness to our good desires, and which bear long with them the fruit that rewards and consoles us.

I do not add, that the source of our disgusts is in ourselves rather than in virtue; that it is our passions which give birth to our repugnances; that virtue has nothing in itself but what is amiable; that were our hearts not depraved through love for the flesh, we would find nothing sweet and consoling but the pleasures of innocence; that we are born for virtue and righteousness; that these ought to be our first inclinations, as they are our first distinction; and if we find different dispositions within us, at least we have not virtue, but only ourselves to blame. I could add, that perhaps it is the peculiar character of our heart, which spreads for us so much bitterness through the detail of a Christian life; that being born perhaps with more lively passions, and a heart more sensible to the world and to pleasure, virtue appears more melancholy and insupportable to us; that not finding in the service of God the same attraction which we have found in that of the world, our heart, accustomed to lively and animated pleasures, is no longer capable of reconciling itself to the expected dreariness

rinefs of a Christian life ; that the endless diffipation in which we have lived, renders the uniformity of duties more irkfome to us ; the agitation of parties and pleasures, retirement more difgulting ; our total fubmiffion to the paffions, prayer more painful ; the frivolous maxims with which our minds are occupied, the truths of faith more infipid, and more unknown ; that our mind being filled with only vain things : with fabulous reading, if nothing worfe ; with chimerical adventures, and theatrical phantoms, is no longer capable of relifhing any thing folid ; that never having accuftomed ourfelves to any thing ferious, it is rare that the ferioufnefs of piety does not difgult us, and that we find God to our tafte, if I dare to fpeak in this manner, we who have never relifhed any thing but the world and its vain hopes. This being the cafe, what happinefs when we bring back to virtue, a heart yet incorrupted by the world ! What happinefs to enter into the fervice of God, with happy inclinations, and fome remains of our original innocence ! When we begin early to know the Lord ; when we return to him in that firft feafon of our life, when the world has not yet made fuch profound and desperate impreffions ; when the paffions ftill in their growth, bend eafily towards good, and make virtue, as it were, a natural inclination to us ! What happinefs when we have been able to put an early check upon our heart ; when we have accuftomed it to bear the yoke of the Lord ; and when we have arrefted, almoft in their infancy, paffions, which render us miferable in our guilt, and which likewife occafion all the bitternefs of our virtues ! How many uneafineffes, how many pangs does it prevent ! How many confolations does it prepare ! How many comforts fpread through the reft of life ! and what a difference for the eafe and tranquillity of our future years,

betwixt

betwixt days whose primitive ones have been pure, and those which, infected in their source, have felt flow from thence a fatal bitterness which has blasted all their joys, and spread itself through all the remainder of their career ! It is ourselves alone, says a holy Father, who render virtue disagreeable ; and we are wrong to complain of an evil, in which we have such a share ourselves, or to attribute faults to virtue, which are our own handy-work.

But granting these reflections to have even less solidity ; were it even true, that we are not the first and original cause of our disgusts at virtue ; it is at least incontestible, that the longer we defer our return to God, the more invincible do we render that distaste which separates us from him ; that the more we shrink and draw back, the more do we fortify that repugnance within us to virtue ; that if the Christian life offers at present only melancholy and tedious duties, they will appear more insupportable in proportion as we grow old in the ways of the world, and in the taste for its iniquitous pleasures. Could the delay of our conversion sweeten the bitter and painful portion of virtue, by holding out a little longer against grace, could we obtain a more favourable composition, as I may say, and as an article of it, stipulate, that piety should afterwards be presented to us with more charms and graces, and with conditions more agreeable and flattering : alas ! whatever risks we may run by deferring it, the hopes of softening our pains and sufferings might serve in some measure to excuse our delays. But delay only prepares new sorrows for us ; the more we accustom our heart to the world, the more do we render it unfit for virtue : It is no longer, says the Prophet, but a polluted vase, to which the passions we have allowed to settle in it, have communicated a taste
and

and smell of death, which generally last the remainder of life. Thus, my brethren, when after a long course of crimes, and deeply-rooted passions, we must return to God, what obstacles do not these frightful dispositions present ! What insensibility towards good do we not find within ourselves ! Those hearts, which the world has always engrossed, and who afterwards wish to consecrate to God the remains of a life entirely mundane ; what a buckler of brass, says a Prophet, do they not oppose to grace ! What hardness of heart to the holy consolations of virtue ! They may find it just ; but it is impossible, they say, to find it amiable : They may return to God ; but they enjoy him no more : They may nourish themselves with the truth , but it is no more for them but the bread of tribulation and bitterness : They may seek the kingdom of God, and the treasure of the gospel ; but it is like unfortunate slaves, condemned to search for gold in the bowels of the earth, and waste their strength against the opposing rocks : They may draw for water from the wells of Jacob ; but they can only reap the toil ; they can never partake of those comforts and consolations which bear peace and refreshment to the soul : They wish to draw near to God, yet every thing separates them from him ; they wish to fly from the world, yet wherever they go, there they carry it with them in their heart : They seek the society of virtuous people, yet in their company they find a weariness, and a melancholy stiffness, which disgusts them with piety itself : They apply themselves to holy books ; and alas ! it is only a tiresome and fatiguing decency which supports their patience. It appears, that in virtue, they act a borrowed character, so little does it become them, and so much does their part constrain and tire them : and although, in reality, they seek salvation, yet there appears a something so foreign and constrained in their efforts, that we believe they only assume

the semblance of it; and that feeling themselves not born for virtue, they wish at least to give themselves the appearances of it.

Disgusts and wearinesses should not, therefore, drive us from virtue; since, in proportion as we retire from it, they become every day more violent and insupportable. But candidly, my brethren, is it for us to reproach to God, that we weary in his service? Ah! Did our slaves and domestics make us the same reproach; had they to lament the weariness they experience in our service, they would certainly be entitled to complain of it: Our eternal humours, from which they suffer so much; our fancies and caprices, to which they must accommodate themselves; our hours and moments, to which they must subject themselves; our pleasures and tastes, to which they must sacrifice their rest and liberty; our indolence, which alone costs them so much; makes them endure so much weariness; pass so many melancholy moments, without our even deigning to observe it; they undoubtedly would be entitled to complain of their cruel situation and sufferings.

Nevertheless, should they venture to say, that they weary in our service; that they reap not the smallest satisfaction from it; that they feel no inclination for us, and that every service they perform, is disgusting to a degree scarcely supportable: Alas! We would regard them as fools; we would find them too happy in having to support our humours and caprices; we would think them sufficiently honoured, by being permitted to be near us; and fully recompensed for all their fatigues. Ah, my brethren! And God, does he not sufficiently recompense those who serve him, that they should support any little disgusts or wearinesses which may be found in his service? Are we not still too
happy,

happy, by this acceptance of our services, in spite of the repugnances which render them cold and languid? Does he not sufficiently load us with blessings, to be entitled to exact our sufferance of a few slight sorrows for his sake? Does he not promise us still more, sufficiently precious to sweeten the trifling disgusts attached to the fulfilment of his ordinances? Must not he find it strange, that vile creatures, who hold all for him, who exist only through him, and who expect all from him, should complain of dislike to his service? That worms of the earth, whose only boast is the honour of belonging to him, dare complain of feeling no inclination for him, and that it is both melancholy and wearisome to serve or to be faithful to him? Is he then a master like us; fanciful, intolerant, indolent, entirely occupied with himself, and who seeks only to render himself happy, at the expence and comfort of those who serve him? Unjust that we are! We dare offer reproaches to the Almighty, which we would regard as outrages upon ourselves, from the mouths of our slaves!

Second Truth: The disgusts which accompany virtue are not so bitter as we represent them to ourselves.

REFLECT. III. But even were they so, I have said, in the third place, that they would still be infinitely less than those of the world: And it is here, my brethren, that the testimony of the world itself, and the self-experience of worldly souls, answer every purpose of a proof. For if you continue in the ways of the world, and of the passions, what is your whole life but a continual weariness, where, by diversifying your pleasures, you only diversify your disgusts and uneasinesses? What is it but an eternal void, where you are a burden to yourself? What is it but a pompous circulation of duties, attentions, ceremonies, amusements,

ments, and trifles, which incessantly revolving, possess one single advantage, that of unpleasantly filling up moments which hang heavy upon you, and which you know not otherwise to employ? What is your life but a flux and reflux of desires, hatreds, chagrins, jealousies, and hopes, which poison all your pleasures, and are the cause that, surrounded by every thing which ought to ensure your happiness, you cannot succeed in being contented with yourselves?

What comparison is there betwixt the phrensies of the passions, the chagrin of a striking neglect, the sensibility of a bad office, and the slight sorrows of virtue? What comparison betwixt the unlimited subjections to ambition; the fatigues and toils of pretensions and expectancies; the pains to ensure success; the exertions and submissions necessary to please; the cares, uneasinesses, and agitations, in order to exalt ourselves; and the slight violences which assure to us the kingdom of heaven? What comparison betwixt the frightful remorse of the conscience, that internal worm, which incessantly gnaws us; that sadness of guilt, which undermines and brings us low indeed; that weight of iniquity, which overwhelms us; that internal sword, which pierces us to the quick; which we know not how to draw forth, and carry with us wherever we go; and the amiable sorrow of the penitence which operates salvation? My God, can we complain of thee, after knowing the world; Can thy yoke appear grievous, after quitting that of the passions? And the thorns of thy cross, are they not flowers, when compared to those which the ways of iniquity and the world have sown?

Thus every day we hear the worshippers of the world decry the world they serve; complain with the utmost dissatisfaction of their lot; utter the keenest invectives
against

against its injustice and abuses ; censure, condemn, and despise it ; but find me if you can any truly pious souls, who send forth investives against virtue ; who condemn or despise it ; and who detest their lot of being embarked in a voyage, so full of chagrin and bitterness. The world itself continually envies the destiny of the virtuous, and acknowledges that none are happy but the upright ; but find me a truly pious soul, who envies the destiny of the world ; who publishes, that none are happy but its partisans ; who admires the wisdom of their choice, and regards his own condition as the most miserable and the most foolish : What shall I say ? We have frequently seen sinners, who, through despair and disgust at the world, have fled to the opposite extremes ; lose rest, health, reason, and life ; fall into states of horror, and the blackest melancholy, and no longer regard life but as the greatest torment. But where are the righteous, whom the disgusts which accompany virtue have thrown into such dreadful extremities ? They sometimes complain of their sorrows ; but they still prefer them to the pleasures of the passions : Virtue, it is true, may sometimes appear melancholy and unpleasing to them ; but with all her sadness, they love her much more than guilt ; They would wish a few more sensible supports and consolations from the Father of Mercies ; but they detest those of the world : They suffer ; but the same hand which proves, supports them ; and they are not tempted beyond their strength : They feel what you call the weight of the yoke of Jesus Christ ; but in recalling the load of iniquity, under which they had so long groaned, they find their present lot happy, and the comparison calms and comforts them.

In effect, my brethren, in the first place, the violences which we do to ourselves, are much more agreeable than those

those which come from without, and happen in spite of us. Now the violences of virtue, are at least voluntary : These are crosses which we choose from reason, and impose upon ourselves from duty : they are often bitter, but we are consoled by the reflection of having chosen them. But the disgusts of the world are forced crosses, which come without our being consulted : It is a hateful yoke, which is imposed on us against our will : We wish it not : we detest it ; yet nevertheless we must drink all the bitterness of the cup. In virtue, we only suffer, because it is our inclination to suffer : In the world, we suffer so much the more, in proportion as we wish it less, and as our inclinations are inimical to our sufferings:

Secondly, The disgusts accompanying virtue are a burden only to indolence and laziness ; these are repugnances, bitter only to the senses : But the disgusts of the world ; ah ! they pierce to the quick ; they mortify all the passions ; they humble pride ; pull down vanity ; light up envy ; mortify ambition, and none of our feelings escape the influence of their sadness and bitterness.

Thirdly, those of virtue are sensible only in their first operation : The first efforts cost us much ; the sequel softens and tranquillizes them ; the passions, which are generally the occasion of any disgust at virtue, have this in particular, that the more we repress them, the more tractable they become ; the violences we do to them, gradually calm the heart, and leave us less to suffer from those to come ; but the disgusts of the world are always new ; as they always find in us the same passions, they always leave us the same bitternesses ; those which have gone before, only render those that follow more insupportable.

In a word, the disgusts of the world inflame our passions, and consequently increase our sufferings; those of virtue repress them, and by these means gradually establish peace and tranquillity in our soul.

Fourthly, The disgusts of the world happen to those who most faithfully serve it: It does not treat them better, because they are more devoted to its party, and more zealous for its abuses; on the contrary, the hearts most ardent for the world, are almost always those who experience the largest share of its mortifications; because they feel more sensibly its neglect and injustice: Their adour for it, is the source of all their uneasinesses. But with God, we have only our coldness to dread; for the disgusts which may accompany virtue, in general, have only relaxation and idleness for principle; the more our ardour for the Lord increases, the more do our disgusts diminish; the more our zeal inflames, the more do our repugnances weaken; the more we serve him with fidelity, the more charms and consolations do we find in his service; It is by relaxing, that we render our duties disagreeable; it is by lessening our fervour, that we add a new weight to our yoke; and if in spite of our fidelity, the disgusts continue, they are then trials, and not punishments; it is not that consolations are refused, it is a new occasion of merit which is prepared for us; it is not an irritated God, who shuts his heart to us; it is a merciful God, who purifies our own; it is not a discontented master, who suspends his favours; it is a jealous Lord, who wishes to prove our love; our homages are not rejected; our submissions and services are only anticipated; it is not meant to repulse, but to assure to us the price of our sufferings, by rejecting every thing which might still mingle the man with God; ourselves with grace; human supports
with

with the gifts of Heaven ; and the riches of faith with the consolations of self love. Behold, my brethren, the last truth, with which I shall terminate this discourse : Not only the disgusts accompany virtue, are not so bitter as those of the world, but they likewise possess resources which those of the world have not.

REFLECT. IV. I say resources : alas ! my brethren, we find none but in virtue. The world wounds the heart ; but it furnishes no remedies : It has its chagrins, but nothing to comfort them : It is full of disgusts and bitterness, but we find no resources in it. But in virtue, there is no sorrow which has not its consolation ; and if in it we find repugnances and disgusts, we find likewise a thousand resources which soothe them.

In the first place, Peace of heart, and the testimony of the conscience. What luxury, to be at peace with ourselves ; no longer to carry within us that importunate and corroding worm, which pursued us every where : no longer to be racked by eternal remorse, which poisoned every comfort of life : In a word, to be delivered from iniquity ! The senses may still suffer from the sorrows of virtue, but the heart at least is tranquil.

Secondly, The certainty that our sufferings are not lost ; that our sorrows become a new merit for us ; that our repugnances, in preparing for us new sacrifices, secure an additional claim to the promises of faith ; that were virtue to cost us less, it would likewise bear an inferior price in the sight of God ; and that he only renders the road so difficult, in order to render our crown more brilliant and glorious.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Submission to the orders of God, who has his reasons for refusing to us the visible consolations of virtue; whose wisdom consults our interest more than our passions; and who has preferred bringing us to himself by a less agreeable road, because it is a more secure one.

Fourthly, The favours with which he accompanies our sorrows; which sustain our faith at the same time that our violences lower self-love; which fortify our heart in truth, at the same time that our senses are disgusted with it: which make our mind prompt and fervent, although the flesh is weak and feeble; in so much, that he renders our virtue so much the more solid, as to us it seems melancholy and painful.

Fifthly, The external succours of piety, which are so many new resources in our faintings and thirst; the holy mysteries, where Jesus Christ, himself the comforter of faithful souls, comes to console our heart; the truths of the divine writings, which promise nothing in this world to the upright but tribulation and tears; calm our fears, by informing us, that our pleasures are to come; and that the sufferings which discourage us, far from making us distrust our virtue, ought to render our hope more animated and certain: In a word, the history of the saints, who have undergone the same disgusts and trials; consequently, we have so much the less reason to complain, as characters so infinitely more pious than we have experienced the same lot; that such has almost always been the conduct of God towards his servants; and that if any thing in this life can prove his love towards us, it is that of his leading us by the same path that he did the saints, and treating us in this world in the same manner as he did the upright.

Sixthly, The tranquillity of the life, and the unifor-

mity of the duties, which have succeeded to the phrenfies of the paffions, and the tumult of a worldly life ; which have provided for us much more happy and peaceful days than thofe we had ever paffed in the midft of diffipation ; and which, though they ftill leave us fomething to fuffer, yet occafion us to enjoy a more tranquil and fupportable lot.

Laftly, Faith, which brings eternity nearer to us ; which difcovers to us the insignificancy of worldly affairs ; that we approach the happy term ; that the prefent life is but a rapid inflant ; and confequently, that our fufferings cannot endure long, but that this fleeting moment of tribulation affures to us a glorious and immortal futurity, which will endure as long as God himfelf. What refources for a faithful heart ! What difproportion betwixt the fufferings of virtue and thofe of guilt ! It is in order to make us feel the difference that God often permits the world to poffefs us for a time ; that in youth we deliver ourfelves up to the fway of the paffions ; on purpofe that when he afterwards recalls us to himfelf, we may know by experience how much more eafy is his yoke than that of the world : I will permit, fays he in the Scriptures, that my people ferve the nations of the earth for fome time ; that they allow themfelves to be feduced by their profane fuperftitions, in order that they may know the difference betwixt my fervice and the fervice of the kings of the earth ; and that they may feel how much more eafy is my yoke than the fervitude of men.

Happy the fouls, who, in order to be undeceived, have had no occafion for this experience, and who have not fo dearly bought the knowledge of this world's vanity, and the melancholy lot of iniquitous paffions. Alas ! fince at laft we muft be undeceived, and muft abandon and defpife it ; fince
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the day will come, when we shall find it frivolous, disgusting, and insupportable, when of all its foolish joys, there shall no longer remain to us, but the cruel remorse of having yielded to them; the confusion of having followed them; the obstacles to good which they will have left in our heart; why not anticipate and prevent such melancholy regrets? Why not do to-day, what we allow ourselves must one day be done? Why wait till the world has made such deep wounds in our heart, to run afterwards to remedies, which cannot re-establish us without greater pain, and costing us doubly dear? We complain of some slight disgusts which accompany virtue; but alas! the first believers, who, to the maxims of the gospel, sacrificed their riches, reputation, and life; who run to the scaffolds to confess Jesus Christ; who passed their days in chains, in prisons, in shame and in sufferance, and to whom it cost so much to serve Jesus Christ; did they complain of the bitterness of his service? Did they reproach him with rendering unhappy those who served him? Ah! they glorified themselves in their tribulation; they preferred shame and disgrace with Jesus Christ to all the vain pleasures of Egypt; they reckoned as nothing, wheels, fires, and every instrument of torture, in the hopes of a blessed immortality, which would amply recompense their present sufferings: In the midst of torments, they chanted hymns; and regarded as a gain, the loss of all, for the interests of their master. What a life, in the eyes of the flesh, is that of these unfortunate men, proscribed, persecuted, driven from their country, having only dens and caverns for their habitation, regarded every where as the horror of the universe; become execrable to their friends, their fellow-citizens, and their relations! They esteemed themselves happy in belonging to Jesus Christ; in their opinion, they could not too dearly purchase the glory of being his disciples, and

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the consolation of pretending to his promises: And we, my brethren, in the midst of too many of the conveniencies of life; surrounded by too much abundance, prosperitry and worldly glory; finding, perhaps for our misfortune, in the applauses of the world, which cannot prevent itself from esteeming worth, the recompense of virtue; in the midst of our relations, our children, and our friends; we complain, that it costs us too much to serve Jesus Christ; we murmur against the slight bitterness we experience in virtue; we almost persuade ourselves, that God requires too much of his creatures: Ah! when the comparison shall one day be made betwixt these little disgusts which we exaggerate so much; and the crosses, the wheels, the fires, and all the the tortures of the martyrs; the austerities of the anchorites; the fasts, the tears, and sufferings of so many holy penitents; alas! we shall then blush to find ourselves almost single before Jesus Christ; we, who have suffered nothing for him; to whom his kingdom has cost nothing; and who individually bearing before his tribunal more iniquities than a number of saints together, cannot, however, in assembling all our works of piety, compare them united to a single instance of their exertions.

Let us cease, therefore, to complain of God, since he has so many reasons to complain of us; let us serve him as he wishes to be served by us; if he softens our yoke, let us bless his goodness, which prepares these consolations for our weakness; if he makes us feel the whole extent of its weight, let us still esteem ourselves happy, that he deigns at that price to accept of our works and homage: With equal gratitude, let us receive from his hand consolation or affliction, since every thing which proceeds from him alike conducts us to him: Let us learn, to be as the Apostle, in want or abundance, provided we belong to Jesus Christ

Christ; the essential part is not, to serve him with pleasure, it is not to serve him with fidelity. In reality, my brethren, in spite of all the disgusts or repugnances which may accompany virtue, there is no real or true pleasure but in serving God; there is no solid consolation to be reaped, but by attaching ourselves to him, No, said the Sage, it is still better to feed upon the bread of wormwood and gall with the fear of the Lord, than to live in the midst of pleasures and profane joys, under the lash of his wrath and indignation. Alas! of what pleasure can we be capable, when we are the enemies of God? What pleasure can we taste, when we bear in our heart only the anguish and bitterness of guilt? No, says the Sage once more, The fear of God can alone charm our wearinesses; soften our moments of melancholy; soothe our endless anguishes; and enable us to find a certain degree of sweetness, even in the evils incident to our nature. It is that which renders retirement sweet, and enables us to enjoy repose, far from the world and its amusements: It is that which makes days pass quickly, and occupies in peace and tranquillity every moment; and though apparently it allows us more leisure than a worldly life, yet it leaves a much smaller portion to weariness.

Great God! What honour does not the world unintentionally pay to thy service! What an affecting eulogium on the destiny of the upright is the lot of sinners! How well, my God, thou knowest to extort glory and praise from even thy enemies! and how little excuse thou leavest to those souls who depart from thy paths, since in order to draw them to virtue, thou makest a resource to them even of their crimes; and employest their wants to recal them to thy eternal mercies.

SERMON IV.

THE UNCERTAINTY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IN A STATE OF LUKEWARMNESS.

LUKE iv. 38.

And he rose out of the Synagogue, and entered into Simon's house : and Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever : and they besought him for her.

NOTHING more naturally represents the situation of a languid and lukewarm soul, than the state of infirmity in which the gospel here describes Peter's mother-in-law to have been. It may be said, that coldness and indolence in the ways of God, though otherwise accompanied with a life free from enormities, is a kind of secret and dangerous fever, which gradually undermines the powers of the soul, changes all its good dispositions, weakens its faculties, insensibly corrupts its inward parts, alters its propensities, spreads an universal bitterness through all its duties, disgusts it with every thing proper, with all holy and necessary nourishment ; and finishes at last, by a total extinction, and an inevitable death.

This langour of the soul, in the path of salvation, is so much the more dangerous, as it is less observed.

Our exemption from open irregularity gives us confidence ; the external regularity of conduct, which attracts from men those praises due only to virtue, flatters us ; and the

the secret comparison we make of our morals with the excesses of those avowed sinners, whom the world and their passions govern, unites to blind us : We regard our situation as a state, less perfect indeed, but always certain of salvation ; seeing our conscience can only reproach us with indolence and negligence in the discharge of our duties ; too lenient a correction of our appetites ; self-love, and some slight infidelities, which do not bring death to the soul. Nevertheless, since the holy writings represent the adulterous and the lukewarm soul as equally rejected by God ; and as they pronounce the same anathema against those who despise the works of the Lord, and those who perform them with negligence, this state of coldness and languor in the ways of God, must necessarily be very suspicious with regard to salvation, both from the present dispositions which it gives to the soul ; and from those to which, sooner or later, it never fails to lead it.

I say, in the first place, from the present dispositions it gives to the soul ; namely, a fund of indolence, self-love, disgust at virtue, infidelity, and deliberate disregard to every thing they believe not absolutely essential in their duties : Dispositions, that form a state, very doubtful of salvation.

Secondly, From those, to which, sooner or later, lukewarmness conducts us ; namely, a forgetfulness of God, and an open and shameful departure from every thing sacred.

From these I wish to establish two capital truths in this matter, which expose the danger of a lukewarm and infidel life ; and which, from their importance, will furnish

us with subject for two discourses. The first, that it is very doubtful, whether in this habitual state of coldness and languor, the lukewarm soul (as it believes,) preserves the righteousness and sanctifying grace upon which it grounds its security.

The second, That it were even less doubtful, whether it had preserved or lost before God, the sanctifying grace; at any rate, it is certain of being unable long to preserve it.

The uncertainty of righteousness in a state of lukewarmness. This first truth will be the subject of the present Discourse.

The certainty of a departure from righteousness in that state is the second truth, upon which, in the following one, I shall endeavour to instruct you.

PART I. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," says an Apostle. The purest virtue below is never free, therefore, from stain. Man, full of darkness and passions, since the entrance of sin into the world, cannot always be so attentive to regularity, but that he must sometimes be deceived, and err; nor so impressed with invisible good, but he will allow himself to be sometimes caught by worldly and ostensible riches; because their impressions on the mind are lively and quick, and they always find in our hearts dispositions too favourable to their dangerous seductions.

The fidelity which the law of God exacts from just souls, excludes not, therefore, a thousand imperfections, inseparable

nable from our nature, and from which the most guarded and watchful piety cannot defend itself; but of these, there are two descriptions: The first, which happen through our weakness, are less infidelities than surprises, where the weight of corruption preponderates over the inclination or choice; and which the Lord, says St. Augustine, permits to remain in the most faithful souls, in order to nourish their humility; excite their lamentations; reanimate their desires; their disgusts at their present exilement, and their longings for its termination: The second class are those which please us; which we justify to ourselves; which it appears impossible for us to renounce; which we look upon as necessary sweeteners of virtue; in which we see nothing criminal, because we perceive not the guilt; which form a part of the deliberate and general system of our morals and conduct, and constitute that state of indolence and coldness in the ways of God, which is the cause of condemnation to so many, born otherwise, perhaps, with principles of virtue, detestation of iniquity; a fund of religion, and fear of God; and happy dispositions for salvation.

Now, I say, that this state of relaxation and infidelity; this tranquil and continued negligence of every thing which perhaps appears not essential in our duties; this effeminate indulgence of all our desires, so long as they offer not actual guilt to our sight: In a word, this life, altogether according to our animal nature, our humours, temperaments, and self-love, so common with those who make a public profession of piety; so safe in appearance; so glorious even in the eyes of men; and to which the general error attaches the names of virtue and regularity: I say, that this is a state extremely doubtful, to attain salvation; that it derives its source from an irregular heart,

where the Holy Spirit no longer reigns ; and that all the rules of faith induce us to think, that a soul of this description is already, without being sensible of it, fallen from righteousness and grace : In the first place, Because the desire of perfection essential to Christian piety, is extinguished in his heart. Secondly, Because the rules of faith, almost always very uncertain in the distinction of guilt from venial errors, with regard to other sinners, are infinitely more so with respect to the unfaithful and lukewarm heart. Thirdly, Because of all the external marks of a living and habitual charity, there is not in it the smallest appearance of one. Let us investigate these truths ; for they are indeed worthy of your attention.

Every Christian soul is obliged to bend every effort towards the perfection of his state. I say obliged : for although the degree of perfection be not comprised in the precept, to endeavour at, to labour for perfection is nevertheless a commandment, and a duty essential to every believer. Be ye perfect, says our Saviour, because the heavenly Father whom ye serve is perfect. I can perceive but one essential point, said St. Paul, viz. to forget whatever I have done to this period ; (and what, my brethren, was he to forget ? his endless labours, continual sufferings, and apostolic courses ; so many nations converted to faith ; so many illustrious churches founded ; so many revelations and prodigies ?) and incessantly advancing to direct my views to the attainment of what I have yet to perform. The desire of perfection ; the continued efforts to attain it ; the holy inquietudes in consequence of the innumerable obstacles which check our progress, do not therefore comprise only a simple advice, and a practice reserved for the cloister and the desert alone, they form the essential state of a Christian, and the life according to faith on this earth.

For the life, according to faith, which the just man leads, is only an uninterrupted desire, that the kingdom of God may be accomplished in our hearts ; a holy eagerness, to form a perfect resemblance in us to Jesus Christ, and to increase even to the plenitude of the new man ; a continual lamentation, excited by the internal sensibility of our own miseries, and by the load of corruption which oppresses the soul, and makes it to bear so many marks still of the worldly man ; a daily struggle betwixt the law of the Spirit, which continually wishes to raise us above our sensual appetites, and the dominion of the flesh, which incessantly draws us back towards ourselves : Such is the state of faith, and of Christian piety. Whoever you be, great, or of humble rank, prince or subject, courtier or recluse, behold the perfection to which you are called ; behold the ground-work, and the spirit of your vocation. The austerities of an Anchorite ; the silence and solitude of the desert ; the poverty of the cloister, are not demanded of you ; but you are required to labour incessantly towards the repression of those internal desires, which oppose themselves to the law of God ; to mortify those rebellious inclinations, which so unwillingly submit to order and duty ; in a word, to advance as much as possible your perfect conformity with Jesus Christ : Behold the degree of perfection to which Christian grace calls you, and the essential duty of a just soul.

Now, from the moment you give way to every inclination, provided it extends not to the absolute infraction of the precept ; from the moment you confine yourselves to the essentials of the law ; that you establish a kind of system of coldness and negligence ; that you say to yourselves, “ We are unable to support a more exact, or more exemplary life ;” from that moment you renounce the desire
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of perfection : You no longer propose to yourselves an unceasing advancement towards that point of piety and holiness to which the Almighty calls you, and towards which his grace never ceases to impel you in secret : You no longer grieve over those miseries and weaknesses, so inimical to your progress : You no longer wish the kingdom of God to be established in your hearts : You abandon, therefore, from that moment, the great work of righteousness, at which you are commanded to labour : You neglect the care of your soul : You enter not into the designs of grace. On the contrary, you check its holy impressions : You are no longer Christian ; that is to say, that this disposition alone, this formal intention of limiting yourselves to the essentials, and of regarding all the rest as laudable excesses, and works of supererogation, is a state of sin and death, since it is an avowed contempt of that great commandment, which requires us to be perfect ; that is to say, to labour towards becoming so.

Nevertheless, when we come to instruct you with regard to Christian perfection, you look upon it as to be found only in cloisters and solitudes, and scarcely will you deign to give the smallest attention to our instructions. You deceive yourselves, my brethren : The individuals who adopt retirement, certainly employ austerities, fastings, and watchings, as means to succeed in that mortification of the passions, to which we are equally invited : They engage themselves to a perfection of means, which I confess our state will not admit of ; but the perfection of the end, to which these means conduct, viz. the command and regulation of the affections, proper contempt of the world, detachment from ourselves, submission of the senses and the flesh to the Spirit, and renovation of the heart, are the perfection of all states, the engagement
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of all Christians, and the covenant of our baptism. To renounce this perfection therefore, by limiting ourselves from choice, or in consequence of our rank in the world, to an effeminate, sensual, and worldly life, exempt only from striking enormities, is to renounce the Christian calling, and change the grace of faith, which has made us members of Jesus Christ, into a shameful and unworthy indolence. First reason.

But were this state even not so dubious for salvation, with respect to the desire of that perfection essential to a Christian life, and which is extinguished in a lukewarm and unfaithful soul, it would become so by the imbecility which it occasions, and in which it places itself, of distinguishing in its conduct the infidelities which may extend to guilt, from those which may be termed simple errors. For though it is true, that all sins are not sins which bring death, as St. John observes, and that Christian morality acknowledges errors, which only grieve the Holy Spirit within us; and others which extinguish it altogether in the soul; nevertheless the rules which it furnishes to distinguish these, can neither be always certain nor general at the moment they are applied: Some circumstances relative to ourselves continually change their nature. I speak not here of those manifest and absolute transgressions of the precepts marked in the law, which leave no hesitation respecting the enormity of the offence: I speak of a thousand doubtful and daily transgressions; of hatred, jealousy, evil-speaking, sensuality, vanity, idleness, duplicity, negligence in the practice of our duties, and ambition; in all which, it is extremely difficult to define how far the precept may be violated: Now, I say, that it is by the disposition alone of the heart, that the measure and guilt of these faults can be decided; that the rules
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there are always uncertain and changeable ; and that frequently what is only weakness or surprize in the just, is guilt and corruption not only in the finner, but likewise in the lukewarm and unfaithful soul : This is proven by the following examples taken from the Holy writings.

Saul, in disobedience to the order of the Lord, spared the king of the Amalekites, and the most precious spoils of that infidel prince. The crime does not appear considerable ; but as it proceeded from a fund of pride, of relaxation in the ways of God, and a vain complaisance in his victory ; this action is the commencement of his reprobation, and the Spirit of God withdraws itself from him. Joshua, on the contrary, too credulous, spares the Gibeonites, whom the Lord had commanded him to exterminate : He went not before the ark to consult him previous to his alliance with these impostors. But this infidelity being an act of precipitancy and surprize, rather than a disobedience ; and proceeding from a heart still faithful, religious, and submissive to God, it appears slight in his eyes, and the pardon almost immediately follows the crime. Now if this principle be incontrovertible, upon what do you depend, when you regard your daily and habitual infidelities as slight ? Are you acquainted with all the corruption of your heart, from which they proceed ? God knows it, who is the searcher and judge ; and his eyes are very different from those of men. But if it be permitted to judge before the time, say, if this fund of indolence and infidelity which is in you ; of voluntary perseverance in a state displeasing to God ; of deliberate contempt for all the duties which you consider as not essential ; of attention and care, as I may say, to labour only for the Lord when he opens before you the gates of punishment and destruction : Say, if all these can constitute in his
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fight a state worthy of a Christian heart ; and if faults, which proceed from so corrupted a principle, can in reality be slight, or worthy of indulgence ?

Paul, my brethren, that miraculous man, to whom the secrets of heaven had been revealed ; Paul, who no longer lived for himself, but in whom Jesus Christ alone lived ; Paul, who earnestly longed every moment for the dissolution of his earthly body, that he might be clothed with immortality : This Apostle, always ready to sacrifice his life for his master, and a willing victim to faith ; this elected instrument of our Lord and Saviour, whose conscience could reproach him with nothing ; knew not, however, whether he merited the love or hatred of his Lord ? whether he still possessed in his heart, or had forfeited the invisible treasure of charity ; and in these melancholy doubts, the testimony of his conscience was insufficient to calm his dread and uncertainty. David, that king so penitent, whose delights were centered in the constant meditation of the law of God, and whom the Holy Spirit calls a king after God's own heart ; David trembles, however, lest the iniquity of his crimes be not sufficiently known to him ; lest the corruption of his heart conceals not from him their enormity. He figures to himself unknown gulfs in his conscience ; which cause him to shed torrents of tears ; to prostrate himself before the Majesty and Holiness of his God, and supplicate his assistance towards his purification from secret infidelities, by making him sensible of them. And you, who watch not, nor search your hearts ; you, who devoted to lukewarm and sensual habits, with deliberate coolness, allow yourselves every day a thousand infidelities, upon the iniquity of which, you are utterly ignorant what judgment the Almighty may form : You, who
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every moment experience those suspicious ebullitions of passion, where, in spite of all your self-indulgence, you find it so difficult to prove, that the will has not accompanied the gratification: and that you have not overstept that critical and dangerous line, which distinguishes actual guilt from involuntary error: You, in whom almost every action is suspicious; who every moment may be demanding at your own heart, “Have I not gone too far?” who, in your own conscience, feel movements and regrets, which you will never quiet: You, who in spite of so many just subjects of dread, believe the state of your conscience to be perfectly known to you; that the decisions of your own self-love, with regard to your infidelities, are the decisions of the Almighty; and that the Lord whom you serve with so much coldness and negligence, does not yield you up to your own blindness, and punish your crimes, by making you mistake them: You can possibly believe that you still preserve your righteousness, and the grace of sanctification, and can quiet yourselves upon your visible and habitual guilt, by a pretended invisible exercise of righteousness, of which you can produce neither mark or proof?

O man! How little art thou acquainted with the illusions of the human heart, and the terrible judgments of God upon those souls which resemble thee! Thou sayest to thyself; I am rich, I am loaded with the good things of this world; (with this, our Saviour formerly reproached a cold and unbelieving soul;) And thou perceivest not, continued he, (for blindness and presumption are the distinguishing character of coldness,) that in my sight, thou art poor, miserable, blind, and lost to every thing. It is the destiny, therefore, of a lukewarm and unfaithful soul,

to live in error and illusion ; to believe himself just, and acceptable to God ; while alas ! before him, he is lost, without knowing it, to both grace and righteousness.

And one reflection, which I beg you to make here, is, that the confidence of such souls, is so much the more illusive and ill-founded, as there exists not a soul, less capable of judging of his own heart, than the lukewarm and unfaithful one. For the avowed sinner cannot conceal his crimes from himself ; and he is sensible, that he must assuredly be dead to the Lord : The just man, although ignorant whether he merits love or hatred of his master, enjoys nevertheless a conscience free from reproach ; but the cold and unfaithful soul is involved in a state of a continual and inexplicable mystery to itself. For this lukewarmness in the ways of God, enfeebling in us the lights of faith, and strengthening our passions, increases our darkness : Every infidelity is like an additional cloud, overspreading the mind and heart, which darkens to our sight the truths of salvation : In this manner, the heart is gradually enveloped ; the conscience becomes embarrassed ; the lights of the mind are weakened : You are no longer that spiritual Christian, capable of a proper judgment. Insensibly you adopt maxims in secret, which, as you think, diminish your guilt : the blindness increases in the same proportion as the lukewarmness.

The more you admit of this relaxation, in a more altered light do your duties and rules appear : What formerly appeared essential, no longer appears but a vain scruple : The omissions, which, in the period of fervour for duty and religion, would have excited in you the warmest compunctions, are now no longer regarded even as faults : The

principles, the judgment, the lights of the mind, are all changed.

Now in this situation, who has told you, that in the judgment which you form on the nature of your infidelities, and your daily departure from virtue, you do not deceive yourselves? Who has told you, that the errors which you think so flight, are in reality so; and that the distant boundaries which you prescribe to guilt, and within which every thing to you appears venial, are really the limits of the law? Alas! the most enlightened guides know not how to distinguish clearly in a cold and unbelieving conscience. These are what I may call the evils of that languor in which we know nothing; where the wisest of us can say nothing with certainty; and of which the secret cause is always an enigma. You are sensible yourselves, that in this state of relaxation, you experience in your hearts certain doubts and embarrassments, which you can never sufficiently clear up: That in your consciences there always remains something secret and inexplicable, which you never wish to search into, or above half expose. These are not exaggerations; it is the real state and bottom of your soul which you feel a reserve to lay open: You are sensible, that even when prostrating yourselves before the Almighty, the confession of your guilt never entirely corresponds with the most intimate dispositions of your heart; that it never paints your internal situation such as in reality it is; and, in a word, that there always exists in your heart something more criminal, than what in any statement of it you can bring yourselves to avow. And, indeed, how can you be certain, that in those continual self-gratifications; in that effeminacy of manners which composes your life; in that attention to every thing which may flatter the senses, or remove disquiet from you; to sacrifice to indolence and laziness

ness, all which appears not essential in your duties; how can you be certain, I say, that your self-love is not arrived at that fatal point, which serves to give it dominion over your heart, and forever banish from it Christian charity? Who is able to inform you, in these frequent and voluntary infidelities, where, comforted by their pretended insignificance, you oppose the internal grace which endeavours to turn you from them; you continually act contrary to your own reason and judgment; whether this internal contempt of the voice of God; this formal and daily abuse of your own lights and grace from God be not an outrage upon the divine goodness; a criminal contempt of his gifts; a wickedness in your deviations from virtue, which leaves no excuse; and a deliberate preference to your passions and yourselves over Jesus Christ, which can alone proceed from a heart where the love of all order and righteousness is extinguished? Who can tell you, if in these recollections where your listless mind has a thousand times dwelt upon objects or events dangerous to modesty, your indolence in combating them has not been criminal; and if the efforts which you afterwards made, were not an artifice of self-love, in order to disguise their criminality, and quiet you on the indulgence you had already yielded to your crimes? Who would dare to determine, if, in these secret antipathies and animosities, which you give yourselves but little trouble to restrain, (and that always more for the sake of appearances than through piety,) you have never exceeded that slippery line, beyond which dwell hatred, and death to the soul! If, in that excess of sensibility, which in general accompanies all your afflictions, infirmities, losses, and disgraces, those which you call feelings, attached and inevitable to nature, are not irregularities of the heart, and a revolt against the decrees of Providence? If, in all those attentions, and eagernesses with which we see you occupied, to manage
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either the interests of your worldly affairs, or the preservation of a vain beauty, there is not either as much forwardness as may amount to the crime of illegal ambition, or complaisance for yourself, and desire of pleasing, as may fully your heart with the guilt of sensuality? Great God! who hast well discerned, as thy servant Job formerly remarked, the fatal limits which separate life from death, and light from darkness, in the heart; these are the gulfs and abysses over which mankind, little instructed in them, must tremble; and of which Thou reservest the manifestation till the terrible day of thy vengeance shall arrive. Second reason, drawn from the uncertainty of the rules, which leaves the state of a lukewarm soul very suspicious, and even renders it incapable of knowing itself.

But a final reason, which to me appears still more decisive, and more dreadful to the lukewarm soul, is there not being an appearance from which we can presume, that it still preserves the sanctifying grace; on the contrary, every thing induces us to suppose it forfeited; that is to say, that of all the symptoms, of an habitual and living charity, there is not a vestige of one in it.

For, my brethren, the first character of charity is to fill us with that spirit of adoption in children, which leads us to love God as our heavenly Father, to love his law, and the justice of his commandments; and to dread the forfeiture of his love, more than all the evils with which he threatens us.

Now, the attention alone with which a lukewarm soul examines whether an offence be venial, or extends further; of disputing with God every article he may refuse him, without actual guilt; of studying the law, only for the purpose

pose of knowing to what degree it may be violated ; of unceasingly preferring the interests of his own cupidity to those of grace ; and always justifying those things which flatter the passions, in opposition to the rules which check or forbid them ; this attention, I say can only proceed from a heart destitute of faith and charity ; from a heart in which the Spirit of God, that spirit of love and kindness, apparently no longer reigns. For no children but the prodigal, are capable of quibbling in this manner with their father and protector ; of exercising to the utmost length of severity any claims they may have, and of seizing all they may think themselves entitled to.

Now, in order to give this reflection all its weight : That disposition, which deliberately allows itself every infidelity, which will not, it believes, be followed by eternal punishment, is the disposition of a slave and hireling ; that is to say, that could they promise themselves the same impunity and indulgence from the Almighty, for the transgression of the essential points of the law, they would violate them with the same difference as they violate the least ; for, were cruel and avowed revenge, calumny of the blackest nature, and criminal attachments, to be attended in futurity with no worse consequences than slight and momentary resentments, accidental and careless evil-speaking, or too much self-love, they would feel no more horror in the commission of the former, than the last mentioned crimes ; that is to say, that when faithful to the commandments, it is not from a love of righteousness, but the dread of that punishment, which would attend their infraction ; it is not to order and to the law that they submit themselves, it is to their chastisements ; it is not the Lord they have in view, it is themselves : For while his glory alone is interested, and no serious consequences may be expected to follow our infidelities,

ties, from their apparent slightness, we are not afraid of displeasing him ; we even justify to ourselves in secret these kind of transgressions, by saying, that notwithstanding they offend, and are displeasing to the Lord, yet they bring not death, nor eternal punishment to the soul : We are not affected by what regards only him ; his glory goes for nothing in the distinction we make betwixt actions allowed or forbidden ; our interest alone regulates our fidelity ; and nothing can warm our coldness, but the dread of everlasting punishment. We are even delighted at the impunity of those trivial transgressions ; of being able to gratify our inclinations, without any greater misfortune attending, than the displeasure of the Almighty : We love this wretched liberty, which seems to leave us the right of being unpunished, though unfaithful : We are the apologists of it ; we carry it even further, than in reality it goes : We wish all to be venial ; gaming, dress, sensual pleasures, passion, animosities, public spectacles, what shall I say ? We would wish this freedom to be universal ; that nothing which gratifies our appetites should be punished ; that the Almighty were neither just, nor the avenger of iniquity ; and that we might yield ourselves up to the gratification of every passion, and violate the sanctity of his law, without any dread of the severity of his justice. Provided a lukewarm soul will descend to an examination of itself, it will feel, that this is truly the principle of its heart, and its real disposition.

Now, I ask you, is this the situation of a soul in which the sanctifying charity and grace is still preserved ; that is to say, a soul which loves its Maker more than the world, more than all created beings, more than all pleasures or riches, more than itself ? Of a soul which can feel no joy but in his possession ; which dreads only his loss, and knows

no misfortune but that of his displeasure? Does the charity you flatter yourselves still to preserve, seek, in this manner, its proper interest? Does it regard, as nothing, the displeasure of him it loves, provided its infidelities remain unpunished? Does it think of disputing, like you, every day, to what degree it may safely offend him, in order to take its measures accordingly, and then allow itself every transgression, to which impunity is attached: Does it see nothing amiable in its God, or capable of attaching the heart, but his chastisements? Were he not even an Almighty and an avenging God, would it be less affected by his infinite mercies, his truth, holiness, wisdom, fatherly tenderness, and protection? Ah! lukewarm and infidel soul, Thou lovest him no longer: Thou lovest, thou livest only for thyself. The small remains of fidelity, which still keep thee from sin, are nothing but a fund of sloth, timidity, and self-love. Thou wishest to live in peace with thyself: Thou darest the embarrassments of a passion, and the remorse of a sullied conscience: iniquity is become a fatigue, and that alone displeases thee with it: Thou lovest thine own ease; and that is thy sole religion: Indolence is the only barrier which stops thee, and all thy virtue is limited to thyself. Assuredly, thou wouldest wish to know, whether this infidelity be a venial transgression, or if it extends further. Thou acknowledgest, that it displeases God, (for that point admits of no doubt,) yet is that not sufficient to turn thee from it? Thou wouldest wish to know, whether it so far displeases him, as to provoke his everlasting wrath? Ah! Thou seest very well, that this investigation tends to nothing by thyself; that thy disposition leads thee to think guilt nothing, as an offence, and a displeasure to God; a powerful reason, however, why it should be detestable to thee: That thou

no longer fervest the Lord in truth and in charity ; that thy pretended virtue is only a natural timidity ; which dare not expose itself to the terrible threatenings of the law ; that thou art nothing but a vile and wretched slave, to restrain whom, it is necessary to keep scourges continually in thy sight : that thou resemblest that unfaithful servant, who secreted his talent, because he knew that his master was severe ; and, but for that reason, would have wasted it in dissipation ; and that in the preparation of the heart, to which alone the Almighty looketh, thou hatest his law : Thou lovest every thing it forbids : Thou art no longer in charity : Thou art a child of death and perdition.

The second character of charity is to be timorous, and to magnify to ourselves our smallest deviations : not that charity deceives or conceals from us the truth ; but disengaging the soul from the senses, it purifies our view of faith, and renders it more quick-sighted in spiritual affairs ; and besides, whatever is in the smallest degree displeasing to the only object of our love, appears serious and considerable to the soul which loves. Thus charity is always humble, timid, and distrustful of itself ; unceasingly agitated by its pious perplexities, which leave it in suspense respecting its real state, always alarmed by those delicacies of grace, which make it tremble at every action ; which make a kind of martyrdom of love, from the uncertainty in which they leave it ; and by which, however, it is purified. These are not the vain and puerile scruples, which we blame in weak minds : They are those pious fears of charity and of grace, inseparable from every faithful and religious soul : It works its salvation with fear and trembling ; and even frequently regards as crimes, actions, which are often virtues in the sight of God ; and which at most, can only be regarded as simple weaknesses.

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These are the holy perplexities of charity, which derive their source even from the lights of faith. This path has, in all ages, been the path of the just.

Yet nevertheless it is that pretended charity, of which in the midst of a vicious life, and of all your infidelities, you believe yourselves still possessed, that makes them appear slight to you : It is that charity itself, which you suppose not to have lost, that comforts and encourages you ; that diminishes your faults in your own sight, and fixes you in a state of peace and security : In a word, that not only banishes from your heart all those pious alarms, inseparable from real piety, but makes you regard them as weaknesses, and even the excesses of piety. Now tell me, I beg of you, is not that an inconsistency ? Does charity contradict itself in that manner ? Or can you place much dependence on a love, which so nearly resembles hatred ?

The last character of charity, is to be active and diligent in the ways of God. We find how much the Apostle dwells on its activity and fecundity in the heart of a Christian : It operates wherever it is ; it cannot, say the saints, be idle : It is a celestial fire, which no power can hinder from shewing itself, and from acting : It may sometimes indeed be overwhelmed, and greatly weakened, by the multitude of our weaknesses, but, while not entirely extinguished, there always proceed from it, as I may say, some sparks of sighs, wishes, lamentations, efforts, and deeds. The Holy Sacrament reanimates it, prayer arouses it ; pious reading, affliction, disgrace, bodily infirmity, all rekindle it, when not utterly extinguished. It is mentioned in the second book of the Maccabees, that the sacred fire, which the Jews had concealed during their captivity, was found at their return apparently extinct. But

as the surface alone was obscured, and the sacred fire still internally preserved all its virtue, scarcely was it exposed to the rays of the sun, when they saw it instantaneously rekindle, and present to their sight a brightness altogether new, and an activity altogether astonishing.

Behold, my brethren, a faithful representation of the coldness, of a truly just soul; and which likewise would be your case, had the multitude of your infidelities done no more than cover and relax, as I may say, without extinguishing the sacred fire of charity within you: Behold, I say, what ought to be your situation, when you approach the Holy Sacrament, or listen to the word of God. When Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, darts upon you some rays of his grace and light, and inspires you with holy desires, your heart ought then to be seen rekindled, and your fervour renewed: You then ought to appear all fire and animation in the practice of your duty, and astonish even the most confident witnesses of your former life, by the renovation of your morals and zeal.

Alas! nothing, however, reanimates you. Even the holy Sacrament leaves you all your coldness: The words of the gospel which you listen to, fall upon your heart, like corn upon a sterile land, where it immediately dies: The sentiments of salvation, which grace operates within you, are never followed with any effect, in the melioration of your morals; you continually drag on in the same indolence and languor; you depart from the holy altar equally cold, equally insensible, as you approached it: We see not in you these renewals of zeal, piety, and fervour, so common in just souls, and of which the motives are to be found in their deviations from duty. What you were yesterday, you are to-day: The same infidelities, the same weaknesses:

weaknesses : You advance not a single step in the road to salvation ; all the fire of heaven could scarcely rekindle in the bottom of your heart this pretended charity, upon which you depend so much. Ah ! my dear hearer, how much I dread that it is extinct, and that you are dead in the sight of the Lord ! I wish not to anticipate the secret judgments of God upon the consciences ; but I must tell you, that your state is very far from being safe ; I even tell you, that if we are to judge by the rules of faith, you are in disgrace with, and hated of the Lord : I tell you likewise, that a coldness so durable and constant, cannot subsist with a principle of heavenly and eternal life, which always, from time to time at least, betrays external movements and signs, raises, animates itself, and takes wing, as if to disengage itself from the shackles which weigh it down ; and that a charity so mute, so indolent, and so constantly insensible, exists no more.

But the great danger of this state, my brethren, is, that a lukewarm soul is so without scruple : It feels that it might carry its fervour and fidelity to a much greater length, but it looks upon that zeal, and that exactitude, as a perfection, and a grace, reserved only for certain souls, and not as a general duty ; in this manner they fix themselves in that degree of coldness into which they are fallen ; they have not made, nor scarcely attempted, the smallest progress in virtue, since the ardours of conversion. It would appear, that having exhausted all their fervour against the criminal passions with which they had at first to combat, they imagine, that nothing now remains, but to enjoy in peace the fruits of their victory ; a thousand damages which still remain from their first shipwreck, they think no more of repairing : So far from endeavouring to repress a thousand weaknesses, and corrupted inclinations,

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left them by their first irregularities, they love and cherish them. The Holy Sacrament no longer reanimates or invigorates their faith; it only amuses it. Conversion is no longer the end they propose; they believe it already done: And, alas! their confessions even to the Almighty, are more for the purpose of amusing and lulling their consciences, than the effects of piety, and real contrition.

We impose greatly upon ourselves, my brethren, with regard to our consciences reproaching us with nothing criminal; for we see not, that it is even that tranquillity which constitutes the danger, and perhaps the guilt likewise of it. We believe ourselves in security in our state, because it perhaps offers to our sight more innocence and regularity, than that of disorderly souls; and indeed, we wish not to conceive how a life purely natural, should not be a life of grace and of faith; or that a state of habitual idleness and sensual gratification, should be a state of sin and death, in a Christian life.

Thus, my dear hearer, you whom this discourse regards, reanimate yourself without ceasing in the spirit of your vocation; according to the advice of the Apostle, raise yourself every day by prayer, by mortification of the senses, by vigilance over your passions, and by a continual retrospection to, and investigation of your own heart; that first grace, which operates to draw you from the errors and wanderings of the world, and make you enter into the paths of God. Depend upon it, that piety has nothing sure or consoling but fidelity; that in relaxing from it, you only augment your troubles, because you multiply your bonds; that in retrenching from your duty, zeal, fervour and exactitude, you likewise retrench all its sweets and pleasures; that in depriving your state of fidelity, you
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deprive it of security ; and that in limiting yourself, simply to shun iniquity, you lose the most precious fruits of virtue.

And after all, since you have already sacrificed the essential, why will you still attach yourselves to the frivolous parts ? After having accomplished the most laborious and painful exertions towards salvation, must you perish for not finishing the slightest and most easy ? When Naaman, little convinced, because the prophet, for the cure of his leprosy, had only ordered him to bath in the waters of Jordan, retired full of contempt for the man of God, and believing it impossible that his recovery could be accomplished by so simple a remedy, the people who accompanied him made him sensible of his error, by saying to him, “ But, “ master, had the prophet bid thee do some great thing, “ wouldest thou not have done it ? How much rather then, “ when he saith to thee, wash and be clean ?”

And now, my brethren, attend to what I have to say, while I finish this discourse. You have abandoned the world, and the idols which you formerly worshipped in it : You are come from afar into the paths of God : You have had so many passions to overcome, and obstacles to surmount ; so many things to sacrifice, and difficult exertions to make ; there remains only one step more to accomplish, which is a faithful and constant vigilance over yourselves. If a sacrifice of the criminal passions were not already made, and you were required to do it, you would not, I believe, hesitate a moment ; cost what it might, you would make it : And in the meanwhile, when simple purifications are only demanded of you ; nay, when you are required as I may say, almost the same things which you do, but only to be practised with more fervour, fidelity, faith, and vigilance,

lance, are you excusable in declining them? Why will you render uselefs all your former efforts, by the refusal of a thing so easy? Why should you have renounced the world, and all its criminal pleasures, only to find in piety the same rock, which by flying from sin you thought to have escaped? And would it not be lamentable, if, after having sacrificed to God the principal parts, you should lose yourselves, by wishing still to dispute with him a thousand little sacrifices, much less painful to the heart and to nature.

Finish then in us, O my God! that which thy grace has already begun; triumph over our languors, and our weaknesses, since thou hast already triumphed over our crimes; give us a heart fervent and faithful, since thou hast already deprived us of a criminal and corrupted one; inspire us with that willing submission which the just possess, since thou hast extinguished in us that pride and obstinacy which occasion so many finners: Leave not, O my God! thy work unfinished; and since thou hast already made us enter into the holy career of salvation, render us worthy of the holy crown promised to those who shall have legally fought for it.

Now to God, &c. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON V.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE LOSS OF RIGHTEOUS- NESS IN A STATE OF LUKEWARMNESS.

LUKE iv. 38.

And he rose out of the Synagogue, and entered into Simon's house : and Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever : and they besought him for her.

SINCE Simon thought the presence of our Saviour necessary for the cure of his mother-in-law, it would appear my brethren, that the evil was pressing, and threatened an approaching death ; the usual remedies must have been found ineffectual, and nothing but a miracle could operate her cure, and draw her from the gates of death : Nevertheless, the Scriptures mention her being attacked by only a common fever. On every other occasion, we never find that they had recourse to our Saviour, but to raise people from the grave, to cure paralytics, restore sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, from their birth : In a word, to cure diseases, incurable by any other, than the Sovereign Master of Life and Death : In this instance, he is called upon, to restore health to a person attacked by a simple fever.

Whence comes it, that the Almighty Power is employed on so slight an occasion ? It is, that this fever being a natural image of lukewarmness in the ways of God, the
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Holy Spirit has wished to make us understand by it, that this disease apparently so slight, and of which they dread not the danger; this lukewarmness, so common in piety, is a disease, which inevitably destroys the soul, and that a miracle is necessary to rescue it from death.

Yes, my brethren, of all the maxims of Christian morality, there is none upon which experience allows us less to deceive ourselves, than the one which assures us, that contempt for the smallest points of our duty insensibly leads us to a transgression of the most essential; and that, negligence in the ways of God is never far from a total loss of righteousness. He who despises the smaller objects of religion, says the Holy Spirit, will gradually fall; he who despises them, that is to say, who deliberately violates them; who lays down as it were, a plan of this conduct; for, if through weakness or surprise you fail in them sometimes, it is the common destiny of the just, and this discourse would no longer regard you; but to despise them in the sense already mentioned, which can happen only with lukewarm and unfaithful souls, is a path which must terminate in the loss of righteousness. In the first place, because the special grace necessary towards perseverance in virtue is no longer granted. Secondly, Because the passions are strengthened which lead us on to vice. Thirdly, Because all the external succours of piety become useless.

Let us investigate these three reflections: They contain important instructions in the detail of a Christian life: Useful, not only to those who make profession of a public and avowed piety, but likewise to those who make all virtue to consist in that regularity of conduct, and propriety of behaviour, which even the world requires.

PART I.—It is a truth of salvation, says a holy Father, that the innocence of even the most upright has occasion for the continual assistance of grace. Man, delivered up to sin, by the wickedness of his nature, no longer finds in himself but principles of error, and sources of corruption: Righteousness and truth, originally born with us, are now become as strangers; all our inclinations, revolted against God and his law, in spite of ourselves, drag us on towards illicit objects; in so much, that to return to the law, and submit our heart to order, it is necessary to resist, without ceasing, the impressions of the senses; to break our warmest inclinations, and to harden ourselves continually against ourselves. There is no duty but what now costs us something; no precept in the law, but combats some of our passions; no step in the paths of God against which our heart does not revolt.

To this load of corruption, which renders duty so difficult and irksome, and iniquity so natural, add the snares which surround us, the examples which entice us, the objects which effeminate us, the occasions which surprise us, the compliances which weaken us, the afflictions which discourage us, the properties which corrupt us, the situations which blind us, and the contradictions which we experience; every thing around us is indeed only one continued temptation. I speak not of the miseries which are natural to us; or the particular opposition to order and righteousness, which our past morals, and our first passions have left in our hearts: That love for the world and its pleasures; that dislike to virtue and its maxims; that empire of the senses, fortified by a voluptuous life; that invincible indolence, to which every thing is a burden, and to which whatever is a burden, becomes almost impossible; that pride, which knows neither how to bend or break;

that inconstancy of heart, incapable of end or uniformity, which presently tires of itself; which cannot submit to rule, because that it is always the same; which wishes, and wishes not; passes in a moment from the lowest state of dejection, to a vain and childish joy, and leaves scarcely the interval of a moment betwixt the sincerest resolution, and the infidelity which violates it.

Now, in a situation so miserable, what, O my God! can the most just accomplish, delivered up to his own weakness, and all the snares which surround him; bearing in his heart the source of all his errors, and in his mind the principles of every illusion? The grace of Jesus Christ, therefore, can alone deliver him from so many miseries; enlighten him in the midst of so much darkness; support him under so many difficulties; restrain him from following the dictates of so many rapid desires, and strengthen him against so many attacks. If left a moment to himself, he inevitably stumbles, and is lost: If an Almighty hand ceases an instant to retain him, he is carried down by the stream: Our consistency in virtue, is therefore a continual grace and miracle; all our steps in the ways of God are new motions of the Holy Spirit; that is to say, of that invisible guide, which impels and leads us on. All our pious actions are gifts of divine mercy; since every proper use of our liberty comes from him, and he crowns his gifts in recompensing our merits: All the moments of our Christian life are like a new creation, therefore, in faith, and in piety; that is to say, (this spiritual creation does not suppose a non-existence in the just, but a principle of grace, and a liberty which co-operates with it,) that as, in the order of nature, we should again return to our non-entity, if the Creator ceased an instant to preserve the being he has given us; in the life of grace, we would again fall
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into sin and death, did the Redeemer cease a single moment to continue, by new succours, the gift of righteousness and holiness, with which he hath embellished our soul: Such is the weakness of man, and such is his continual dependence on the grace of Jesus Christ. The fidelity of the just soul is, therefore, the fruit of continual aids of grace; but it is likewise the principle: It is grace alone which can operate the fidelity of the just; and it is the fidelity alone of the just, which merits the preservation and increase of grace in the heart.

For, my brethren, the ways of God towards us being full of equity and wisdom, there must necessarily be some order in the distribution of his gifts and grace: The Lord must communicate himself more abundantly to the soul, which faithfully prepares its heart for his ways; he must bestow more continual marks of his protection and mercy on the upright heart, which gives him constant proof of love and fidelity; and the servant who improves his talent, must necessarily be recompensed in proportion to the profit he has known how to reap from it: It is just on the contrary, that a lukewarm and unfaithful heart, who serves his God with negligence and disgust, should find the Almighty cold and disgusted towards him: The misery inseparable from coldness, is, therefore, the privation of the grace of protection. If you become cold, the Almighty becomes so towards you; if you limit yourself with regard to him, to those essential duties, which you cannot refuse him without guilt, he confines himself with regard to you, to those general succours, which will not support you far: He retires from you, in proportion as you retire from him; and the measure of fidelity with which you serve him, is the measure of protection you may expect to receive.

Nothing can be more equitable than this conduct ; for you enter into judgment with your God. You neglect every opportunity where you might give him proofs of your fidelity : You dispute every thing with him, of which you think you could avoid the payment : You carefully watch, lest you do any thing for him, beyond what duty requires. It appears, you say to him, what he formerly said to the unfaithful servant : Take that thine is ; and go thy way. You reckon with God, as I may say : All your attention is engaged in prescribing limits to the right he has over your heart ; and all his attention likewise, if I may be permitted to speak in this manner, is to put bounds to his mercies to your soul, and to pay your difference with the same : Love is the price of love alone ; and if you do not sufficiently feel all the terror and extent of this truth, allow me to explain to you its consequences.

The first is, that this state of lukewarmness and infidelity removing the soul from the grace of protection, leaves him, as I may say, empty of God, and in the hands, as it were, of his own weakness : He may undoubtedly, with the common succours left him, still preserve the fidelity he owes to God : He has always enough to support him in well-doing ; but his lukewarmness deprives him of the ability to apply them to any purpose ; that is to say, that he is still aided by those succours, which may enable him to go on ; but no longer by those with which he may infallibly persevere ; there is no peril, therefore, in this situation, but makes a dangerous impression on him, and leads him to the brink of ruin.

I grant that a happy natural disposition, some remains of modesty, and fear of God, a conscience still afraid of guilt, and a reputation to preserve, may for some time defend him
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againſt himſelf ; but as theſe reſources, drawn moſtly from nature, cannot extend far ; as the ſenſual objects, in the miſt of which he lives, make every day new wounds in his heart, and grace leſs abundant, repairs not the loſs, alas ! his ſtrength exhauſts every moment, faith relaxes, and truth is obſcured ; the more he advances, the worſe he becomes : Such ſouls feel perfectly, that they no longer retire from the world and its dangers, equally innocent, as formerly ; that they carry their weakneſſes and compliance much farther ; that they encroach upon limits which they formerly reſpected ; that looſe converſations find them more indulgent, evil-ſpeaking more favourable, pleaſure leſs guarded, and the world more anxious for it ; that they bring into it, a heart already half-gained ; that they are ſenſible of their loſſes, but feel nothing to repair them ; in a word, that God is almoſt withdrawn from them ; and there is no longer any barrier, but their own weakneſs, betwixt guilt and them. Behold the ſituation in which you are ; and from that, judge of the one in which you will ſoon be.

I know that this ſtate of relaxation and infidelity troubles and diſturbs you ; that you ſay every day, that nothing can beſtow greater happineſs, than a detachment from every thing worldly ; and that you envy the deſtiny of thoſe Chriſtians who give themſelves up to God without reſerve, and no longer keep any terms with the world. But you are deceived ; it is not the faith, or the fervour of theſe faithful Chriſtians, you envy ; you only covet their lot ; that happineſs and peace, which they enjoy, in the ſervice of their Maker, and which you are incapable of partaking ; you only envy them that inſenſibility, and happy indifference to which they have attained, for the world and every thing it eſteems ; your love for which occasions all your troubles, remorſes, and ſecret anguiſh ; but you envy them

them not the sacrifices they were under the necessity of making, to arrive at their present state of peace and tranquillity: You envy them not the trials they have undergone, in order to merit the precious gift of a lively and fervent faith: You envy the happiness of their state; but you would not wish it to cost you the illusion and sensuality of your own.

The second consequence I draw from the refusal of the grace of protection to the lukewarm Christian, is, that the yoke of our Saviour, to him, becomes burdensome, hard, and insupportable. For, my brethren, by the irregularity of our nature, having lost all taste for righteousness and truth, which, in a state of innocence, formed the happiness of man, we no longer have any feeling or desire, but for objects which gratify the senses and passions. The duties of the law of God, which recal us from the senses to the spirit, and make us sacrifice the present impressions of pleasure to the hope of future promises: These duties, I say, presently fatigue our weakness, because they are continual efforts we make against ourselves. It requires the unction of grace, therefore, to soften the yoke; it is necessary that grace spread secret consolations over its bitterness, and change the sadness of duty into a holy and sensible joy. Now the lukewarm soul, deprived of this unction, feels only the weight of the yoke, without the consolations which soften it: In this manner, all the duties of piety and religion become insipid to you; works of salvation become wearisome; your conscience, restless and embarrassed, by your relaxations and infidelities, of which you cannot justify the innocence, no longer allows you to enjoy either peace or joy in the service of God. You feel all the weight of the duties to which some remains of faith, and love of ease, hinder you from being unfaithful; but
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you feel not the secret testimony of a clear conscience, which sooths and supports the fervent Christian : You shun, perhaps, certain occasions of pleasure, where innocence is sure of being shipwrecked, but you only experience in the retreat which divides you from them, a wearisomeness, and a more lively desire for the same pleasures, from which you have forced yourself to refrain. You pray, but prayer is no longer but a fatigue : You frequent the society of virtuous persons, but their company becomes so irksome, as almost to disgust you with virtue itself : The slightest violence you do upon your inclinations for the sake of heaven, costs you such efforts, that the pleasures and amusements of the world must be applied to, to refresh and invigorate you after this fatigue ; the smallest mortification exhausts your body ; casts uneasiness and chagrin through your temper, and only consoles you, by an immediate determination, to abandon its practice. You live unhappy, and without consolation, because you deprive yourself of a world you love, and substitute in its place duties which you love not : Your whole life is but a melancholy fatigue, and a perpetual disgust with yourself : You resemble the Israelites in the desert ; disgusted, on the one part, with the manna upon which the Lord had ordered them to subsist ; and on the other, not daring to return to the food of the Egyptians, which they still loved, and which the dread alone of the Almighty's anger induced them to deny themselves. Now this state of violence cannot endure ; we soon tire of any remains of virtue, which do not quiet the heart, comfort the reason, and even flatter our self-love : We soon throw off the remains of a yoke, which weighs us down ; and which we no longer carry through love, but for decency's sake. It is so melancholy to be nothing at all, as I may say : Neither just nor worldly ; attached neither to the world nor to Jesus Christ ;

Christ; enjoying neither the pleasures of the senses, nor those of grace; that it is impossible this wearisome situation of indifference and neutrality can be durable. The heart, and particularly those of a certain description, requires an avowed object to occupy and interest it; If not God, it will soon be the world: A heart, lively, eager, always in extremes, and such as the generality of men possess, cannot be fixed, but by the feelings; and to be continually disgusted with virtue, shows a heart already prepared to yield to the attractions of vice.

I know, in the first place, That there are lazy and indolent souls, who seem to keep themselves in this state of equilibration and insensibility; who offer nothing decided, either for the world or virtue; who appear equally distant, by their dispositions, either from the ardours of a faithful piety, or the excesses of profane guilt; who, in the midst of the pleasures of the world, preserve a fund of retention and regularity, which proves the existence of some remains of virtue; and in the midst of their religious duties, a fund of carelessness and laxity, which still breathes the air and maxims of the world. These are indolent and tranquil hearts, animated in nothing; in whom indolence almost supplies the place of virtue; and who, notwithstanding they never arrive at that degree of piety, which the faithful accomplish, never proceed to those lengths in iniquity, which criminal and abandoned souls do.

I know it, my brethren, but I likewise know, that this indolence of heart defends us only from crimes which would cost us trouble; makes us avoid only those pleasures which we would be obliged to purchase, at the expence of our tranquillity, and which the love of ease alone prevents us from enjoying. It leaves us virtuous only in the eyes of
men,

men, who confound the indolence which dreads embarrassment with the piety which flies from vice; but it does not defend us against ourselves; against a thousand illicit desires; a thousand criminal compliances; a thousand passions, more secret, and less painful, because shut up in the heart; from jealousies, which devour us; ambition, which domineers over us; pride, which corrupts us; a desire of pleasure, which engrosses us; an excess of self-love, which is the principle of all our conduct, and infects all our actions; that is to say, that this indolence delivers up our heart to all its weaknesses; at the same time that it serves as a check against the more striking and tumultuous passions, and that, what appears only indolence in the eyes of men, is always before God a secret ignominy and corruption.

I know, in the second place, that this love of piety, and this unction which softens the practice of religious duties, is a gift frequently refused even to holy and faithful Christians. But there are three essential differences betwixt the faithful soul, to whom the Lord denies the sensible consolations of piety; and the lukewarm and worldly one, whom the weight of the yoke oppresses, and who is incapable of enjoying the things of God.

The first is, That a faithful Christian, in spite of his repugnancies, preserving a firm and solid faith, finds his state, and the exemption from guilt in which he lives, since touched by God, a thousand times more happy, than that in which he lived when delivered up to his passions; and penetrated with horror at his former excesses, he would not change his lot, or re-engage himself in his former vices, for all the pleasures of the earth: In place of which, the lukewarm and unfaithful heart, disgusted with virtue,

enviously regards the pleasures, and vain happiness of the world; and his disgusts being only the consequence and sufferings of his weakness, and the lukewarmness of his faith, to plunge into sin, begins to appear as the only resource left him, from weariness and the gloominess of piety.

The second difference is, That the faithful Christian, in the midst of his disgusts and hardships, at least bears a conscience which reproaches him not with guilt: He at least is supported, by the testimony of his own heart, and by a certain degree of internal peace, which, though neither warm, nor very sensible, fails not, however, to establish within us, a calm which we never experienced in the paths of error: on the contrary, the lukewarm and unfaithful soul, allowing himself, against the testimony of his own conscience, a thousand daily transgressions, of which he knows not the wickedness, bears always an uneasy and suspicious conscience; and being no longer sustained by love for his duties, nor the peace and testimony of his conscience, this state of agitation and weariness soon terminates in the miserable peace of sin.

The last reason is, That the disgusts of the faithful Christian being only trials, to which, for his purification, God exposes him, he supplies, in a thousand ways, the sensible consolations of virtue which he refuses him; he replaces them by a more powerful protection; by a merciful attention to remove every danger which might seduce him; and by more abundant succours of grace; for the Almighty wishes neither to lose nor discourage him; he wishes only to prove him; and make him expiate by the afflictions and hardships of virtue, the unjust pleasures of sin: But the disgusts of an infidel soul are not trials, they are punishments:

ments: It is not a merciful God who suspends the consolations of grace, without suspending grace itself: It is not a tender father, who supplies by the solidity of his tenderness, and by effectual assistances, the apparent rigours he is under the necessity of using: It is a severe judge, who only begins to deprive the criminal of a thousand indulgences, because the sentence of death is prepared for him. The hardships of virtue find a thousand resources in virtue itself; those of lukewarmness, can find them only in the deceitful pleasures of vice.

Such, my brethren, is the inevitable lot of lukewarmness in the ways of God; the misery of losing righteousness, Will you tell us, after this, that you wish to practise only a degree of virtue which may continue; that these great exertions of zeal cannot be supported; that it is much better not to begin so high, and by these means to accomplish the end; and that they never go far, who exhaust themselves at the beginning of their journey.

I know that every excess, even in piety, comes not from the Spirit of God, which is a spirit of wisdom and discretion; that the zeal which overturns the order of our state and duties, is not the piety which comes from above, but an illusion born in ourselves; that indiscretion is a source of false virtues; and that we often give to vanity what we think is given to truth.

But I tell you from God, that to persevere in his ways, we must give ourselves up to him without reserve: That in order to support the fidelity due to the essential parts of our duty, we must unceasingly endeavour to weaken the passions which oppose it; and that keeping terms with these passions, under the pretext of not going too far, is

to dig for ourselves a grave. I tell you, that it is only the faithful and fervent Christians, who, not contented with shunning sin, shun also every thing which can lead to it; that it is these alone who persevere, who sustain themselves, who honour piety by a supported, equal and uniform conduct; and, on the contrary, it is lukewarm and relaxed souls, who have begun their penitence, by limiting their piety, and accommodating it to the pleasures and maxims of the world; it is these souls who draw back, who belie themselves, and who dishonour piety, by their inconstancy and inequality of conduct; by a life, sometimes blended with virtue and retirement, and at others devoted to the world and weakness: And I appeal to yourselves, my brethren, if, when you see in the world a person relax from his first fervour, gradually mingle himself in the pleasures and societies he had lately so scrupulously and severely denied himself; insensibly abate his love of retirement, his modesty, circumspection, prayers, and exactitude to fulfil his religious duties, you say not to yourselves, that he is not far from returning to what he formerly was? Are not these relaxations regarded by you as a prelude to his ruin; and that virtue is nearly extinct, when once you see it weakened? Do you even require so much to rouse your censures, and malicious presages against piety? Unjust that you are, you condemn a cold and unfaithful virtue, while you condemn us for requiring of you a virtue faithful and fervent! You pretend, that in order to continue, you must begin with moderation, while you prophecy that a total departure from virtue is not far distant, when once it begins to be followed with coolness and negligence.

From a relaxation alone, therefore, we are to dread a return to our former courses, and a departure from virtue: It is not by giving ourselves up without reserve to God,
that

that we become disgusted with piety, and are forsaken by him: The way to come gloriously off in battle, is not by sparing, but overcoming the enemy: There is no dread, therefore, of doing too much, lest we should be unable to support it; on the contrary, to merit the grace necessary to our support, we ought, from the first, to leave nothing undone. What illusion, my brethren! We dread zeal, as dangerous to perseverance: and it is zeal alone which can obtain it: We fix ourselves in a lukewarm and commodious life, as the only one which can subsist; and it is the only one which proves false: We shun fidelity, as the rock of piety; and piety without fidelity is never far from shipwreck.

It is thus that lukewarmness removes from the infidel soul the grace of protection; of which the absence depriving our faith of all its strength, and the yoke of Jesus Christ of all its consolations, leaves us in a state of such imbecility, that to be lost, innocence requires only to be attacked. But if the loss of righteousness is inevitable, on the part of grace which is withdrawn, it is still more so, on account of the passions which are fortified within us.

PART II. What renders vigilance so necessary to Christian piety, is, that all the passions which oppose themselves in us to the law of God, only die, as I may say, with us. We undoubtedly are able to weaken them, by the assistance of grace, and a fervent and lively faith; but the roots always continue in the heart; we always carry within us the principles of the same errors our tears have effaced. Guilt may be extinguished in our hearts; but sin, as the Apostle says, that is to say, the corrupted inclinations which have formed our guilt, inhabits and lives there still: And that fund of corruption which removed us so far from God, is

still left us in our penitence, to serve as a continual exercise to virtue; to render us, by the continual occasions of combat it raises up for us, more worthy of an eternal crown; to humble our pride; to keep us in remembrance that the duration of our present life is a time of war and danger; and, by a destiny inevitable to our nature, that there is only one step between relaxation and guilt.

It is true, that the grace of Jesus Christ is given us to repress these corrupted inclinations which survive our conversion; but in a state of lukewarmness, as I have already said, grace offering us only common succours, and the grace of protection, of which we are become unworthy, being either more rare, or entirely suspended, it is evident that the passions must acquire new strength. But I say, that not only the passions are strengthened, in a lukewarm and infidel life, because the grace of protection which checked them is more rare, but likewise by the state itself of relaxation and coldness; for that life being only a continued indulgence of all the passions; a simple easiness in granting, to a certain degree, every thing which flatters the appetites; a watchfulness, even of self-love, to remove whatever might repress, or restrain them; and a perpetual usage of all things capable of inflaming them: it is evident, that by these means they must daily acquire new force.

In a word, my brethren, we are not to imagine, that in pushing our indulgence for our passions, only to certain lengths permitted, we appease them as I may say, that we allow sufficient to satisfy them, and not enough to stain our soul, or carry trouble and remorse through our conscience; or fancy that we can ever attain a certain degree of equilibrium betwixt virtue and sin, where, on the one side, our
 passions

passions are satisfied by the indulgence allowed them; and on the other, our conscience is tranquil, by the absence of guilt, which we shun. For such is the plan adopted by the lukewarm soul: Favourable to his indolence, because he equally banishes every thing, either in virtue or in sin, which can disturb him: To the passions, he refuses whatever might trouble his conscience; and to virtue, whatever might be disagreeable to, or mortify his self-love: But this state of equilibrium is a perfect chimaera. The passions know no limits or bounds in guilt; how, therefore, could they possibly be restrained to those of the lukewarm soul? Even the utmost excess cannot restrain or fix them; how then could simple indulgences do it? The more you grant, the more you deprive yourself of the power to refuse them any thing. The true secret of appeasing, is not by favouring them to a certain degree; it is by opposing them in every thing; every indulgence only renders them more fierce and unmanageable; it is a little water thrown upon a great fire, which, far from extinguishing, increases its fury: Every thing which flatters the passions, renders them more keen, and diminishes the probability of being able to conquer them.

Now, such is the state of a lukewarm and unfaithful soul. It allows itself every animosity which extends not to avowed revenge; it justifies every pleasure, in which guilt is not palpable; it delivers itself up without reserve to every worldly desire and gratification, by which no individual, it supposes, is injured; every omission, which seems to turn on the arbitrary duties, or but slightly interests the essential ones, it makes no scruple of; every action of self-love, which leads not directly to guilt, it regards as nothing; all that nicety, with regard to rank and personal fame, which is compatible with that moderation even the world requires,

requires, it regards as a merit. Now, what happens in consequence of this? Listen and you shall know; and I beg you will attend to the following reflections.

In the first place: All the inclinations within us, which oppose themselves to order and duty, being continually strengthened, order and duty at last find in us insurmountable difficulties; in so much, that to accomplish them on any essential occasion, or when required by the law of God, is like remounting against the stream of a rapid flood, where the current drags us down, in spite of every effort to the contrary; or like a furious and unmanageable horse, which it is necessary to stop short on the brink of a precipice. Thus your insensibility and pride, are nourished to such a degree of strength, that you abandon your heart to all their impressions: Thus your care and anxiety, have so fortified in your heart, the desire of worldly praise, that on any important occasion, where it would be necessary to sacrifice the vanity of its suffrages to duty, and expose yourself, for the good of your soul, to its censure and derision, you will always prefer the interests of vanity to those of truth, and the opinions of men will be much more powerful than the fear of-God. Thus those anxieties with regard to fortune and advancement, have rendered ambition so completely sovereign of your heart, that in any delicate conjuncture, where the destruction of a rival would be necessary towards your own elevation, you will never hesitate, but will sacrifice your conscience to your fortune; and be unjust towards your brother, lest you fail towards yourself. Thus, in a word, to avoid a long detail, those suspicious attachments, loose conversations, ridiculous compliances, and desires of pleasing, too much attended to, have filled you with dispositions so nearly allied to guilt and debauchery, that you are no longer capable of resist-

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ance against any of their attacks ; the corruption prepared, by the whole train of your past actions, will be lighted up in an instant : Your weakness will overcome your reflection : Your heart will go against glory, duty, and yourself. We cannot long continue faithful, when we find in ourselves so many dispositions to be otherwise.

Thus you will yourself be surpris'd at your own weakness : You will ask at yourself, What are become of all those dispositions of modesty and virtue, which formerly inspir'd you with such horror at sin ? You no longer will know yourself : But this state of guilt will gradually appear less frightful to you : The heart soon justifies to itself, whatever pleases it : Whatever is agreeable to us, does not long alarm us ; and to the misery of a departure from virtue, you will add the misery of ignorance and security.

Such is the inevitable lot of a lukewarm and unfaithful life : Passions which we have too much indulg'd ; “ Young lions,” says a prophet, which have been nourish'd without precaution, at length grow up, and devour the carefuls hand, which has even assist'd to strengthen and render them formidable :” The passions arriv'd to a certain point, gain a complete ascendancy : In vain you then try to regain yourself : The time is past ; you have fostered the profane fire in your heart ; it must at last break out ; you have nourish'd the venom within you ; it must now spread and gain upon you ; and the time is past for any application to medicine ; you should have taken it in time ; at the commencement the disease was not irremediable ; you have allowed it to strengthen ; you have irritated it by every thing which could inflame, and render it incurable ; it must now be conqueror, and you the victim of your own indiscretion and indulgence.

Do you not likewise say, my brethren, that you have the best intentions in the world; that you wish you could act much better than you do; and though you have the sincerest desires for salvation, yet a thousand conjunctures happen in life, where we forget all our good intentions, and must be fainted to resist their impressions? This is exactly what we tell you; that in spite of all your pretended good intentions, if you do not fly, struggle, watch, pray, and continually take the command over yourself, a thousand occasions will occur, where you will no longer be master of your own weakness: This is what we tell you, [that nothing but a mortified and watchful life can place us beyond the reach of temptation and danger: That it is ridiculous to suppose we shall continue faithful, in those moments when violently attacked, when we bear a heart weakened, wavering, and already on the verge of falling; that none but the house built upon a rock can resist the winds and the tempests; and, in a word, that we must be holy, and firmly established in virtue, to live free from guilt.

And when I say that we must be holy: Alas! my brethren, the most faithful and fervent Christians, with every inclination mortified as far as the frailty of our nature will permit; imaginations purified by prayer, and minds nourished in virtue, and meditation on the law of God, frequently find themselves in such terrible situations, that their hearts sink within them; their imaginations become troubled and deranged; they see themselves in those melancholy agitations, where they float for a long time betwixt victory and death; and, like a vessel struggling against the waves, in the midst of an enraged ocean, they can only look for safety from the Almighty Commander of winds and tempests. And you, with a heart already half-seduced, with inclinations at least bordering upon guilt, would wish
your

your weakness to be proof against all attacks, and the most powerful temptations to find you always tranquil and inaccessible? You would wish, with your lukewarm, sensual, and worldly morals, that on these occasions your soul should be gifted with that strength and faith which even the most tender and watchful piety sometimes cannot give? You would wish passions flattered, nourished, and strengthened, to remain, tractable, quiet, and cold, in the presence of objects most capable of lighting them up? Those which after years of austerities, and a life devoted to prayer and watching, awake sometimes in a moment, far even from danger, and, by melancholy examples, make the most upright feel, that we never should be off our guard, and that the highest point of virtue is sometimes the instant which precedes a departure from, and total loss of it. Such is our lot, my brethren, to be quick-sighted only towards the dangers which regard our fortune, or our life, and not even to know those which threaten our salvation. But let us undeceive ourselves: To shun guilt, something more is required than the lukewarmness and indolence of virtue; and vigilance is the only mean left us by our Saviour to preserve our innocence. First reflection.

A second reflection to be made on this truth is, That the passions, daily strengthening in a lukewarm and infidel life, not only duty finds in us unsurmountable repugnancies, but guilt likewise, as I may say, polishes itself; and at last we feel no more repugnance to it, than to the simplest fault. Indeed, by these daily infidelities inseparable from lukewarmness, the heart, as if by insensible steps, at last arrives at those dangerous limits, which, by a single line, separate life from death, guilt from innocence, and makes the final step, almost without perceiving it; only a little way remaining for him to go, and having no occasion for any new exertion

exertion to accomplish it, he does not believe he has exceeded his former bounds. He had replenished himself with dispositions, so nearly bordering on guilt, that he has brought forth iniquity without pain, repugnance, visible movement, or even perceiving it himself: Similar to a dying person, whom the languors of a long and painful malady have so extenuated, and so nearly approached to his end, that the departing sigh resembles those which have preceded it; costs him no greater effort than the others, and even leaves the spectators uncertain, whether his last moment is come, or if he still breathes: And this is what renders the state of a lukewarm and infidel soul still more dangerous, that they are commonly dead to grace, without knowing it themselves: They become enemies to God, while they still live with him as with a friend: They are still in the commerce of holy things, when they have lost the grace, which entitles us to approach them.

Thus, let those souls whom this discourse regards, no longer deceive themselves, because they believe to have hitherto avoided a gross departure from virtue: Their state before God, is undoubtedly only more dangerous: Perhaps the most formidable danger of lukewarmness, is, that already dead in the sight of God, they live in their opinion, without any visible or marked guilt; that they compose themselves tranquilly in death, depending on an appearance of life which comforts them; that to the danger of their situation, they add a false peace, which confirms them in this path of illusion and darkness; it is in a word, that the Lord, by terrible and secret judgments, strikes them with blindness, and punishes the corruption of their heart, by permitting them to be ignorant of it. A gross fall from virtue, if I may venture to say so, would to them be a mark of the goodness and mercy of God: They would then at least
open

open their eyes : Naked and manifest guilt would then carry trouble and uneasiness through their conscience : The disease at last discovered, would perhaps induce them to have recourse to the remedy ; in place of which, this life, apparently regular, composes and calms them ; renders useless the example of fervent Christians ; persuades them that this great fervour is unnecessary ; that it is much more the effect of temperament than of grace ; that it is an emotion of zeal, rather than a duty ; and makes them listen to, as vain exaggerations, all that we say, with regard to a lukewarm and infidel life. Second reflection.

In a word, the last reflection to be made on this great truth, is, that such is the nature of our heart, always to remain much below what it at first proposed. A thousand times we have formed pious resolutions ; we have projected to carry to a certain point, the detail of our duties and conduct ; but the execution has always much diminished from the ardour of our projects ; and has rested at a degree much below the one to which we wished to raise ourselves : Thus, the lukewarm Christian, proposing to himself no higher point of virtue, than to shun guilt ; looking precisely to precept, that is to say, to that rigorous and precise point of the law, immediately below which is prevarication and death : He infallibly rests below, and never reaches that essential point, which he had proposed to himself : It is, therefore, an incontestible maxim, that we must undertake much, to execute little ; and look very high, to attain at least the middle. Now, this maxim, so sure with regard even to the most just, is much more so with respect to the lukewarm and infidel soul : For coldness, more strongly binding all his ties, and augmenting the weight of his corruption and misery, it is principally him, who ought to take this grand flight, in order to attain at least the lowest degree ;

degree ; and in his counfels with himfelf, propofe perfection, if he wifhes to reft, even at the obfervance of precept : Above all, it is to him that we may truly fay, that by fettling in his mind, only to fhun guilt, loaded as he is with the weight of his coldnefs and infidelities, he will always alight at a place very diftant from the one he expected to reach ; and the line of guilt being immediately below this commodious and fenfual virtue, the very fame efforts he made, as he thought to fhun it, will only ferve to conduct him to it. Thefe are reafons, drawn entirely from the weaknefs the ftrengthened paffions leave to the lukewarm and infidel foul ; and which inevitably lead it to ruin.

The only reafon, however, you allege to us, for perfevering in this dangerous ftate, is, that you are weak, and totally unable to fupport a more retired, limited, mortified, and perfect manner of life : But furely, it is becaufe you are weak, that is to fay, full of difguft for virtue, of love for the world, and of fubjection to your appetites, that a retired and mortified life becomes indifpenfable : It is becaufe you are weak, that with more caution, you ought to fhun every danger ; take a greater command over yourfelf ; pray, watch, refufe yourfelf every improper gratification, and attain even to holy exceffes of zeal and fervour, in order to accomplifh a barrier againft your weaknefs. You are weak ? And becaufe you are weak, you think you are entitled to expofe yourfelf more than another ; to dread danger lefs ; with more tranquillity and indifference, to neglect the neceffary remedies ; to allow more to your appetites ; to preferve a ftronger attachment to the world, and every thing which can corrupt the heart ? What illufion ! You make your weaknefs then the title of your fecurity ? In the neceffities you have to watch and pray, you find then the privilege of difpenfing with them ! And fince,

when

when is it, that the sick are authoris'd to allow themselves greater excesses, and make use of less precaution, than those who enjoy a perfect health? Privation has always been the way of the weak and infirm; and to allege your weakness as a right of dispensation from a more fervent and Christian life, is like enumerating your complaints, in order to persuade us that you have no occasion for medicine. Second reason, drawn from the passions, which are strengthened in a state of lukewarmness, and which proves, that this state always ends in a departure from virtue, and the loss of righteousness.

To all these reasons, I should add a third, drawn from the external succours of religion, necessary to the support of piety; and which become useless to the lukewarm and infidel soul.

The Holy Sacrament not only becomes of no utility, but even dangerous to him; either by the coldness with which he approaches it, or by the vain confidence with which it inspires him; it is no longer a resource for him; it has lost its effect, like medicines too frequently made use of; it amuses his languor, but cannot cure him: It is like the food of the strong and healthy, which so far from re-establishing, completes the ruin of the weak stomach: It is the breath of the Holy Spirit, which, unable to re-illuminate the still smouldering spark, entirely extinguishes it; that is to say, that the grace of the Holy Sacrament, received in a lukewarm and infidel heart, no longer operating there an increase of life and strength, never fails, sooner or later, to operate the death and condemnation attached to the abuse of these divine remedies.

Prayer

Prayer, that channel of grace, that nourishment to a faithful heart ; that sweetener of piety ; that refuge against all attacks of the enemy ; that cry of an affected soul, which renders the Lord so attentive to his necessities : Prayer, without which the Almighty no longer makes himself felt within us ; without which we no longer know our father ; we no longer render thanks to our benefactor, nor appease our judge ; we expose no longer our wounds to our physician : We live without God in the world : Prayer, in a word, so necessary to the most established virtue, to the lukewarm soul, is no longer but the wearisome occupation of a distracted mind ; of a heart dry, and shared betwixt a thousand foreign affections. He no longer experiences that love, those consolations, which are the fruit of a fervent and faithful life ; He no longer, as if with a new light, sees the holy truths, which confirm the soul in its contempt for the world, and love for the things of heaven ; and which, after its departure hence, make it regard with new disgust every thing which foolish man admires : He leaves it, no longer filled with that lively faith which reckons as nothing, all the obstacles and disgusts of virtue, and with a holy zeal, devours all its sorrows : He no longer feels after it, more love for his duty, and horror at the world ; more determination to fly from its dangers ; more light to know its nothingness and misery, and strength to hate and struggle with himself ; more terror for the judgments of God, and compunction for his own weaknesses : He leaves it, only more fatigued than before, with virtue ; more filled with the phantoms of the world, which in the moment when at the feet of the Almighty, have, it appears, agitated more briskly his imagination, blasted and stained by all those images ; more happy, by being quit of
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a burdensome duty, where he has experienced nothing so agreeable, as the pleasure of finding it over; more eager, by amusements and infidelities, to supply this moment of weariness and pain; in a word, more distant from God, whom he has irritated by the infidelity and irreverence of his prayer. Such, my brethren, is the fruit which he reaps from it. In a word, all the external duties of religion; which support and rouse piety, are no longer to the lukewarm Christian, but dead and inanimate customs, where his heart is not; where there is more of habit, than of love or spirit of piety; and where the only disposition he brings is the weariness and languor, of always doing the same thing.

Thus, my brethren, the grace of this soul, being continually attacked and weakened, either by the practices of the world, which it allows itself, or by those of piety, which it abuses; either by sensual objects which nourish its corruption, or by those of religion, which increase its disgusts; either by the pleasures which enervate it, or by the duties which fatigue it; all uniting to make it bend towards ruin, and nothing supporting it: Alas! what fate can it promise itself! Can the lamp without oil, long continue to give light? The tree which no longer draws nourishment from the earth, can it fail to wither, and be devoted to the fire? Now, such is the situation of the lukewarm Christian; entirely delivered up to himself, nothing supports him; surrounded by weariness and disgusts, nothing reanimates him; full of weakness and of languor, nothing protects him; every consolation of the just soul, is to him an increase of languor; every thing which gives support to a faithful Christian, disgusts and overpowers him; whatever renders the yoke more easy to others, makes his more burdensome; and the succours of piety are no longer but his fatigues, or his crimes. Now, in this state,

O my God! almost abandoned by thy grace, tired of thy yoke, disgusted with himself, as well as with virtue, weakened by diseases and their remedies, staggering at every step, a breath overturns him; he himself leans towards his fall, without any additional or foreign impression; and to see him fall, there is no necessity for his being attacked.

These are the reasons, which prove the certainty of the loss of righteousness in a lukewarm and infidel life. But are so many proofs necessary, my dear hearer, when your own misfortunes have so sadly instructed you? Remember from whence you are fallen, as the Holy Spirit of God formerly said to a lukewarm and infidel soul: Remount to the source of the disorders under which you still bend: You will find it in the negligence and infidelity of which we speak. A birth of passion too feebly rejected, an occasion of danger too much frequented, practices of piety too frequently omitted or despised, convenience too sensually sought after, desires of pleasing too much listened to, dangerous writings too little avoided; the source is almost imperceptible: The torrent of iniquity proceeding from it, has completely inundated the capacity of your soul: It was only a spark which has lighted up this great conflagration; it was a morsel of leaven, which, in the end, has fermented, and corrupted the whole mass. You never believed it possible, that you could be, what at present you are: Whatever was said to you on this subject, you heard as exaggerations of zeal and spirituality: You would then have come forward of your own accord, in order to clear yourself of certain steps, for which you now feel not the smallest remorse: Remember from whence you are fallen: Consider the depth of the abyss into which you are plunged: It is relaxation and slight infidelities, which by degrees have conducted you to it. Once more, remember it; and see, if that can be denominated a sure or durable state, which has brought you to the precipice. Such

Such is the usual artifice of Satan : He never at first proposes guilt ; that would frighten away his prey, and remove it beyond the reach of his surprises : Too well he knows the road for entering the heart ; he knows that he must gradually confirm the timid conscience against the horror of guilt, and propose nothing at first but honest purposes, and certain limits in pleasure : It is not boldly like the lion, he at first attacks ; it is warily like the serpent : He does not lead you straight to the gulf ; he conducts you there by winding paths. No, my brethren, crimes are never the first essays of the heart. David was imprudent and slothful, before he became an adulterer : Solomon had allowed himself to be seduced and enervated by the delights and magnificence of royalty, before he publicly appeared in the midst of lewd women : Judas had given up his heart to money, before he put a price upon his master : Peter was presumptuous before he renounced the truth. Vice has its progress, as well as virtue : As the day, says the Prophet, instructs the day, thus the night gives melancholy lessons to the night ; and there is not far betwixt a state, which suspends all the grace of protection, fortifies all the passions, renders useless all the succours of piety, and a state where it is entirely extinct.

What then, my dear hearer, can confirm or comfort you, in this life of negligence and infidelity ? Is it that exemption from guilt you have hitherto preserved ? But I have shewn you, that it is either guilt itself, or that it will not fail, soon to lead you to it : Is it the love of ease ? But in that, you enjoy neither the pleasures of the world, nor the consolations of virtue : Is it the assurance that the Almighty requires no more of you ? But how can the lukewarm and unfaithful soul satisfy or please him, when from his mouth he rejects him ? Is it the irregularity in which the
generality

generality of men live, and who carry it to an excess which you avoid? But their fate is perhaps less to be mourned, and less desperate than your own; They at least know their malady, while you regard your own as a state of perfect health. Is it the dread of being unable to support a more mortified, watchful, and Christian life? But since you have hitherto been able to support some remains of virtue and innocence, without the comforts and consolations of grace, and in spite of the wearinesses and disgusts which your lukewarmness has spread through all your duties, what will it be when the Spirit of God, shall soften your yoke, and when a more fervent and faithful life, shall have restored to you all the grace and consolations, of which your lukewarmness has deprived you? Piety is never sad, or insupportable, but when it is cold and unfaithful.

Rise then, says a prophet, wicked and slothful soul: Break the fatal charm, which lulls, and chains thee to thine indolence. The Lord whom thou believest to serve, because thou dost not openly affront him, is not the God of the wicked, but of the faithful; he is not the rewarder of idleness and sloth, but of tears, watchings, and combats: He establisheth not in his abodes, and in his everlasting city, the useless, but the vigilant and laborious servant: And his kingdom, says the Apostle, is not of flesh and blood, that is to say, of an unworthy effeminacy, and a life devoted to the appetites, but the strength and virtue of God; namely, a continued vigilance; a generous sacrifice of all our inclinations; a constant contempt of all things which pass away; and a tender and ardent desire for those invisible blessings which fade not, nor even pass away: Which may God, in his infinite mercy, grant to all assembled here. Amen.

SERMON VI.

ON EVIL-SPEAKING.

JOHN ii. 24.

But Jesus did not commit himself unto them; because he knew all men.

THESE were the same Pharisees, who a little before had been decrying to the people, the actions of Jesus Christ, and endeavouring to poison the purity and sanctity of his words, who now make a shew of believing in him, and classing themselves amongst his disciples. And such is the character of the evil-speaker; under the mark of esteem, and the flattering expressions of friendship, to conceal the gall and bitterness of slander.

Now, although this be perhaps the only vice, which no circumstance can palliate, it is the one we are most ingenious in concealing from ourselves, and to which piety and the world at present show the greatest indulgence. Not, that the character of a slanderer is not equally odious to men, as, according to the expression of the Holy Spirit, it is abominable in the sight of God; but in that number, they comprise only particular defamers of a blacker and more avowed malignity, who deal their blows indiscriminately, and without art; and who, with sufficient malice to censure, are destitute of the wit necessary to please:
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Now, the defamers of that description are more rare ; and had we only them to address ourselves to, it would be sufficient at present to point out, how much unworthy of reason and religion this vice is, to inspire with a just detestation of it, those who feel themselves guilty.

But there is another description of slanderers, who condemn the vice, yet allow themselves the practice of it ; who, without regard, defame their brethren, yet applaud themselves for circumspection and moderation ; who carry the sting to the heart ; but, because it is more brilliant and piercing, perceive not the wound it has made. Now, defamers of this character are every where to be found ; the world is filled with them ; even the holy asylums are not free ; this vice is the bond of union to the assemblies of sinners ; it often finds its way even into the society of the just ; and we may safely say, that all have erred from the strait road ; and there is not one, who has preserved his tongue pure, and his lips undefiled.

It is proper, then, my brethren, to expose at present the illusion of the pretexts, made use of every day in the world, in justification of this vice ; and to attack it in the circumstances, where you believe it most innocent ; for were I to describe it to you, in general, with all its meanness, cruelty, and irreparability, you would no longer apply it to yourselves ; and far from inspiring you with horror at it, I should be accessory towards your persuasion, that you are free from its guilt.

Now, what are the pretexts, which, in your eyes, soften, or justify the vice of evil-speaking ? In the first place, It is the lightness of the faults you censure : We persuade ourselves, that as it is not a matter of culpability, there
cannot

cannot likewise be much harm in censuring it. 2dly, It is the public notoriety, by which those to whom we speak, being already informed of what is reprehensible in our brother, no loss of reputation can be the consequence of our discourses. Lastly, Zeal for truth, and the glory of God, which does not permit us to be silent on those disorders which dishonour him. Now, to these three pretexts, let us oppose three incontrovertible truths. To the pretext of the lightness of the faults; that the more the faults which you censure are light, the more is the slander unjust: First Truth. To the pretext of the public notoriety; that the more the faults of our brethren are known, the more cruel is the slander which censures them: Second Truth. To the pretext of zeal; that the same charity, which, in piety, makes us hate sinners, makes us likewise cover up the multitude of their faults: Last Truth.

PART I. The tongue, says the Apostle James, is a devouring fire, a world of iniquity, an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. And behold, what I would have applied to the tongue of the evil-speaker, had I undertaken to give you a just and natural idea of all the enormity of this vice: I would have said, that the tongue of the slanderer is a devouring fire, which tarnishes whatever it touches; which exercises its fury on the good grain, equally as on the chaff; on the profane, as on the sacred; which, wherever it passes, leaves only desolation and ruin; digs even into the bowels of the earth, and fixes itself on things the most hidden; turns into vile ashes, what, only a moment before, had appeared to us so precious and brilliant; acts with more violence and danger than ever, in the time when it was apparently smothered up, and almost extinct; which blackens, what it cannot consume; and sometimes sparkles and delights, before it destroys. I would have told you, that evil-
speaking

speaking is an assemblage of iniquity; a secret pride, which discovers to us the mote in our brother's eye, but hides the beam which is our own; a mean envy, which hurt at the talents or prosperity of others, makes them the subject of its censures, and studies to dim the splendour of whatever outshines itself; a disguised hatred, which sheds in its speeches, the hidden venom of the heart; an unworthy duplicity, which praises to the face, and tears in pieces behind the back; a shameful levity, which has no command over itself, or words, and often sacrifices both fortune and comfort, to the imprudence of an amusing conversation; a deliberate barbarity, which goes to pierce your absent brother; a scandal, where you become a subject of shame and sin to those who listen to you; an injustice, where you ravish from your brother, what is dearest to him. I would have said that slander is a restless evil; which disturbs society; spreads dissention through cities and countries; disunites the strictest friendships; is the source of hatred and revenge; fills, wherever it enters, with disturbances and confusion; and, every where, is an enemy to peace, comfort, and Christian good breeding. Lastly, I would have added, that it is an evil full of deadly poison; whatever flows from it is infected, and poisons whatever it approaches; that even its praises are impoisoned; its applauses, malicious; its silence, criminal; its gestures, motions and looks, have all their venom, and spread it each in their way.

Behold, what in this discourse, it would have been my duty, more at large, to have exposed to your view, had I not proposed only to paint to you, the vileness of the vice, which I am now going to combat; but as I have already said, these are only general invectives, which none apply to themselves. The more odious the vice is represented,
the

the less do you perceive yourselves concerned in it; and though you acknowledge the principle, you make no use of it, in the regulation of your manners; because, in these general paintings, we always find features which resemble us not. I wish, therefore, to confine myself at present, to the single object of making you feel all the injustice of that description of slander, which you think the most innocent; and least you should not feel yourselves connected with what I shall say, I shall attack it, only in the pretexts which you continually employ in its justification.

Now the first pretext, which authorises in the world almost all the defamations, and is the cause that our conversations are now continual censures upon our brethren, is the pretended insignificancy of the vices we expose to view. We would wish not to tarnish a man of character, or ruin his fortune, by dishonouring him in the world; to stain the principles of a woman's conduct, by entering into the essential points of it; that would be too infamous and mean: But upon a thousand faults, which lead our judgment to believe them capable of all the rest; to inspire the minds of those who listen to us with a thousand suspicions, which point out what we dare not say; to make satirical remarks, which discover a mystery, where no person before had perceived the least intention of concealment; by poisonous interpretations, to give an air of ridicule to manners which had hitherto escaped observation; to let every thing, on certain points, be clearly understood, while protesting, that they are incapable themselves of cunning or deceit, is what the world makes little scruple of; and though the motives, the circumstances, and the effects of these discourses, be highly criminal, yet gaiety and liveliness excuse

their malignity, to those who listen to us, and even conceal from ourselves their atrocity.

I say, in the first place, the motives. I know that it is above all by the innocency of the intention, that they pretend to justify themselves; that you continually say, that your design is not to tarnish the reputation of your brother, but innocently to divert yourselves with faults which do not dishonour him in the eyes of the world. You, my dear hearer, to divert yourself with his faults! But what is that cruel pleasure, which carries sorrow and bitterness to the heart of your brother? Where is the innocency of an amusement, whose source springs from vices, which ought to inspire you with compassion and grief? If Jesus Christ forbid us in the gospel, to invigorate the languors of conversation by idle words, shall it be more permitted to you, to enliven it by derisions and censures? If the law curse him, who uncovers the nakedness of his relations, shall you, who add raillery and insult to the discovery, be more protected from that malediction? If whoever call his brother fool, be worthy, according to Jesus Christ, of eternal fire; shall he who renders him the contempt and laughing-stock of a profane assembly, escape the same punishment? You, to amuse yourself with his faults? But does charity delight in evil? Is that rejoicing in the Lord, as commanded by the Apostle? If you love your brother as yourself, can you delight in what afflicts him? Ah! The church formerly held in horror the exhibitions of gladiators, and denied that believers, brought up in the tenderness and benignity of Jesus Christ, could innocently feast their eyes with the blood and death of these unfortunate slaves, or form an harmless recreation of so inhuman a pleasure. But you renew more detestable shows, to enliven your languor: You bring upon the stage, not infamous wretches
 devoted

devoted to death, but members of Jesus Christ, your brethren ; and there you entertain the spectators, with wounds, which you inflict on persons rendered sacred by baptism.

Is it then necessary that your brother should suffer, to amuse you ? Can you find no delight in your conversations, unless his blood, as I may say, is furnished towards your iniquitous pleasures ? Edify each other, says St. Paul, by words, of peace and charity ; relate the wonders of God towards the just, the history of his mercies to sinners ; recal the virtue of those, who with the signs of faith have preceded us ; make an agreeable relaxation to yourselves, in reciting the pious examples of your brethren with whom you live ; with a religious joy, speak of the victories of faith ; of the agrandisement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ ; of the establishment of truth, and the extinction of error ; of the favours which Jesus Christ bestows on his church, by raising up in it faithful pastors, enlightened members, and religious princes ; animate yourselves to virtue, by contemplating the little solidity of the world, the emptiness of pleasures, and the unhappiness of sinners, who yield themselves up to their unruly passions. Are these grand objects not worthy the delight of Christians ? It was thus, however, that the first believers rejoiced in the Lord, and from the sweets of their conversations, formed one of the most holy consolations to their temporal calamities. It is the heart my brethren, which decides upon our pleasures : A corrupted heart feels no delight, but in what recalls to him the image of his vices : Innocent delights, are only suitable to virtue.

In effect, you excuse the malignity of your censures, by the innocency of your intentions. But fathom the secret of your heart : Whence comes it, that your sarcasms are
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always pointed to fuch an individual, and that you never amufe yourfelf with more wit, or more agreeably, than in recalling his faults? May it not proceed from a fecret jealousy? Do not his talents, fortune, credit, ftation, or character, hurt you more than his faults? Would you find him fo fit a fubject for censure, had he fewer of thofe qualities which exalt him above you? Would you experience fuch pleafure in expofing his foibles, did not the world find qualities in him both valuable and praiſe-worthy? Would Saul have fo often repeated with fuch pleafure, that David was only the fon of Jeſſe, had he not confidered him as a rival more deferving than himfelf of the empire? Whence comes it, that the faults of all others find you more indulgent? That elfewhere you excuſe every thing, but here every circumſtance comes empoiſoned from your mouth? Go to the ſource, and examine, if it is not ſome ſecret root of bitterneſs in your heart? And can you pretend to juſtify, by the innocency of the intention, diſcourſes which flow from fo corrupted a principle? You maintain that it is neither from hatred nor jealousy againſt your brother: I wiſh to believe it; but in your ſarcaſms may there not be motives, perhaps ſtill more ſhameful and mean? Is it not your wiſh, to render yourfelf agreeable, by turning your brother into an object of contempt and ridicule? Do you not ſacrifice his character to your fortune? Courts are always fo filled with theſe adulatory, and ſordidly intereſted ſatires, on each other! The great are to be pitied, whenever they yield themſelves up to unwarrantable averſions. Vices are ſoon found out, even in that virtue itſelf which diſpleaſes them.

But after all, you do not feel yourſelves guilty, you ſay, of all theſe vile motives; and that it is merely through indifcretion, and levity of ſpeech, if it ſometimes happen
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that you defame your brethren. But is it by that you can suppose yourselves more innocent? Levity and indiscretion; that vice, so unworthy of the gravity of a Christian, so distant from the seriousness and solidity of faith, and so often condemned in the gospel, can it justify another vice? What matters it to the brother whom you stab, whether it be done through indiscretion or malice? Does an arrow, unwittingly drawn, make a less dangerous, or slighter wound, than if sent on purpose? Is the deadly blow, which you give to your brother, more slight, because it was lanced through imprudence and levity? And what signifies the innocency of the intention, when the action is a crime? But besides, Is there no criminality in indiscretion, with regard to the reputation of your brethren? In any case whatever, can more circumspection and prudence be required? Are not all the duties of Christianity comprised in that of charity? Does not all religion, as I may, consist in that: And to be incapable of attention and care, in a point so highly essential, is it not considering as it were, all the rest as a sport? Ah! it is here he ought to put a guard of circumspection on his tongue, weigh every word, put them together, in his heart, says the sage Ecclesiasticus, and let them ripen in his mouth. Do any of these inconsiderate speeches ever escape you, against yourself? Do you ever fail in attention to what interests your honour or glory? What indefatigable cares! What exertions and industry, to make them prosper! To what lengths we see you go, to increase your interest or improve your fortune! If it ever happen, that you take blame to yourself, it is always under circumstances which tend to your praise: You censure in yourself, only faults which do you honour; and in confessing your vices, you wish only to recapitulate your virtues: Self-love connects every thing with yourself. Love your brother as you love yourself, and every thing will recal to

you him ; you will be incapable of indiscretion, where his interest is concerned, and will no longer need our instructions, in respect to what you owe to his character and glory.

But if these slanders which you call trivial, be criminal in their motives, they are not less so in their circumstances.

In the first place, I should make you observe, that the world, familiarized with guilt, and accustomed to see the most heinous vices, now become the vices of the multitude, is no longer shocked at them ; denominates light, defamations which turn upon the most criminal and shameful weaknesses : Suspicions of infidelity, in the sacred bond of marriage, are no longer a marked discredit, or an essential stain ; they are sources of derision and pleasantry : To accuse a courtier of insincerity and double-dealing, is no attack upon his honour, it is only casting a ridicule on the protestations of sincerity, with which he amuses us : To spread the suspicion of hypocrisy, in the sincerest piety, is not an insult to God through his saints, it is a language of derision, which custom has rendered common : In a word, excepting those crimes punishable by the public authority, and which are attended with the loss of credit and property, all others seem trivial and become the ordinary subject of conversation, and of the public censure.

But let us not pursue this reflection farther. I wish to allow that your brother's faults are light : The more they are light, the more are you unjust in heightening them : The more he merits indulgence on your part, the more are we to presume in you, a malignity of observation, from which nothing can escape ; a natural hardness of heart, which can excuse nothing. Were the faults of your brother
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ther important, you would spare him, you say ; you would find him entitled to your indulgence : Politeness and religion would make your silence a duty : What ! because his weaknesses are only trivial, you find him less worthy of your regard ? The very circumstance which ought to make him respectable, authorises you in making him the butt of your sarcasms ? Are you not, says the Apostle, become a judge of iniquitous thoughts ? And your eye, is it then wicked, only because your brother is good ? Besides, the faults which you censure are light ; but would they appear so to you, were you to be reproached with them ? When certain discourses, held in your absence, have reached your ears, and which, in fact, attacked essentially, neither your honour nor probity, but only acquainted the public with some of your weaknesses, what have been your sensations ? My God ! Then it was, that you magnified every thing ; that every circumstance appeared important to you ; that, not satisfied with exaggerating the malice of the words, you raked up the secret of the intention, and hoped to find motives still more odious than the discourses. In vain are you told, that these are not reproaches, which essentially interest you, and at the worst cannot disgrace you. You think yourselves insulted ; you mention them with bitter complaints ; you blaze out, and are no longer masters of your resentment ; and whilst all the world blames the excess of your sensibility, you alone obstinately persist in the belief of its being a serious affair, and that your honour is interested in it. Make use then, of this rule in the faults which you publish of your brother : Apply the offence to yourselves ; every thing is light, which is against him ; but with regard to what touches you, the smallest circumstance appears important to your pride, and worthy of all your resentment.

Lastly,

Lastly, The vices which you censure are light ; but do you add nothing of your own to them ? Do you faithfully exhibit them as they are ? In their relation, do you never mingle the malignity of your own conjectures ? Do you not place them in a point of view, different from their natural state ? Do you not embellish your tale ? And in order to make the hero of your ridicule agreeable, do you not fashion him to the wish of the company, and not such as in reality he is ? Do you never accompany your speeches with certain gestures, which allow all to be understood ; with certain expressions, which open the minds of your hearers to a thousand suspicions, equally rash, as dishonourable ? Even with a certain silence, which permits more to be imagined, than any thing you could have possibly said ? For, how difficult it is to confine ourselves to the bounds of truth, when we are no longer within those of charity ! The more what we censure is light, the more is calumny to be dreaded : we must embellish to attract attention ; and we become calumniators, where we did not suppose ourselves even censurers.

Behold the circumstances which regard you ; but if, on their account, the slanders which you think light, be highly criminal, will they be less so with respect to the individuals whom they attack ?

In the *first* place, it is a person, perhaps of a sex, to whom, especially on certain points, the slightest stains are important : to whom it is a dishonour to be publicly spoken of ; to whom raillery becomes an insult, and every suspicion an accusation ; in a word, a person, whom not to praise becomes an outrage, and a disgrace to their station : Thus St. Paul would have every woman to be adorned

with

with bashfulness and modesty; that is to say, he would wish those virtues to be as conspicuous in them, as the ornaments with which they are covered; and the highest eulogy which the Holy Spirit makes on Judith, after speaking of her beauty, youth, and great wealth, is, that in all Israel, not a person was to be found who had aspersed her conduct; and that her reputation corresponded with her virtue.

2dly, Your censures are perhaps pointed towards your superiors; or against those whom providence has established above you, and to whom the law of God commands you to render that respect and submission to which they are entitled. For the pride which hates inferiority, always recompenses itself, by finding out weaknesses and foibles, in those to whom it is under the necessity of yielding obedience; the more they are exalted, the more they are exposed to our censures: Malignity is even more quick sighted in regard to their errors; nothing, in their actions, is pardoned; the very persons most loaded with their kindnesses, or most honoured by their familiarity, are frequently those, who most openly publish their imperfections and vices; and besides violating the sacred duty of respect, they likewise render themselves guilty of the mean and shameful crime of ingratitude.

3dly, It is a person, perhaps consecrated to God, and established in the church, whom you censure; who, engaged by the sanctity of his vocation, to more exemplary, pure, and irreproachable manners, finds himself stained and dishonoured by censures, which would not affect the reputation of persons of the world. Thus the Lord, in the scriptures, curseth those who shall even meddle with his anointed. Nevertheless, the traits of slander are never

more animated, more brilliant, or more applauded in the world, than when directed against the ministers of his holy altar; the world, so indulgent to itself, seems to have preserved its severity only on their account; and for them, it has eyes more censorious, and a tongue more empoisoned, than for the rest of men. It is true, O my God, that our conversation amongst the people is not always holy, and free from reproach; that we frequently adopt the manners, luxury, indolence, idleness, and pleasures of the world, against which we ought to struggle; that we hold out to believers, more examples of pride and negligence, than of virtue; that we are more jealous of pre-eminence, than of the duties of our calling; and that it is difficult for the world to honour a character, which we ourselves disgrace. But as I have often said, my brethren, our infidelities ought rather to be the subject of your tears, than of your pleasantry and censures: God generally punishes the disorders of the people, by the corruption of the priests; and the most dreadful scourge with which he strikes kingdoms and empires, is that of not raising up in them venerable pastors, and zealous ministers, who may stem the torrent of dissipation; it is that of permitting faith and religion to become weakened, even amongst those who are its defenders and depositaries; that the light, which was meant to instruct you, should be changed into darkness; that the co-operators in your salvation, should assist, by their example, towards your destruction; that even from the sanctuary, from whence ought to proceed only the good favour of Jesus Christ, there should issue a smell of death and scandal; and in a word, that abominations should find their way even into the holy place. But what alteration does the relaxation of our manners, make in the sanctity of the vocation which consecrates us? Are the sacred vases, which serve on the altar, though composed of a mean metal, less worthy of
your

your respect? And even granting the minister may merit your contempt, would you be less sacriligious, in not respecting his ministry?

What shall I say? Your detractions and censures, are perhaps directed against persons, who make a public profession of piety, and whose virtue your hearers formerly respected. You then persuade them, that they had been too credulous; you authorise them to believe, that few worthy and intrinsically good characters, are to be found on the earth; that all those held out as such, when narrowly examined, are like the rest of men: You confirm the prejudices of the world against virtue, and give fresh credit to those discourses, so usual, and so injurious to religion, with regard to the piety of the servants of Jesus Christ. Now, do all these appear so very light to you? Ah, my brethen! The just on this earth are like the holy ark, in the midst of which the Lord dwells, and any contempt or insult to which, he most rigorously avenges: They may stagger in their road, like the ark of Israel, while conducting in triumph to Jerusalem; for the purest and most shining virtue, has its spots and eclipses; and even the most solid, cannot always equally support itself; but the Lord is incensed, when rash and impure hands, like those of Uzzah, shall venture to put them right; and scarcely have they touched them, when they are smote by his wrath: He takes to himself the slightest insults with which they dishonour his servants, and he cannot endure that virtue, which has found admirers, even amongst tyrants, and the most barbarous nations, should frequently among believers, find only censures and derisions. Thus the little children of Israel, were devoured on the spot, for having mocked the small number of hairs of the man of God; nevertheless these were only the puerile indiscretions,

tions, so pardonable at their age. Fire from heaven, fell upon the officer of the impious Ahaziah, and in a moment consumed him, for having in derision called Elijah the Man of God; nevertheless it was a courtier, from whom little regard might be expected, for the austerity and simplicity of a prophet, or for the virtue of a man, rustic in his appearance, and hateful to his master. Michal was struck with barrenness, for having too harshly censured the holy excesses of joy and piety of David before the altar; nevertheless, it proceeded merely from female delicacy. But to meddle with those who serve the Lord, is, according to the Scripture, to meddle with the apple of your eye: He invisibly curses those rash censurers on piety: and though he may not strike them as formerly, with instant death, yet he marks on their forehead, from this life forward, the stamp of reprobation, and denies to themselves, that precious gift of sanctity and grace, which they had despised in others; nevertheless, it is the upright who are now become the general butt of the malignity of public discourses; and we may safely say, that virtue gives birth to more censures in the world, than vice.

I do not add, that if these slanders, which you term light, be highly criminal in their motives and circumstances, they are still more so in their consequences: I say their consequences, my brethren, which are always irreparable. You may expiate the crime of voluptuousness, by mortification and penitence; the crime of hatred, by love for your enemy; the crime of ambition, by a renunciation of the honours and grandeurs of the age; the crime of injustice, by a restoration of what you had unjustly ravished from your brother; even the crime of impiety and freethinking, by a religious and public respect for the worship of your fathers; but what remedy, what virtue, can repair the crime of detraction?

traction? You revealed to only one person the vices of your brother: It may be so; but that unlucky confident will soon, in his turn, have communicated it to others, who, on their part, no longer regarding as a secret, what they have just heard, will relate it to the first comers; in the relation of it, every one will add new circumstances; each, in his way, will empoison it with some new trait; in proportion as they publish, they will increase, they will magnify it: Similar to a spark of fire, says St. James, which wafted by an impetuous wind, to different places, sets in flames, the forests and countries it reaches: Such is the destiny of detraction.

: What you had mentioned in secret, was nothing at first; and seemed stifled and buried under its own ashes; but this fire, lies hid for a while, only in order to burst forth with redoubled fury; that nothing soon acquires reality by passing through a diversity of mouths; every one will add to it, whatever his passion, interest, disposition of mind, and his own malignity, may hold out to him as probable: The source is hardly perceptible; but, assisted in its course, by a thousand foreign streams, the united torrent will overwhelm the court, city, and country; and that, which at its birth, was only a private and imprudent pleasantry, but a simple idea, but a malicious conjecture, will become a serious affair, a public and formal dishonour, the subject of every conversation, and an eternal stain upon the character of your brother. Repair, now, if you can, the injustice and scandal; restore to your brother the good name, of which you have deprived him. Will you pretend to oppose the public inveteracy, and singly hold forth his praise? But they will regard you as a new comer, who is ignorant of what has taken place in the world; and your praises come far too late, will serve only to draw upon him fresh satires.

Now

Now, what a multitude of crimes, proceeding from only one! The sins of a whole people become your's: You defame through the mouths of all your fellow-citizens: You are likewise answerable for the guilt of all who listen to you. What penitence can expiate evils, to which it can no longer afford relief? And will your tears be able to blot out, what shall never be effaced from the memory of man? Again, were the scandal to end with you, your death, by terminating it, might be its expiation before God. But it is a scandal which will survive you; the shameful histories of courts never die with their heroes. Lascivious writers have transmitted to us, the anecdotes, and irregularities of the courts which have preceded us; and licentious authors will be found amongst us, to acquaint the ages to come, with the public rumours, the scandalous circumstances, and the vices of our own.

O my God! These are of that description of sins, of which we know not either the enormity or extent: but we know, that to become a stumbling block to our brethren, is to overturn for them the work of thy Son's mission, and to destroy the fruit of his labours, of his death, and of all his ministry. Such is the illusion of the pretext, which you draw from the lightness of your slanders; the motives are never innocent; the circumstances always criminal; the consequences, irreparable. Let us examine, if the pretext of the public notoriety be better founded. This is what yet remains for me to investigate.

PART II. Whence comes it, that the majority of precepts are violated by those very persons who profess themselves their observers; and that we find more difficulty in bringing the world to acknowledge than to correct its transgressions? The reason is, that our ideas of duty are never
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taken from the groundwork of religion; that we never enter into the spirit, to decide upon the letter; and that few people ascend to the principle, to clear up the doubts, which corruption forms on the detail of the consequences.

Now, to apply this maxim to my subject: What are the rules in the gospel, which constitute slander a crime to the disciples of Jesus Christ? In the first place, it is the precept of Christian humility, which, as it ought to establish in us, a profound contempt of ourselves, and to open our eyes on the endless multitude of our own wants, should, at the same time, shut our eyes on those of our brethren. In the second place, it is the duty of charity; that charity, so recommended in the gospel; the grand precept of the law; which covers the faults it cannot correct; excuses those it cannot cover; delights not in evil; and, with difficulty, believes, because it never wishes it to happen. Lastly, It is the inviolable rule of justice, which, never permitting us to do to others, what we would not have done to ourselves, condemns whatever goes beyond these equitable bounds. Now the scandalous discourses, which turn upon those faults you term public, essentially wound these three rules: Judge, then, of their innocency.

1st, They wound the precept of Christian humility. Indeed, my dear hearer, were you feelingly touched with your own wants, says a holy father; were your own sin incessantly before your eyes, like the penitent David, you would find neither sufficient leisure nor attention, to remark the faults of your brethren. The more they were public, the more would you in secret thank the Lord, for averting from you that scandal; the more would you feel your gratitude awakened, when you considered, that though fallen perhaps into the same errors, he hath not permitted them

them to be proclaimed from the housetops, like those of your brother; that he hath left in obscurity your deeds of darkness; that he hath covered them, as I may say, with his wings; and that, in the eyes of men, he hath preserved for you, an honour, and an innocence, which you have so often forfeited before him: You would tremble, while saying to yourself, that perhaps he hath spared your confusion in this world, only to render it more bitter and more durable in the next.

Such is the disposition of Christian humility towards the public disgraces of our brethren: We should often speak of them to ourselves, but almost never to others. Thus, when the Scribes and Pharisees, presented to our Saviour, the woman caught in adultery, and eagerly pressed him to give his judgment; though the guilt of the sinner was public, Jesus Christ kept a profound silence; and to their insidious and pressing entreaties, to explain himself; he simply answered: "He that is without sin amongst you, let him first cast a stone at her;" as if he thereby meant to make them understand, that sinners, like them, were little entitled to condemn, with so high a hand, the crime of that woman; and that to acquire the right of casting a single stone at her, it was necessary the individual should himself be free from reproach. And behold, my brethren, what I wish to say to you at present: The evil conduct of such a person is become notorious: Very well! Whoever of you is without sin, let him cast the first stone: If, before God, you have nothing, perhaps more criminal, with which to reproach yourself, speak with freedom; condemn, in the severest manner, his fault, and open upon him the whole flood of your derisions and censures; it is permitted to you: Ah! you, who so hardily speak of it, you are more fortunate; but are you more innocent than he?

he? You are thought to possess more virtue, and more regard for your duty; but God, who knoweth you, will he judge like men? Were the darkness, which conceals your shame, to be dissipated; would not every stone you throw, recoil upon yourselves? Were an unexpected circumstance to betray your secret, would not the audacity and malicious joy with which you censure, add additional ridicule to your confusion and disgrace? Ah! It is only to artifices and arrangements, which the justice of God may disconcert and lay open in an instant, that you are indebted for this phantom of reputation, on which you pride yourselves so much: You perhaps border on the moment, which shall reveal your shame; and far from blushing in secret and in silence, when faults, like your own, are made known; you speak of; and relate them with pleasure; and you furnish the public with traits, which, one day, it will employ against yourself: It is the threat and prediction of our Saviour. All they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword: You pierce your brother with the sword of the tongue; with the same weapon, shall you be pierced in your turn; and though you were even exempted from the vices you so boldly censure in others, the just God will deliver you up to it.

Disgrace is the common punishment of pride. Peter, on the evening of the Lord's Supper, never ceased to exaggerate the guilt of the disciple, by whom his master was to be betrayed: He was the most anxious of them all to know his name, and the most forward to express his detestation of his perfidy; and immediately after, he falls himself into the infidelity which he had so lately blamed with such pride and confidence. Nothing draws down upon us the wrath and curse of God, so much as the malicious pleasure with which we magnify the faults of our brethren;

and his mercy is incensed, that these afflicting examples, which he permits, for the sole purpose of recalling us to our own weaknesses, and awakening our vigilance, should flatter our pride, and excite only our derisions and censures.

You depart, then, from the rules of Christian humility, when you permit yourselves to censure the faults, however public, of your brother ; but you likewise essentially wound those of charity : For charity never faileth, says the Apostle. Now, if the vices of your brother be known to those who listen to you, to what purpose, then, do you repeat them afresh ? What indeed can be your intention ? To blame his conduct ? But, is his shame not already sufficient ? Would you wish to overwhelm an unfortunate wretch, and give the last stab to a man, already pierced with a thousand mortal blows ? His guilt has already been exaggerated by so many dark and malicious hearts, who have spread in colours sufficient to blacken it for ever : Is he not sufficiently punished ? He is now worthy of your pity, rather than of your censures. What then could be your intention ? To condole with him for his misfortune ? But to open afresh his wounds, is a strange way of condoling with an unfortunate brother. Is true compassion thus cruel ? What is it then ? To justify your prophecies, and former suspicions, on his conduct ? To tell us, that you had always believed, that sooner or later it would come to that ? But you come then, to triumph over his misfortune ? To applaud yourself for his disgrace ? To claim an honour to yourself for the malignity of your judgment ? Alas ! What glory can it be to a Christian, to have suspected his brother ; to have believed him guilty, before he was known as such ; to have rashly foreseen his disgraces yet to come ; we, who ought not to see them, even when they have taken place ? Ah ! You can prophecy
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so juſtly, on the deſtiny of others : Be a prophet in your own country, and anticipate the miſfortunes which threaten you : Why do you not prophecy thus for yourſelf, that unleſs you fly from ſuch an opportunity, and ſuch a danger, you will periſh in it ? That unleſs you diſſolve ſuch a connection, the public, which already murmurs, will at laſt break out, and then you ſhall find it too late to repair the ſcandal ? That unleſs you quit theſe exceſſes, into which the paſſions of youth, and a bad education, have thrown you, your affairs and fortune will be ruined beyond reſource ? It is on theſe points that you ought to exerciſe your art of conjecture. What madneſs, while ſurrounded one's-ſelf with precipices, to be occupied, in contemplating from afar thoſe that threaten our brethren !

Befides, the more your brother's diſgraces are public, the more affected ought you to be with the ſcandal, which they neceſſarily occaſion to the Church ; with the advantage which the wicked and the free-thinkers will draw from them, to blaſpheme the name of the Lord, to harden themſelves in impiety, and to perſuade themſelves, that theſe are weakneſſes common to all men, and that they are moſt virtuous, who beſt know how to conceal them : The more ought you to be afflicted, at the occaſion which theſe public examples of irregularity give to weak ſouls, to fall into the ſame diſorders : the more does charity oblige you to grieve over them ; the more ought you to wiſh, that the remembrance of theſe faults ſhould periſh : that the day, and the places of their revelation, ſhould be effaced from the memory of men : and laſtly, the more ought you, by your ſilence, to endeavour to ſuppreſs them. But the whole world ſpeaks of them, you ſay ; your ſilence will not prevent the public converſations ; conſequently, you may make remarks in your turn. The inference is barbarous :

Because

Because you are unable to repair the disgrace, are you permitted to augment it? Because you cannot save your brother from shame, shall you assist to overwhelm him with confusion and infamy? Because, almost every one casts a stone at him, shall it be less cruel in you, to throw one in your turn, and to unite with those who bruise, and beat him in pieces? Setting religion aside, how beautiful it is, to declare for the unfortunate? How much real dignity and greatness of soul, in sheltering under our protection, those abandoned by the world! And even admitting the rules of charity were not to make it a duty to us, the feelings alone, of glory and humanity, should in this case be sufficient.

3dly, You not only violate the holy rules of charity; but you are also a breaker of those of justice. For, the faults of your brother are public; let it be so; but place yourself in the same situation, would you exact from him less deference or less humanity, were your disgrace to be no longer a mystery? Would you agree, that the public example gave to your brother a right against you, which you arrogate to yourself against him? Would you accept, on his part, in justification of his malignity, an excuse, which would render him still more odious, mean, and cruel? Besides, how do you know whether the author of all these reports be not an impostor? So many false reports are circulated in the world; and the malice of men renders them so credulous on the faults of others! How do you know, but these calumnies have been circulated by an enemy, a rival, or some envious person, in order to ruin him, who has thwarted his passions or his fortune? Are such instances rare? Whether it be not some heedless person who has given occasion to all those discourses, by an indiscreet expression, uttered without thought, and laid hold of through malice? Are such mistakes impossible? Whether it be not
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a mere conjecture, originally circulated as such, and afterwards given as a truth? Are such alterations uncommon, in public rumours? What could have a greater appearance of feasibility, to the children of the captivity, than the alledged misconduct of Susanna. The judges of the people of God, venerable through their age and dignity, deposed against her; the people exclaimed against her as an adulteress; they looked upon her as the disgrace of Israel; nevertheless, it was her modesty alone which drew upon her these insults; and had not a Daniel been found in her time, who had the courage to doubt a general report, the blood of that innocent woman must have stained the whole people. And, without departing from our gospel; were not the sacrilegious reports, which held out Jesus as an impostor and Samaritan, become the public discourses of all Judea? The Priests and Pharisees, people, to whom the dignity of their station, and the regularity of their manners, attracted the respect and confidence of the people, strengthened them by their authority: Nevertheless, would you excuse such amongst the Jews, as on reports so common, spoke of the Saviour of the world, as a seducer who imposed on the credulity of the people? You expose yourself, then, to the guilt of having calumniated your brother; however circulated the rumours against him may be, his crime, of which you have not been a witness, is always dubious to you: and you do him an injustice, when you propagate as true, what you have only heard from public reports, often false, and always rash.

But I go further: when your brother's disgrace, should even be certain, and the malignity of reports should have added nothing to its criminality; how can you know, that the very shame of seeing it so public may not have recalled him

him to himself; and that a sincere repentance, and tears of compunction, may not have already effaced, and expiated it before God? Years are not always required for grace to triumph over a rebellious heart: there are victories which it leaves not to time; and a public disgrace often turns out the moment of mercy, which decides upon the conversion of the sinner. Now, if your brother is in 'a state of repentance, are you not unjust and cruel to revive faults which his penitence has effaced, and which the Lord hath ceased to remember? Do you recollect the sinful woman in the gospel? Her irregularities were notorious, seeing she had been known through the whole city as a prostitute: nevertheless, when the Pharisee reproached her with her sins, her tears and love had effaced them, at the feet of our Saviour; the goodness of God had remitted her errors, yet the malignity of men, was unable to obliterate them.

Lastly, Your brother's disgrace was public; that is to say, it was confusedly known, that his conduct was not free from reproach, and you come to particularise the circumstances, to proclaim his deeds, to explain the motives, and to lay open the whole mystery; to confirm what they but imperfectly knew; to tell them of what they knew not at all; and to applaud yourself, for appearing better instructed in your brother's misfortune, than those who listen to you: Some degree of character, though wavering, yet remained to him; he still preserved, at least, some remains of honour, a spark of life, and you completely extinguish it. I do not add that these public reports perhaps originated from people of no character; persons of neither reputation nor consequence to convince; hitherto none durst yield credit to rumours so poorly supported; but, you, who by your rank, birth, and dignities, have acquired an influence over the minds, remove every shadow of doubt

or uncertainty : Your name alone, will now serve as a proof against the innocency of your brother ; and in future it will be cited in justification of the general reports, Now, can any thing be harder, or more unjust, both on account of the injury you do to him and of the service you fail to perform ? Your silence on his fault might alone perhaps have stopt the public defamation ; and you would have been cited to clear his innocence, as you now are to blacken it : And what more respectable use could you have made of your rank and influence ? The more you are exalted in the world, the more ought you to be religious, and circumspect on the reputation of your brethren ; the more ought a noble decency to render you reserved on their errors : The discourses of the vulgar are soon forgot ; they expire in coming into the world ; but the words of the great never fall in vain ; and the public is always a faithful echo, either to the praises they bestow, or to the censures they allow themselves to utter. My God ! thou teachest us, by concealing thyself the sins of men, to conceal them on our part ; to reveal our faults, thou waitest with a merciful patience, the day when the secrets of our hearts shall be manifested : And we by a rash malignity, anticipate the time of thy vengeance ; we who are so interested, that the secrecies of our hearts, and the mystery of the consciences, should not as yet be laid open to thee.

Thus, you particularly, my brethren, whom rank and birth exalt above others, be not satisfied with putting a check upon your tongue ; according to the advice of the Holy Spirit, present a melancholy and severe countenance, a silence of disapprobation and indignation, to every defamatory discourse ; for the crime is exactly equal, between the malignity of the speaker, and the satisfaction of those who listen to them. Let us surround our ears with thorns,
that

that they may not be accessible to poisonous insinuations ; that is to say, let us not only shut them against these words of blood and gall, but let us return them on their author in a manner equally bitter and mortifying. Were slander to find fewer approvers, the kingdom of Jesus Christ would soon be purged of that scandal : Slander is pleasing ; and a vice which pleases soon becomes a desirable talent : We animate slander by our applauses ; and as there is no person but wishes to be applauded, there are few likewise who do not study it, and endeavour to make a merit of slandering with skill.

But what is surprising is, that piety itself frequently serves as a pretext to that vice, which saps the very foundations of piety, and which sincere piety detests. This ought to be the last part of this discourse ; but I shall say only a single word upon it. Yes, my brethren, slander frequently finds in piety itself, wherewithal to colour itself ; It decks itself out in the appearance of zeal : Hatred to vice seems to authorise the censure of sinners : Those who make a profession of virtue, often believe that they are honouring God, and rendering glory to him, when they dishonour, and exclaim against those who offend him ; as though the privilege of piety, whose soul is charity, were to dispense us even from charity. It is not that I wish here to justify the discourses of the world, and to furnish it with new traits against the zeal of the upright ; but, at the same time, I ought not to dissemble, that the liberty which they assume, of censuring the conduct of their brethren, is one of the most common abuses of piety.

Now, my dear hearer, you whom this discourse regards, listen to, and never forget the rules which the gospel prescribes to true zeal.

1stly, Remember, that the zeal which makes us lament over the scandals that dishonour the church, is contented with lamenting them before God; with praying him not to forget his former mercies; to cast his propitious regards upon the people; to establish his reign in all hearts; and to recal sinners from their erroneous ways. Behold, the holy manner of lamenting over the disgraces of your brethren; mention them frequently to the Lord, but forget them in the presence of men.

2dly, Remember, that piety gives you no right of empire or authority over your brethren: That if you be not established over them, and responsible for their conduct, whether they fall, or remain steadfast, is the concern of the Lord, and not your's; consequently, that your continual and public lamentations, over their irregularities, proceed from a principle of pride, malignity, levity, and intolerance; that the church has its pastors to superintend the flock; that the ark has its ministers to sustain it, without needing the interference of any foreign or imprudent succours; and lastly, that by these means, far from correcting your brethren, you dishonour piety; you justify the discourses of the wicked against the just; and you authorise them in saying, as formerly in the Book of Wisdom, Why professest the righteous, to have a right to fill the streets, and the public places, with their clamours and upbraidings against our conduct; and holdeth it out as a point of virtue, to defame us in the minds of our brethren?

3dly, Remember, that the zeal regulated by wisdom, seeks the salvation, and not the defamation of the brother it wishes to edify; that it loves not to injure; that in order to render itself useful, it studies to render itself amiable; that it is more affected with the misfortune and loss of its

brother, than irritated against, or scandalised by his errors ; that, far from going to publish them to others, it would wish to be enabled to conceal them from itself ; and that the zeal which censures them, far from lessening the evil, serves only to augment the scandal.

4thly, Remember, that the censorious zeal which you display, is useless to your brother, seeing he witnesses it not ; that far from being of service, it is even hurtful to his conversion, to which you raise up obstacles, by irritating him against your censures, should he happen to be informed of them ; that it is injurious to his reputation, which you wound ; and lastly, to those that listen to you, who respecting your pretended virtue, never entertain a doubt that they can err, while following your steps ; and no longer place slander among the number of vices. Zeal is humble and has eyes for nothing but its own wants ; it is simple, and much more disposed to be credulous with regard to good than evil ; it is merciful, and is always indulgent to the faults of others, in the same proportion as it is severe to its own weaknesses ; it is gentle and timorous, and prefers to have failed in sufficiently blaming vice, to rashly exposing itself to go too far in censuring the sinner.

Thus, my brethren, you who returned from the errors of the world, now serve the Lord, allow me to conclude, with addressing to you the same words, formerly spoken by a holy father, to the servants of Jesus Christ, who through an indiscreet zeal, made no scruple of tearing in pieces the characters of their brethren.

“ A tongue which has confessed Jesus Christ ; which has
 “ renounced the errors and splendours of the world ; which
 “ every day blesses the God of peace, at the foot of the altar ;
 “ and

“and is often consecrated, by participation of the holy mys-
 “teries, should no longer be intolerant, dangerous, and full
 “of gall and bitterness against its brethren. It is disgracing
 “religion, after having offered up pure prayers and thankf-
 “givings to the Lord, in the assembly of believers, to go
 “and spit out the venomous traits of the serpent, against
 “those whom the unity of faith, charity, the sacrament,
 “and even their very errors, should render more endeared
 “and more respectable to you.”

By the wisdom and moderation of our discourses, let us
 deprive the enemies of virtue, of every occasion to blas-
 pheme against it; let us correct our brethren, by the sanc-
 tity of our example, rather than by the keenness of our cen-
 sures; let us recal them, by living better than they, and
 not by speaking against them; let us render virtue respecta-
 ble by its sweetness, rather than by its severity; let us
 draw sinners towards us by compassionating, rather than
 censuring their faults; in order that our virtue may be
 conspicuous to them, only through our charity and indul-
 gence, and that our tender care to cover and excuse their
 faults, may induce them to accuse and condemn themselves
 with more severity, when they perceive the difference of
 our conduct: By these means, we shall regain our brethren;
 we shall honour piety; we shall overthrow impiety and
 freethinking; we shall deprive the world of all occasion
 for those discourses, so common, and so injurious to real
 virtue: And, after having used mercy towards our bre-
 thren, we shall with more confidence go to present ourselves
 before the Father of mercies, and the God of all consol-
 ation, to ask mercy for ourselves.

SERMON VII.

ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

JOHN vii. 33.

Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent me.

AN improper use of time, is the source of all the disorders which reign amongst men. Some pass their whole life in idleness and sloth, equally useless to the world, their country and themselves: Others, in the tumult of business and worldly affairs. Some appear to exist, only for the purpose of indulging an unworthy indolence, and escaping, by a diversity of pleasures, from the weariness which every where pursues them, in proportion as they fly from it: Others in a continual search, amidst the cares of the world, for occupations which may deliver them from themselves. It appears, that time is a common enemy, against which all men have agreed to conspire: Their whole life is one continued and deplorable anxiety, to rid themselves of it. The happiest are those, who best succeed, in not feeling the weight of its duration; and the principal satisfaction they reap, either from frivolous pleasures, or serious occupations, is the abridgment of days and moments, and deliverance from them, almost without a preception of their being passed.

Time,

Time, that precious deposit confided to us by the Lord, is therefore become a burden which fatigues and oppresses us : We dread, as the greatest of evils, its deprivation for ever ; and we almost equally dread the obligation, to support its weariness and duration. It is a treasure which we would wish to retain for ever ; yet which we cannot suffer to remain in our possession.

This time, however, of which we make so little estimation, is the only mean of our eternal salvation. We lose it without regret, which is a crime ; we employ it only for worldly purposes, which is a madness. Let us employ the time which God allows us, because it is short : Let us employ it only in labouring for our salvation, because it is only given us, that we may be saved : That is to say, let us be sensible of the value of time, and let us lose it not ; let us know the use of it, and employ it only for the purpose it was given : By these means, we shall avoid both the dangers of a slothful, and the inconveniences of an hurried life. This is the subject of the present Discourse.

PART I. Three circumstances, in general, decide upon the value of things among men : The great advantages which may accrue to us from them : The short space we have to enjoy them : And, lastly, every hope destroyed of ever regaining them, if once lost. Now, behold, my brethren, the principal motives which ought to render time precious and estimable, to every wise man : In the first place, it is the price of eternity : In the second place, it is short ; and we cannot make too much haste to reap the benefit of it : And lastly, it is irreparable ; for, once lost, it can never be regained. It is the price of eternity : Yes, my brethren, man, condemned to death by the sin of his birth

birth, ought to receive life, only to lose it, even from the moment he has received it. The blood alone of Jesus Christ has effaced this sentence of death and punishment, pronounced against all mankind, in the person of the first sinner: We live, though the offspring of a father condemned to death, and inheritors ourselves of his punishment, because the Redeemer died for us: The death of Jesus Christ is, therefore, the source, and the only claim of right we have to life; our days, our moments, are the first blessings, which have flowed to us from his cross; and the time which we so vainly lose, is the price however, of his blood, the fruit of his death, and the merit of his sacrifice.

Not only as children of Adam, we deserve no longer to live; but even all the crimes we have added to those of our birth, are become new sentences of death against us. So many times as we have violated the law of the Author of Life, so many times, from that moment, ought we to have lost it.

Every sinner is, therefore, a child of death and anger; and every time the mercy of God has suspended, after each of our crimes, the sentence of condemnation and death, it is a new life, as it were, his goodness has granted, in order to allow us time to repair the criminal use we had hitherto made of our own.

I even speak of the diseases, accidents, and numberless dangers, which so often have menaced our life; which so often we have seen to terminate that of our friends and nearest connections; and from which, his goodness has always delivered us. The life which we enjoy, is like a perpetual miracle, therefore, of his divine mercy: The time which

is left to us, is the consequence of an infinity of tender mercies and grace, which composes the thread and the train, as it were, of your life: Every moment we breathe, is like a new gift we receive from God; and to waste that time, and these moments, in a deplorable inutility, is to insult that Infinite Goodness, which has granted them to us; to dissipate an inestimable grace, which is not our due; and to deliver up to chance the price of our eternity. Behold, my brethren, the first guilt attached to the loss of time: It is a precious treasure left to us, though we no longer have any right to it; which is given to us, for the purpose alone of purchasing the kingdom of heaven; and which we dissipate, as a thing the most vile and contemptible, and of which we know not any use to make.

In the world, we would regard that man as a fool, who, heir to a great fortune, should allow it to be wasted, through want of care and attention; and should make no use of it, either to raise himself to places and dignities, which might draw him from obscurity, or in order to confirm to himself, a solid establishment, which might place him in future beyond the reach of any reverse.

But, my brethren, time is that precious treasure, which we have inherited from our birth, and which the Almighty leaves to us through pure compassion: It is in our possession, and it depends upon ourselves to make a proper use of it. It is not in order to exalt ourselves to frivolous dignities here below, or to worldly grandeurs: Alas! whatever passes away, is too vile to be the price of time, which is itself the price of eternity: It is in order to be placed in the heavens above, at the side of Jesus Christ: It is in order to separate us from the crowd of the children of Adam, above all Cæsars and Kings of the earth, in that immortal society

society of the happy, who shall all be kings, and whose reign shall have no bounds, but those of eternity.

What madness, then, to make no use of a treasure so inestimable: In frivolous amusements, to waste that time, which may be the price of eternal salvation; and to allow the hopes of our immortality, to be dissipated in smoke! Yes, my brethren, there is not a day, an hour, a moment, but which, properly employed, may merit us heaven. A single day lost, ought, therefore, to leave to us remorse, a thousand times more lively and poignant, than the failure of the greatest worldly prospects; yet, nevertheless, this time is a burden to us: Our whole life is only one continued science to lose it; and in spite of all our anxieties to waste it, there always, however, remains more than we know how to employ; and yet, the thing upon the earth we have the smallest value for, is our time: Our acts of kindness, we reserve for our friends: Our bounties, for our dependents: Our riches, for our children and relations: Our praises, for those who appear worthy of them: Our time we give to all the world: We expose it, as I may say, a prey to all mankind: They even do us a pleasure in delivering us from it: It is a weight, as it were, which we support in the midst of the world, while incessantly in search of some one who may ease us of its burden. In this manner, time, that gift of God, that most precious blessing of his clemency, and which ought to be the price of our eternity, occasions all our embarrassments, all our wearinesses, and becomes the most oppressive burden of our life.

But a second reason, which makes us feel, still more sensibly, our absurdity in setting so little value upon the time the Almighty leaves to us, is, that not only it is the price of our eternity, but likewise, it is short, and we cannot
 hasten

hasten too much to employ it to advantage. For, my brethren, had we even a long series of ages to exist upon the earth, that space would, in truth, be still too short to be employed in meriting everlasting happiness; yet its duration would at least enable us to retrieve those accidental losses. The days and moments lost, would at least form only a point, scarcely perceptible, in that long series of ages we should have to pass here below. But, alas! Our whole life is itself but an imperceptible point: The longest endures so little: Our days and our years are shut up in such narrow limits, that we see not what we can have still to lose, in a space so short and rapid. We are only, as I may say, a moment upon the earth; like those fiery exhalations, which, in the obscurity of night, are seen wandering in the air, we only appear, to vanish in a moment, and be replunged, for ever, into our original and everlasting darkness: The exhibition we make to the world is but a flash, which is extinguished almost in the same moment it exists: We say it ourselves every day. Alas! How can we take days and hours of rest, from a life, which is itself but a moment? And besides, if you retrench from that moment, all you are under the necessity of allowing to the indispensable necessities of the body, to the duties of your station, to unexpected events, and the inevitable compliances due to society, what remains for yourself, for God, and for eternity? And are we not worthy of pity; we, who know not how to employ the little which remains to us, and who fly to the assistance of a thousand artifices to abridge its duration?

To the little time, my brethren, we have to live upon the earth, add the number of past crimes, which we have to expiate in this short interval. How many iniquities are collected upon our heads, since our first years: Alas! Ten

lives, like ours, would scarcely suffice to expiate a part of them: The time would still be too short; and it would be necessary to call upon the goodness of God, to prolong the duration of our penance. Great God! What portion can remain to me for pleasures and indolence, in a life so short and so criminal as mine? What place, then, can frivolous sports and amusements find in an interval so rapid; and which altogether would not suffice to expiate a single one of my crimes?

Ah! my brethren, do we even think upon it? A criminal condemned to death, and to whom a single day is only allowed to endeavour towards obtaining his pardon, would he find hours and moments still to trifle away? Would he complain of the length of the time, which the humanity and goodness of his judge had awarded him? Would he be embarrassed how to use it? Would he search for frivolous amusements to assist him to pass those precious moments, which were left him to merit his pardon and deliverance? Would he not endeavour to profit by an interval so decisive with regard to his destiny? Would he not replace, by the anxiety, vivacity, and continuance of his exertions, what might be wanting from the brevity of the time allowed to him? Fools that we are! our sentence is pronounced; our guilt renders our condemnation certain: We are left a single day to shun the evil, and to change the rigour of our eternal decree: And this only day, this rapid day, we indolently pass in occupations vain, slothful, and puerile.

This precious day is a burden to us, wearies us; we seek to abridge it; scarcely can we find amusements sufficient to fill the void; the evening arrives, without our having made any other use of the day left to us, than that
of

of rendering ourselves still more worthy of the condemnation we had already merited. And besides, my brethren, how do we know, that the abuse of the day, left to us by the Almighty's goodness, will not oblige his justice to abridge, and to cut of a portion of it? How many unexpected accidents may arrest us in a course so limited, and crop, in their fairest blossoms, the hopes of a longer life! How many sudden and astonishing deaths do we see; and generally the just punishment of the unworthy use they had made of life! What age has ever witnessed more of these melancholy examples? Formerly these accidents were rare and singular; at present, they are events which happen every day. Whether it be, that our crimes have drawn down upon us this punishment; whether it be, that excesses unknown to our forefathers lead us to them; but at present they are the deaths most common and frequent. Number, if you can, those of your relations, friends, and connections, whom a sudden death has surpris'd without preparation, repentance, or a moment allowed them to reflect upon themselves, upon that God whom they have offended, and upon those crimes which, far from detesting, they never had leisure sufficiently to be acquainted with.

Will you tell us after this, that there are many spare moments in the day: That we must contrive to amuse ourselves some way or other?

There are many spare moments in the day? But your guilt consists in leaving them in that frightful void: The days of the upright are always full. Spare moments in the day: But are your duties always fulfilled? Are your houses regulated, your children instructed, the afflicted relieved, the poor visited, the works of piety accomplished? Time is short: Your obligations so infinite; and you can
still

still find so many spare moments in the day? My God! How many holy characters have in solitude complained, that their days passed too rapidly away; have borrowed from the night, what the brevity of the day had taken from their labours and zeal; have lamented, even in the calm and leisure of their solitude, that sufficient time remained not for them to publish thy praises, and eternal mercies: And we, charged with a multiplicity of cares; we, in the midst of the solitudes and engagements of the age, which absorb almost all our days and moments; we, responsible to our relations, to our children, to our friends, to our inferiors, to our superiors, to our stations, to our country, for such an infinity of duties; we still find a void in our life; and the little which remains to us, we think too long to be employed in serving and blessing thy holy name?

But we are happy, you say, when we know how to amuse ourselves, and innocently to pass away the time. But how do you know that your course is not already run; and that you do not perhaps touch the fatal moment which commences your eternity? Does your time belong to you, to be disposed of as you please? Time itself passes away so soon; and are so many amusements necessary to assist it in passing still more rapidly?

But, is time given to you for nothing serious, great, and eternal; nothing worthy of the elevation and destiny of man? And the Christian and inheritor of heaven, is he upon the earth, only to amuse himself?

But are there not, you say, many innocent recreations in life? I grant there are many: But recreations suppose pains and cares, which have preceded them; while your whole life is one continued recreation. Recreations are permitted

permitted to those who, after fulfilling their duties, are under the necessity of according some moments of relaxation to the weakness of human nature: But you, if you have occasion for relaxation, it is from the continuance of your pleasures, and even what you call your recreations: It is from the rage of inordinate gaming, of which the duration and earnest attention necessary, besides the loss of time, render you incapable, on quitting it, of application to any other duty of your station. What recreation can you find in a lawless and boundless passion, which occupies almost your whole life; ruins your health; deranges your fortune, and renders you the continual sport of a miserable chance? And it is not with such characters that we find neither order, rule, or discipline? All serious duties forgotten; disorderly servants; children miserably educated; affairs declining; and public scorn and contempt attached to their names, and their unfortunate posterity? The passion of gaming is almost never unaccompanied; and to those of one sex especially, is always the source, or the occasion of all the others: These are the recreations you believe innocent, and necessary to fill up the empty moments of the day.

Ah! my brethren, how many of the reprobate, in the midst of their anguish and punishments, entreat from the mercy of God, only one of those moments, which we know not how to employ; and could their request be granted, what use would they not make of that precious moment? How many tears of compunction and penitence! How many prayers and supplications, to soften the Father of Mercies, and to induce his paternal feelings to restore to them his affection! This only moment is nevertheless refused: Time, they are told, exists no more for them; and you find yourselves embarrassed with the little you are left? God will judge you, my brethren; and on the bed
of

of death, and in that terrible hour which shall surprife you, in vain fhall you demand a little more time : In vain fhall you promife to God, a more Chriftian ufe of what you will endeavour to obtain : His juftice, without pity, will cut the thread of your days : And that time, which now oppreffes and embarrafles you, fhall then be denied.

But in what our blindnefs here is ftill more confpicuous, is, that not only the time which we lofe with fo much indifference and infenfibility, is fhort and precious, but likewise irreparable ; for once loft, it is for ever gone, without refource.

I fay irreparable : For, in the firft place, riches, honours, reputation, and favour, though once loft, may again be retrieved. We may even replace each of thefe loffes, by other acquirements, which will repay us with ufury : But the moments loft in inutility, are fo many means of falvation, which we never again can poffefs, but which are for ever cut off from the number, which God, in his compaffion, had allotted to us. Indeed, in a fpace fo fhort as we have to live, there cannot be a doubt, but that the Almighty had his particular defigns, with regard to each of our days and moments ; that he hath marked the ufe we ought to have made of them ; the connection they were to have with our eternal falvation ; and that to each of them he hath attached affiftances of grace, in order to confummate the work of our fanctification. Now, thefe days and moments being loft, the grace attached to them muft be equally fo : The moments of God are finifhed, and return no more : The courfe of his mercies is regulated : We believed they were only ufelefs moments we had loft ; and with them we have loft ineflimable fuccours of grace ;
which

which we find deducted from those the goodness of God had destined for us.

In the *second* place, Irreparable, because every day, every moment, ought to advance us a step nearer heaven: Now, the days and moments lost leaving us in arrears, and the duration of our course being also determined, the end arrives when we are yet at a distance; when there is no longer time to supply the remainder of the career; or, at least, to regain the lost moments, and reach the goal, we must double our speed: In one day, fill up the course of many years; make the most heroic exertions; and hasten in a degree, even beyond our strength: Proceed to excesses of holiness, which are miracles of grace, and of which the generality of men are incapable; and consummate, in small interval, what ought to be the labour of a whole life.

In the *last* place, Irreparable, with respect to the works of penance and reparation, of which, in a certain period of life, we are capable, but are no longer so, when we wait the infirmities of a more advanced age. For, after all, it is in vain to say then, that God expects not impossibilities; that there is a penance for every age; and that religion does not wish us to hasten our days, under the pretext of expiating our crimes: It is you who have placed yourselves in this state of impossibility: Your sins diminish not your obligations: Guilt must be punished, in order to be effaced. The Almighty had allowed you both time and strength, to satisfy this immutable and eternal law: This time you have wasted in accumulating new debts: This strength you have exhausted, either by new excesses, or at least, without making any use of it, to further the designs of God respecting you: The Almighty must therefore

fore do, what you have never done yourselves, and punish after your death, the crimes you have never been inclined to expiate during your life.

This is to say, in order to concentrate all these reflections, that with every moment of our life, it is as with our death : We die only once : and from thence we conclude, that we must die in a proper state, because there is no longer a possibility of returning, to repair, by a second death the evil of the first : In like manner, we only once exist, such and such moments : We cannot return upon our steps, and, by commencing a new road, repair the errors and faults of our first path : In like manner, every moment of our life which we sacrifice, becomes a point fixed for our eternity ; that moment lost, shall change no more : It shall eternally be the same ; it will be recalled to us, such as we had passed it, and will be marked with that ineffaceable stamp. How miserable, then is our blindness, my brethren ; we, whose life is only one continued attention to lose the time which returns no more, and with so rapid a course, flies to precipitate itself into the abyss of eternity !

Great God ! Thou who art the sovereign dispenser of times and moments : Thou in whose hands are our days and our years, with what eyes must thou behold us losing and dissipating the moments of which thou alone knowest the duration ; of which, in irrevocable characters, thou hast marked the course and measure ; moments, which thou drawest from the treasure of thine eternal mercies, to allow us time for penitence : Moments, which every day, thy justice presses thee to abridge, as a punishment for their abuse ; moments, which, every day before our eyes, thou refusest to so many finners, less culpable than we, whom a terrible death surprises, and drags into the gulf of thine eternal vengeance ;

vengeance : Moments, in a word, which we shall not perhaps long enjoy ; and of which thou soon intendest to terminate the melancholy career ! Great God, Behold the greatest, and the best part of my life, already past, and wholly lost : In all my days, there has not hitherto been a single serious one : A single day for thee, for my salvation, and for eternity : My whole life is but a vapour, which leaves nothing real or solid in the hand of him who recalls it. Shall I, to the end, drag on my days in this melancholy inutility ; in this weariness which pursues me, in the midst of my pleasures, and the efforts which unavailingly I make to avoid it ? Shall the last hour surprize me, loaded with the void of my whole years ? And in all my course, shall there be nothing serious or important, but the last moment, which will terminate it for ever, and decide my everlasting destiny ? Great God ! what a life, for a soul destined to serve Thee, called to the immortal society of thy Son, and thy saints, enriched with thy gifts, and in consequence of them, capable of works worthy of eternity ! What a life, is that life, which, in reality, is nothing, has nothing in view, and fills up a time which is decisive of its eternal destiny, in doing nothing, and reckoning as well passed, those days and hours which imperceptibly slip away !

But if inutility be opposite to the price of time, irregularity and multiplicity of occupations are not less so, to the proper order of time, and to the Christian use we ought to make of it. You have just seen the dangers of a slothful, and I will now lay down before you the inconveniencies of a hurried life.

PART II. To every thing we have hitherto said, my brethren, the majority of those who listen to me, have no doubt secretly opposed, that their life is any thing but sloth-

ful and ufelefs ; that fcarcely can they fuffice, for the duties, good offices, and endless engagements of their ftations ; that they live in an eternal viciffitude of occupations and bufinefs, which abforbs their whole life ; and that they think themfelves happy, when they can accomplifh a moment for themfelves, and enjoy at leifure, the fituation which their fortune denies to them.

Now this, my brethren, is a new way of abufing time, ftill more dangerous than even inutility and indolence. In effect the Chriftian ufe of time, is not merely the filling up of all its moments ; it is that of filling them up in order, and according to the will of the Lord, who gives them to us : The life of faith, is a life of regularity and wifdom : Fancy, paffion, pride, and cupidity, are falfe principles of conduét, fince they themfelves are only a derangement of the mind and heart ; and that order and reafon ought to be our only guides.

Nevertheless the life of the majority of men, is a life always occupied, and always ufelefs ; always laborious, and always void : Their paffions give birth to all their motions : Thefe are the great fprings which agitate men ; make them run here and there like madmen ; and leave them not a fingle moment's tranquillity ; and in filling up all their moments, they feek not to fulfil their duties, but to deliver themfelves up to their reflleffnefs, and to fatisfy their iniquitous defires.

But in what doth this order confift, which ought to regulate the meafure of our occupations, and to fanctify the ufe of our time ? It confifts, in the firft place, in limiting ourfelves to the occupations attached to our ftations : In not feeking places and fituations which may multiply them ;
and

and in not reckoning among our duties, the cares and embarrassments, which anxiety, or our passions, alone generate within us. Secondly, However agitated may be our situations, amidst all our occupations, to regard as the most essential, and the most privileged, those we owe to our salvation.

I say, in the first place, not to reckon amongst the occupations which sanctify the use of our time, those which restlessness, or the passions alone generate.

Restlessness: Yes, my brethren, we all wish to avoid ourselves: To the generality of men, nothing is more melancholy and disagreeable, than to find themselves alone, and obliged to review their own hearts. As vain passions carry us away; as many criminal attachments stain us; and as many thousands illicit desires occupy every moment of our heart; in entering into ourselves, we find only an answer of death, a frightful void, cruel remorse, dark thoughts, and melancholy reflections. We search, therefore, in the variety of occupations, and continual distractions, an oblivion of ourselves: We dread leisure as the signal of weariness; and we expect to find in the confusion and multiplicity of external cares, that happy intoxication, which enables us to go on without perceiving it, and makes us no longer to feel the weight of ourselves.

But al! we deceive ourselves: Weariness is never found but in irregularity, and in a life of confusion, where every thing is out of its place: It is in living by hazard, that we are a burden to ourselves: that we continually search after new occupations, and that disgust soon obliges us to repent that we ever sought for them; that we incessantly change our situation, in order to fly from ourselves; and

and that wherever we go, we carry ourselves : In a word, that our whole life is but a diversified art, to shun weariness, and a miserable talent to find it. Wherever order is not, weariness must necessarily be found : and far from a life of irregularity and confusion being a remedy, on the contrary, it is the most fruitful source, and universal cause of it.

The just souls who live in regularity ; they who yield nothing to caprice and temper ; whose every occupation is exactly where it ought to be ; whose moments are filled up, according to their destination, and to the will of the Lord who directs them, find in order, a perfect remedy against, and protection from weariness. That wise uniformity in the practice of duties, which appear so gloomy in the eyes of the world, is the source of their joy, and of that happy equality of temper, which nothing can derange : Never embarrassed with the present time, which stated duties occupy : Never in pain with regard to the future, for which new duties are arranged : Never delivered up to themselves, by the change of occupations, which succeed each other : Their days appear as moments, because every moment is in its place : Time hangs not upon them, because it always has its distinction and use : and in the arrangement of an uniform an occupied life, they find that peace, and that joy, which the rest of men in vain search for in the confusion of a continual agitation.

Restlessness, by multiplying our occupations, leaves us, therefore, a prey to weariness and disgust ; nor yet does it sanctify the use of our time : For if the moments, not regulated by the order of God, are moments lost, however occupied they may otherwise be ; if the life of man ought to be a life of wisdom and regularity, where every occupation has its allotted place ; what can be more opposite to such a life than this inconsistency, these eternal fluctuations
in

in which restlessness makes us pass our time? But the passions which keep us in perpetual motion, do not form for us more legitimate employments.

Yes, my brethren, I know that it is only in a certain age of life, that we appear occupied with frivolity and pleasures; more serious cares, and more solid avocations succeed to the indolence, and to the vain amusements of our younger years; and after wasting our youth in sloth and in pleasures, we appropriate our maturity, to our country, to fortune, and to ourselves; but still with respect to heaven we continue the same. I confess that we owe our services to our country, to our Sovereign, and to the national cares; that amongst the number of duties prescribed to us by religion, it places that of zeal for our Sovereign, and for the interest and glory of our country; and that religion alone can form faithful subjects, and citizens ever ready to sacrifice their all for the general good. But religion wishes not that pride and ambition should rashly plunge us in public affairs; and that we should anxiously endeavour by all possible means, by intrigue and solicitations, to attain places, where, owing every thing to others, not a moment is left for ourselves: Religion wishes us to dread these tumultuous situations; to give ourselves up to them with regret and trembling, when the order of God, and the authority of our masters, call us to them; and where the choice left to us, always to prefer the safety and leisure of a private station, to the dangers and eclat of dignities and places. Alas! We have a short time to exist upon the earth, and the salvation, or eternal condemnation which awaits us, is so near, that every other care ought to be melancholy and burdensome to us; and every thing which diverts our attention from that grand object, for which we are allowed only a small portion of days, ought to appear as the heaviest misfortune.

fortune. This is not a maxim of pure spirituality; it is the first maxim, and the foundation of Christianity.

Nevertheless, ambition, pride, and all our passions, unite to render a private life insupportable to us. What in life we dread most, is a lot and a station which leave us to ourselves, and do not establish us upon others. We consult neither the order of God, nor the views of religion, nor the dangers of a too agitated situation, nor the happiness which faith points out in a private and tranquil station, where we have nothing but ourselves to answer for, and frequently not even our talents; we consult only our passions, and that insatiable desire of raising ourselves above our brethren; we wish to figure upon the stage of life, and become great personages; and upon a stage, alas! which to-morrow shall disappear, and leave us nothing real, but the puerile trouble, and pain of having acted upon it. Even the more these stations appear surrounded with tumult and embarrassment, the more do they appear worthy of our pursuit: We wish to be in every thing: That leisure so dear to a religious soul, to us appears shameful and mean: Every thing which divides us betwixt the public and ourselves: Every thing which gives to others an absolute right over our time: Every thing which plunges us into that abyss of cares and agitations, which credit, favour, and consideration drag after them, affects, attracts, and transports us. Thus, the majority of men inconsiderately create to themselves a tumultuous and agitated life, which the Almighty never required of them; and eagerly seek for cares, where they cannot be in safety, unless the order of God had prepared them for us.

Indeed, we sometimes hear them complaining of the endless agitations inseparable from their places; fighting for rest

rest, and envying the lot of a tranquil and private station; repeating, that it should indeed be time to live for themselves, after having so long lived for others. But these are merely words of course: They seem to groan under the weight of affairs; but with much more uneasiness and grief, would they support the weight of leisure and of a private condition: They employ one part of their life, in struggling against each other for the tumult of places and employments, and the other they employ in lamenting the misfortune of having obtained them. It is a language of vanity: They would wish to appear superior to their fortune; and they are not so, to the smallest reverse, or the slightest symptom of coldness which threatens them. Behold how our passions create occupations and embarrassments, which God required not: and deprive us of a time, whose value we shall be ignorant of, till we reach that last moment, when time finishes, and eternity begins.

Yet still my brethren, in the midst of the endless occupations attached to your stations, were you to regard as the most privileged, those connected with your salvation, you would in some measure at least, repair the dissipation of that portion of your life, which the world and the cares of this earth entirely occupy. But it is still in this point that our blindness is deplorable: We cannot find time for our eternal salvation. That which we bestow on fortune, the duties of a charge, the good offices expected from our station, the care of the body, and attentions to dress; that which we give to friendship, society, recreation, and custom, all appear essential and indispensable: We even dare not encroach upon, or limit these: We carry them beyond the bounds of even reason and necessity; and as life is too short, and our days too rapid, to suffice for all, whatever we retrench, is from the cares of our salvation:

In the multiplicity of our occupations, we are sure to sacrifice those which we ought to bestow on eternity. Yes, my brethren, in place of retrenching from our amusements; from the ceremonies which idleness alone has established; from the duties which ambition multiplies; from the cares and attentions which we bestow on a vain dress, which custom and effeminacy have rendered endless: In place of retrenching from these, at least some little time every day, scarcely do they leave us some accidental remains, which by chance have escaped from the world and pleasure: Some rapid moments, the world wishes not; with which we are perhaps embarrassed; and which we know not how to dispose of otherwise. So long as the world chuses to engage us; so long as it continues to offer pleasures, duties, trifles, and complaisances, we yield ourselves up to it with delight. When all is over, and we no longer know how to fill up our vacant hours, we then consecrate to some languid practices of religion, those outcast moments, which weariness, or a deficiency of pleasures, leaves us: Properly speaking, they are moments of recreation, which we bestow upon ourselves rather than upon God: An interval, we place between the world and us, in order to return to it with more relish; and breathe a little from the fatigue, the disgust, and the satiety, which are the necessary consequences of a life devoted to the world and pleasures, which, prolonged beyond a certain measure, are immediately followed by weariness and lassitude.

Such is the use, which even persons, who deck themselves out with a reputation for virtue, make of their time. Their whole life is one continued criminal preference, given to the world, fortune, ceremony, and pleasures, above the business of their salvation: All is filled up by what they give to their masters, friends, places, and appetites,

tites, and nothing remains for God and for eternity. It would appear, that time is given to us, in the first place, for the world, ambition, and earthly cares; and should any portion of it happen afterwards to remain, that we are entitled to praise, when we bestow it on our salvation.

Great God! For what purpose dost thou leave us on the earth, but to render ourselves worthy of thine eternal possession? Every thing we do for the world, shall perish with it; whatsoever we do for thee, shall be immortal. All our cares and attentions here, are in general for masters, ungrateful, unjust, difficult to please, weak, and incapable of rendering us happy: The duties we render to thee, are given to a Lord and Master, faithful, just, compassionate, almighty, and who alone can recompense those who serve him: The cares of the earth however brilliant, are foreign to us; they are unworthy of us; it is not for them we are created; we ought only to devote ourselves to them as they pass, in order to satisfy the transitory ties they exact from us, and which connect us with mankind: The cares of eternity alone are worthy of the nobility of our hopes, and fill all the grandeur and dignity of our destiny. Without the cares of salvation, those of this earth are profane and sullied; they are no longer but vain, fruitless, and almost always criminal agitations: The cares of salvation alone consecrate and sanctify them; give to them reality, elevation, the price and the merit which they wanted. All other cares wound, trouble, harden, and render us miserable; but the duties we render to thee, leave us a real and heartfelt joy: They strengthen, calm, and console us; and even soften the anguish and bitterness of the others. In a word, we owe ourselves to thee, O my God! before masters, inferiors, friends, or connections. Thou alone hast the first right over our hearts and reason, which are the

gifts of thy liberal hand; it is for thee, therefore, that in the first place we ought to make use of them; and we are Christians, before we are princes, subjects, public characters, or any thing else on the earth.

You will perhaps tell us, my brethren, that in fulfilling the painful and endless duties attached to your station, you believe that you serve God, accomplish your measure of righteousness, and labour toward your salvation. I grant it: But we must fulfil these duties, according to the views of the Lord, from motives of faith, and in the true spirit of religion and piety. God reckons only what we do for him: Of all our pains, fatigues, submissions and sacrifices, he accepts only those which are offered to his glory, and not to our own; and our days are only full in his sight, when they are full for eternity. All actions, which have nothing for their object but the world; a fame limited to this earth; a perishable fortune; some praises they may attract to us from men; or some degree of grandeur and reputation, to which they may raise us here below, are nothing in his presence; or, at least, are only puerile amusements, unworthy of the majesty of his regards.

Thus, my brethren, how different are the judgments of God from those of the world! In the world we call beautiful that splendid life, in which great actions are numbered, victories gained, difficult negotiations concluded, undertakings successfully conducted, illustrious employments supported with reputation, eminent dignities acquired by important services, and exercised with glory; a life which passes into history, fills the public monuments, and of which the remembrance shall be preserved to the latest posterity: Such, according to the world, is a beautiful life. But if, in all this, they have sought more their own, than the

the glory of God ; if they have had nothing more in view than to erect to themselves a perishable edifice of grandeur on the earth, in vain shall they have furnished a splendid career to the eyes of men ; in the sight of God, it is a life-lost : In vain shall history record us ; we shall be effaced from the book of life, and from the eternal histories ; in vain shall our actions be the admiration of ages to come ; they shall not be written on the immortal columns of the Heavenly Temple. In vain shall we have acted a dignified part upon the stage of all earthly ages ; in the eternal ages we shall be as those who never were : In vain shall our titles and dignities be preserved upon the marble and brass ; as the fingers of men have written them, they shall perish with them ; and what the finger of God shall have written, will alone endure as long as himself. In vain shall our life be proposed as a model to the ambition of our descendants ; its reality existing only in the passions of men, from the moment they shall cease to have passions, and the objects which inflame them shall be annihilated, this life shall be nothing, and shall be replunged into non-entity, with the world which admired it.

For candidly, my brethren, can you really wish, that in that awful and terrible day, when righteousness itself shall be judged, the Almighty should give you credit for all the pains, cares, and disgusts you have experienced and devoured, in order to raise yourselves in the world ? That he should regard, as well employed, the time you have sacrificed to the world, fortune, glory, and the elevation of your name and race, as if you were upon the earth only for yourselves ? That he should place among the number of your works of salvation, those which have only had for principle ambition, pride, envy, and self-interest ; and that he should reckon your vices amongst your virtues.

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And what will you be able to say to him, on the bed of death, when he shall enter into judgment with you, and demand an account of the time, which he had only granted you, to be employed in glorifying and serving him? Will you say to him: Lord, I have gained many victories; I have usefully and gloriously served my prince and country; I have established to myself a great name amongst men? alas! you have never been able to gain a victory over yourself: You have usefully served the kings of the earth, and you have neglected, with contempt, the service of the King of kings. You have established to yourself a great name amongst men; and your name is unknown amongst the chosen of God: Time lost for eternity. Will you say to him: I have conducted the most difficult negotiations, I have concluded the most important treaties; I have managed the interests and fortunes of princes; I have been in the secrets, and in the councils of Kings? Alas! you have concluded treaties and alliances with men, and you have a thousand times violated the holy covenant you have entered into with God: You have managed the interests of princes, and you have never known how to manage the interests of your salvation: You have entered into the secrets of kings, and you have ever been ignorant of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven: Time lost for eternity. Will you say to him: My whole life has been only an incessant toil, and a painful and continued occupation? alas! you have always toiled, and you have never been able to do any thing to save your soul: Time lost for eternity. Will you say to him: I have established my children in the world: I have exalted my relations; I have been useful to my friends; I have augmented the patrimony of my ancestors? alas! you have bequeathed great establishments to your children, and you have not left them the fear of the Lord, by bringing them up, and establishing them in faith and in piety:

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You have augmented the patrimony of your ancestors, and you have dissipated the gifts of grace, and the patrimony of Jesus Christ: Time lost for eternity. Will you say to him: I have made the most profound studies; I have enriched the public with useful and curious works; I have perfected the sciences by new discoveries; I improved my great talents, and rendered them useful to mankind? alas! The great talent confided to you, was that of faith and grace, of which you have made no use: You have rendered yourself learned in the sciences of men, and you have always been ignorant in the science of the Holy: Time lost for eternity. In a word, will you tell him: I have passed my life in fulfilling the duties, and good offices of my station: I have gained friends; I have rendered myself useful and agreeable to my masters? alas! You have had friends to boast of on the earth, and you have acquired none to yourself in heaven: You have made every exertion to please men, and you have done nothing to please the Almighty: Time lost for eternity.

No, my brethren, what a frightful void, the greatest part of men, who had governed states and empires, who appeared to regulate the whole universe, and had filled in it the most distinguished places; who were the subjects of every conversation, and of the desires and hopes of men; who engrossed almost alone, the whole attentions of the earth; what a frightful void, will they, on the bed of death, find their whole life to be? Whilst the days of the pious and retired soul, regarded by them as obscure and indolent, shall appear full, complete, occupied, marked each by some victory of faith, and worthy of being celebrated by the eternal songs.

Meditate, my brethren, on these holy truths: Time is short; it is irreparable: It is the price of your eternal felicity:

city : It is given to you, only in order to render you worthy of that felicity : Calculate, therefore, what portion of it you should bestow on the world, pleasures, fortune, and on your salvation. My brethren, says the Apostle, time is short : Let us therefore use the world, as not abusing it ; let us possess our riches, places, dignities and titles, as though we possessed them not ; let us enjoy the favour of our superiors, and the esteem of men, as though we enjoyed them not ; they are only shadows, which vanish, and leave us for ever ; and let us only reckon upon as real in our whole life, the moments which we have employed for heaven.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

THE CERTAINTY OF A FUTURE STATE.

MATT. xxv. 46.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

BEHOLD, to what at last shall be brought the desires, hopes, counsels, and enterprises of men: Behold, upon what at last shall split, the vain reflections of sages and freethinkers; the doubts and eternal uncertainties of unbelievers; the vast projects of conquerors; the monuments of human glory; the cares of ambition; the distinction of talents; the disquietudes of fortune; the prosperity of empires, and all the insignificant revolutions of the earth. Such shall be the awful conclusion, which will unravel the mysteries of Providence, on the diverse lots of the children of Adam, and justify its conduct in the government of the universe. This life is, therefore, but a rapid instant, and the commencement of an eternal futurity. Torments, without end, or the delights of an immortal felicity, shall be our lot, as well as that of all men.

Nevertheless, the view of this grand object, which formerly had been able to startle the ferocity of tyrants; to shake the fortitude of philosophers; to disturb the effeminacy and voluptuousness of Cæsars; to soften the most barbarous

ous nations ; to form fo many martyrs ; to people the deferts, and to bring the whole univerfe fubmiffive to the yoke of the crofs : This image, fo terrifying, is now almoft deftined to alarm the timidity of merely the common people : Thefe grand objects are become like vulgar paintings, which we dare no longer expofe to the falfe delicacy of the great, and connoiffeurs of the world ; and the only fruit we generally reap from this fort of difcourfes, is to make it be inquired, perhaps, after quitting them, whether every thing fhall take place, as we have faid.

For, my brethren, we live in times in which the faith of many has been wrecked ; in which a wretched philofophy, like a mortal venom, fpreads in fecret, and undertakes to juftify abominations and vices, againft the belief of future punifhment and rewards. This evil has paffed from the palaces of the great, even to the people, and every where the piety of the juft is infulted by the difcourfes of irreligion, and the maxims of freethinking.

And certainly, I am not furprifed that diffolute men fhould doubt of a future ftate, and endeavour to combat, or to weaken a truth, fo capable of difturbng their criminal fenfualities. It is horrible to look forward to everlafting mifery. The world has no pleafure, which can endure a thought fo fhocking ; confequently, it has always endeavoured to efface it from the heart and mind of man. It well knows, that the belief of a future ftate, is a troublefome check on the human paffions, and that it will never fucceed in making tranquil and refolute libertines, without having firft made unbelievers.

Let us deprive, then, the corruption of the human heart of fo wretched and weak a fupport : Let us prove to diffolute

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lute souls, that they shall survive their debaucheries ; that all dies not with the body ; that this life shall finish their crimes, but not their misery ; and more completely to confound impiety, let us attack it in the vain pretexts on which it depends.

1stly, who knows, say the impious, that all dies not with us ? Is that other life, of which we are told, quite certain ? Who has ever returned, to inform us of it ?

2dly, Is it worthy of the majesty of God, say they again, to demean himself, by any attention to what passes among men ? What matters it to him, that worms of the earth, like us, murder, deceive, and tear each other, live in luxury or intemperance ? Is it not presumptuous in man, to suppose, that an Almighty God is occupied with him ?

Lastly, What likelihood, add they, that God, having made man such as he is, will punish as crimes, inherent inclinations to pleasure, which nature has given us. Behold the philosophy of the voluptuary : The uncertainty of a future state : The majesty of God, which a vile creature cannot offend ; and the weakness of man, which, being born with him, he would be unjust, of it, to constitute a crime.

Let us then prove, in the first place, against the uncertainty of the impious, that the truth of a future state is justified by the purest lights of reason : Secondly, against the unworthy idea, grounded upon the greatness of God, that this truth is justified by his wisdom and glory : Lastly, against the pretext, drawn from the weakness of man, that it is justified, even by the testimony of his own conscience. The certainty of a future state : The necessity of a future

state : The inward acknowledgment of a future state : Behold the subject, and arrangement of my discourse.

O God ! Attend not to the insults, which the blasphemies of impiety offer to thy glory ; regard only, and see, of what reason is capable, when thy light is withdrawn. In the wickedness of the human mind, behold, all the severity of thy justice, when it abandons it, that the more I expose the foolish blasphemies of the impious soul, the more may he become in thy sight, an object worthy of thy pity, and of the treasures of thine infinite mercy.

PART I. It surely is melancholy to have to justify before believers, the most consolatory truth of faith : to come, to prove to men, to whom Jesus Christ has been declared, that their being is not a wild assemblage, and the wretched offspring of chance : that a wise and an Almighty artificer, has presided at our formation and birth ; that a spark of immortality animates our clay ; that a portion of us shall survive ourselves ; and that, on quitting this earthly mansion, our soul shall return to the bosom of God, from whence it came, and go to inhabit the eternal region of the living, where to each one shall be rendered according to his works.

It was with this truth that Paul began to announce faith, before the Athenian judges. We are the immortal race of God, said he to that assembly of sages, and he has appointed a day to judge the universe. By that, the Apostles spread the first principles of the doctrine of salvation, through infidel and corrupted nations. But we, who come after the revolution of ages, when the plenitude of nations has entered into the Church, when the whole universe has professed to believe, when all the mysteries have been

been cleared up, all the prophecies accomplished, Jesus Christ glorified, the path of heaven laid open; we who appear in these latter times, when the day of the Lord is so much nearer than when our fathers believed; Alas! what ought our ministry to be, unless to dispose believers for that grand hope, and to instruct them to hold themselves in readiness to appear before Jesus Christ, who will quickly come: far from having still to combat these shocking and foolish maxims, which the first preaching of the gospel had effaced from the universe.

The pretended uncertainty of a future state, is, then, the grand foundation of the security of unbelievers. We know nothing, say they, of that other world, of which you tell us so much. None of the dead have ever returned to inform us; perhaps, there is nothing beyond the grave: Let us enjoy, therefore, the present, and leave to chance a futurity, which either exists not, or is meant to be concealed from our knowledge.

Now, I say, that this uncertainty is suspicious in the principle which produces it, foolish in the proofs on which it depends, and frightful in its consequences. Refuse me not here your attention.

Suspicious in the principle which produces it. For, how has the uncertainty of a future state been formed in the mind of the unbeliever? It requires only to trace the origin of an opinion, to know whether the interests of truth, or the passions, have established it on earth.

At his birth, the impious man bore the principles of natural religion, common to all men: He found written in his heart, a law, which forbade violence, injustice, treachery,

chery, and every action to another; which he would not have done to himself: Education fortified these sentiments of nature: He was taught to know a God; to love and to fear him: Virtue was shewn to him in the rules; it was rendered amiable to him in the examples; and though, within himself, he felt inclinations, in opposition to duty, yet, when he yielded to their seductions, his heart secretly espoused the cause of virtue against his own weakness.

Thus did the impious man, at first, live on the earth: With the rest of mankind, he adored a Supreme Being; respected his laws; dreaded his chastisements; and expected his promises. Whence comes it, then, that he no longer acknowledges a God; that crimes appear to him as human policies: hell, a vulgar prejudice; a future state, a chimaera; and the soul, a spark, which is extinguished with the body? By what exertion has he attained to the knowledge of things so new, and so surprising? By what means has he succeeded, to rid himself of these ancient prejudices, so rooted among men, so consistent with the feelings of his heart, and the lights of reason? Has he searched into, and maturely examined them? Has he adopted every solid precaution, which an affair the most important of life, requires? Has he withdrawn himself from the commerce of men, in solitude, to allow leisure for reflection and study? Has he purified his heart, lest the passions may have misled him? What anxious attentions, and solicitude, to investigate the truth, are required, to reject the first feelings which the soul has imbibed!

Listen, my brethren, and adore the justice of God, on these corrupted hearts, whom he delivers up to the vanity of their own judgment. In proportion as his manners became dissolute, the rules have appeared suspicious; in proportion

proportion as he became debased, he has endeavoured to persuade himself, that man is like the beast. He is become impious, only by shutting up every avenue which might lead him to the truth; by no longer regarding religion as an important concern; by searching into it, only for the purpose of dishonouring it, by blasphemies and sacrilegious witticisms; he is become impious, only by seeking to steel himself against the cries of his own conscience, and delivering himself up to the most infamous gratifications. It is by that path, that he has attained to the wonderful and sublime science of unbelief: It is to these grand efforts, that he owes the discovery of a truth, of which the rest of men before him, had either been ignorant, or detested.

Behold the source of unbelief; the corruption of the heart. Yes, my brethren, find me, if you can, men wise temperate, pure, regular, and lovers of truth, who believe not a God, who look forward to no future state, who look upon adulteries, abominations, and incests, as the inclinations and innocent pastimes of nature. If the world has seen impious characters, who bore the semblance of wisdom and temperance, it was either that they better concealed their irregularities, in order to give more credit to their impiety, or the satiety of pleasures, which had brought them to that feigned temperance: Debauchery had been the original source of their irreligion; their hearts were corrupted, before their faith was wrecked; they had an interest to believe that all dies with the body, before they succeeded in persuading themselves of it; and a long indulgence of luxury, had fully disgusted them with guilt, but had not rendered virtue more amiable to them,

What consolation for us, who believe, that we must first renounce probity, modesty, manners, and all the feelings
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of humanity, before we can renounce faith, and to be no longer Christian, must first cease to be man!

Behold then, the uncertainty of the impious, already suspicious in its principle; but secondly, it is foolish in the proofs on which it depends.

For surely, very decisive and convincing proofs must be required to make us espouse the cause of unbelief, and to render us tranquil, on what we are told of an eternal state to come. It is not natural, that man would hazard an interest so serious as that of eternity, on light and frivolous proofs, still less so, that he would thereon abandon the general opinion, the belief of his fathers, the religion of all ages, the agreement of all nations, and the prejudices of his education, had he not, as it were, been forced to it, by the evidence of the truth. Unless absolutely convinced that all dies with the body, nothing can bear a comparison with the madness and folly of the unbeliever. Now, is he completely convinced? What are the grand reasons which have determined him to adopt this vile cause? We know not, says he, what happens in that other world of which you tell us; the good die equally as the wicked: man as the beast; and no one returns, to say which was in the error. Press him a little further, and you will be shocked to see the weakness of unbelief; vague discourses, hackneyed suspicions, everlasting uncertainties, and chimerical suppositions, on which nobody in their senses, would wish to risk the happiness, or disquiet of a single day, and upon which he, however, hazards an eternity.

Behold the insurmountable proofs which the freethinker opposes to the belief of the universe; behold that evidence, which, in his mind, prevails over all that is most clear,
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and most established on the earth. We know nothing of what passes in that other world of which you tell us. O man! open here thine eyes. A single doubt is sufficient to render thee impious, and all the proofs of religion are too weak to make thee a believer. Thy mind hesitates to believe in a future state, and, in the mean time, thou livest as though there were none. The only foundation thou hast, for thine opinion, is thine uncertainty, and thou reproachest to us, that faith is a vulgar credulity!

But I ask, on which side here is credulity? Is it on that of the freethinker, or the believer? The latter believes in a future state, on the authority of the divine writings, that is to say, the book, without contradiction, which most deserves belief; on the deposition of holy men, that is to say, just, pure, and miraculous characters, who have shed their blood to render glory to the truth, and to that doctrine, of which the conversion of the universe has rendered a testimony, that to the end of ages, shall rise up against the impious; on the accomplishment of the prophecies, that is to say, the only character of truth, which the impostor cannot imitate; on the tradition of all ages, that is to say, on facts, which, since the creation of the world, have appeared certain, to all the greatest characters, the most acknowledged just men, the wisest and most civilized nations, the universe could ever boast of; in a word, on proofs at least probable. The freethinker denies a futurity on a simple doubt, a mere suspicion. Who knows it says he; who has returned from it? He has no argument, either solid or decisive, to overturn the truth of a future state. For let him avow it, and then will we submit. He only mistrusts that there be any thing after this life, and upon that he believes that all dies with him.

Now I demand, which here is the credulous? Is it he, who, in support of his belief, has whatever is probable among men, and most calculated to make impression on reason; or him who is resolved to deny a future state, on the weakness of a simple doubt? Nevertheless, the free-thinker imagines that he exerts his reason more than the believer; he looks down upon us, as weak and credulous men; and he considers himself as a superior genius, exalted above all vulgar prejudices, and whom reason alone, and not the public opinion, determines. O God! How terrible art thou, when thou deliverest up a sinner to his own infatuation; and how well thou knowest to draw glory to thyself, even from the efforts which thine enemies make to oppose it.

But I go still further. When, even in the doubt, formed by the unbeliever, of a future state, the arguments should be equal, and the trifling uncertainties, which render him incredulous, should balance the solid and evident truths which promise immortality to us; I say, that even in an equality of proofs, he at least ought to wish, that the opinion of faith, with regard to the nature of our soul, were true; an opinion which is so honourable to man; which tells him, that his origin is celestial, and his hopes eternal; he ought to wish, that the doctrine of impiety were false; a doctrine so melancholy, so humiliating to man; which confounds him with the beast; which makes him live only for the body; give him neither purpose, destination, nor hope; and limits his lot to a small number of rapid, restless, and sorrowful days, which he passes on the earth: All things equal, a reason born with any degree of elevation, would prefer being deceived by what is honourable to itself, rather than adopt a side so disgraceful to its being. What a soul, then, must the unbeliever have received from nature, to prefer,

prefer, in so great an inequality of proofs, the belief, that he is created only for this earth, and favourable to regard himself as a vile assemblage of dirt, and the companion of the ox and bull ! What do I say ? What a monster in the universe must be the unbeliever, who mistrusts the general belief, only because it is too glorious for his nature ; and believes, that the vanity of men has alone introduced it on the earth, and has persuaded them that they are immortal.

But no, my brethren ! These men of flesh and blood, with reason, reject the honour which religion does to their nature, and persuade themselves, that their soul is merely of earth, and that all dies with the body. Sensual, dissolute, and effeminate men, who have no other check than a brutal instinct ; no other rule, than the vehemence of their desires ; no other occupation, than to awaken, by new artifices, the cupidity already satiated ; men of that character can have little difficulty to believe, that no principle of spiritual life exists within them ; that the body is their only being ; and, as they imitate the manners of beasts, they are pardonable in attributing to themselves the same nature. But let them not judge of all men by themselves ; there are still on the earth, chaste, pure, and temperate souls ; let them not ascribe to nature, the shameful tendencies of their own mind ; let them not degrade humanity in general, because they have unworthily debased themselves ; let them seek out among men, such as themselves ; and finding that they are almost single in the universe, they shall then see that they are rather monsters, than the ordinary productions of nature.

Besides, not only is the freethinker foolish, because, that even in an equality of proofs, his heart and glory should decide him in favour of faith, but likewise his own

interest: For, as I have already said, What does he risk by believing? What disagreeable consequence will follow his mistake? He will live with honour, probity, and innocence; he will be mild affable, just, sincere, religious, a generous friend, a faithful husband, and an equitable master; he will moderate his passions, which would otherwise have occasioned all the misfortunes of his life; he will abstain from pleasures and excesses, which would have prepared for him a painful and premature old age, or a deranged fortune; he will enjoy the character of a virtuous man, and the esteem of mankind:—Behold what he risks. When all should even finish with this life, that surely is still the way to pass it with happiness and tranquillity; such is the only inconveniency I can find. If no eternal recompense shall follow, what will he have lost by expecting it? He has lost some sensual and momentary gratifications which would soon have either fatigued him by the disgust, which always follows their enjoyment, or tyrannised over him, by the new desires they light up: He has lost the wretched satisfaction of being, for the instant he appeared on the earth, cruel, unnatural, voluptuous, without faith, morals, or constancy, perhaps despised and disgraced in the midst of his own people. I can see no other misfortune; he sinks back to his original non-existence, and his error has no other consequence.

But if there is a future state; should he deceive himself in rejecting faith, what does he not risk? The loss of eternal riches; the possession of thy glory, O my God! which would for ever have rendered him happy. But even that is only the commencement of his misery; he goes to experience punishment without end or measure, an eternity of horror and wrath. Now, compare these two destinies: What party here will the freethinker adopt? Will he risk
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the short duration of his days, or a whole eternity? Will he hold by the present, which must finish to-morrow, and in which he even cannot be happy? Will he tremble at a futurity, which has no other limits than eternity, and can never finish but with God himself! Where is the prudent man, who, in an uncertainty even equal, durst here balance? And what name shall we give to the unbeliever, who, with nothing in his favour but frivolous doubts, while on the side of truth, beholding the authority, example, prescription, proof, and voice of all ages, the entire world, singly adopts the wretched cause of unbelief; dies tranquil, as though he were no longer to have existence; leaves his eternal destiny in the hands of chance, and carelessly prepares to encounter so awful a scene. O God! Is this a man conducted by cool reason; or, is it a madman, who looks forward to no resource but despair? The uncertainty of the freethinker is therefore foolish, in the proofs on which he depends.

But lastly, it is still more dreadful in its consequences. And here, my brethren, allow me to lay aside the deep reasonings of erudition and doctrine; I wish to speak only to the conscience of the unbeliever, and to confine myself to the proofs which his own feelings acknowledge.

Now, if all shall finish with us, if man have nothing to expect after this life, and that here is our country, our origin, and the only happiness we can promise ourselves, why are we not happy? If only created for the pleasures of the senses, why are they unable to satisfy us; and why do they always leave a fund of weariness and sorrow in the heart? If man have nothing superior to the beast, why, like it, do not his days flow on without care, uneasiness, disgust, or sorrow, in sensual and carnal enjoyments? If man have no
other

other felicity to expect, than merely a temporal happiness, why is he unable to find it on the earth? Whence comes it, that riches serve only to render him uneasy; that honours fatigue him; that pleasures exhaust him; that the sciences, far from satisfying, confound and irritate his curiosity; that reputation constrains and embarrasses him; that all these, united, cannot fill the immensity of his heart, and still leave him something to wish for? All other beings, contented with their lot, appear happy in their way, in the situation the Author of Nature has placed them; the stars, tranquil in the firmament, quit not their station to illuminate another world; the earth, regular in its movements, shoots not upwards to occupy their place; the animals crawl in the fields, without envying the lot of man, who inhabits cities and sumptuous palaces; the birds carol in the air, without troubling themselves, whether there be happier creatures in the earth than themselves; all are happy as I may say; every thing in nature is in its place: Man alone is uneasy and discontented; man alone is a prey to his desires, allows himself to be torn by fears, finds his punishment in his hopes, and becomes gloomy and unhappy in the midst even of his pleasures: Man alone can meet with nothing here to fix his heart.

Whence comes this, O man? Must it not be, that here thou art not in thy place; that thou art made for heaven; that thy heart is greater than the world; that the earth is not thy country; and that whatever is not God, is nothing to thee? Answer, if thou can, or rather question thy heart, and thou wilt believe.

2dly, If all die with the body, who has been able to persuade all men, of every age, and of every country, that their soul was immortal? From whence has this strange idea of immortality

immortality descended to the human race? How could an opinion, so distant from the nature of man, were he born only for the functions of the senses, have pervaded the earth: For if man, like the beast, be created only for the present, nothing ought to be more incomprehensible to him, than even the idea of immortality. Could machines of clay, whose only object should be a sensual happiness; have ever been able to form, or to find in themselves, an opinion so exalted, an idea so sublime? Nevertheless, this opinion, so extraordinary, is become that of all men; this opinion, so opposite even to the senses, since man, like the beast, dies wholly, in our sight, is established on the earth; this opinion, which ought not to have even found an inventor in the universe, has been received with an universal docility of belief, amongst all nations; the most savage, as the most cultivated; the most polished, as the most brutal; the most incredulous, as the most submissive to faith.

For, go back to the beginning of ages, examine all nations, read the history of kingdoms and empires, listen to those who return from the most distant isles; the immortality of the soul has always been, and still is, the belief of every people on the face of the earth. The knowledge of one God may have been obliterated; his glory, power, and immensity, may have been effaced, as I may say, from the hearts and minds of men; obstinate and savage nations may still live without worship, religion, or God, in this world; but they all look forward to a future state; nothing has ever been able to eradicate the opinion of the immortality of the soul; they all figure to themselves a region, which our souls shall inhabit after death; and in forgetting God, they have never discarded the idea of that provision for themselves.

Now,

Now, whence comes it, that men so different in their dispositions, worship, country, opinions, interests, and even figure, that scarcely do they seem of the same species with each other, unanimously agree, however, on this point, and expect immortality? There is no collusion here; for how is it possible to assemble together men of all countries and ages? It is not a prejudice of education; for manners, habits, and worship, which are generally the consequences of prejudices, are not the same among all nations; the opinion of immortality is common to all. It is not a sect; for besides that it is the universal religion of the world, that tenet has had neither head nor protector: Men have adopted it themselves, or rather nature has taught them to know it, without the assistance of teachers; and since the beginning of things, it alone has passed from father to son, and has been always received as an indisputable truth. O thou! who believest thyself to be only a mass of clay, quit the world, where thou findest thyself single in belief; go, and in other regions search for men of another species, and similar to the beast; or rather, be struck with horror, to find thyself single, as it were, in the universe, in revolt against nature, and disavowing thine own heart, and acknowledge, in an opinion common to all men, the general impression of the Author, who has formed them all.

Lastly, and with this proof I conclude: The universal fellowship of men, the laws which unite one to the other, the most sacred and inviolable duties of civil life, are all founded only on the certainty of a future state. Thus, if all die with the body, the universe must adopt other laws, manners, and habits, and a total change must take place in every thing. If all die with the body, the maxims of equity, friendship, honour good faith and gratitude, are only

only popular errors ; since we owe nothing to men, who are nothing to us, to whom no general bond of worship and hope unites us, who will to-morrow sink back to their original non-entity, and who are already no more. If all die with us, the tender names of child, parent, father, friend, and husband, are merely theatrical appellations, and a mockery ; since friendship, even that springing from virtue, is no longer a lasting tie ; since our fathers, who preceded us, are no more ; since our children shall not succeed us ; for the non-entity in which we must one day be has no consequence ; since the sacred society of marriage is only a brutal union, from which, by a strange and fortuitous concurrence, proceed beings who resemble us, but who have nothing in common with us but their non-entity.

What more shall I add ? If all dies with us, domestic annals, and the train of our ancestors, are only a collection of chimeras ; since we have no forefathers, and shall have no descendants, anxieties for a name and posterity are therefore ridiculous ; the honours we render to the memory of illustrious men, a childish error, since it is absurd to honour what has no existence ; the sacred respect we pay to the habitations of the dead, a vulgar illusion ; the ashes of our fathers and friends, a vile dust which we should cast to the winds, as belonging to no person ; the last wishes of the dying, so sacred amongst even the most barbarous nations, the last sound of a machine which crumbles in pieces ; and, to comprise all in a word, if all die with us, the laws are then a foolish subjection ; kings and rulers phantoms, whom the imbecility of the people has exalted ; justice, and usurpation on the liberties of men ; the law of marriage a vain scruple ; modesty, a prejudice ; honour and probity, chimeras ; incests, parricides, and the blackest

blackest villainies, pastimes of nature, and names which the policy of legislators has invented.

Behold, to what the sublime philosophy of the free-thinker amounts; behold, that force of argument, that reason, and that wisdom, which they are continually vaunting to us. Agree to their maxims, and the entire universe sinks back to a frightful chaos; all is overturned on the earth; all ideas of virtue and vice are reversed, and the most inviolable laws of society vanish; the institution of morals perishes; the government of states and empires is without direction; all harmony in the body-politic, falls. The human species is only an assemblage of fools, barbarians, voluptuaries, madmen, and villains, who own no law but force; no other check than their passions, and the terror of authority; no other bond than impiety and independence; and no other God than themselves. Behold the world of the freethinker; and if this hideous plan of a republic pleases you, constitute, if you can, a society of these monsters. The only thing which remains for us to say, is, that you are fully qualified to occupy a place in it.

How worthy then, of man, to look forward to an eternal destiny; to regulate his manners by the law; and to live, as having one day to render account of his actions before Him, who shall weigh us all in the balance!

The uncertainty of the believer is then suspicious in its principle, foolish in its proofs, and horrible in its consequences. But after having shewn you, that nothing can be more repugnant to sound reason, than the doubt which he entertains of a future state, let us completely confound his pretexts, and prove, that nothing is more opposite to the

idea of a wise God, and to the opinion of his own conscience:

PART II. It is no doubt astonishing, that the freethinker should seek, even in the greatness of God, a shelter to his crimes; and that, finding nothing within himself to justify the horrors of his soul, he can expect to find, in the awful Majesty of the Supreme Being, an indulgence, which he cannot find even in the corruption of his own heart.

Indeed, says the unbeliever, Is it worthy the greatness of God, to pay attention to what passes among men; to calculate their virtues or vices; to study even their thoughts, and their trifling and endless desires? Men, worms of the earth, who sink into nothing before the Majesty of his looks, are they worthy his attentive inspection? And is it not degrading a God, whom we are taught to believe so great, to give to him an employment, by which even man would be dishonoured?

But, before I make you sensible of the whole absurdity of this blasphemy, I beg you will observe, that it is the freethinker himself who thus degrades the Majesty of God, and brings him to a level with man. For, has the Almighty occasion narrowly to observe men, in order to know every thought and deed? Are cares and attentions necessary for Him, to see what passes on the earth? Is it not in Him, that we are, that we live, that we act? And can we shun his looks, or can he even avert them from our crimes? What folly, then, in the freethinker, to suppose, that it requires care and observation from the Divinity, if he wishes to remark what passes on the earth! His only employment is to know and enjoy himself.

This reflection admitted : I answer, in the first place, If it become the greatness of God to leave good and evil without punishment or reward, it is then equally indifferent, whether we be just, sincere, friendly and charitable, or cruel, deceitful, perfidious and unnatural : God consequently does not love virtue, modesty, rectitude, religion, more than debauchery, perjury, impiety, and villainy ; since the just and the impious, the pure and the impure, shall experience the same lot, and an eternal annihilation equally awaits them all in the grave.

What do I say ? God even seems to declare in favour of the impious here against the just. He exalts him like the cedar of Lebanon ; loads him with riches and honours ; gratifies his desires, and assists his projects ; for the impious are in general the prosperous on the earth. On the contrary, He seems to neglect the upright man ; He humbles, afflicts, and delivers him up to the falsity and power of his enemies ; for disgrace and affliction are the common portion of the good below. What a monster of a Supreme Being, if all must finish with man, and if neither miseries nor rewards, except those in this life, are to be expected ! Is He, then, the protector of adulteries, profanations and the most shocking crimes, the persecutor of innocence, modesty, piety, and all the purest virtues ? Are his favours the price of guilt, and his punishments the recompense of virtue ? What a God of darkness, imbecility, confusion, and iniquity, does the freethinker form to himself !

What, my brethren ! It would become His greatness to leave the world he has created, in a general confusion ; to see the wicked almost always prevail over the upright ; the innocent crushed by the usurper ; the father, the victim of an ambitious and unnatural son ? From the height of his
greatness,

greatness, God would amuse himself with these horrible transactions, without any interest in their commission? Because He is great, he should be either weak, unjust, or cruel? Because men are insignificant, they should have the privilege of being dissolute without guilt, or virtuous without merit?

O God! If such be the character of thy Supreme Being: If it be Thee whom we adore, under such shocking ideas, I know Thee no more, then, as my heavenly Father, my protector, the consoler of my sufferings, the support of my weakness, and the rewarder of my fidelity? Thou art then only an indolent and capricious tyrant, who sacrificest all men to thy vain pride, and hast drawn them from nothing, only to serve as the sport of thy leisure or caprice!

For, lastly, If there be no future state, what design worthy of his wisdom, could God have proposed, in creating man? What, in forming them, He had no other view, than in forming the beast? Man, that being so noble, who is capable of such sublime thoughts, such vast desires, and such grand sentiments; susceptible of love, truth, and justice: Man, of all creatures, alone worthy of a great destination, that of knowing and loving the Author of his being; that man should be made only for the earth, to pass a small portion of days, like the beast, in trifling employments, or sensual gratifications; he should fulfil his purpose, by acting so risible and so pitiable a part; and afterwards, should sink back to non-entity, without any other use having been made of that vast mind, and elevated heart, which the Author of his being had given him? O God! where would here be thy wisdom, to have made so grand a work, for the duration only of a moment; to have exhibited men upon the earth, only as the playful essays of thy
power;

power ; or to amuse thy leifure, by a variety of fhews ! The Deity of the freethinker, is not grand, therefore, but becaufe he is more unjust, capricious, and defpicable than men ? Purfue thefe reflections, and fupport, if you can, all the extravagance of their folly.

How, worthy, then, of God, my brethren, to watch over the univerfe ; to conduct man, whom he has created, by the laws of juftice, truth, charity, and innocence ; to make virtue and reafon the bond of union, and the foundation of human fociety ! How worthy of God, to love in his creatures, thofe virtues which render himfelf amiable ; to hate the vices, which diffigure in them his image ; not to confound for ever, the juft with the impious ; to render happy, with himfelf, thofe fouls, who have lived only for him ; and to deliver up to their own mifery, thofe who believed they had found a happinefs independent of him !

Behold the God of the Christians ; behold, that wife, juft, and Holy Deity, whom we adore ; and the advantage we have over the freethinker is, that ours is the God of an innocent and pure heart ; the God, whom all creatures manifeft to us ; whom all ages have invoked ; whom the fages, even of Paganifm, have acknowledged ; and of whom, nature has deeply engraven the idea on the very foundation of our being !

But, fince God is fo juft, ought he to punifh as crimes, inclinations for pleafure, born with us ; nay, which he alone has given us ? Laft blaſphemy of impiety, and laft part of this Difcourfe : I fhall abridge it, and conclude.

But, in the firft place, Be whom you may, who hold this abfurd language, if you pretend to juftify all your actions,

tions, by the inclinations which induce you to them; if, whatever we wish, become legitimate; if our desires ought to be the only regulation of our duties; on that principle, you have only to regard with an envious eye, the fortune of your brother, to acquire a right to despoil him of it; his wife, with a corrupted heart, to be authorised to violate the sanctity of the nuptial bed; in opposition to the most sacred rights of society and nature. You have only to suspect, or dislike an opponent, to become entitled to destroy him; to bear, with impatience, the authority of a father, or the severity of a master; to imbrue your hands in their blood: In a word, you have only to bear within you the impressions of every vice, to be permitted the gratification of all; and as each finds the fatal seeds in himself, none would be exempted from this horrible privilege. It is necessary, therefore, that man conduct himself by other laws than his inclinations, and another rule than his desires.

Even the Pagan ages acknowledged the necessity of a philosophy, that is to say, of a light superior to the senses, which regulated their practice, and make reason a check to the human passions.

Nature alone led them to this truth; and taught them, that blind instinct ought not to be the sole guide of the actions of men: This instinct, therefore, either is not the original institution of nature, or it must be a corruption of it; since all the laws, ever framed on the earth, have avowedly been made to restrain it; that all those, who, in every age, have borne the character of wise and virtuous, have rejected its impressions; that, amongst all nations, those infamous individuals, who yielded themselves up, without reserve or shame, to brutal sensuality, have been
always

always considered as monsters, and the disgrace of humanity; and the maxim once established, that our inclinations and desires cannot be considered as crimes, society can no longer exist; men must separate to be in safety, must bury themselves in the forests, and live solitary like the beasts.

Besides, let us render justice to men, or rather to the Author, who has formed us. If we find within us inclinations to vice and voluptuousness, do we not also find sentiments of virtue, modesty, and innocence. If the law of the members drag us towards the pleasures of the senses, do we not also bear, written in our hearts, another law, which recalls us to chastity and temperance? Now, betwixt these two tendencies, why does the freethinker decide, that the inclination which impels us towards the senses is most conformable to the nature of man? Is it, from being the most violent? But its violence alone is a proof of its disorder; and whatever comes from nature ought to be more moderate. Is it, from being the strongest? But there are just and believing souls, in whom it is always subject to reason. Is it, from being more agreeable? But a sure proof, that this pleasure is not made to render man happy, is, that disgust immediately follows it; and likewise, that to the good, virtue has a thousand times more charms than vice. Lastly, is it, from being more worthy of man? You dare not say so, since it is through it that he confounds himself with the beast. Why then do you decide in favour of the senses, against reason; and insist, that it is more conformable to man, to live like the beast, than to be a reasonable being?

Lastly, were all men corrupted; and, like the animals not gifted with reason, did they blindly yield themselves up to their brutal instinct, and to the empire of the senses and passions; you then, perhaps, might have reason to say,

say, that these are inclinations inseparable from nature, and, in example, find a sort of excuse for your excesses. But look around you : Do you no longer find any upright characters on the earth ? There is no question here of those vain discourses you so frequently hold against piety, and of which you feel yourselves the injustice : Speak candidly, and render glory to the truth. Are there no longer chaste, faithful, and righteous souls, who live in the fear of the Lord, and in the observance of his holy law ?

Whence comes it, then, that you have not the same empire over your passions enjoyed by these just men ? Have they not inherited from Nature the same inclinations ? Do the objects of the passions not awaken, in their hearts, the same sensations as in yours ? Do they not bear within them the sources of the same troubles ? What have the just, superior to you, but that command over themselves, and fidelity, of which you are destitute ?

O man ! Thou imputeest to God a weakness, which is the work of thine own disorders ! Thou accusest the Author of Nature of the irregularities of thy will ; it is not enough to offend him, thou wishest to make him responsible for thy deeds ; and pretendest, that the fruit of thy crimes becomes the title of thine innocence ! With what chimeras is a corrupted heart not capable of feeding its delusion, in order to justify to itself the shame and infamy of its vices !

God is then just, my brethren, when he punisheth the transgressions of his law. And let not the freethinker here say to himself, that the recompense of the just shall then be resurrection to eternal life ; and the punishment of the sinner, the everlasting annihilation of his soul : for behold the last resource of impiety,

But

But, what punishment would it be to the freethinker to exist no more? He wishes that annihilation; he looks forward to it, as his sweetest hope: Amidst his pleasures, he lives tranquil, only in that expectation. What! The just God would punish a sinner, by according him a destiny to the summit of his wishes. Ah! It is not thus that God punisheth. For, what would the freethinker find so shocking in a return to non-entity? Would it be, in the deprivation of his God? But he loves him not; he knows him not; he desires no communication with him: for his only God is himself. Would it be to exist no more? But what could be more desirable to a monster, who knows, that, beyond the term of his crimes, he cannot live but in sufferance, and in the expiation of the horrors of an infamous life? Would it be, by having for ever lost the worldly pleasures he enjoyed, and the different objects of his passions? But when he exists no more, the love of these must equally be extinguished. A more desirable fate cannot therefore be pointed out to the freethinker. It indeed would be the happy conclusion of all his excesses, horrors, and blasphemies.

No, my brethren! The hopes of the freethinker, but not his crimes, shall perish: his torments shall be as eternal as his debaucheries would have been, had he been master of his own destiny. He would willingly have eternized himself on the earth, in the practice of every sensual vice. Death has bounded his crimes, but has not limited his criminal desires. The just and upright Judge, who fathoms the heart, will therefore proportion the punishment to the guilt.

What are we to conclude from this Discourse? That the freethinker is to be pitied, for grounding the only consolation

tion of his future destiny on the uncertainty of the truths of the gospel : That he is to be pitied, because his only tranquillity must be, in living without faith, worship, confidence, or God : Because, the only hope he can indulge, is, that the gospel is a fable ; the belief of all ages, a childish credulity ; the universal opinion of men, a popular error ; the first principles of nature and reason, prejudices of education ; the blood of so many martyrs, whom the hopes of a future state supported under all their sufferings and tortures, a mere tale, concerted to deceive mankind ; the conversion of the world, a human enterprise ; and the accomplishment of the prophecies, a mere stroke of chance. In a word, that every thing, the best established, and the most consistent with truth and reason in the world, must all be false, to accomplish the only happiness he can promise himself, and to save him from eternal misery.

O man ! I will point out to thee a much surer way to render thyself tranquil, and to enjoy the sweets of eternal peace. Dread that futurity thou forcest thyself to disbelieve. Question us no more, what they do in that other world, of which we tell thee ; but ask thyself, without ceasing, what thou art doing in this ; quiet thy conscience, by the innocency of thy life, and not by the impiety of thy unbelief : Give repose to thy heart, by calling upon God, and not by doubting that he pays attention to thee : The peace of the unbeliever is despair. Seek, then, thy happiness, not by freeing thyself from the yoke of faith, but by tasting how sweet and agreeable it is. Follow the maxims it prescribes to thee, and thy reason will no longer refuse submission to the mysteries it commands thee to believe. A future state will cease to appear incredible to thee from the moment thou ceasest to live like those who centre all their happiness in the fleeting moments of this life. Then, far from dread-

ing a futurity, thy wishes will anticipate it. Thou wilt sigh for the arrival of that happy day, when the Son of Man, the Father of all future ages, shall come to punish the unbelieving, and to conduct thee to his kingdom, along with those who have lived on the earth, in the expectation and hope of a blessed immortality

That you, my brethren, may be partakers of this eternal felicity, is my fervent prayer. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

ON DEATH.

LUKE vii. 12.

Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.

WAS death ever accompanied with more affecting circumstances? It is an only son, sole successor to the name, titles, and fortune of his ancestors, whom death snatches from an afflicted mother and widow; he is ravished from her in the flower of age, and almost at his entry into life; at a period when happily past the dangers of infancy, and attained to that first degree of strength and reason, which commences man, he seemed least exposed to the shafts of death, and at last allowed maternal tenderness to breathe from the fears which accompany the uncertain progress of education. The citizens run in crowds, to mingle their tears with those of the disconsolate mother; they assiduously seek to lessen her grief, by the consolation of those vague and common-place discourses, to which profound sorrow little attends; with her they surround the mournful bier; and they deck the obsequies with their mourning and presence; the train of this funeral pomp, to them, is a show; but is it an instruction? They are struck and affected,
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but are they from it less attached to life ? And will not the remembrance of this death perish, in their minds, with the noise and decorations of the funeral !

To similar examples, we every day bring the same dispositions. The feelings which an unexpected death awakens in our hearts, are the feelings of a day, as though death itself ought to be the concern of a day. We exhaust ourselves in vain reflections on the inconstancy of human things ; but the object which struck us, once out of sight, the heart become tranquil, finds itself the same. Our projects, our cares, our attachments to the world, are not less lively, than if we were labouring for eternal ages ; and at our departure from a melancholy spectacle, where we have sometimes seen birth, youth, titles, and fame, wither in a moment, and for ever buried in the grave, we return to the world more occupied with, and more eager than ever, after all those vain objects, of which we so lately had seen with our eyes, and almost felt with our hands, the insignificancy and meanness.

Let us at present examine the reasons of so deplorable a mistake. Whence comes it, that men reflect so little upon death ; and that the thoughts of it make such transitory impressions ? It is this : The uncertainty of death amuses us, and removes from our mind its remembrance : The certainty of death appals, and forces us to turn our eyes from the gloomy picture : The uncertainty of it, lulls and encourages us ; whatever is awful and certain, with regard to it, makes us dread the thoughts of it. Now, I wish at present to combat the dangerous security of the first, and the improper dread of the others. Death is uncertain : You are therefore imprudent not to be occupied with the thoughts of it, but to allow it to surprize you : Death is certain : You then

then are foolish to dread the thoughts of it, and it ought never to be out of your sight : think upon death, because you know not the hour it will arrive : Think upon death, because it must arrive. This is the subject of the present discourse.

PART I.—The first step which man makes in life, is likewise the first towards the grave : From the moment his eyes open to the light, the sentence of death is pronounced against him ; and, as though it were a crime to live, it is sufficient that he lives, to make him deserving of death. That was not our first destiny : The Author of our being had at first animated our clay with a breath of immortality : He had placed in us a seed of life, which the revolution of neither years nor time could have weakened or extinguished. His work was so perfect, that it might have defied the duration of ages, while nothing external could have dissolved, or even injured its harmony. Sin alone withered this divine seed, overturned this blessed order, and armed all created beings against man : And Adam became mortal, the moment he became a sinner : “ By sin,” said the Apostle, “ did death enter into the world.”

From our birth, therefore, we all bear it within us. It appears, that, in our mother's womb we have sucked in a slow poison, with which we come into the world ; which makes us languish on this earth, some a longer, others a more limited period, but which always terminates in death : We die every day ; every moment deprives us of a portion of life, and advances us a step towards the grave : The body pines, health decays, and every thing which surrounds, assists to destroy us ; food corrupts, medicines weaken us ; the spiritual fire, which internally animates, consumes us ; and our whole life is only a long and painful sickness.

sickness. Now, in this situation, what image ought to be so familiar to man as death? A criminal condemned to die, whichever way he casts his eyes, what can he see but this melancholy object? And does the longer or shorter period we have to live make a sufficient difference, to entitle us to think ourselves immortal on this earth?

It is true, that the measure of our lots is not alike: Some, in peace, see their days grow upon them to the most advanced age, and the inheritors of the blessings of the primeval age, expire full of years, in the midst of a numerous posterity; others, arrested in the middle of their course, see, like king Hezekiah, the gates of the grave open for them, while yet in their prime; and like him, “seek in vain for the residue of their years:” There are some who only shew themselves as it were on the earth; who finish their course with the day, and who, like the flowers of the field, leave scarcely an interval betwixt the instant which views them in their bloom, and that which sees them withered and cut off. The fatal moment marked for each is a secret written in the book of life, which the Lamb of God alone has a right to open. We all live, then, uncertain of the duration of our life; and this uncertainty, of itself so fit to render us watchful of our last hour, even lulls our vigilance. We never think on death, because we know not exactly in what age of life to place it: We even regard not old age as the term, at least sure and inevitable: The doubt of ever reaching that period, which surely ought to fix and limit our hopes to this side of decrepitude, serves only to make us stretch them beyond it. Unable to settle itself on any thing certain, our dread becomes a vague and confused feeling, which fixes on nothing; in so much that the uncertainty, which ought only to dwell on the
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length or brevity of it, renders us tranquil on our existence itself.

Now, I say, in the first place, that of all dispositions, this is the rashest and most imprudent : I appeal to yourselves for this truth. Is an evil which may take place every day, to be more disregarded, than another which threatens you only at the expiration of a number of years ? What ! because your soul may every moment be recalled, you would tranquilly live as though you were never to lose it ? Because the danger is always present, circumspection becomes less necessary ? But in what other situation or circumstance of life, except that of our eternal salvation, does uncertainty become an excuse for security and neglect ? Does the conduct of that servant in the gospel, who under pretence that his master delayed to return, and that he knew not the hour when he should arrive, applied his property to his own purposes, as if he never were to render account of it, appear to you a prudent discharge of his duty ? What other motives has Jesus Christ made use of, to exhort us to incessant watching ? and, What in religion is more proper to awake our vigilance, than the uncertainty of this last day ?

Ah, my brethren ! were the hour unalterably marked for each of us ; were the kingdom of God, like the stars, to come at a known and fixed revolution ; at our birth, were our portions written on our foreheads ; the number of our years, and the fatal day which shall terminate them ; that fixed and certain object, however distant, would incessantly employ our thoughts, would agitate, and deprive us of every tranquil moment ; we would always regard the interval before as too short ; that object, in spite of us, always present to our mind, would disgust us with every thing ; would render

der every pleasure insipid, fortune indifferent, and the whole world tiresome and a burden : That terrible moment, which we would no more lose sight of, would repress our passions, extinguish our animosities, disarm revenge, calm the revolts of the flesh, and mingle itself in all our schemes ; and our life, thus limited to a certain number of days, fixed and known, would be only a preparation for that last moment. Are we in our senses, my brethren ? Death seen at a distance, at a sure and fixed point, would fill us with dread, detach us from the world and ourselves, call us to God, and incessantly occupy our thoughts ; and this same death, uncertain, which may happen every day, every instant ; this same death, which must surprize us when we least expect it ; which is perhaps at the gate, engages not our attention, and leaves us tranquil : What do I say ! leaves us all our passions, our criminal attachments, our ardour for the world, pleasures, and fortune ; and because it is not certain that we shall die to day, we live as if we were to live for ever.

Observe, my brethren, that this uncertainty is in effect accompanied with all the circumstances most capable of alarming, or at least of engaging the attention of a prudent man, who makes any use of his reason. In the first place, the surprize of that last day you have to dread, is not one of those rare and singular accidents, which befall only some unfortunate wretches, and which it is more prudent to disregard than to foresee. In order to be surprized by death, the question at present is not, that the thunder should fall upon your heads, that you should be buried under the ruins of your palaces, that you should be swallowed up by the waves, nor many other accidents, whose singularity renders them more terrible, though less dreaded ; it is a common evil ; not a day passes without furnishing some examples ; almost

almost all men are surpris'd by death ; all see it approach, while they believe it yet at a distance ; all say to themselves, like the foolish man in the gospel, " Why should I be " afraid ; I have many years yet to come ? " In this manner have you seen depart, your relations, friends, and almost all those whose death you have witnessed ; every instance surpris'd you ; you expected it not so soon ; and you endeavour'd to account for it by human reasons ; such as the imprudence of the patient, or the want of proper advice and medicines ; but the only and true reason is, that the hour of the Lord always takes us by surpris'e.

The earth is like a vast field of battle, where we are every day engag'd with the enemy ; you have happily escap'd to-day ; but you have witnessed the fall of many, who like you, expected to survive ; to-morrow you again must enter the lists ; and who has told you that fortune, so capricious with regard to others, to you alone will continue favourable ? And since you at last must perish there, are you prudent in building a fixed and permanent habitation, on the very spot, perhaps, intended for your tomb ? Place yourselves in any possible situation, there is not a moment but may be your last, and has actually been so to some of your brethren ; no brilliant action, but may terminate in the eternal shades of the grave ; and Herod is struck in the midst of the servile and foolish applauses of his people : No day set apart for the solemn display of worldly magnificence, but may conclude with your funeral pomp ; and Jezebel was precipitated the very day she had chosen to show herself in her greatest pride and ostentation, from the windows of her palace : No festival, but may be the feast of death ; and Belshazar expired in the midst of a sumptuous banquet. No repose, but may conduct you to an everlasting sleep : and Holofernes, in the heart of his army,

and conqueror of so many kingdoms and provinces, fell under the stroke of a simple Jewish woman: No disease, but may be the fatal term of your course; and every day you see the slightest complaints decieve the opinions of the most skilful, and the expectations of the patient, and almost in an instant take the turn of death: In a word, figure yourselves in any possible stage or station of life, and with difficulty can you number those who have been surpris'd in a similar situation; and what right have you to expect, that you alone shall be exempted from a lot common to all? You allow, you confess this: but these confessions are merely words of course, and are never followed by a single precaution, to secure you from the danger.

2dly, Did this uncertainty turn only on the hour, the place, or the manner of your death, it would appear less shocking: for, after all, says a Holy Father, what matters it to a Christian, whether he shall expire in the midst of his connections, or in the country of strangers; in the bed of sorrow, or the abyss of the waves; provided he dies in piety and righteousness? But what renders this terrible, is, the uncertainty, whether you shall die in the Lord, or in sin; that you shall know not what will be your lot in that other region, where conditions change no more; into whose hands, at its departure from the body, your soul trembling, a stranger and alone, shall fall: whether it shall be surrounded with light, and carried to the foot of the throne on the wings of blessed and happy spirits, or enveloped in darkness, and cast headlong into the gulf: You hang betwixt these two eternities: You know not to which you shall be attached: Death alone will disclose the secret; and in this uncertainty, you remain tranquil, and indolently wait its approach, as though it were a matter of no importance to you, nor to determine your eternal happiness

pinels or misery? Ah! my brethren, were it even true, that all ends with us, the impious man would still be foolish in saying, "Let us think not on death; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die:" The more he found life agreeable, the more reason would he have to be afraid of death, which to him would however be only a cessation of existence. But we, to whom faith opens prospects of punishment, or eternal rewards, beyond the grave; we who must reach the gates of death, still uncertain of this dreadful alternative, is there not a folly, What do I say? a madness (not to be sure in professing the sentiments of the impious, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,") in living as though we thought like him! Is it possible we can remain a single instant unoccupied with that decisive moment, and without allaying, by the precautions of faith, that trouble and dread into which this uncertainty must cast a soul, who has not yet renounced his eternal hopes?

3dly, In all other uncertainties, the number of those who share the same danger, may inspire us with confidence; or resources, with which we flatter ourselves, may leave us more tranquil; or, even at the worst, the disappointment becomes a lesson, which teaches us, to our cost, to be more guarded in future: But, in the dreadful uncertainty in question, the number of those who run the same risk can diminish nothing from our danger; all the resources with which we may flatter ourselves on the bed of death, are, in general, merely illusive; and religion itself, which furnishes them, dare ground but small hopes on them: In a word, the mistake is irremediable; we die only once, and our past folly can no more serve as a lesson to guard us from future error. Our misfortune, indeed, opens our eyes; but these new lights, which dissipate our blindness, become useless, by the immutability of our state, and are rather a

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cruel knowledge of our misery, which prepares to tear us with eternal remorse, and to occasion the most grievous portion of our punishment, than wise reflections which may lead us to repentance.

Upon what, then, can you justify this profound and incomprehensible neglect of your last day, in which you live? On youth, which may seem to promise you many years yet to come?

Youth! But the son of the widow of Naim was young: Does death respect ages or rank? Youth! But that is exactly what makes me tremble for you; licentious manners, pleasures to excess, extravagant passions, ambitious desires, the dangers of war, thirst for renown, and the sallies of revenge: Is it not during the pursuit, or gratification of some one of these passions, that the majority of men finish their career? Adonias, but for his debaucheries, might have lived to a good old age; Absalom, but for his ambition; the king of Schem's son, but for his love of Dinah; Jonathan, had glory not dug a grave for him in the mountains of Gilboa. Youth! alas! it is the season of dangers, and the rock upon which life generally splits.

Once more, then, Upon what do you found your hopes? On the strength of your constitution? But what is the best established health? A spark which a breath shall extinguish: A single day's sickness is sufficient to lay low the most robust. I examine not after this, whether you do not even flatter yourselves on this point: If a body, exhausted by the irregularities of youth, do not announce to your own minds the sentence of death; if habitual infirmities do not lay open before you the gates of the grave; if disagreeable indications do not menace you with some sudden accident,

dent. I wish you to lengthen out your days even beyond your hopes. Alas! my brethren, can any period appear long which must at last come to an end? Look back, and see where now are your youthful years? What trace of solid joy do they leave in your remembrance? Not more than a vision of the night; you dream that you have lived, and behold all that is left to you of it: All that interval, elapsed from your birth to the present day, is like a rapid flash, whose passage the eye, far from dwelling on, can with difficulty see: Had you begun to live, even with the world itself, the past would now appear to you neither longer nor more real; all the ages, elapsed down to the present day, you would look upon as fugitive instants; all the nations which have appeared and disappeared on the earth; all the revolutions of empires and kingdoms; all those grand events which embellish our histories, to you would be only the different scenes of a show, which you had seen concluded in a day. Recollect the victories, the captured cities, the glorious treaties, the magnificence, the splendid events of the first years of this reign; most of you have not only witnessed, but have shared in their danger and glory; our annals will convey them down to our latest posterity; but to you, they are already but a dream; but a momentary flash which is extinguished, and which every day effaces more and more from your remembrance. What, then, is this small portion you have still to accomplish? Can you believe that the days to come have more reality than those already past? Years appear long, while yet at a distance; arrived, they vanish, they slip from us in an instant; and scarcely shall we have looked around us, when, as if by enchantment, we shall find ourselves at the fatal term, which still appeared so distant, that we rashly concluded it would never arrive. View the world, such as you have seen it in your youthful days, and such as you now see it: New personages

ges have mounted the stage ; the grand parts are filled by new actors ; they are new events, new intrigues, new passions, new heroes in virtue as well as in vice, which engage the praises, derisions, and censures of the public ; a new world, without your having perceived it, has insensibly risen on the wrecks of the first ; every thing passes with and like you ; a velocity which nothing can stop, drags all into the gulf of eternity : Yesterday our ancestors cleared the way for us ; and to-morrow, we shall do the same for those who are to follow. Ages succeed each other ; the appearance of the world incessantly changes ; the dead and the living continually replace and succeed each other : Nothing stands still ; all changes, all wastes away, all has an end : God alone remaineth always the same : The torrent of ages, which sweeps away all men, flows before his eyes ; and, with indignation, he sees weak mortals carried down by that rapid course, insult him while passing ; wish, of that transitory instant, to constitute all their happiness ; and at their departure from it, fall into the hands of his vengeance and wrath. Where, says the Apostle, amongst us, are now the wise ? And a man, were he even capable of governing the world, can he merit that name from the moment that he forgets what he is, and what he must be ?

Nevertheless, my brethren, what impression on us does the instability of every thing worldly make ? The death of our relations, friends, competitors, and masters ? We never think that we are immediately to follow them ; we think only of decking ourselves out in their spoils ; we think not on the little time they had enjoyed them, but only on the pleasure they must have had in their possession : We hasten to profit ourselves from the wreck of each other : We are like those foolish soldiers, who, in the heat of battle, when their companions are every moment falling around them, eagerly

eagerly load themselves with their clothes; and scarcely are they put on, when a mortal blow at once deprives them of their absurd decorations and life. In this manner the son decks himself with the spoils of the father; closes his eyes; succeeds to his rank, fortune, and dignities; conducts the pomp of his funeral, and leaves it, more occupied with, more affected by the new titles with which he is now invested, than instructed by the last advices of a dying parent; than afflicted for his loss, or even undeceived with regard to the things of the earth, by a sight which places before his eyes their insignificancy, and announces to him the same destiny soon. The death of our companions is not a more useful lesson to us: Such a person leaves vacant an office, which we hasten to obtain; another promotes us a step in the service; claims expire with this one, which might have greatly embarrassed us; that one now leaves us the undisputed favourite of our sovereign; another brings us a step nearer to a certain dignity, and opens the road to a rank which his death alone could render attainable; and on these occasions, our spirits are invigorated; we adopt new measures, and form new projects: and, far from our eyes being opened, by the examples of those whom we see disappear, there issue, even from their ashes, fatal sparks, which inflame all our desires and attachments to the world; and death that gloomy picture of our misery, reanimates more passions among men, than even all the illusions of life. What then can detach us from this wretched world, since death itself seems only to knit more strongly the bonds, and strengthen us in the error which bind us to it?

Here, my brethren, I require nothing from you but reason. What are the natural consequences which good sense alone ought to draw from the uncertainty of death?

1st, The hour of death is uncertain: Every year, every day, every moment, may be the last of our life; it is absurd, then, by attaching ourselves to what must pass away in an instant, to sacrifice the only riches which are eternal; every thing you do for the earth ought therefore to appear as lost, since you have no interest there; you can depend on nothing there, and can carry nothing from it; but what you shall have done for heaven: The kingdoms of the earth, and all their glory, ought not then for a moment to balance the interests of your eternal welfare, since the greatest fortune cannot assure you of a day more than the most humble; and since the only consequence which can accrue from it, is a more deep and bitter sorrow on the bed of death, when you shall be obliged for ever to part from them; every care, every movement, every desire, ought therefore to centre in establishing for yourselves a permanent and unchangeable fortune, an eternal happiness, which fadeth not away.

2^{dly}, The hour of your death is uncertain: You ought then to expect it every day; never to permit yourselves an action, in which you would wish not to be surpris'd; to consider all your proceedings, as those of a dying man, who every moment expects his soul to be recalled; to act in every thing, as though you were that instant to render account of your conduct; and, since you cannot answer for the time which is to come, in such a manner to regulate the present, that you may have no occasion for the future to repair its errors.

Lastly, The hour of your death is uncertain: delay not then, your repentance; time presses, hasten then your conversion to the Lord: You cannot assure yourselves of a day, and you defer it to a distant and uncertain period to come.

come. Were you unfortunately to swallow a mortal poison, would you put off to another day, the trial of the only antidote which might save your life? Would the agent of death, which you carried in your bowels, allow of delays, and neglect? Such is your state. If you be wise, have instant recourse to your precautions: You carry death in your soul, since in it you carry sin; hasten to apply the remedy, since every moment is precious to him, who cannot depend on one; the poisonous beverage which infects your soul, cannot long be trifled with; the goodness of God still holds out to you a cure; hasten, once more I say, to secure it, while it is not yet too late. Should entreaties be necessary to determine your compliance; ought not the prospect of relief to be sufficient? Is it necessary to exhort an unfortunate wretch, just sinking in the waves, to exert his endeavours to save himself? Ought you, in this matter, to have occasion for our ministry? Your last hour approaches; you soon shall have to appear before the tribunal of God. You may usefully employ the moment, which yet remains to you: Almost all those, whose departure from this world you are daily witnessing, allow it to slip from them, and die without having reaped any advantage from it: You imitate their neglect; the same surprise awaits you, and like them you will be cut off before the work of reformation has commenced. They had been warned of it, and in the same manner we warn you; their misery touches you not; and the unfortunate lot which awaits you, will not more sensibly affect those to whom we shall one day announce it; it is a succession of blindness, which passes from father to son, and is perpetuated on the earth: We all wish to live better, and we all die before we have begun to reform.

Such, my brethren, are the prudent and natural reflections which the uncertainty of our last hour, should lead us to make. But if, on account of its uncertainty, you are imprudent, in paying no more attention to it, than as if it were never to arrive, the fearful portion attending its certainty still less excuses your folly, in striving to remove that melancholy image from your mind, under the pretence of its only tending to empoison every comfort, and to destroy the tranquillity of life. This, is what I have still to lay before you.

PART II.—Man loves not to dwell upon his nothingness, and meanness: whatever recalls to him his origin, puts him in mind also of his end, wounds his pride, interests self-love, attacks the foundation of all his passions, and gives birth to gloomy and disagreeable thoughts. To die; to disappear from the earth; to enter the dark abyss of eternity; to become a carcass, the food of worms, the horror of men, the hideous inmate of a tomb; that sight alone, revolts every sense, distracts reason, blackens imagination, and empoisons every comfort in life; we dare not fix our looks on so hideous an image; we reject that thought, as the most gloomy and bitter of all: We dread, we fly from every thing, which may force its remembrance on our mind, as though it would hasten the approach of the fatal hour. Under a pretence of tenderness, we love not to hear mention of our departed friends; care is taken to remove our attention, from the places in which they have dwelt, and from every thing which, along with their idea, at the same time awakens that of death, which has deprived us of them. We dread all melancholy recitals; in that respect, we carry our terrors even to the most childish superstition; in every trifle our fancy sees fatal prognostications of death; in the wanderings of a dream, in the nightly sounds of a bird, in
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the casual number of a company, and in many other circumstances still more ridiculous; every where we imagine it before us; and, for that very reason, we endeavour to expel it from our thoughts.

Now, my brethren, these excessive terrors, were pardonable in Pagans, to whom death was the greatest misfortune, seeing they had no expectation beyond the grave; and that, living without hope, they died without consolation. But that death should be so terrible to Christians, is a matter of astonishment; and that the dread of that image should even serve as a pretext to remove its idea from their minds, is still more so.

For, in the first place, I grant, that you have reason to dread that last hour; but, as it is certain, I cannot conceive why the terrors of it should prevent your mind from dwelling upon, and endeavouring to anticipate its evils: on the contrary, it seems to me, that in proportion as the danger is great to which you are exposed, you ought more constantly to keep it in view, and to use every precaution, that it may not take you unawares. What! The more the danger alarms you, the more it should render you indolent and careless! The excessive and improper terrors of your imagination should cure you, even of that prudent dread, which operates your salvation; and because you dread too much, you should abandon every thought of it! But, where is the man, whom a too lively sense of danger renders calm and intrepid? Were it necessary to march through a narrow and steep defile, surrounded on all sides by precipices, would you order your eyes to be bound, that you might not see your danger, and lest the depth of the gulf below should turn your head? Ah! my dear hearer, you see the grave open before you, and that spectacle alarms you; but,

in place of taking all the precautions, offered to you by religion, to prevent you falling headlong into the gulf, you cover your eyes, that you may not see it: You fly to dissipation, to chase its idea from your mind; and like those unfortunate victims of Paganism, you run to the stake, your eyes covered, crowned with flowers, and surrounded by dancing and songs of joy, that you may not have leisure to reflect on the fatal term, to which this pomp conducts, and least you should see the altar, that is to say, the bed of death, where you are immediately to be sacrificed.

Besides, by repelling that thought, could you likewise repel death, your terrors would then at least have an excuse. But think, or think not on it, death always advances; every effort you make, to exclude its remembrance, brings you nearer to it, and, at the appointed hour, it will come. What then do you gain by turning your mind from that thought? Do you lessen the danger? On the contrary, you augment it, and render a surprisal inevitable. By averting your eyes, do you soften the horror of that spectacle? Alas! You only multiply its terrors. Were you to familiarize yourselves more with the thoughts of death, your mind, weak and timid, would insensibly accustom itself to it: You would gradually acquire courage to view it without anguish, or at least, with resignation, on the bed of death; it would no longer be an unusual and strange sight. A long anticipated danger astonishes not: Death is only formidable the first time that the imagination dwells upon it; and it is only when not expected, and no provision made against it, that it is to be dreaded.

But, when that thought should even disquiet, and fill you with impressions of dread and sorrow, where would be the disappointment? Are you, upon the earth, to live
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only in an indolent ease, and solely engrossed by agreeable and smiling objects? We should lose our reason, say you, were we to devote our attention to this dismal spectacle, without the relaxation of pleasures. We should lose our reason! But so many faithful souls, who in all their actions mingle that thought; who make the remembrance of that last hour the check to curb their passions, and the most powerful inducement to fidelity; so many illustrious penitents, who have buried themselves alive in their tombs, that they might never lose sight of that object; the holy, who every day suffered death, like the Apostle, that they might live for ever, have they, in consequence of it, lost their reason? You should lose your reason! That is to say, you would regard the world as an exilement; pleasures as an intoxication; sin as the greatest of evils; places, honours, favour, and fortune, as dreams; and salvation as the grand and only object worthy of attention: Is that to lose our reason? Blessed folly! And would that you, from this moment, were amongst the number of these foolish sages. You would lose your reason! Yes, that false, worldly, proud, carnal, and mistaken reason, which seduces you; that corrupted reason, which obscures faith, authorises the passions, makes us prefer the present moment to eternity; takes the shadow for the substance, and leads all men astray: Yes, that deplorable reason, that vain philosophy, which looks upon as a weakness the dread of a future state, and because it dreads it too much, seems, in appearance, or endeavours to force itself, not to believe it at all. But that prudent, enlightened, moderate, and Christian reason, that wisdom of the serpent, so recommended in the gospel, it is in that remembrance that you would find it: That wisdom, says the Holy Spirit, preferable to all the treasures and honours of the earth; that wisdom so honourable to man, and which exalts him so much above himself; that wisdom

wisdom which has formed so many Christian heroes, it is the image always present of your last hour, which will embellish your soul with it. But that thought, you add, should we take it into our head to enter deeply into, and to dwell continually upon it, would be fit to make us renounce all, and to form the most violent and overstrained resolutions; that is to say, would detach you from the world, your vices, passions, the infamy of your excesses, and make you lead a chaste, regular and Christian life, alone worthy of reason: These are what the world calls violent and overstrained resolutions. But likewise, under pretence of shunning pretended excesses, would you refuse to adopt the most necessary resolutions? Make a beginning at any rate; the first transports soon begin to abate; and it is much more easy to moderate the excesses of piety, than to animate its coldness and indolence. Dread nothing from the excessive fervour and transports of your zeal; you can never, in that respect, go too far. An indolent and sensual heart, such as your's, nursed in pleasures and effeminacy, and void of all taste for whatever pertains to the service of God, does not promise any very great indiscretions in the steps of a Christian life. You know not yourselves; you have never experienced what obstacles all your inclinations will cast in the way of your simplest exertions in piety. Take measures only against coldness and discouragement, which are the only rock you have to dread. What blindness! In the fear of doing too much for God, we do nothing at all: the dread of bestowing too much attention on our salvation, prevents us from labouring towards it; and we lose ourselves for ever, lest we should too surely attain salvation: We dread chimerical excesses of piety, and we are not afraid of a departure from, and an actual contempt of piety itself. Does the fear of doing too much for fortune and rank, check your exertions

exertions, or cool the ardour of your ambition? Is it not that very hope which supports and animates them? Nothing is too much for the world, but all is excess for God: We fear, and we reproach ourselves, lest we never do enough for an earthly establishment; and we check ourselves, in the dread of doing too much for an eternal fortune.

But I go further, and say, that it is a criminal ingratitude towards God, to reject the thought of death, merely because it disquiets and alarms you; for that impression of dread and terror, is a special grace with which you are favoured by God. Alas! How many impious characters exist who despise it, who claim a miserable merit, in beholding with firmness its approach, and who regard it as the annihilation of their being! How many sages and philosophers in Christianity, who, without renouncing faith, limit all their reflections, all the superiority of their talents, to the tranquil view of its arrival; and who, during life, exert the powers of their reason, only in preparing for that last moment, a constancy and serenity of mind, equally absurd as the most vulgar terrors; a purpose the most imprudent to which reason can be applied. It is, therefore, a special grace bestowed on you by God, when he permits that thought to have such an energy and ascendancy in your soul; in all probability, it is the way by which he wishes to recal you to himself: Should you ever quit your erroneous and iniquitous courses, it will be through its influence: Your salvation seems to depend on that remedy.

Tremble, my dear hearer, lest your heart should fortify itself against these salutary terrors; lest God should withdraw from you this mean of salvation, and harden you against all the terrors of religion. A favour, not only despised,

pised, but even regarded as a punishment, is soon followed with the indignation, or at least the indifference of the benefactor. Should that unfortunately be ever the case, then will the image of death leave you all your tranquillity: You will fly to an entertainment, the moment you have quitted the solemnity of a funeral; with the same eyes will you behold a hideous carcass, or the criminal object of your passion; then will you be even pleased with yourself for having soared above all these vulgar fears, and even applaud yourself, for a change so terrible towards your salvation. Profit then, towards the regulation of your manners by that sensibility, while it is yet left to you by God: Let your mind dwell on all the objects proper to recal that image, while yet it has influence to disturb the false peace of your passions: Visit the tomb of your ancestors, in the presence of their ashes, to meditate on the vanity of all earthly things; go and ask, What now, in these dark habitations of death, remains to them of all their pleasures, dignities, and splendour? open yourself these gloomy dwellings, reflecting on what they had formerly been, in the eyes of men, see what they now are; spectres, whose presence you with difficulty can support; loathsome masses of worms and putrefaction: Such are they in the eyes of men; but what are they in the sight of God? Descend, in idea, into these dwellings of horror and infection, and chuse before hand your own place; figure yourself in that last hour, extended on the bed of anguish, struggling with death, your limbs benumbed, and already seized with a mortal coldness; your tongue already bound in the chains of death; your eyes fixed, covered with a cloud of confusion, and before which all things begin to disappear; your relations and friends around you, offering up ineffectual wishes for your recovery, and augmenting your fears and regrets, by the tenderness of their sighs, and the abundance of
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their tears : Reflect upon that sight, so instructive, so interesting ; you then, in the dismal struggles of that last combat, proving that you are still in life, only by the convulsions which announce your death ; the whole world annihilated to you ; despoiled for ever of all your dignities and titles ; accompanied solely by your works, and ready to appear in the presence of God. This is not a prediction ; it is the history of all those who die every day to your knowledge, and it is the anticipation of your own. Think upon that terrible moment ; the day, perhaps, is not far removed, yet however distant it may be, you will at last reach it, and the interval will seem to you only an instant ; and the only consolation you then can have, shall be, to have made the study of, and preparation for death, the employment of your life.

Lastly, As my final argument : trace to their source these excessive terrors, which render the image and thoughts of death so terrible, and you will undoubtedly find them originating from the disorders of a criminal conscience : It is not death which you dread, it is the justice of God which awaits you beyond it, to punish the infidelities and crimes of your life : It is, that covered as you are with the most shameful wounds, which disfigure in you his image, you are not in a state to present yourselves before him ; and that to die in your present situation, must be to perish for ever. Purify then your conscience, put an end to, and expiate your criminal passions ; recal God to your heart ; no longer offer to his sight any thing worthy of his anger or punishment ; place yourselves in a state to hope something after death, from his infinite mercy ; then shall you see that last moment approach with less dread and trembling ; and the sacrifice which you shall already have made to God, of the world and your passions, will not only ren-

der easy, but even sweet and consoling, the sacrifice you will then make to him of your life.

For say, What has death so fearful to a faithful soul? From what does it separate him? From a world which shall perish, and which is the country of the reprobate; from his riches, which torment him, of which the use is surrounded with dangers, and which he is forbid to use in the gratification of the senses; from his relations and friends, whom he precedes only a moment, and who shall soon follow him; from his body, which hitherto had been either a rock to his innocence, or a perpetual obstacle to his holy desires; from his offices and dignities, which, in multiplying his duties, augmented his dangers; lastly, from life, which to him was only an exilement, and an anxious desire to be delivered from it. What does death bestow on him, to compensate for what it takes away? It bestows unfading riches, of which none can ever deprive; eternal joys, which he shall enjoy without fear or remorse; the peaceable and certain possession of God himself, from which he can never be degraded; deliverance from all his passions, which had ever been a constant source of disquiet and distress; an unalterable peace, which he could never find on the earth; and lastly, the society of the just and happy, in place of that of sinners, from whom it separates him. What then, O my God! has the world so delightful, to attach a faithful soul? To him it is a vale of tears, where dangers are infinite, combats daily, victories rare, and defeats certain; where every gratification must be denied to the senses; where all tempts, and all is forbidden to us; where we must fly from and dread what most pleases us; in a word, where, if you suffer not, if you weep not, if you resist not to the utmost extremity, if you combat not without ceasing, if you hate not yourself, you are lost.

lost. What then do you find so amiable, so alluring, so capable of attaching a Christian soul? and to die, is it not a gain, and a triumph for him?

Besides, death is the only object he looks forward to; it is the only consolation which supports the fidelity of the just. Do they bend under afflictions? They know that their end is near; that the short and fleeting tribulations of this life shall soon be followed by a load of eternal glory; and in that thought they find an inexhaustible source of patience, fortitude and joy. Do they feel the law of the members warring against the law of the spirit, and exciting commotions, which bring innocence to the very brink of the precipice? They are not ignorant, that after the dissolution of the earthly frame, it shall be restored to them pure and celestial; and that delivered from these bonds of misery, they shall then resemble the heavenly spirits; and that remembrance soothes and strengthens them. Do they groan under the weight of the yoke of Jesus Christ; and their faith, more weak, is it on the point of relaxing and sinking under the rigid duties of the gospel? Ah! the day of the Lord is nigh; they almost touch the blessed recompense; and the end of their course, which they already see, animates, and gives them fresh vigor. Hear in what manner the Apostle consoled the first Christians: My brethren, said he to them, time is short, the day approaches, the Lord is at the gate, and he will not delay; rejoice then; I again say to you, rejoice. Such was the only consolation of men, persecuted, insulted, proscribed, trampled upon, regarded as the scum of the earth, the disgrace of the Jews, and the scoff of the Gentiles. They knew that death would soon dry up their tears; that for them, there would then be neither mourning, sorrow, nor sufferance; that all would be changed; and that thought softened every pain: Ah! who-

foever had told these generous justifiers of faith, that the Lord would never make them know death, but would leave them to dwell forever on the earth, would have shaken their faith, tempted their constancy, and, by robbing them of that hope, would have deprived them of every consolation.

You, my brethren, are no doubt little surpris'd at this ; because death must appear a refuge, to men afflicted and unhappy as they were. You are mistaken : It was neither their persecutions nor sufferings which occasioned their distress and sorrow ; these were their joy, consolation, and pride : We glory, said they, in tribulations : it was the state of separation in which they still lived from Jesus Christ ; that alone was the source of their tears, and what rendered death so desirable.

While we are in the body, said the Apostle, we are separated from the Lord ; and that separation was a state of anguish and sorrow to these faithful Christians : Piety consists in wishing for a re-union with Jesus Christ our head ; in sighing for the happy moment which shall incorporate us, with the chosen of God, in that mystical body, which, from the beginning of the world, is forming, of every tongue, every tribe, and every nation ; which is the completion of the designs of God, and which will glorify him, with Jesus Christ, to all eternity. Here, we are like branches torn from their stem ; like strangers, wandering in a foreign land ; like fettered captives in a prison, waiting their deliverance ; like children, banished for a time from their paternal inheritance and mansion ; in a word, like members separated from their body. Since Jesus Christ, our Head, ascended to Heaven, the earth is no longer the place of our establishment ; we look forward, in blessed expectation, to the coming of the Lord ; that
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desire constitutes all our piety and consolation: And a Christian, not to long for that happy moment, but to dread, and even look upon it as a misfortune, is to fly in the face of Jesus Christ; to renounce all communication with him; to reject the promises of faith, and the glorious title of a citizen of Heaven; it is to centre our happiness on the things of the earth, to doubt a future state, to regard religion as a dream, and to believe that all dies with us.

No, my brethren, death has nothing to a just soul, but what is pleasing and desirable: Arrived at that happy moment, he, without regret, sees a world perish, which he had never loved, and which to him had never appeared otherwise than a confusion of vanities: His eyes close with pleasure on all those vain shows which the earth offers, which he had always regarded as the splendor of a moment, and whose dangerous illusions he had never ceased to dread: He feels, without uneasiness, what do I say? with satisfaction, that mortal body, which had been the subject of all his temptations, and the fatal source of all his weaknesses, become clothed with immortality: He regrets nothing on the earth, where he leaves nothing; and from whence his heart flies along with his soul: He even complains not, that he is carried off in the middle of his career, and that his days are concluded in the flower of his age: On the contrary, he thanks his deliverer, for having abridged his sufferings with his years, for having exacted only a portion of his debt, as the price of his eternity, and for having speedily consummated his sacrifice, lest a longer residence in a corrupted world should have perverted his heart. His trials, his mortifications, which had cost so much to the weakness of the flesh, are then his sweetest reflections: He sees that all now vanishes, except what he has done for God; that all now abandon him, his riches, relations, friends
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and dignities; his works alone remaining; and he is transported with joy, to think that he had never placed his trust in the favour of princes, in the children of men, in the vain hopes of fortune, in things which must soon perish, but in the Lord alone, who remaineth eternally, and in whose bosom he goes to experience that peace and tranquillity which mortals cannot bestow. Thus tranquil on the past, despising the present, transported to touch at last that futurity, the sole object of his desires, already seeing the bosom of Abraham open to receive him, and the Son of Man seated at the right hand of his Father, holding out for him the crown of immortality, he sleeps in the Lord, he is wafted by blessed spirits to the habitation of the holy, and returns to the place from whence he originally came.

May you, my brethren, in this manner, see your course terminated.

SERMON

SERMON X.

ON THE DEATH OF A SINNER, AND THAT OF
A RIGHTEOUS CHARACTER.

REV. xiv. 13.

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.

THERE is something peculiarly striking and incomprehensible in the human passions.

All men wish to live ; they look upon death as the most dreadful of all evils ; all their passions attach them to life ; yet nevertheless those very passions incessantly urge them towards that death, for which they feel such horror ; nay, it should even seem, that their only purpose in life is to accelerate the moment of death.

All men flatter themselves, that they shall die the death of the righteous : They wish it ; they expect it. Knowing the impossibility of remaining for ever upon this earth, they trust, that before the arrival of their last moment, the passions which at present pollute, and hold them in captivity, shall be completely overcome. They figure to themselves, as horrible, the lot of a sinner, who expires in his iniquity, and under the wrath of God, yet nevertheless they tranquilly prepare for themselves the same destiny.

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This dreadful period of human life, which is death in sin, strikes and appals them; yet, like fools, they blindly and merrily pursue the road which leads to it. In vain do we announce to them, that in general men die as they have lived: They wish to live the life of a sinner, yet nevertheless to die the death of the righteous.

My intention, at present, is not to undeceive you with regard to an illusion so common, and so ridiculous, (let us reserve this subject for another occasion); but, since the death of the righteous appears so earnestly to be wished for, and that of the sinner so dreadful to you, I mean, by a representation of them both, to excite your desires for the one, and to awaken your just terrors for the other. As you must finally quit this world in one of these two situations, it is proper to familiarize yourselves with a view of them both, that by placing before your eyes the melancholy spectacle of the one, and the soothing consolations of the other, you may be enabled to judge which of the lots awaits you; and, consequently, to adopt the necessary means to secure the decision in your favour.

In the picture of the expiring sinner, you will see in what the world, with all its glory and pleasures, terminates; from the recital of the last moments of the righteous man, you will learn to what virtue conducts, in spite of all its momentary checks and troubles. In the one you will see the world from the eyes of a sinner in the moment of death: And how vain, frivolous, and different from what it seems at present will it then appear to you! In the other, you will see virtue from the eyes of the expiring righteous man: How grand and estimable will your heart then acknowledge it to be!

In the one, you will comprehend all the misery of a soul, which has lived forgetful of its God. In the other, the happiness of him who has lived only to please and to serve him. In a word, the picture of the death of the sinner will make you wish to live the life of the righteous; and the image of the death of the just will inspire you with a holy horror at the life of the sinner.

PART I.—In vain do we repel the image of death; every day brings it nearer. Youth glides away; years hurry on; and, like water, says the Scripture, spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again, we rapidly course towards the abyss of eternity, where for ever swallowed up, we can never return upon our steps, to appear once more upon the earth.

I know that the brevity and uncertainty of life are continual subjects of conversation to us. The deaths of our relations, our friends, our companions, frequently sudden, and always unexpected, furnish us with a thousand reflections on the frailty of every thing terrestrial.

We are incessantly repeating, that the world is nothing; that life is but a dream; and that it is a striking folly our interesting ourselves so deeply for what must pass so quickly away. But these are merely words; they are not the sentiments of the heart; they are discourses offered at the shrine of custom; and that very custom occasions their being immediately, and for ever forgot.

Now, my brethren, form to yourselves a destiny on this earth, agreeable to your own wishes: Lengthen out in your own minds, your days to a term beyond your most sanguine hopes. I even wish you to indulge in the enjoyment of so

pleasing an illusion : But at last, you must follow the track which your forefathers have trod : You will at last see that day arrive, to which no other shall succeed ; and that day will be the day of your eternity : Happy, if you die in the Lord : Miserable if you depart in sin. One of these lots awaits you : In the final decision upon all men, there will be only two sides, the right and the left ; two divisions, the goats and the sheep. Allow me then to recal you to the bed of death, and to expose to your view the double spectacle of this last hour, so terrible to the sinner, and so consolatory to the righteous man.

I say terrible to the sinner, who, lulled by vain hopes of a conversion, at last reaches this fatal moment ; full of desires, empty of good works ; having ever lived a stranger to the Lord, and unable now to make any offering to him, but of his crimes, and the anguish of seeing a period put to those days, which he vainly believed would endure for ever. Now nothing can be more dreadful than the situation of this unfortunate wretch, in the last moments of his life ! Whichever way his mind is employed, whether in recalling the past, or considering what is acting around him ; in a word, whether he penetrates into that awful futurity, upon the brink of which he hangs, or limits his reflections to the present moment ; these objects, the only ones which can occupy his thoughts, or present themselves to his fancy, only open to him the blackest prospects, which overwhelm him with despair.

For what can the past offer to a sinner, who extended upon the bed of death, begins now to yield up dependence upon life, and reads, in the countenances of those around him, the dreadful intelligence, that all is over with him ? What now does he see in that long course of days, which he

he has run through upon the earth? Alas! he sees only vain cares and anxieties; pleasures which passed away before they could be enjoyed, and iniquities which must endure for ever.

Vain cares.—His whole life, which now appears to have occupied but a moment, presents itself to him, and in it he views nothing but one continued constraint, and an useless agitation. He recalls to his mind all he has suffered for a world, which now flies from him; for a fortune, which now vanishes; for a vain reputation, which accompanies him not into the presence of God; for friends, whom he loses; for masters, who will soon forget him; for a name, which will be written only on the ashes of his tomb. What regret must agitate the mind of this unfortunate wretch, when he sees that his whole life has been one continued toil, yet that nothing to the purpose has been accomplished for himself! What regret, to have so often done violence to his inclinations, without gaining the advance of a single step towards heaven! To have always believed himself too feeble for the service of God, and yet to have had the strength and the constancy to fall a martyr to vanity, and to a world which is on the eve of perishing!

Alas! it is then that the sinner, overwhelmed, terrified at his own blindness and mistake, no longer finding but an empty space in a life which the world had alone engrossed; perceiving, that, after a long succession of years upon the earth, he has not yet begun to live; leaving history, perhaps, full of his actions, the public monuments loaded with the transactions of his life, the world filled with his name, and nothing, alas! which deserves to be written in the book of eternity, or which may follow him into the presence of God: Then it is, though too late, that he begins to hold

hold a language to himself, which we have frequent opportunities of hearing: "I have lived, then, only for vanity? "Why have I not served my God, as I have served my masters? Alas! Were so many anxieties, and so much trouble, necessary to accomplish my own destruction? Why, "at least did I not receive my consolation in this world? "I should have enjoyed the present, that fleeting moment "which passes away from me; and I should not then have "lost all. But my life has been always filled with anxieties, "subjections, fatigues, and restraints; and all these in "order to prepare for me everlasting misery. What madness "to have suffered more towards my own ruin, than "was required to have accomplished my salvation; and to "have regarded the upright, as a melancholy and an unsupportable one; seeing they have done nothing so difficult "for God, that I have not performed an hundred-fold for "the world, which is nothing, and from which I have "consequently nothing to expect."

Yes, my brethren it is in that last moment that your whole life will present itself to your view; but in very different colours from those in which it appears to you today. At present you count upon services performed for the state; places which you have filled; actions in which you have distinguished yourselves; wounds, which still bear testimony to your valour; the number of your campaigns; the splendour of your orders; all these appear objects of importance and reality to you. The public applauses which accompany them; the rewards with which they are followed; the fame which publishes them; the distinctions attached to them; all these only recal your past days to you, as days full, occupied, marked each by some memorable action, and by events worthy of being for ever preserved to posterity. You even distinguish yourselves,

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in your own minds, from those indolent characters of your own rank, who have led an obscure, idle, and uselefs life, and dishonoured their names, by that slothful effeminacy, which has kept them always grovelling in the dust: But on the bed of death, in that last moment, when the world flies off, and eternity approaches, your eyes will be opened; the scene will be changed; the illusion, which at present magnifies these objects, will be dissipated. You will see things as they really are; and that which formerly appeared so grand, so illustrious, as it was done only for the sake of the world, of glory, of fortune, will no longer appear of the least importance to you.

You will no longer find any thing real in your life, but what you shall have done for God; nothing praiseworthy, but works of faith and of piety; nothing great, but what will merit eternity; and a single drop of cold water in the name of Jesus Christ, a single tear shed in his presence, and the slightest mortification suffered for his sake, will all appear more precious, more estimable to you, than all the wonders which the world admires, and which shall perish with it.

Not that the dying sinner finds only cares and anxieties thrown away in his past life, he finds the remembrance likewise of his pleasures; but this very remembrance depresses and overwhelms him: Pleasures, which have existed only for a moment: He now perceives that he has sacrificed his soul, and his eternal welfare, to a fugitive moment of passion and voluptuousness. Alas! life had appeared too long to him, to be entirely consecrated to God: He was afraid to adopt too early the side of virtue, lest he should be unable to support its duration, its weariness, and its consequences. He looked forward to the
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years he had still to run, as to an immense space, through which he must travel under the weight of the Cross, and separated from the world, in the practice of Christian works : This idea alone had always suspended his good intentions ; and in order to return to God, he waited the last stage of life, as the one in which perseverance is most certain. What a surprize in this last hour, to find ; that what had to him appeared so long, has in reality been but an instant ; that his infancy and old age so nearly touch each other, that they only form, as I may say, one day ; and that, from his mother's breast, he has made but one step towards the grave. Nor is this the bitterest pang which he experiences in the remembrance of his pleasures : they have vanished like a dream ; but he, who formerly claimed an honour to himself from their gratification, is now covered with confusion and shame at their recollection : So many shameful excesses ; such weakness and debauchery : He, who piqued himself upon reason, elevation of mind, and haughtiness towards man ; O my God ! he then finds himself the weakest, the most despicable of sinners ! Apparently, perhaps, a life of prudence, yet sunk in all the infamy of the senses, and the puerility of the passions ! A life of glory in the eyes of men ; but in the sight of God, the most shameful, the most deserving of contempt and disgrace ! A life, which success, perhaps, had continually accompanied ; yet, nevertheless, in private, the most absurd, the most trifling, the most destitute of reflection and wisdom !

Pleasures, in a word, which have been the source of all his chagrins ; which have empoisoned every enjoyment of life ; which have changed his happiest days into days of madness and lamentation.

Pleasures,

Pleasures, for which he has ever paid dear ; and of which he has never experienced but the anxieties and the bitterness : such are the foundations of this frivolous happiness ! His passions alone have rendered life miserable to him ; and the only moments of tranquillity he has enjoyed, in the whole course of his life, are those in which his heart has been sheltered from their influence. The days of my pleasures are fled, says then the sinner to himself, but in a disposition of mind very different from that of Job : “ Those days which have occasioned all the sorrows of my life ; by which my rest has been broken, and the calm stillness of the night changed into the blackest thoughts and uneasinesses. Yet nevertheless, Great God ! Thou wilt still punish the sorrows and distresses of my unfortunate life ! All the bitterness of my passions is marked against me in the book of thy wrath ; and thou preparest for me, in addition to gratifications which have always been the source of all my miseries, a misery without end, and boundless.”

Behold what the expiring sinner experiences in the remembrance of the past : Crimes, which shall endure for ever ; the weaknesses of childhood ; the dissipations of youth ; the passions and the disorders of a more advanced period ; what do I know, perhaps even the shameful excesses of a licentious old age. Ah ! my brethren, whilst in health, we perceive only the surface of our conscience : We recal only a vague and confused remembrance of our life : We see only the passions which actually enchain us ; a complete life, spent in the habits of iniquity, appears to us only a single crime. But on the bed of death, the darkness spread over the conscience of the sinner is dissipated. The more he searches into his heart, the more does he discover new stains ; the deeper he enters into that abyss,

abyss, the more do new monsters of horror present themselves to his sight. He is lost in the chaos, and knows not how to proceed. To enlighten it, an entire new life would be necessary: Alas! and time flies; scarcely do a few moments now remain to him, and he must precipitate a confession, for which the greatest leisure would hardly suffice, and which can precede but an instant the awful judgment of the justice of God. Alas! we often complain, during life, of a treacherous memory; that we forget every thing; that the minister of God is under the necessity of remedying our inattention, and of assisting us to know and to judge of ourselves. But in that last moment, the expiring sinner shall require no assistance to recal the remembrance of his crimes: The justice of God, which had delivered him up, during health to all the profundity of his darkness, will then enlighten him in his wrath.

Every thing around his bed of death awakens the remembrance of some new crime; servants, whom he has scandalized by his example; children, whom he has neglected; a wife, whom he has rendered miserable by unlawful attachment; ministers of the church, whom he has despised; riches, which he has abused; the luxury which surrounds him, for which the poor and his creditors have suffered; the pride and magnificence of his edifices, which have been reared up upon the inheritance of the widow and the orphan, or perhaps by the public calamity: every thing, in a word, the heavens and the earth, says Job, shall reveal his iniquity, and rise up against him; shall recal to him the frightful history of his passions, and of his crimes.

Thus, the recollection of the past forms one of the most dreadful situations of the expiring sinner; because in it he finds

finds nothing but labours lost ; pleasures, which have been dissipated the moment almost of their existence ; and crimes which shall endure for ever.

But the scenes around him are not less gloomy to this unfortunate soul : His surprises, his separations, his changes.

His surprises.—He had always flattered himself, that the hour of the Lord would not surprise him. Whatever had been said to him on the subject from the pulpit, had not prevented him from assuring himself, that his conscience should be properly arranged before the arrival of this dreaded moment ; he has reached it, however, still loaded with all his crimes, without preparation, without the performance of a single exertion towards appeasing the wrath of the Almighty ; he has reached it, while he least thought of it, and he is now to be judged.

His surprises.—God strikes him in the zenith of his passions ; in the time, when the thoughts of death were most distant from his mind ; when he had attained to places he had long ardently struggled for ; and when, like the foolish man in the gospel, he had exhorted his soul to repose itself, and to enjoy in peace the fruit of its labours. It is in this moment that the justice of God surprises him ; and he sees life, with every imaginary hope of happiness, blasted for ever.

His surprises.—He is on the brink of the gulf, and the Almighty willeth that no one shall dare to inform him of his situation. His relations flatter him ; his friends leave him undeceived : They already lament him, in secret, as dead, yet they continue to speak of his recovery ; they deceive him, in order that he may deceive himself. The

Scriptures must be fulfilled: The finner must be taken by surprife in this last moment: Thou haft said it, O my God! and thy words are the words of truth:

His surprifes.—Abandoned by all the succours of art, delivered up alone to anguish and difeafe, he ftill cannot perfuade himfelf that death is near: He flatters himfelf—he ftill hopes: The juftice of God, it would feem, leaves him a remnant of reafon, for the fole purpofe of feducing himfelf. From his terrors, his aftonifhment, his inquietudes, we fee clearly that he ftill comprehends not the neceffity of death. He torments, he agitates himfelf, as if by thefe means he could efcape death; but his agitations, are only occafioned by regret for the lofs of life, and are not the effects of grief, for having wickedly fpent it. The blinded finner muft be fo to the end; and his death muft be fimilar to his life.

In a word, his surprifes.—He fees now that the world has all along deceived him; that it has continually led him from illufion to illufion, and from hope to hope; that things have never taken place exactly as he had promifed himfelf; and that he has always been the dupe of his errors. He cannot comprehend how his blindnefs could poffibly be fo conftant; that for fuch a feries of years he could obftinately continue to make fuch facrifices for a world, for mafters, whofe only payment has been vain promifes; and that his entire life has been one continued indifference on the part of the world to him, and an intoxication on his to the world. But what overpowers him is, the impoffibility of remedying the miftake; that he can die only once; and that after having badly run his race, he can no more recal the paff, or, by retracing his fteps, undertake a new trial. Thou art juft, O my God! and thou

thou willest that the sinner should in advance pronounce against himself, in order that he may afterwards be judged from his own mouth.

The surprises of the dying sinner are, therefore, overwhelming; but the separations which take place in that moment are not less so for him. The more he was attached to the world, to life, to all its works, the more does he suffer when a separation becomes inevitable: Every tie, which now must be broken asunder, becomes a wound which rankles in his heart: Every separation becomes a new death to his mind.

Separation from the riches which, with such constant and laborious attention, he had accumulated, by means, perhaps, repugnant to salvation; in the possession of which he obstinately persisted; in spite of all the reproaches of his conscience, and which he had cruelly refused to the necessities of his brethren. They now, however, escape from him: The mass of earth is dissipated before his eyes; his love, his regret for their loss, and the guilt of having acquired them, are the only remaining proofs that they were once in his possession.

Separation from the magnificence which surrounds him: From his proud edifices, in whose stately walls he once fondly believed he had erected an asylum against death: From the vanity and luxury of his furniture, of all which no portion shall now remain to him, but the mournful cloth, which is to encircle him in the tomb: From that air of opulence, in the midst of which he had always lived. All escape from him; all abandon him; and he begins to look upon himself as a stranger in the midst of his palaces; where indeed he ought always to have considered himself

as such ; as an unknown, who no longer possesses any thing there ; as an unfortunate wretch, whom they are on the point of stripping before his eyes, and whom they only allow to gratify his fight with the spoils for a little while, in order to augment his regret, and his punishment.

Separation from his honours and offices, which he leaves, perhaps to a rival ; to which he had at last attained, by wading through so many dangers, so many anxieties, so many meaneffes, and which he had enjoyed with so much insolence and pride. He is already on the bed of death, stripped of all the marks of his dignities, and of all his titles, preserving that of sinner alone, which he in vain, and now too late, bestows upon himself. Alas ! in this last moment, he would gladly embrace the most servile condition ; he would accept, as a favour, the most obscure and the most grovelling station, could but his days be prolonged on these conditions : He envies the lot of his slaves, whom he leaves behind him : He rapidly advances towards death, and turns back his eyes with regret, to take a lingering look of life.

Separation from his body, for whose gratification he had always lived, and with which, by favouring all its passions, he had contracted such lively and intimate ties. He feels that the house of mud is crumbling into dust ; he feels the approaches of death in each of his senses ; he no longer holds to life, but by a carcase which moulders away ; by the cruel agonies which his diseases make him feel ; by the excess of his love for it, and which becomes more lively in proportion as he advances towards the moment of separation. From his relations, from his friends, whom he sees surrounding his bed, and whose tears and lamentations wring his heart, and make him cruelly feel the anguish of losing them for ever.

Separation

Separation from the world, where he had enjoyed so many distinguished offices; where he had established, aggrandised, and arranged himself, as if it had been intended for the place of his eternal residence; from the world, in whose smiles he only lived; on whose stage he had ever been one of the principal actors; in whose transactions he had always taken such an active part, and where he had figured with so much splendour, and so many talents, to render himself conspicuous in it. His body now quits it; but his heart and all his affections are centered in it still: The world dies to him, but he himself, in expiring, dies not to the world.

Then it is that the Almighty is great, in the eyes of the expiring sinner. It is in that terrible moment, that the whole world crumbling, disappearing from his sight, he sees only God, who remaineth, who filleth all, who alone changeth not, and passeth not away. Formerly he used to complain, with an impious and ironical air, that it is very difficult to feel any fervent emotions for a God whom we see not, and not to love beings whom we perceive, and who interest all our senses. Ah! in this last moment, he shall see only God: The hitherto Invisible will now be visible to him; his senses, already extinguished, will reject all sensual objects; all shall vanish around him; and God will take the place of those delusions, which had misled and deceived him through life.

Thus every thing changes to this unfortunate wretch; and these changes, with his separations and surprises, occasion the last bitterness of the spectacle of death.

Change in his credit and in his authority.—From the moment that nothing farther is to be expected from his life,
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the world ceases to reckon upon him: His pretended friends withdraw; his dependents already seek, elsewhere, other protectors, and other masters: Even his slaves are employed in securing to themselves, after his death, an establishment which may suit them; scarcely does a sufficient number remain around him to catch his last sighs. All abandon him; all withdraw themselves: He no longer sees around him that eager crowd of worshippers; it is a successor, perhaps, upon whom they already lavish the same attentions; whilst he, says Job, alone in the bed of his anguish, is no longer surrounded but by the horrors of death; already enters into that frightful solitude which the grave prepares for him, and makes bitter reflections on the inconstancy of the world, and the little dependence to be placed on men.

Change in the public esteem, with which he had been so flattered, so intoxicated.—Alas! that world, by which he had been so celebrated, has already forgotten him. The change which his death shall necessarily occasion in the scene, may perhaps engage, for a few days, the public attention; but this short interval over, and he shall be plunged in oblivion; scarcely will it be remembered that he has existed: Every tongue will now be employed in celebrating the abilities of a successor, and exalting his character, upon the wrecks of his memory and reputation. He already perceives this neglect; that he has only to die, and the blank will speedily be filled up; that no vestige of him shall even remain in the world; and that the upright alone, who had seen him surrounded with all his pomp, will say to themselves, Where is he now? Where now are those flatteries which his greatness attracted? Behold to what the world conducts, and what is to be the portion of those who serve it!

Change in his body.—That flesh, which he had flattered, idolised so much; that vain beauty, which had attracted so many glances, and corrupted so many hearts, is already but a spectacle of horror, whose sight is hardly supportable; it is no longer but a carcase, which is approached with dread. That unfortunate creature, who had lighted up so many unjust passions. Alas! his friends, his relations, even his slaves avoid him, conceal themselves, dare not approach him, but with precaution, and no longer bestow upon him but the common offices of decency, and even these with reluctance. He himself shrinks with horror, and shudders at himself. I, says he to himself, who formerly attracted every look: “I call my servants, and they give me no answer: My breath is corrupt; my days are extinct; the grave is ready for me.”—Job xix. 17.

Lastly, change in every thing which surrounds him.—His eyes seek some resting place, some object of comfort, and no where do they find but the dreary representations of death. Yet even still, the remembrance of the past, and the view of the present, would be little to the expiring sinner; could he confine himself to these, he would not be so completely miserable; but the thoughts of a futurity convulse him with horror and despair. That futurity, that incomprehensible region of darkness, which he now approaches, conscience his only companion: That futurity, that unknown land from which no traveller has ever returned; where he knows not whom we shall find, nor what awaits him: That futurity, that fathomless abyss, in which his mind is lost and bewildered, and into which he must now plunge, ignorant of his destiny: That futurity, that tomb, that residence of horror, where he must now occupy his place amongst the ashes and the carcases of his ancestors: That futurity, that incomprehensible eternity,
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even the aspect of which he cannot support: That futurity, in a word, that dreadful judgment to which, before the wrath of God, he must now appear, and render an account of a life, of which every moment almost has been occupied by crimes. Alas! while he only looked forward to this terrible futurity, at a distance, he made an infamous boast of not dreading it: He continually demanded, with a tone of blasphemy and derision, Who is returned from it? He ridiculed the vulgar apprehensions, and piqued himself upon his undaunted courage. But from the moment that the hand of God is upon him; from the moment that death approaches near, that the gates of eternity open to receive him, and that he touches upon that terrible futurity, against which he seemed so fortified; ah! he then becomes either weak, trembling, dissolved in tears, raising up suppliant hands to heaven, or gloomy, silent, agitated, revolving within himself the most dreadful thoughts, and no longer expecting more consolation or mercy, from his weak tears and lamentations, than from his frenzies and despair.

Yes, my brethren, this unfortunate wretch, who had always lulled himself in his excesses; always flattered himself that one good moment alone was necessary, one sentiment of compunction before death, to appease the anger of God, despairs then of his clemency. In vain is he told of his eternal mercies; he feels to what a degree he is unworthy of them: In vain the minister of the church endeavours to sooth his terrors, by opening to him the bosom of his divine mercy; these promises touch him little, because he knows well that the charity of the church, which never despairs of salvation for its children, cannot, however, alter the awful judgments of the justice of God. In vain is he promised forgiveness of his crimes; a secret
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and terrible voice resounds from the bottom of his heart, and tells him, that there is no salvation for the impious, and that he can have no dependence upon promises which are given to his miseries, rather than to the truth. In vain is he exhorted to apply to those last remedies which the church offers to the dying : he regards them as desperate reliefs, which are hazarded when hope is over ; and which are bestowed more for the consolation of the living, than from any prospect of utility to those who are departing. Servants of Jesus Christ are called in to support him in this last moment ; whilst all he is enabled to do, is secretly to envy their lot, and to detest the misery of his own : His friends and relations are assembled round his bed, to receive his last sighs, and he turns away from them his eyes, because he finds still amidst them the remembrance of his crimes. Death, however, approaches : The minister endeavours to support, by prayer, that spark of life which still remains : “ Depart, Christian soul,” says he : He says not to him, Prince, grandee of the world, depart. During his life, the public monuments were hardly sufficient for the number and pride of his titles : In this last moment, they give him that title alone which he had received in baptism ; the only one to which he had paid no attention, and the only one which can remain to him for ever. Depart, Christian soul. Alas ! he had lived as if the body had formed his only being and treasure : He had even tried to persuade himself, that his soul was nothing : That man is only a composition of flesh and blood, and that every thing perishes with us : He is now informed, that it is his body, which is nothing but a morsel of clay, now on the point of crumbling into pieces ; and that his only immortal being, is that soul, that image of the Divinity, that intelligence, alone capable of knowing and loving its Creator, which now prepares to quit its earthly mansion, and appear be-

fore his awful tribunal. Depart, Christian soul. You had looked upon the earth as your country; and it was only a place of pilgrimage, from which you must depart: The Church thought to have announced glad tidings to you, the expiration of your exilement, in announcing the dissolution of your earthly frame: Alas! and it only brings you melancholy and frightful news, and opens the commencement of your miseries and anguish.

Depart then, Christian soul. Soul, marked with the seal of salvation, which you have effaced. Redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, whom you have trampled under foot: Purified by the grace of regeneration, which you have a thousand times stained; enlightened by the lights of the faith, which you have always rejected; loaded with all the tender mercies of Heaven, which you have always unworthily profaned. Depart, Christian soul. Go, and carry before Jesus Christ that august title, which should have been the illustrious mark of your salvation, but which now becomes the greatest of your crimes.

Then, the expiring sinner, no longer finding in the remembrance of the past, but regrets which overwhelm him: In all which takes place around him, but images which afflict him: In the thoughts of futurity, but horrors which appal him: No longer knowing to whom to have recourse; neither to created beings, who now leave him; nor to the world, which vanishes; nor to men, who cannot save him from death; nor to the Just God, whom he looks upon as a declared enemy, and from whom he has no indulgence to expect; a thousand horrors occupy his thoughts; he torments, he agitates himself, in order to fly from death which grasps him, or at least to fly from himself: From his expiring eyes, issue something, I know not what of, dark and gloomy,

gloomy, which expresses the fury of his soul; in his anguish, he utters words interrupted by sobs, which are unintelligible, and to which they know not whether repentance or despair gives birth. He is seized with convulsions, which they are ignorant whether to ascribe to the actual dissolution of his body, or to the soul which feels the approach of its Judge: He deeply sighs; and they know not whether the remembrance of his past crimes, or the despair at quitting life, forces from him such groans of anguish. At last, in the midst of these melancholy exertions, his eyes fix, his features change, his countenance becomes disfigured, his livid lips convulsively separate; his whole frame quivers; and, by this last effort, his unfortunate soul tears itself reluctantly from that body of clay, falls into the hands of its God, and finds itself alone at the foot of the awful tribunal.

My brethren, in this manner do those expire who forget their Creator during life. Thus shall you yourselves die, if your crimes accompany you to that last moment.

Every thing will change in your eyes, and you shall not change yourselves: You shall die, and you shall die in sin, as you have lived; and your death will be similar to your life. Prevent this misery, O my brethren. Live the life of the righteous; and your death, similar, to theirs, will be accompanied with joy, peace, and consolation. This is what I mean to explain in the second part of this Discourse.

PART II.—I know, that even to the most upright souls, there is always something terrible in death. The judgments of God, whose profound secrecy they dread; the darkneses of their own conscience, in which they continually

figure

figure to themselves hidden stains, known to the Almighty alone; the liveliness of their faith, and of their love, which in their own fight magnifies their smallest faults; in a word, the dissolution itself of their earthly frame, and the natural horror we feel for the grave: All these occasion death to be attended by a natural sensation of dread and repugnance, in so much, that as St. Paul says, the most upright themselves, who anxiously long to be clothed with that immortality promised to them, would yet willingly attain it, without being divested of the mortality which encompasses them.

It is not less true, however, that in them, grace rises superior to that horror at death, which springs from Nature; and in that moment, whether they recal the past, consider the present, or look forward to the future, they find, in the remembrance of the past, the end of their troubles; in the consideration of the present, a novelty, which moves them with a holy joy; in their views towards the future, the certainty of an eternity, which fills them with rapture; in so much, that the same situations, which are the occasion of despair to the dying sinner, become then an abundant source of consolation to the faithful soul.

I say, whether they recal the past: And here, my brethren, figure to yourselves a righteous character on the bed of death, who has long, by the practice of Christian works, prepared himself for this last moment; has amassed a treasure of righteousness, that he may not appear empty-handed in the presence of his Judge; and has lived in faith, that he may die in peace, and in all the consolations of hope: Figure to yourselves this soul, reaching at last that final hour, of which he had never lost sight, and with which he had always connected all the troubles, all the wants, all

the self-denials, all the events of his mortal life. I say that nothing is more soothing to him, than the remembrance of the past; of his sufferings, of his mortifications, of all the trials which he has undergone.

Yes, my brethren, it appears frightful to you at present to suffer for God. The smallest exertions upon yourselves required by religion, seem to overpower you; you consider as unhappy those who bear the yoke of Jesus Christ, and who, to please him, renounce the world, and all its charms. But on the bed of death, the most soothing reflection to a faithful soul, is the remembrance of what he has suffered for his God. He then comprehends all the merit of penitence, and how absurd men are, to dispute with God, a moment of constraint, which will be entitled to the recompense of a felicity without end, and without measure. For then, his consolation is, that he has sacrificed only the gratifications of a moment, of which there would only remain to him now, the confusion and the shame; that whatever he might have suffered for the world, would in this moment be lost to him; on the contrary, that the smallest suffering for God, a tear, a mortification, a vain pleasure sacrificed, an improper desire repressed, will never be forgotten, but shall last as long as God himself. What consoles him is, that of all the human luxuries and enjoyments, alas! on the bed of death there remain no more to the sinner who has always indulged in them, than to the righteous man who has always abstained from them: that they are equally past to them both; but that the one shall bear eternally the guilt of having delivered himself up to them, and the other the glory of having known how to vanquish them.

This is what the past offers to a faithful soul, on the bed of death. Sufferings, afflictions, which have endured but a little while, and which are now to be eternally rewarded: The time of dangers and temptations past; the attacks made by the world upon his faith at last terminated; the trials in which his innocence had run so many risks, at last disappeared; the occasions in which his virtue had so nearly been shipwrecked, at last for ever removed; the continual combats which he had to sustain against his passions, at last ended; and every obstacle which flesh and blood had always placed in the way of his piety, for ever annihilated. How sweet it is, when safely arrived in port, to recal the remembrance of past dangers and tempests! When victorious in the race, how pleasing to retrace, in imagination, our exertions, and to review those parts of the course most distinguished by the toils, the obstacles, and the difficulties which have rendered them celebrated.

The righteous man then appears to me like another Moses, expiring on the holy mountain, where the Lord had marked out to him his grave: "Get thee up into the mountain Abarim, and die," &c. Deut. xxxii. 49; who before he expired, looking down from that sacred place, and casting his eyes over that extent of country, the nations and kingdoms he had traversed, and now leaves behind him, reviews, in imagination, the numberless dangers he had escaped; his battles with so many conquered nations; the fatigues of the desert; the snares of Midian; the murmurs and calumnies of his brethren; the rocks split in pieces; the dangers of Egypt avoided; the waters of the Red Sea got over; hunger, thirst, and weariness struggled against; and touching at last the happy term of so many labours, and viewing from afar that country promised to his

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his fathers, he sings a song of thanksgiving and praise to God; dies transported with joy, both at the remembrance of so many dangers avoided, and at the prospect of that place of rest, which the Lord shews him from afar; and looks upon the holy mountain, where he is to expire, as the reward of his toils, and the happy term of his course.

Not that the remembrance of the past, in recalling to the dying righteous soul the trials and dangers of his past life, does not also remind him of his infidelities and wanderings; but these are errors expiated by the sighs of repentance; wanderings which have fortunately been followed by a renewal of fervour and fidelity; wanderings which recal to him the mercies of God to his soul, who hath made his crimes the means of his repentance, his passions of his conversion, and his errors of his salvation. The grief for his faults, in this last moment, becomes only a sorrow of consolation and tenderness; and tears which this remembrance draws from him still, are no longer but the tears of joy and gratitude.

The former mercies of God to his soul fill him with confidence, and inspire him with a just hope of more; the past conduct of God, with regard to him, comforts his heart, and seems to answer for what he shall experience in future. He no longer, as in the days of his penitence and mourning, figures to himself the Almighty under the idea of a terrible and severe judge, whom he had insulted, and whom it was necessary to appease; but as the Father of mercies, and a God of all consolation, who prepares to receive him into his bosom, and there shelter him from all his afflictions.

“Awake,

“Awake, righteous soul,” says then to him in secret his Lord and his God; “Thou who hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, thou shalt no more drink it again; the days of thy tribulation are past. Shake thyself from the dust, arise, and sit down; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion: Put on thy strength, put on thy beautiful garments: Enter into the everlasting joy of thy Lord, where thou shalt obtain gladness and peace, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.” *Iſaiah li. 17. &c.*

First consolation of the upright soul in the bed of death; the remembrance of the past.—But all which takes place around him; the world which flies from him; all created beings which disappear; all that phantom of vanity which vanishes; this change, this novelty, is the source still of a thousand consolations to him.

We have just seen, that the despair of the dying sinner, in viewing what passes around him, is occasioned by his surprisings, his separations, his changes; these are precisely the sources of consolation to the faithful soul in this last moment. Nothing surprises him: He is separated from nothing: In his eyes nothing is changed.

Nothing surprises him.—The hour of the Lord surprises him not; he expected, he longed for it. The thought of this last moment accompanied all his actions, entered into all his projects, regulated all his desires, and animated his whole conduct through life. Every hour, every moment, seemed to him the one which the upright judge had appointed for that dreadful reckoning, where righteousness
itself

itself shall be judged. Thus had he lived, incessantly preparing his soul for that last hour. Thus he expires, tranquil, consoled, without surprize or dread, in the peace of his Lord; death never approaching nearer to him than he had always beheld it; and experiencing no difference betwixt the day of his death, and the ordinary ones of his life.

Besides, what occasions the surprize and the despair of the sinner on the bed of death, is to see that the world, in which he had ever placed all his confidence, is nothing, is but a dream, which vanishes and is annihilated.

But the faithful soul, in his last moment; ah! he sees the world in the same light he had always viewed it: as a shadow which flitteth away; as a vapour which deceives at a distance, but, when approached, has neither reality nor substance. He feels then the holy joy of having estimated the world according to its merit; of having judged with propriety; of never being attached to what must one day slip from him in a moment; and of having placed his confidence in God alone, who remaineth for ever, eternally to reward those who trust in him.

How sweet then to a faithful soul, to say to himself, I have made the happiest choice; how fortunate for me, that I attached myself only to God, since he alone will endure to me for ever! My choice was regarded as a folly; the world laughed it to scorn, and found me whimsical and singular in not conforming myself to its ways: but now this last moment verifies all. It is death that decides on which side are the wise or the foolish, and which of the two has judged aright, the worldly or the faithful.

Thus does the upright soul, on the bed of death, view the world and all its glory. When the ministers of the church come to converse with him of God, and the nothingness of all human things, these holy truths, so new to the sinner in that last moment, are subjects familiar to him, objects of which he had never lost sight : These consolatory truths are then his sweetest occupation ; he meditates upon, he enjoys them, he draws them from the bottom of his heart, where they had always been cherished, to place them full in his view, and he contemplates them with joy. The minister of Jesus Christ speaks no new or foreign language to him ; it is the language of his heart ; they are the sentiments of his whole life. Nothing soothes him so much then, as to hear that God spoken of, whom he had always loved ; those eternal riches, which he had always coveted ; that happiness of another life, for which he had always sighed ; and the nothingness of that world, which he had always despised. All other subjects of conversation become insipid to him ; he can listen only to the mercies of the God of his fathers, and he regrets the moments as lost, which must necessarily be devoted to the regulation of an earthly mansion, and the succession of his ancestors. Great God ! What knowledge ! What peace ! What delicious transports ! What holy emotions of love, of joy, of confidence, of thanksgiving, then fill the soul of this righteous character ! His faith is renewed ; his love is invigorated ; his fervour is excited ; his compunction is awakened. The nearer the dissolution of the earthly man approaches, the more is the new man completed and perfected ! The more his mansion of clay crumbles, the more is his soul purified and exalted : In proportion as the body falls into ruin, the spirit is disengaged and renewed ; like a pure and brilliant flame, which ascends and shines forth with additional splendour, in proportion as it disengages itself

itself from the remains of matter which held it down, and as the substance to which it was attached is consumed and dissipated.

Alas! All discourses upon God fatigue the sinner on the bed of death: They irritate his evils; his head suffers by them, and his rest is disturbed: It becomes necessary to manage his weakness, by venturing only a few words at proper periods; to do it with precaution, lest their length should incommode him; to chuse the moments for speaking to him of the God who is ready to judge him, and whom he has never known. Holy artifices of charity are required, nay deception is even necessary sometimes, to make him bestow a thought upon his salvation. Even the ministers of the church but rarely approach him, because they well know that their presence is only an intrusion. They are excluded, as disagreeable and melancholy prophets; his friends around him carefully turn the conversation from salvation, as conveying the news of death, and as a dismal subject which wearies him; they endeavour to enliven his spirits, by relating the affairs and vanities of the age, which had engrossed him during life. Great God! and thou permittest that this unfortunate wretch shall bear, even to death, his dislike to truth; that worldly images shall still occupy him in this last moment; and that they shall dread to speak to him of his God, whom he has always dreaded to serve, and to know!

But let us not lose sight of the faithful soul: Not only he sees nothing on the bed of death which surpriseth him, but he is likewise separated from nothing which he laments or regrets. For what can death separate him from, to occasion either regret or tears? From the world? Alas! from a world, in which he had always lived as an exile;

in which he had found only shameful excesses, which grieved his faith; rocks at which his innocence trembled; attentions, which were troublesome to him; subjections, which in spite of himself, still divided him betwixt heaven and the earth: We feel little regret for the loss of what we have never loved. From his riches and wealth? Alas! his treasure was in heaven: His riches had been the riches of the poor: He loses them not; he only goes to regain them for ever, in the bosom of God. From his titles and his dignities? Alas! it is a yoke from which he is delivered: The only title dear to him, was the one he had received in baptism, which he now bears to the presence of God, and which constitutes his claim to the eternal promises. From his relations and friends? Alas! he knows that he only precedes them by a moment; that death cannot separate those whom charity had joined upon the earth; and that, soon united together in the bosom of God, they shall again form the same church, and the same people, and shall enjoy the delights of an immortal society. From his children? He leaves to them the Lord as a father; his example and instructions as an inheritance; his good wishes and his blessing as a final consolation: And, like David, he expires in entreating for his son Solomon, not temporal prosperities, but a perfect heart, love of the law, and the fear of the God of his fathers. From his body? Alas! from that body which he had always chastised, crucified; which he considered as his enemy; which kept him still dependent upon the senses and the flesh; which overwhelmed him under the weight of so many humiliating wants; from that house of clay, which confined him prisoner; which prolonged the days of his banishment and his slavery, and retarded his union with Jesus Christ: Ah! like St. Paul, he earnestly wishes its dissolution: It is an irksome clothing, from which he is
delivered;

delivered; it is a wall of separation from his God, which is destroyed; and which now leaves him free, and qualified to make his flight towards the eternal mountains. Thus death separates him from nothing, because faith had already separated him from all.

I do not add, that the changes which take place on the bed of death, so full of despair to the sinner, change nothing in the faithful soul. His reason, it is true, decays; but for a long time past, he had subjected it to the yoke of faith, and extinguished its vain lights before the light of God, and the profundity of his mysteries. His expiring eyes become darkened, and are closed upon all visible objects; but long ago they had been fixed on the invisible alone. His tongue is immoveable; but he had long before planted the guard of circumspection on it, and meditated in silence the mercies of the God of his fathers. All his senses are blunted, and lose their natural use; but for a long time past, he had himself interdicted their influence. He had eyes, and saw not; ears, and heard not; taste, and relished only the things of heaven. Nothing is changed, therefore, to this soul, on the bed of death. His body falls in pieces; all created beings vanish from his eyes; light retires; all nature returns to nothing; and, in the midst of all these changes, he alone changeth not; he alone is always the same.

How grand, my brethren, does faith render the righteous on the bed of death! How worthy of God, of angels, and of men, is the sight of the upright soul in that last moment! It is then that the faithful heart appears master of the world, and of all the created; it is then, that participating already in the greatness and the immutability of the God to whom he is on the eve of being united, he is elevated
above

above all ; in the world, without any connection with it ; in a mortal body, without being chained to it ; in the midst of his relations and friends, without seeing or knowing them ; in the midst of the embarrassments and changes which his death opens to his sight, without the smallest interruption to his tranquillity : He is already fixed in the bosom of God, in the midst of the destruction of all things. Once more, my brethren, how grand it is to have lived in the observance of the law of the Lord, and to die in his fear ! With what dignity does not faith then display itself in the righteous soul ? It is the moment of his glory and triumph ; it is the centre at which the whole lustre of his life and of his virtues unite.

How beautiful to see the righteous man, then moving with a tranquil and majestic peace towards eternity ! And with reason did the false Prophet cry out, when he saw the triumphal march of the Israelites entering into the land of Promise, “ Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his.” Numbers xxiii. 10.

And behold, my brethren, what completely fills with joy and consolation the faithful soul on the bed of death : It is the thought of futurity. The sinner, during health, looks forward to a future state with a tranquil eye ; but in this last moment, beholding its approach, his tranquillity is changed into shudderings and terror. The upright man, on the contrary, during the days of his mortal life, durst never regard, with a fixed eye, the depth and the extent of God's judgments : He wrought out his salvation with fear and trembling ; he shuddered at the very thought of that dreadful futurity, where even the just, if judged without mercy, shall hardly be saved : But, on the bed of death, ah ! The God of Peace who displays himself to him,
calms

calms his agitations; his fears immediately cease, and are changed into a sweet hope. He already pierces, with expiring eyes, through that cloud of mortality which still surrounds him, and sees the throne of glory, and the Son of Man at his Father's right hand, ready to receive him; that immortal country, for which he had longed so much, and upon which his mind had always dwelt; that Holy Zion, which the God of his fathers filleth with his glory and his presence; where he overfloweth the elect with a torrent of delights, and maketh them for ever to enjoy the incomprehensible riches which he hath prepared for those who love him; that city of the people of God, the residence of the saints, the habitation of the just, and of the Prophets, where he shall again find his brethren, with whom charity had united him on the earth, and with whom he will bless eternally the tender mercies of the Lord, and join with them in halelujahs to his praise.

Ah! when also the ministers of the church come to announce to this soul, that the hour is come, and that eternity approaches; when they come to tell him, in the name of the Church, which sends them: "Depart, Christian
 " soul: Quit at last that earth, where you have so long
 " been a stranger and a captive: The time of trial and
 " tribulation is over: Behold, at last, the upright Judge;
 " who comes to strike off the chains of your mortality:
 " Return to the bosom of God, from whence you came:
 " Quit now a world, which was unworthy of you: The
 " Almighty hath at last been touched with your tears: He
 " at last openeth to you the gate of eternity, the gate of
 " the upright: Depart faithful soul; Go, and unite thy-
 " self to the Heavenly Church, which expects thee: On-
 " ly remember your brethren, whom you leave upon the
 " earth, still exposed to temptations and to storms: Be
 " touched

“ touched with the melancholy state of the Church, here
 “ below; which has given you birth in Jesus Christ, and
 “ which envies your departure: Entreat the end of her
 “ captivity, and her re-union with her spouse, from whom
 “ she is still separated. Those who sleep in the Lord, pe-
 “ rish not for ever: We only quit you on the earth, in or-
 “ der to regain you in a little time with Jesus Christ, in
 “ the kingdom of the Holy: The body, which you are
 “ on the point of leaving a prey to worms and to putrefac-
 “ tion, shall soon follow you, immortal and glorious. Not
 “ a hair of your head shall perish. There shall remain in
 “ your ashes, a seed of immortality, even to the day of
 “ revelation, when your parched bones shall be vivified,
 “ and again appear more resplendent than light: What
 “ happiness for you, to be at last quit of all the miseries
 “ which still afflict us, to be no longer exposed, like your
 “ brethren, to lose that God, whom you go to enjoy; to
 “ shut your eyes, at last, on all the scandals which grieve
 “ us; on that vanity, which seduces us; on those exam-
 “ ples, which lead us astray; on those attachments, which
 “ engross us; and on those troubles, which consume us!
 “ What happiness, to quit at last a place, where every
 “ thing tires, and every thing sullies us; where we are a
 “ burden to ourselves, and where we only exist, in order
 “ to be unhappy; and to go to a residence of peace, of
 “ joy, of quiet, where our only occupation will be to en-
 “ joy the God whom we love.”

What blessed tidings, then, of joy and immortality, to
 this righteous soul! What blessed arrangement! With
 what peace, what confidence, what thanksgivings, does
 he not accept! He raises, like old Simeon, his dying eyes
 to heaven; and viewing the Lord, who cometh inwardly,
 says to him, “ Break, O my God, when thou pleasest,
 “ these

“these remains of mortality; these feeble ties, which still keep me here: I wait, in peace and in hope the effects of thine eternal promises.” Thus purified by the expiation of an holy and Christian life, fortified by the last remedies of the Church, washed in the blood of the Lamb, supported by the hope of the promises, and ripe for eternity, he shuts his eyes with an holy joy on all sublunary creatures: He tranquilly goes to sleep in the Lord, and returns to the bosom of that God from whence he came.

My brethren, any observations here would be useless. Such is the end of those who have lived in the fear of the Lord: Their death is precious before God, like their life. Such is the deplorable end of those, who have neglected him to that last hour: The death of a sinner is abominable in the eyes of the Lord, equally as their life. If you live in sin, you will die in all the horrors, and in all the useless regrets of the sinner, and your death shall be an eternal death. If you live in righteousness, you will die in peace, and in the confidence of the just, and your death will be only a passage to a blessed immortality.

Now, to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now, henceforth, and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XI.

ON CHARITY.

JOHN vi. 11.

And Jesus took the loaves, and, when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down.

IT is not without design that our Saviour associates the disciples, in the prodigy of multiplying the loaves, and that he makes use of their ministry in distributing the miraculous food among a people pressed with hunger and want. He might, again, no doubt, have made manna to rain upon the desert, and saved to his disciples the trouble of so painful a distribution.

But, might he not, also, after raising up Lazarus from the dead, dispensed with their assistance in unloosing him? Could his Almighty voice, which had just broken asunder the chains of death, have found any resistance from the feeble bands which the hand of man had formed? It is because he wished to point out to them beforehand the sacred exercise of their ministry; the part they were afterwards to have in the spiritual resurrection of sinners; and that whatever they should unloose upon the earth should be unloosed in heaven.

Again,

Again, when there was question of paying tribute to Cesar, he might have avoided the snare of Peter, by producing a piece of money out of the bowels of a fish: He who, even from stones, was able to raise up children of Abraham, might surely with greater ease have converted them into a precious metal, and thereby furnished the amount of the tribute due to Cesar: But, in the character of Head of the Church, he meant to teach his ministers to respect those in authority; and, by rendering honour and tribute to the powers established by God, to set an example of submission to other believers.

Thus, in making use, upon this occasion, of the intervention of the apostles to distribute the loaves to the multitude, his design is, to accustom all his disciples to compassion and liberality towards the unfortunate: He establishes you the ministers of his providence, and multiplies the riches of the earth in your hands, for the sole purpose of being distributed from thence among that multitude of unfortunate fellow-creatures which surrounds you. He, do doubt, might nourish them himself, as he formerly nourished Paul and Elijah in the desert; without your interference he might comfort those creatures which bear his image; he, whose invisible hand prepares food even for the young ravens which invoke him in their want; but he wishes to associate you in the merit of his liberality; he wishes you to be placed betwixt himself and the poor, like refreshing clouds, always ready to shower upon them those fructifying streams which you have only received for their advantage.

Such is the order of his providence; it was necessary that means of salvation should be provided for all men: riches would corrupt the heart, if charity were not to expiate

expiate their abuse; indigence would fatigue and weary out virtue, if the succours of compassion were not to soften its bitterness; the poor facilitate to the rich the pardon of their pleasures; the rich animate the poor not to lose the merit of their sufferings.

Apply yourself, then, be whom you may, to all the consequence of this gospel. If you groan under the yoke of poverty, the tenderness and the care of Jesus Christ towards all the wants of a wandering and unprovided people will console you: If born to opulence, the example of the disciples will now instruct you. You will there see, *1stly*, The pretexts which they oppose to the duty of charity confuted: *2dly*, You will learn what ought to be its rules. That is to say, that in the first part of this discourse we shall establish this duty against all the vain excuses of avarice; in the second we shall instruct you in the manner of fulfilling it against even the defects of charity; it is the most natural instruction with which the history of the gospel presents us.

PART I.—It is scarcely a matter of controversy now in the world, whether the law of God make a precept to us of charity: The gospel is so pointed on this duty; the spirit and the ground-work of religion lead us so naturally to it; the idea alone which we have of Providence, in the dispensation of temporal things, leaves so little room on that point to opinion or doubt, that, though many be ignorant of the extent of this obligation, yet there are almost none who do not admit of the foundation and principle.

Who, indeed, is ignorant that the Lord, whose providence hath regulated all things with an order so admirable
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and beautiful, and prepared food even for the beasts of the field, would never have left men, created after his own image, a prey to hunger and indigence, whilst he would liberally shower upon a small number of happy individuals the blessings of heaven and the fat of the earth, if he had not intended that the abundance of the one should supply the necessities of the other ?

Who is ignorant that originally every thing belonged in common to all men ; that simple nature knew neither property nor portions ; and that, at first, she left each of us in possession of the universe ? But that in order to put bounds to avarice, and to avoid trouble and dissensions, the common consent of the people established that the wisest, the most humane, and the most upright, should likewise be the most opulent ; that besides the portion of wealth destined to them by nature, they should also be charged with that of the weakest, to be its depositaries, and to defend it against usurpation and violence : consequently, that they were established by nature itself as the guardians of the unfortunate, and that whatever surplus they had was only the patrimony of their brethren confided to their care and their equity ?

Who, lastly, is ignorant that the ties of religion have still more firmly cemented the first bonds of union which nature had formed among men ; that the grace of Jesus Christ, which brought forth the first believers, made of them not only one heart and one soul, but also one family, where the idea of individual property was exploded ; and that the gospel, making it a law to us to love our brethren as ourselves, no longer permits us to be ignorant of their wants, or to be insensible to their sorrows ?

But it is with the duty of charity as with all the other duties of the law; in general, the obligation is not, even in idea, denied; but, does the circumstance of its fulfilment take place? A pretext is never wanting, either to dispense with it entirely, or at least to be quit for a moiety of the duty. Now, it would appear that the spirit of God hath meant to point out to us all these pretexts, in the answers which the disciples made to Jesus Christ in order to excuse themselves from assisting the famished multitude which had followed him to the desert.

In the first place, they remind him, that they had scarcely wherewithal to supply their own wants; and that only five loaves of barley, and two fishes remained; behold the first pretext, made use of by covetousness, in opposition to the duty of compassion. Scarcely have they sufficient for themselves; they have a name and a rank to support in the world; children to establish; creditors to satisfy; public charges to support; a thousand expences of pure benevolence, to which attention must be paid; now, what is any income, not entirely unlimited, to such endless demands? in this manner, the world continually speaks; and a world the most brilliant, and the most sumptuous.

Now, I well know, that the limits of what is called a sufficiency, are not the same for all stations; that they extend in proportion to rank and birth; that one star, says the apostle, must differ in lustre from another; that, even from the apostolic ages, men were seen in the assemblies of believers, clothed in robes of distinction, with rings of gold, while others, of a more obscure station, were forced to content themselves with the apparel necessary to cover their nakedness; that, consequently, religion doth not confound stations; and that, if it forbid those who dwell in
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the palaces of kings to be effeminate in their manners, and indecently luxurious in their dress, it doth not at the same time prescribe to them the poverty, and the simplicity of those who dwell in cottages, or of those who form the lower ranks of the people: I know it.

But, my brethren, it is an incontestible truth, that, whatever surplus you may have, belongs not to you; that it is the portion of the poor, and, that you are entitled to consider as your own only that proportion of your revenues which is necessary to support that station in which Providence hath placed you. I ask, then, is it the gospel, or covetousness, which must regulate that sufficiency? Would you dare to pretend, that all those vanities, of which custom has now made a law, are to be held in the sight of God, as expences inseparable from your condition? That every thing which flatters, and is agreeable to you, which nourishes your pride, gratifies your caprices, and corrupts your heart, is for that reason necessary to you? That all which you sacrifice to the fortune of a child, in order to raise him above his ancestors; all which you risk in gaming; that luxury, which either suits not your birth, or is an abuse of it: would you dare to pretend, that all these have incontestible claims on your revenues, which are to be preferred to those of charity? Lastly, Would you dare to pretend, that, because your father, perhaps obscure, and of the lowest rank, may have left to you all his wealth, and perhaps his crimes, you are entitled to forget your family, and the house of your father, in order to mingle with the highest ranks, and to support the same eclat, because, you are enabled to support the same expence?

If this be the case, my brethren, if you consider as a surplus only, that which may escape from your pleasure,
from

from your extravagancies, and from your caprices, you have only to be voluptuous, capricious, dissolute and prodigal, in order to be wholly dispensed from the duty of charity. The more passions you shall have to satisfy, the more will your obligation to charity diminish; and your excesses, which the Lord hath commanded you to expiate by acts of compassion, will themselves become a privilege to dispense yourselves from them. There must necessarily, therefore, be some rule here to observe, and some limits to appoint ourselves, different from those of avarice: and behold it, my brethren, the rule of faith. Whatever tends to nourish only the life of the senses, to flatter the passions, to countenance the vain pomp and abuses of the world, is superfluous to a Christian; these are what you ought to retrench, and to set apart; these are the funds and the heritage of the poor; you are only their depositaries, and you cannot encroach upon them, without usurpation and injustice. The gospel reduces to very little the sufficiency of a Christian, however exalted in the world; religion, retrenches much from the expences; and did we live all according to the rules of faith, our wants, which would no longer be multiplied by our passions, would still be fewer: the greatest part of our wealth, would be found entirely useless; and as in the first age of faith, indigence would no longer grieve the church, nor be seen among believers. Our expences continually increase, because our passions are every day multiplied; the opulence of our fathers is no longer to us but an uncomfortable poverty; and our great riches can no longer suffice, because nothing can satisfy those who refuse themselves nothing.

And in order to give this truth all the extent which the subject in question demands, I ask you, *2dly*, Do the elevation

vation and abundance in which you are born dispense you from simplicity, frugality, modesty, and holy restraint: By being born great, you are not the less Christians. In vain, like those Israelites in the desert, have you amassed more manna than your brethren; you cannot preserve for your use more than the measure prescribed by the law. Were it not so, our Saviour would have forbidden pomp, luxury, and worldly pleasures, but to the poor and unfortunate; those to whom the misery of their condition renders needless that defence.

Now, this grand truth admitted; if, according to the rule of faith it be not permitted to you, to employ your riches in the gratification of your appetites; if the rich be obliged to bear the cross, continually to renounce themselves, and to look for no consolation in this world, equally as the poor; what can the design of Providence have been, in pouring upon you all the riches of the earth? And, what advantage could even accrue to you, from them? Could it be in order to administer to your irregular desires? But, you are no longer bound to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. Could it be in order to support the pride of rank and birth? But, whatever you give to vanity, you cut off from charity. Could it be for the purpose of hoarding up for your posterity? But your treasure should be only in heaven. Could it be in order that you might pass your life more agreeably? But if you weep not, if you suffer not, if you combat not, you are lost. Could it be in order to attach you more strongly to the world? But the Christian is not of this world: he is a citizen of the age to come. Could it be for the purpose of aggrandising your possessions and your inheritances? But, you would never aggrandise but the place of your exile; and the gain of the whole world would be vain, if you there-

by lost your soul. Could it be that your table might be loaded with the most exquisite dishes? But, you well know, that the gospel forbids a life of sensuality and voluptuousness, equally to the rich, as to the indigent. Review all the advantages, which according to the world, you can reap from your prosperity, and you will find almost the whole of them forbidden by the law of God.

It has not, therefore, been his design, that they should be merely for your own purposes, when he multiplied in your hands the riches of the earth. It is not for yourself that you are born to grandeur; it is not for yourself, as Mordecai formerly said to the pious Esther, that the Lord hath exalted you to this point of prosperity and grandeur; it is for the sake of his afflicted people; it is to be the protector of the unfortunate. If you fulfil not the intentions of God, with regard to you, continued that wise Israelite, he will employ some other, who shall more faithfully serve him; he will transfer to them that crown which was intended for you; he will elsewhere provide the enlargement and deliverance of his afflicted people; for he will not permit them to perish; but you and your father's house shall perish. In the designs of the Almighty, you therefore are but the ministers of his providence, towards those who suffer; your great riches are only sacred deposits, which his goodness hath entrusted to your care, for security against usurpation and violence, and in order to be more safely preserved for the widow and the orphan: your abundance, in the order of his wisdom, is destined only to supply their necessities; your authority, only to protect them; your dignities, only to avenge their interests; your rank only to console them by your good offices; whatsoever you be, you are it only for them; your elevation, would no longer be the work of God, and he would have cursed you, in bestowing

flowing on you all the riches of the earth, had he given them to you for any other use.

Ah! alledge then no more to us, as an excuse for your hardheartedness towards your brethren, wants which are condemned by the law of God; rather justify his providence towards all who suffer; by entering into his order, let them know, that there is a God for them, as well as for you; and make them bless the adorable designs of his wisdom, in the dispensation of earthly things, which hath supplied them through your abundance, with such resources of consolation.

But, besides, what can the small contributions required from you retrench from those wants, the urgency of which you tell us so much? The Lord exacteth not from you any part of your possessions and heritages, though they belong wholly to him, and he hath a right to despoil you of them. He leaveth you tranquil possessors, of those lands, of those palaces, which distinguish you in your people, and with which the piety of your ancestors formerly enriched our temples: He doth not command you, like the young man of the gospel, to renounce all, to distribute your whole wealth among the poor, and to follow him: He maketh it not a law to you, as formerly to the first believers, to bring all your riches to the feet of your pastors: He doth not strike you with anathema, as formerly Ananias and Saphira, for daring to retain only a portion of that wealth which they had received from their ancestors; you, who only owe the aggrandisement of fortunes perhaps to public calamities, or other shameful means of acquirement: He consenteth, that, as the prophet says, you shall call the land by your name; and that you transmit to your posterity those possessions which you have inherited
from

from your ancestors : He wisheth, that you lay apart, only a portion for the unfortunate, whom he leaveth in indigence : He wisheth, that while in the luxury and splendour of your apparel, you bear the nourishment of a whole people of unfortunate fellow-creatures, you have wherewith to cover the nakedness of his servants, who languish in poverty, and know not where to repose their head : He wisheth, that from those tables of voluptuousness, where your great riches are scarcely sufficient to supply your sensuality, and the profusions of an extravagant delicacy, you drop at least a portion, for the relief of the Lazaruses pressed with hunger and want : He wisheth that, while paintings of the most absurd and the most boundless price are seen to cover the walls of your palaces, your revenues may suffice to honour the living images of your God : He wisheth, in a word, that, while nothing is spared towards the gratification of an inordinate passion for gaming, and every thing is on the verge of being for ever swallowed up in that gulph, you come not to calculate your expences, to measure your ability, to alledge to us the mediocrity of your fortune, and the embarrassment of your affairs, when there is question of consoling an afflicted Christian. He wisheth it ; and with reason doth he not wish it ? What ! You shall be rich for evil, and poor for good ! Your revenues shall be amply sufficient to effect your destruction, and they shall not suffice to save your soul and to purchase heaven ? And, because you carry self-love to the extreme, every barbarity of heart should be permitted you towards your unfortunate brethren ?

But, whence comes it that, in this single circumstance, you wish to lower the opinion that the world has of your riches ? On every other occasion you wish to be thought powerful ; you give yourselves out as such ; you even frequently

frequently conceal, under appearances of the greatest splendour, affairs already ruined, merely to support the vain reputation of wealth. This vanity, then, does not abandon you but when you are put in remembrance of the duty of compassion; not satisfied, then, with confessing the mediocrity of your fortune, you exaggerate it, and fordidness triumphs in your heart, not only over truth, but even over vanity. Ah! the Lord formerly reproached to the angel of the church of Sardis, "Because thou sayest, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of "nothing; and knowest not that in my sight thou art "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." But, at present he ought, with regard to you, to change that reproach, and to say, "Oh! you complain that "you are poor and destitute of every thing, and you will "not see that you are rich and loaded with wealth; and "that, in times when almost all around you suffer, you "alone want for nothing in my sight."

This is the second pretext made use of in opposition to the duty of charity; the general poverty. Thus the disciples reply, in the second place, to our Saviour, as an excuse for not assisting the famished multitude, that the place is desert and barren, that it is now late, and that he ought to send away the people that they might go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread, for they had nothing to eat. A fresh pretext they make use of to dispense themselves from compassion; the misery of the times, the sterility and irregularity of the seasons.

But, *ally*, Might not our Saviour have answered to the disciples, as a holy father says, It is because the place is barren and desert, and that this people knows not where

to find food to allay their hunger, that they should not be sent away fasting, lest their strength fail them by the way? And behold, my brethren, what I might also reply to you; the times are bad, the seasons are unfavourable: Ah! for that very reason you ought to enter with a more feeling concern, with a more lively and tender anxiety, into the wants of your fellow-creatures. If the place be desert and barren even for you, what must it be for so many unfortunate people? If you, with all your resources, feel so much the misery of the times, what must they not suffer, those who are destitute of every comfort? If the plagues of Egypt obtrude even into the palaces of the great, and of Pharaoh, what must be the desolation in the hut of the poor and of the labourer? If the princes of Israel, afflicted in Samaria, no longer find consolation in their palaces, to what dreadful extremities must the common people not be reduced? Reduced, alas! perhaps like that unfortunate mother, not to nourish herself with the blood of her child, but to make her innocence and her soul the melancholy price of her necessity.

But, besides, these evils with which we are afflicted, and of which you so loudly complain, are the punishment of your hardness towards the poor; God avengeth upon your possessions the iniquitous use to which you apply them; it is the cries and the groanings of the unfortunate whom you abandon which draw down the vengeance of Heaven upon your lands and territories. It is in these times, then, of public calamity, that you ought to hasten to appease the anger of God, by the abundance of your charities; it is then that, more than ever, you should interest the poor in your behalf. Alas! you bethink yourselves, of addressing your general supplications to the Almighty, through these to obtain more favourable seasons, the cessation

tion of public calamities, and the return of peace and abundance; but it is not there alone that your views and your prayers ought to be carried; you can never expect that the Almighty will attend to your distresses, while you remain callous to those of your fellow-creatures; you have here on the earth the masters of the winds and of the seasons; address yourselves to the poor and the afflicted; it is they who have, as I may say, the keys of heaven; it is their prayers which regulate the times and seasons; which bring back to us days of peace or of misery; which arrest or attract the blessings of heaven: for, abundance is given to the earth, only for their consolation; and it is only on their account that the Almighty punisheth, or is bountiful to you.

But, completely to confute you, my brethren, you who so strongly alledge to us the evil of the times, does the pretended rigour of these times retrench any thing from your pleasures? What do your passions suffer from the public calamities? If the misfortune of the times oblige you to retrench from your expences, begin with those of which religion condemns the use; regulate your tables, your apparel, your amusements, your followers, and your edifices, according to the gospel; let your retrenchings in charity at least only follow the others; lessen your crimes before you begin to diminish from your duties. When the Almighty strikes with sterility, the kingdoms of the earth, it is his intention to deprive the great and the powerful of all occasions of debauchery and excess; enter then into the order of his justice, and his wisdom; consider yourselves as public criminals, whom the Lord chastiseth by public punishments; say to him, like David, when he beheld the hand of the Lord weighing down his people, "Lo, I have sinned, and have done wickedly; but these sheep, what

what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me and against my father's house."

Behold your model; by terminating your disorders, terminate the cause of the public evils; in the persons of the poor, offer up to God the retrenchment of your pleasures and of your profusions, as the only righteous and acceptable sacrifice which is capable of disarming his anger; and seeing these scourges fall upon the earth, only in punishment of the abuses which you have made of your abundance, bear you likewise, in lessening these abuses, their anguish and bitterness. But, that the public misfortunes should be perceivable neither in the splendour and pride of your equipages, nor in the sensuality of your repasts, nor in the magnificence of your palaces, nor in your rage for gaming and every criminal pleasure, but solely in your inhumanity towards the poor; and that every thing abroad, the theatres, the profane assemblies of every description, the public festivals, should continue with the same vigour and animation, while charity alone shall be chilled; that luxury should every day increase, while compassion alone shall diminish; that the world and Satan should lose nothing through the misery of the times, while Jesus Christ alone should suffer in his afflicted members; that the rich, sheltered in their opulence, should see only from afar the anger of Heaven, while the poor and the innocent shall become the melancholy victims: Great God! thou wouldst then overwhelm only the unfortunate, in sending these scourges upon the earth! Thy sole intention then should be to complete the destruction of those miserable wretches, upon whom thy hand has already been so heavy in bringing them forth to penury and want. The powerful of Egypt should alone be exempted by the exterminating angel, while thy whole wrath would fall upon the afflicted

afflicted Israelite, upon his poor and unprovided roof, and even marked with the blood of the Lamb. Yes, my brethren, the public calamities are destined to punish only the rich and powerful; and the rich and the powerful are those who alone suffer not; on the contrary, the public evils, in multiplying the unfortunate, furnish an additional pretext towards dispensing themselves from the duty of compassion.

Last excuse of the disciples, founded on the great number of the people, who had followed our Saviour into the desert: These people are so numerous, said they, that two hundred penny-worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. Last pretext, which they oppose to the duty of charity: The multitude of the poor, yes, my brethren, that which ought to excite and to animate charity, extinguishes it: the multitude of the unfortunate, hardens you to their wants: the more the duty increases, the more do you think yourselves dispensed from its practice, and you become cruel, by having too many occasions of being charitable.

But, in the first place, whence comes, I pray you, this multitude of poor, of which you so loudly complain? I know that the misfortune of the times may increase their number: but wars, pestilences, and irregularity of seasons, all of which we at present experience, have happened in all ages: the calamities we behold, are not unexampled; our forefathers have witnessed them, and even much more melancholy and dreadful; civil dissensions, the farther armed against the child, the brother against brother; countries ravaged and laid waste by their own inhabitants; the kingdom a prey to foreign enemies; no person in safety under his own roof: we see not these miseries; but have

they seen what we witness ? so many public, and concealed miseries ? so many families worn out ? so many citizens, formerly distinguished, now low in the dust, and confounded with the meanest of the people ? Arts become almost useles ? The image of hunger and death spread over the cities, and over the fields ? What shall I say ? So many hidden iniquities, brought every day to light, the dreadful consequences of despair, and horrible necessity ? Whence comes this, my brethren ? Is it not from a luxury, unknown to our fathers, and which engults every thing ? from your expences, which know no bounds, and which necessarily drag along with them the extinction of charity ?

Ah ! was the primitive church not persecuted, desolated, and afflicted ? Do the calamities of our age bear any comparison with the horrors of those times ? Proscription of property, exilement, and imprisonment were then daily ; the most burdensome charges of the state, fell upon those who were suspected of Christianity : in a word, so many calamities were never beheld ; and nevertheless, there was no poor among them, says St. Luke, nor any that lacked. Ah ! It is, because riches of simplicity, sprung up even from their poverty itself, according to the expression of the apostle ; it is, because they gave according to their means, and even beyond them : it is, because the most distant provinces, through the care of the apostolic ministers, flowed streams of charity, for the consolation of their afflicted brethren in Jerusalem, more exposed than the rest to the rage and hatred of the synagogue.

But more than all that, it is, because the most powerful of the primitive believers were adorned with modesty ; and that our great riches are now scarcely sufficient to support that monstrous luxury, of which custom has made a
law

law to us ; it is, that their festivals were repasts of sobriety and charity ; and that the holy abstinence itself, which we celebrate, cannot moderate among us, the profusions, and the excesses of the table, and of feasts ; it is, that having no fixed city here below, they did not exhaust themselves in forming brilliant establishments, in order to render their names illustrious, to exalt their posterity, and to ennoble their own obscurity and meanness ; they thought only of securing to themselves a better establishment in the celestial country ; and that at present no one is contented with his station ; every one wishes to mount higher than his ancestors, and that their patrimony is only employed in buying titles and dignities, which may obliterate their name and the meanness of their origin : in a word, it is because the frugality of these first believers constituted the whole wealth of their afflicted brethren, and that at present our profusions occasion all their poverty and want. It is our excesses then, my brethren, and our hardness of heart towards them, which multiply the number of the unfortunate : excuse no more then, on that head, the failing of your charities ; that would be making your guilt itself your excuse. Ah ! you complain that the poor overburden you ; but they would have reason in retorting the charge one day against you : do not then accuse them for your insensibility ; and reproach them not, with that, which they undoubtedly shall one day reproach to you, before the tribunal of Jesus Christ.

If each of you were, according to the advice of the apostle, to appropriate a certain portion of your wealth towards the subsistence of the poor ; if, in the computation of your expences, and of your revenues, this article were to be always regarded as the most sacred, and the most inviolable one : Then should we quickly see the number of the afflicted to
diminish :

diminish: We should soon see renewed in the church, that peace, that happiness, and that chearful equality, which reigned among the first Christians; we should no longer behold sorrow, that monstrous disproportion, which elevating the one, places him on the pinnacle of prosperity and opulence, while the other crawls on the ground, and groans in the gulph of poverty and affliction: no longer should there be any unhappy, except the impious, among us; no secret miseries, except those which sin operates in the soul; no tears, except those of penitence; no sighs, but for heaven; no poor, but those blessed disciples of the gospel, who renounce all to follow their Master: Our cities would be the abode of innocence and compassion; religion, a commerce of charity; the earth, the image of heaven, where in different degrees of glory, each is equally happy; and the enemies of faith would again, as formerly, be forced to render glory to God, and to confess that there is something of divine in religion which is capable of uniting men together in a manner so new.

But, in what the error here consists, is, that in the practice, nobody considers charity as one of the most essential obligations of Christianity: consequently, they have no regulation on that point: if some bounty be bestowed, it is always arbitrary; and however small it be, they are equally satisfied with themselves, as if they had even gone beyond their duty.

Besides, when you pretend to excuse the scantiness of your charities, by saying that the number of the poor is endless; what do you believe to say? you say that your obligations, with respect to them, are become only more indispensable; that your compassion ought to increase in proportion as their wants increase; and that you contract new debts, whenever

whenever any increase of fortune takes place on the earth. It is then, my brethren, it is during these public calamities, that you ought to retrench even from expences, which at any other period might be permitted, and which might even be proper; it is then, that you ought to consider yourselves but as the principal poor, and to take as a charity whatever you take for yourselves? it is then that you are no longer, either grandee, man in office, distinguished citizen, or woman of illustrious birth; you are simply believer, member of Jesus Christ, brother of every afflicted Christian.

And surely, say: while that cities and provinces are struck with every calamity; that men created after the image of God, and redeemed with his whole blood, browse like the animal, and through their necessity go to search in the fields a food which nature has not intended for man, and which to them becomes a food of death; would you have the resolution to be the only one exempted from the general evil? While the face of a whole kingdom is changed, and that cries and lamentations alone are heard around your superb dwelling; would you preserve within the same appearance of happiness, pomp, tranquillity, and opulence? And where, then, would be humanity, reason, religion? In a pagan republic*, you would be held as a bad citizen; in a society of sages and wordly, as a foul, vile, sordid, without nobility, without generosity, and without elevation; and in the church of Jesus Christ, in what light, think you, can you be held? Oh! As a monster, unworthy of the name of Christian which you bear, of that faith, in which you glorify yourself, of the sacrament which you approach, and even of entry into our temples where
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* "This discourse was pronounced in 1709, when France was almost desolated by war, pestilence, and famine."

you come, seeing all these are the sacred symbols of that union, which ought to exist among believers.

Nevertheless, the hand of the Lord is extended over our people, in the cities and in the provinces ; you know it, and you lament it : Heaven is deaf to the cries of this afflicted kingdom ; wretchedness, poverty, desolation, and death, walk every where before us. Now, do any of those excesses of charity become at present a law of prudence and justice, escape you ? Do you take upon yourselves any part of the calamities of your brethren ? What shall I say ? Do you not perhaps take advantage of the public misery ? Do you not perhaps turn the general poverty to a barbarous profit ? Do you not perhaps complete the stripping of the unfortunate, in affecting to hold out to them an assisting hand ? And, are you unacquainted with the inhuman art, of deriving individual profit, even from the tears and the necessities of your brethren ? Bowels of iron, when you shall be filled, you shall burst asunder ; your felicity itself shall constitute your punishment, and the Lord will shower down upon you his war and his wrath.

My brethren, how dreadful shall be the presence of the poor before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, to the greatest part of the rich in this world ! How powerful shall be these accusers ! And how little shall remain for you to say, when they shall reproach to you the scantiness of the succour which was required to soften and to relieve their wants : that a single day, cut off from your profusions, would have sufficed to remedy the indigence of one of their years ; that it was their own property which you withheld, since whatever you had, beyond a sufficiency, belonged to them ; that consequently, you have not only been cruel,
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but also unjust, in refusing it to them ; but that, after all, your hardheartedness has served only to exercise their patience, and to render them more worthy of immortality, while you, forever deprived of those riches, which you were unwilling to lodge in safety in the bosom of the poor, shall receive for your portion only the curse prepared for those who shall have seen Jesus Christ suffering hunger, thirst, and nakedness in his members, and shall not have relieved him. Such is the illusion of the pretexts employed to dispense themselves from the duty of charity ; let us now determine the rules to be observed, in fulfilling it ; and, after having defended this obligation against all the vain excuses of avarice, let us endeavour to save it from even the defects of charity.

PART II. Not to sound the trumpet in order to attract the public attention in the compassionate offices which we render to our brethren ; to observe an order even of justice in charity, and not to prefer the wants of strangers to those with whom we are connected ; to appear feeling for the misfortune, and to know how to sooth the afflicted by our tenderness and affability, as well as by our bounty ; in a word, to find out, by our vigilance and attention, the secret of their shame ; behold the rules which the present example of our Saviour prescribes to us in the practice of compassion.

1stly, He went up into a desert and hidden place, says the gospel ; he ascended a mountain, where he seated himself with his disciples. His design, according to the holy interpreters, was to conceal from the eyes of the neighbouring villages the miracle of multiplying the loaves, and to have no witnesses of his compassion except those who
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were to reap the fruits of it. First instruction, and first rule; the secrecy of charity.

Yes, my brethren, how many fruits of compassion are every day blasted in the sight of God, by the scorching wind of pride and vain ostentation! How many charities lost for eternity! How many treasures, which were believed to have been safely lodged in the bosom of the poor, and which shall one day appear corrupted with vermin, and consumed with rust!

In truth, those gross and bare-faced hypocrites are rare which openly vaunt to the world the merit of their pious exertions; pride is more cunning, and it never altogether unmarks itself; but, how diminutive is the number of those who, moved with the true zeal of charity, like our Saviour, seek out solitary and private places to bestow, and, at the same, to conceal their holy gifts! We now see only that ostentatious zeal, which nothing but necessities of éclat can interest, and which piously wishes to make the public acquainted with every gift; they will sometimes, it is true, adopt measures to conceal them, but they are not sorry when an indiscretion betrays them; they will not perhaps court the public attention, but they are delighted when the public attention surpriseth them, and they almost consider as lost any liberality which remains concealed.

Alas! our temples and our altars, are they not every where marked with the gifts and with the names of their benefactors; that is to say, are they not the public monuments of our forefathers and our own vanity? If the invisible eye of the heavenly Father alone was meant to have witnessed them, to what purpose all that vain ostentation?

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Are you afraid that the Lord forget your offerings? If you wish only to please him, why expose your gifts to any other eye? Why these titles and these inscriptions which immortalise, on sacred walls, your gifts and your pride? Was it not sufficient that they were written even by the hand of God in the book of life? Why engrave on a perishable marble the merit of a deed, which charity would have rendered immortal?

Solomon, after having completed the most superb and the most magnificent temple of which the earth could ever boast, engraved the awful name of the Lord alone upon it, without presuming to mingle any memorial of the grandeur of his race with those of the eternal majesty of the King of kings. We give an appellation of piety to this custom; it is thought that these public monuments excite the liberality of believers. But the Lord, hath he charged your vanity with the care of attracting gifts to his altars? And hath he permitted you to depart from modesty in order to make your brethren more charitable? Alas! the most powerful among the primitive believers carried humbly, as the most obscure, their patrimony to the feet of the apostles: They beheld with an holy joy their names and their wealth confounded among those of their brethren who had less than they to offer; they were not then distinguished in the assembly of the faithful in proportion to their gifts; honours and precedency were not yet the price of gifts and offerings, and they knew better than to exchange the eternal recompence which they awaited from the Lord for any frivolous glory they could receive from men: and now the church has not privileges enough to satisfy the vanity of her benefactors; their places are marked out in the sanctuary; their tombs appear even under the altar, where only the

ashes of martyrs should repose. Custom, it is true, authorises this abuse ; but custom does not always justify what it authorises.

Charity, my brethren, is that sweet-smelling favour of Jesus Christ which vanishes, and is extinguished from the moment that it is exposed. I mean not that public acts of compassion are to be refrained from : We owe the edification and example of them to our brethren ; it is proper that they see our works ; but we ought not ourselves to see them, and our left hand should be ignorant of what our right bestows ; even those actions which duty renders the most shining ought always to be hidden in the preparation of the heart ; we ought to entertain a kind of jealousy of the public view on their account, and to believe their purity in safety only when they are exposed to the eyes of God alone. Yes, my brethren, those liberalities which have flowed mostly in secret reach the bosom of God much more pure than others, which, even contrary to our wishes, having been exposed to the eyes of men, become troubled and defiled, as I may say, in their course, by the inevitable flatteries of self-love, and by the applauses of the beholders ; like those rivers which have flowed mostly under ground, and which pour their streams into the ocean pure, and undefiled, while, on the contrary, those which have traversed plains and countries, exposed to the day, carry there, in general, only muddy waters, and drag along with them the wrecks, carcasses, and slime, which they have amassed in their course. Behold, then, the first rule of charity which our Saviour here lays down ; to shun shew and ostentation in all works of compassion ; to be unwilling to have your name mentioned in them, either on account of the rank which you may there hold, or from the glory of

of having been the first promoter, or from the noise which they may make in the world, and not to lose upon the earth that which charity had amassed only for heaven.

The second circumstance which I remark in our gospel is, that no one of all the multitude who present themselves to Jesus Christ is rejected; all are indiscriminately relieved; and we do not read that, with regard to them, our Saviour hath used any distinction or preference. Second rule: charity is universal; it banishes those capricious liberalities which seem to open the heart to certain wants, only in order to shut it against all others. You find persons in the world who, under the pretexts of having stated charities and places destined to receive them, are callous to all other wants. In vain would you inform them that a family is on the brink of ruin, and that a very small assistance would extricate it; that a young person hangs over a precipice, and must necessarily perish, if some friendly and assisting hand be not held out; that a meritorious and useful establishment must fail, if not supported by a renewal of charity; these are not necessities after their taste; and in placing elsewhere some trifling bounties, they imagine to have purchased the right of viewing with a dry eye and an indifferent heart every other description of misery.

I know that charity hath its order and its measure; that in its practice it ought to use a proper distinction; that justice requires a preference to certain wants; but I would not have that methodical charity, if I may thus speak, which, to a point, knows where to stop; which has its days, its places, its persons, and its limits; which, beyond these, is cruel, and can settle with itself, to be affected only in certain times and by certain wants. Ah! are we thus masters of our hearts when we truly love our brethren? Can

we at our will, mark out to ourselves the moments of warmth and of indifference? Charity, that holy love, is it so regular when it truly inflames the heart? Has it not, if I may say so, its transports and its excesses? And do not occasions sometimes occur so truly affecting, that did but a single spark of charity exist in your heart, it would shew itself, and in the instant would open your bowels of compassion and your riches to your brother?

I would not have that rigidly circumspect charity, which is never done with its scrutiny and which always mistrusts the truth of the necessities laid open to it. See if in that multitude which our Saviour filleth, he apply himself to separate those whom idleness or the sole hope of corporeal nourishment had perhaps attracted to the desert, and who might still have had sufficient strength left to go and search for food in the neighbouring villages; no one is excepted from his divine bounty. Is the being reduced to feign wretchedness not a sufficient misery of itself? Is it not preferable to assist fictitious wants, rather than to run the risk of refusing to real and melancholy objects of compassion? When an impostor should even deceive your charity, where is the loss? Is it not always Jesus Christ who receives it from your hand? And is your recompense attached to the abuse which may be made of your bounty, or to the intention itself which bestows it?

From this rule there springs a third, laid down in the history of our gospel, at the same time with the other two; it is, that not only ought charity to be universal, but likewise mild, affable, and compassionate. Jesus Christ beholding these people wandering and unprovided at the foot of the mountain, is touched with compassion; he is affected at the sight, and the wants of the multitude awaken his

his tendernefs and pity. Third rule: the gentlenefs of charity.

We often accompany pity with fo much afperity towards the unfortunate, while ftretching out to them an helping hand; we look upon them with fo fow and fo fevere a countenance, that a fimple denial had been lefs galling to them than a charity fo harfhly and fo unfeelingly beftowed; for the pity which appears affected by our misfortunes, confoles them almoft as much as the bounty which relieves them. We reproach to them their ftrength, their idlenefs, their wandering and vagabond manners; we accufe their own conduct for their indigence and wretchednefs; and, in fuccouring, we purchafe the right of infulting them. But, were the unhappy creature whom you outrage permitted to reply; if the abjectnefs of his fituation had not put the check of fhame and refpect upon his tongue; what do you reproach to me would he fay? An idle life, and ufelefs and vagabond manners. But what are the cares which in your opulence engrofs you? The cares of ambition, the anxieties of fortune, the impulſes of the paſſions, the refinements of voluptuouſnefs: I may be an unprofitable ſervant, but are you not yourſelf an unfaithful one? Ah! if the moſt culpable were always to be the pooreſt and the moſt unfortunate in this world, would your lot be ſuperior to mine? You reproach me with a ſtrength which I apply to no purpoſe, but to what uſe do you apply your own? Becauſe I work not I ought not to have food; but are you diſpenſed yourſelf from that law? Are you rich merely that you may paſs your life in a ſhameful effeminacy and floth? Ah! the Lord will judge betwixt you and me; and before his awful tribunal it ſhall be ſeen whether your voluptuouſnefs and profuſions were more allowable

lowable in you than the innocent artifice which I employ to attract assistance to my sufferings.

Yes, my brethren, let us at least offer to the unfortunate, hearts feeling for their wants; if the mediocrity of our fortune permit us not altogether to relieve our indigent fellow-creatures, let us, by our humanity, at least soften the yoke of poverty. Alas! we give tears to the chimerical adventures of a theatrical personage; we honour fictitious misfortunes with real sensibility; we depart from a representation with hearts still moved for the disasters of a fabulous hero; and a member of Jesus Christ, an inheritor of heaven, and your brother, whom you encounter in your way from thence, perhaps sinking under disease and penury, and who wishes to inform you of the excess of his sufferings, finds you callous! And you turn your eyes with disgust from that spectacle, and deign not to listen to him? And you quit him even with a rudeness and brutality, which finish to wring his heart with sorrow? Inhuman soul! have you then left all your sensibility on an infamous theatre? Doth the spectacle of Jesus Christ suffering in one of his members offer nothing worthy of your pity? And that your heart may be touched, must the ambition, the revenge, the voluptuousness, and all the other horrors of the pagan ages be revived?

But, it is not enough that we offer hearts feeling for the distresses, which present themselves to our view; charity goes farther: it does not indolently await those occasions, which chance may throw in its way; it knows how to search them out, and even to anticipate them itself. Last rule; the vigilance of charity. Jesus Christ waits not till those poor people address themselves to him, and lay open their
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their wants ; He is the first to discover them ; scarcely has he found them out, when with Philip, he searches the means of relieving them. That charity, which is not vigilant, anxious after the calamities of which it is yet ignorant, ingenious in discovering those which endeavour to remain concealed, which require to be solicited, pressed, and even importuned, resembles not the charity of Jesus Christ ; we must watch, and penetrate the obscurity, which shame opposes to our bounties ; this is not a simple advice ; it is the consequence of the precept of charity. The pastors, who, according to faith, are the fathers of the people, are obliged to watch over their spiritual concerns ; and that is one of the most essential functions of their ministry ; the rich and the powerful are established by God, the fathers and the pastors of the poor, according to the body ; They are bound then to watch continually over their necessities : if, through want of vigilance, they escape their attention, they are guilty before God of all the consequences, which a small succour in time would have prevented:

It is not, that you are required to find out all the secret necessities of a city ; but care and attention are exacted of you ; it is required, that you, who, through your wealth or birth, hold the first rank in a department, shall not be surrounded, unknown to you, with thousands of unfortunate fellow-creatures, who pine in secret, and whose eyes are continually wounded with the pomp of your train, and who, besides their wretchedness, suffer again, as I may say, in your prosperity ; It is required, that you, who, amid all the pleasures of the court, or of the city, see flowing into your hands, the fruits of the sweat and of the labour of so many unfortunate people, who inhabit your lands and your fields ; it is required, that you be acquainted with those, whom the toils of industry and of age have exhausted, and
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who, in their humble dwellings, drag on the wretched remains of dotage and poverty; those whom a languishing health, renders incapable of labour, their only resource against indigence and want; those whom sex and age exposed to seduction, and whose innocence you might have been enabled to preserve. Behold what is required, and what with every right of justice is exacted from you; behold the poor with whom the Lord hath charged you, and for whom you shall answer to him; the poor, whom he leaveth on the earth, only for your sake, and to whom his providence hath assigned no other resource, than your wealth, and your bounty.

Now, are they even known to you? Do you charge their pastors, to make them known to you? Are these the cares which occupy you, when you shew yourself in the midst of your lands and possessions? Ah! It is with cruelty to screw your claims from the hands of these unfortunate people; it is to tear from their bowels the innocent price of their toil, without regard to their want, to the misery of the times which you alledge to us, to their tears, and often to their despair: What shall I say? It is perhaps to crush down their weakness, to be their tyrant, and not their Lord and their father. O God! Cursest thou not, these cruel generations, and these riches of iniquity? Dost thou not stamp upon them the marks of misfortune and desolation, and which shall soon blast the source of their families; which wither the root of a proud posterity: which produce domestic discord, public disgraces, the fall and total extinction of houses? Alas! We are sometimes astonished to see fortunes apparently the best established, go to wreck in an instant; those ancient, and formerly so illustrious names fallen into obscurity, no longer to offer to our view, but the melancholy wrecks of their ancient splendour;

splendour; and their estates become the property of their rivals, or perhaps of their own servants. Ah! Could we investigate the source of their misfortunes; if their ashes, and the pompous wrecks, which in the pride of their monuments remain to us of their glory, could speak: Do you see, they would say to us, these sad marks of our grandeur! It is the tears of the poor whom we neglected, whom we oppressed, which have gradually sapped, and at last have totally overthrown them; their cries have drawn down the thunder of heaven upon our palaces: The Lord hath blown upon our superb edifices, and upon our fortune, and hath dissipated them like dust: let the name of the poor be honourable in thy sight, if you wish that your names may never perish in the memory of men: let compassion sustain your houses, if you wish that your posterity be not buried under their ruins: become wise at our cost; and let our misfortunes in teaching you our faults, teach you also to shun them.

And behold, my brethren, (that I may say something respecting it, before I conclude,) the first advantage of Christian charity; blessings even in this world. The bread blessed by our Saviour, multiplies in the hands of the Apostles who distribute it; five thousand are satisfied; and twelve baskets can hardly contain the remnants gathered up: that is to say, that the gifts of charity, are riches of benediction, which multiply in proportion as they are distributed, and which bear along with them into our houses, a source of happiness and abundance. Yes, my brethren, charity is a gain; it is an holy usury; it is a principle which returns, even here below, an hundred fold. You sometimes complain of a fatality in your affairs; nothing succeeds with you; Men deceive you; rivals supplant you; Masters neglect you; the elements conspire against you:

the best concerted schemes are blasted : associate with you the poor ; divide with them the increase of your fortune : in proportion as your prosperity augments, do you augment your benefactions ; flourish for them as well as for yourself : God himself shall then be interested in your success ; you shall have found out the secret of engaging him in your fortune, and he will preserve ; what do I say ? He will bless, he will multiply riches, in which He sees blended the portion of his afflicted members.

This is a truth, confirmed by the experience of all ages ; charitable families are continually seen to prosper : a watchful Providence presides over all their affairs ; where others are ruined, they become rich : they are seen to flourish, but the secret canal is not perceived, which pours in upon them their property : they are the fleeces of Gideon, covered with the dew of Heaven, while all around is barren and dry.

Such is the first advantage of compassion, I say nothing even of the pleasure, which we ought to feel in the delightful task of soothing those who suffer, in making a fellow-creature happy, in reigning over hearts, and in attracting upon ourselves, the innocent tribute of their acclamations and their thanks. O ! were we to reap but the pleasure of bestowing, would it not be an ample recompense to a worthy heart ? What has even the majesty of the throne more delicious, than the power of dispensing favours ? Would princes be much attached to their grandeur, and to their power, were they condemned to a solitary enjoyment of them ? No, my brethren, make your riches as subservient as you will, to your pleasures, to your profusions, and to your caprices ; but never will you employ them in a way which shall leave a joy so pure, and so worthy of the heart, as in that of comforting the unfortunate.

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What indeed can be more grateful to the heart, than the confidence, that there is not a moment in the day, in which some afflicted souls are not raising up their hands to Heaven for us, and blessing the day which gave us birth? Hear that multitude whom Jesus Christ hath filled; the air resounds with their blessings and thanks; they say to themselves, this is a prophet; they wish to establish him their king. Ah! Were men to choose their masters, it would neither be the most noble, nor the most valiant; it would be the most compassionate, the most humane, the most charitable, the most feeling: masters who, at the same time, would be their fathers.

Lastly, I do not add that Christian charity assists in expiating the crimes of abundance; and that it is almost the only mean of salvation which Providence hath provided for you, you are born to prosperity. Were charity insufficient to redeem our offences, we might certainly think ourselves entitled to complain, says a holy Father; we might take it ill, that God had deprived men of so easy a mean of salvation; at least might we say that, could we but open the gates of Heaven, through the means of riches, and purchase with our whole wealth the glory of the holy, we then should be happy. Well, my brethren, continues the holy Father, profit by this privilege, seeing it is granted to you; hasten before your riches moulder away, to deposit them in the bosom of the poor, as the price of the kingdom of heaven: the malice of men might perhaps have deprived you of them; your passions might have perhaps swallowed them up; the turns of fortune might have transferred them to other hands; death, at last, would sooner or later have separated you from them: ah! charity alone deposits them beyond the reach of all these accidents; it renders you their everlasting possessor; it lodges
them

them in safety in the eternal tabernacles, and gives you the right of for ever enjoying them in the bosom of God himself.

Are you not happy in being able to assure to yourself admittance into heaven by means so easy? In being able, by clothing the naked, to efface from the book of divine justice the obscenities, the luxury, and the irregularities of your younger years? In being able, by filling the hungry, to repair all the sensualities of your life? Lastly, in being able, by sheltering innocence in the asylums of compassion, to blot out from the remembrance of God the ruin of so many souls, to whom you have been a stumbling block? Great God! what goodness to man, to consider as meritorious a virtue which costs so little to the heart! To number in our favour feelings of humanity, of which we could never divest ourselves without being, at the same, divested of our nature; to be willing to accept as the price of an eternal kingdom frail riches, which we even enjoy only through thy bounty; which we could never continue to possess, and from which, after a momentary and fleeting enjoyment, we must at last be separated! Nevertheless, mercy is promised to him who shall have shewn it; a sinner still feeling to the calamities of his brethren will not continue long insensible to the inspirations of heaven; grace still reserves claims upon a heart in which charity has not altogether lost its influence; a good heart cannot long continue an hardened one; that principle of humanity alone, which operates in rendering the heart feeling for the wants of others, is a preparation, as it were, for penitence and salvation; and while charity still acts in the heart, an happy conversion is never to be despaired. Love then the poor as your brethren; cherish them as your offspring; respect them as Jesus Christ himself, in order that he

he say to you on the great day, " Come ye blessed of my
" Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the
" foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and
" ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink :
" I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; I was naked, and
" ye clothed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me : For in-
" asmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these
" my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

SERMON

SERMON XII.

ON AFFLICTIONS.

MATTHEW ii. 6.

And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

IT is a blessing, and a rare blessing, then, not to be offended in Jesus Christ. But what was there, or what could there be in him, who is the wisdom itself, and the glory of the Father, the substantial image of all perfection, which could give subject of scandal to men? His cross, my dearest brethren, which was formerly the shame of the jews, and is, and shall be, to the end of ages, the shame of the greatest part of Christians. But when I say that the cross of the Saviour is the shame of most of Christians, I mean not only the cross that he bore, I mean more especially that which we are obliged, from his example, to bear; without which he rejects us as his disciples, and denies us any participation of that glory into which he has entered, through the cross alone.

Behold what displeases us, and what we find to complain of in our divine Saviour. We would wish, that since he was to suffer, his sufferings had been a title, as it were, of exemption, which had merited to us the privilege of not suffering with him. Let us dispel this error, my dearest brethren;

brethren : the only thing which depends on us, is that of rendering our sufferings meritorious ; but to suffer, or not to suffer, is not left to our choice. Providence has so wisely dispensed the good and evil of this life, that each in his station, however happy his lot may appear, finds crosses and afflictions, which always counterbalance the pleasures of it. There is no perfect happiness on the earth, for it is not here the time of consolations, but the time of sufferance. Grandeur hath its subjections and its disquiets ; obscurity its humiliations and its scorns ; the world, its cares and its caprices ; retirement, its sadness and weariness ; marriage, its antipathies and its frenzies ; friendship, its losses or its perfidies ; piety itself, its repugnances and its disgusts : in a word, by a destiny inevitable to the children of Adam, each one finds his own path strewn with brambles and thorns. The apparently happiest condition hath its secret sorrows, which empoison all its felicity : the throne is the seat of chagrins equally as the lowest place ; superb palaces conceal the cruellest discontents, equally as the hut of the poor and of the humble labourer ; and, lest our place of exile should become endeared to us, we always feel, in a thousand different ways, that something is yet wanting to our happiness.

Nevertheless, destined to suffer, we cannot love the sufferances ; continually stricken with some affliction, we are unable to make a merit of our pains ; never happy, our crosses become necessary, cannot at least become useful to us. We are ingenious in depriving ourselves of all the merit of our sufferances. One while we seek, in the weakness of our own heart, the excuse of our peevishness and of our murmurings ; another in the excess or in the nature of our afflictions ; and again, in the obstacles which they seem to us to cast in the way of our salvation ; that is

to say, one while we complain of being too weak to bear our sufferings with patience ; another, that they are too excessive ; and lastly, that it is impossible in that situation to pay attention to salvation.

Such are the three pretexts continually opposed in the world to the Christian use of affliction : the pretext of self-weakness ; the pretext of the excess or the nature of our afflictions ; the pretext of the obstacles which they seem to place in the way of our salvation. These are the pretexts we have now to overthrow, by opposing to them the rules of faith. Attend then, be whom ye may, and learn that the cause of condemnation to most men is not pleasures alone : Alas ! they are so rare on the earth, and so narrowly followed by disgust ! it is likewise the unchristian use they make of afflictions.

PART I. The language most common to the souls afflicted by the Lord, is that of alledging their own weakness, in order to justify the unchristian use they make of their afflictions. They complain that they are not endowed with a force of mind sufficient to preserve under them a submissive and a patient heart ; that nothing is more conducive to happiness than the want of feeling ; that this character saves us endless vexations and chagrins inevitable in life ; but that we cannot fashion to ourselves an heart according to our own wishes ; that religion doth not render unfeeling and stoical those who are born with the tender feelings of humanity, and that the Lord is too just to make a crime to us even of our misfortunes.

But, to overthrow an illusion so common and so unworthy of piety, remark, in the first place, that when Jesus Christ hath commanded to all believers to bear with
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submission and with love the crosses proposed for us by his goodness, he hath not added, that an order so just, so consoling, so conformable to his examples, should concern only the unfeeling and impatient souls. He hath not distinguished among his disciples, those whom nature, pride, or reflection had rendered firmer and more constant, from those whom tenderness and humanity had endowed with more feeling, in order to make a duty to the first of a patience and insensibility which cost them almost nothing, and to excuse the others to whom they become more difficult.

On the contrary, his divine precepts are cures; and the more we are inimical to them through the character of our heart, the more are they proper for, and become necessary to us. It is because you are weak, and that the least contradictions always excite you so much against sufferances, that the Lord must purify you by tribulations and sorrows; for it is not the strong who have occasion to be tried, it is the weak,

In effect, what is it to be weak and repining? It is an excessive self-love; it is to give all to nature and nothing to faith; it is to give way to every impulse of inclination, and to live solely for ease and self-enjoyment, as constituting the chief happiness of man. Now, in this situation, and with this excessive fund of love for the world and for yourself, if the Lord were not to provide afflictions for your weakness; if he did not strike your body with an habitual languor, which renders the world insipid to you, if he did not send losses and vexations, which force you, through decency, to regularity and retirement; if he did not overthrow certain projects, which, leaving your fortune more obscure, remove you from the great dangers; if he did not place you in certain situations,

where irksome and inevitable duties employ your best days ; in a word, if he did not place betwixt your weakness and you a barrier which checks and stops you, alas ! your innocence would soon be wrecked ; you would soon make an improper and fatal use of peace and prosperity ; you who find no security even amid afflictions and troubles. And, seeing that, afflicted and separated from the world, and from pleasures, you cannot return to God, what would it be did a more happy situation leave you no other check to your desires than yourself ? The same weakness and the same load of self-love, which render us so feeling to sorrow and affliction, would render us still more so to the dangerous impressions of pleasures and of human prosperities.

Thus, it is no excuse for our despondency and murmurs, to confess that we are weak and little calculated to support the strokes with which we are afflicted by God. The weakness of our heart proceeds only from the weakness of our faith ; a Christian soul ought to be a valiant soul, superior, says the apostle, to persecution, disgrace, infirmities, and even death. He may be oppressed, continues the apostle, but he cannot be vanquished ; he may be despoiled of his wealth, reputation, ease, and even life, but he cannot be robbed of that treasure of faith and of grace which he has locked up in his heart, and which amply consoles him for all these fleeting and frivolous losses. He may be brought to shed tears of sensibility and of sorrow, for religion does not extinguish the feelings of nature ; but his heart immediately disavows its weakness, and turns its carnal tears into tears of penitence and of piety. What do I say ? A Christian soul even delights in tribulations ; he considers them as proofs of the tender watchfulness of God over him, as the precious pledge of the promises to come, as the blessed features of resemblance to Jesus Christ,

Christ, and which give him an assured right to share after this life in his immortal glory. To be weak and rebellious against the order of God under sufferance, is to have lost faith, and to be no longer Christian.

I confess that there are hearts more tender and more feeling to sorrow than others; but that sensibility is left to them only to increase the merit of their sufferings, and not to excuse their impatience and murmurings. It is not the feeling, it is the immoderate use of sorrow which the gospel condemns. In proportion as we are born feeling for our afflictions, so ought we to be so to the consolations of faith. The same sensibility which renders our heart susceptible of chagrin, should open it to grace, which soothes and supports it. A good heart has many more resources against afflictions, in consequence of grace finding easier access to it; immoderate grief is rather the consequence of passion than of the goodness of the heart; and to be unable to submit to God, or to taste consolation in our troubles, is to be not tender and feeling, but intractable and desperate.

Moreover, all the precepts of the gospel require strength, and if you have not enough to support with submission the crosses with which the Lord pleaseth to afflict you, you must equally want sufficient for the observance of the other duties prescribed to you by the doctrine of Jesus Christ. It requires strength of mind to forgive an injury; to speak well of those who traduce us; to conceal the faults of those who wish to dishonour even our virtues. It requires fortitude to be enabled to fly from a world which is agreeable to us; to tear ourselves from pleasures towards which we are impelled by all our inclinations; to resist examples authorised by the multitude, and of which custom has now almost

almost established a law. Strength of mind is required to make a Christian use of prosperity; to be humble in exaltation, mortified in abundance, poor of heart amidst perishable riches, detached from all when possessed of all, and filled with desires for heaven amidst all the pleasures and felicities of the earth. It is required to be able to conquer ourselves; to repress a rising desire; to stifle an agreeable feeling; to recal to order an heart which is incessantly straying from it. Lastly, among all the precepts of the gospel, there is not one which does not suppose a firm and noble soul; every where self-denial is required; every where the kingdom of God is a field to be brought into cultivation, a vineyard where toil and the heat of the day must be endured, a career in which continual and valiant combating is required; in a word, the disciples of Jesus Christ can never be weak without being overcome; and every thing, even to the smallest obligations of faith, requires exertion, and bears the mark of the cross, which is its ruling spirit; and if you fail but for an instant in fortitude, you are lost. To say then that we are weak, is to say that the entire gospel is not made for us, and that we are incapable of being not only submissive and patient, but likewise of being chaste, humble, disinterested, mortified, gentle, and charitable.

But, however weak we may be, we ought to have this confidence in the goodness of God, that we are never tried, afflicted or tempted beyond our strength; that the Lord always proportioneth the afflictions to our weakness; that he dealeth out his chastisements like his favours, by weight and measure; that in striking, he meaneth not to destroy, but to purify and save us; that he himself aideth us to bear the crosses which he imposeth; that he chastiseth us as a father, and not as a judge; that the same hand which strikes sustains

suffains us ; that the same rod which makes the wound bears the oil and the honey to soften its pain. He knoweth the nature of our hearts, and how far our weakness goes ; and as his intention in afflicting us is to sanctify and not to destroy us, he knoweth what degree of weight to give to his hand in order to diminish nothing from our merit, if too light, and, on the other side, not to lose it altogether, if beyond our strength.

Ah ! What other intention could he have in shedding sorrows through our life ? Is he a cruel God, who delighteth only in the misery of his creatures ? Is he a barbarous tyrant, who finds his greatness and his security only in the blood and in the tears of the subjects who worship him ? Is he an envious and morose master, who can taste of no happiness while sharing it with his slaves ? Is it necessary that we should suffer, groan, and perish, in order to render him happy ? It is on our account alone, therefore, that he punisheth and chastiseth us ; his tenderness suffers, as I may say, for our evils ; but, as his love is a just and enlightened love, he prefereth to leave us to suffer, because he foresees that, in terminating our pains, he would augment our wretchedness. He is, says an holy father, like a tender physician, who pities, it is true, the cries and the sufferings of his patient, but who, in spite of his cries, cuts, even to the quick, the corrupted part of his wound ; he is never more gentle and more compassionate, than when he appears most severe ; and afflictions must indeed be useful and necessary to us, since a God so merciful and so good can prevail upon himself to afflict us.

It is written, that Joseph, exalted to the first offices in Egypt, could hardly retain his tears, and felt his bowels yearn towards his brethren, in the very time that he affect-

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ed to speak most harshly to them, and that he feigned not to know them. It is in this manner that Jesus Christ chastiseth us. He affects, if it be permitted to speak in this manner, not to acknowledge in us his coheirs and his brethren; he strikes and treats us harshly as strangers; but his love suffers for this constraint; he is unable long to maintain this character of severity, which is so foreign to him: his favours soon come to soften his blows: he soon shews himself such as he is; and his love never fails to betray these appearances of rigour and anger: judge then, if the blows which come from so kind and so friendly a hand can be otherwise than proportioned to our weakness.

Let us accuse then only the corruption, and not the weakness of our heart, for our impatience and murmurs. Have not weak young women formerly defied all the barbarity of tyrants? Have not children, before they had learned to support even the ordinary toils of life, run with joy to brave all the rigours of the most frightful death? Have not old men, already sinking under the weight of their own body, felt like the eagle their youth renewed amidst the torments of a long martyrdom? You are weak? But it is that very weakness which is glorious to faith and to the religion of Jesus Christ; it is even on that account that the Lord hath chosen you, to display in your instance how much more powerful grace is than nature. If you were born with more fortitude and strength, you would do less honour to the power of grace; to man would be attributed a patience, which should be a gift of God: thus the weaker you are, the fitter instrument you become for the designs and for the glory of God. When his hand hath been heavy, he hath chosen only the weak, that man might attribute nothing to himself, and to overthrow by the example of their constancy, the vain fortitude of sages and of philosophers.

losophers. His disciples were only weak lambs, when he dispersed them through the universe, and exposed them amidst the wolves. They rendered glory in their weakness to the power of grace, and to the truth of his doctrine. They are those earthen vessels which the Lord taketh delight in breaking, like those of Gideon, to make the light and the power of faith shine forth in them with greater magnificence; and, if you entered into the designs of his wisdom and of his mercy, your weakness, which in your opinion justifies your murmurs, would constitute the sweetest consolation of your sufferings.

Lord, would you say to him, I ask not that proud reason, which seeks in the glory of suffering with constancy, the whole consolation of its pains: I ask not from thee that insensibility of heart, which either feels not, or contemns its misfortunes. Leave me, O Lord, that weak, and timid reason, that tender and feeling heart, which seems so little fitted to sustain its tribulations and sufferings; only increase thy consolations and favours. The more I shall appear weak in the sight of men, the greater wilt thou appear in my weakness; the more shall the children of the age admire the power of faith, which alone can exalt the weakest and most timid souls to that point of constancy and firmness, to which all philosophy hath never been able to attain. First pretext, taken in the weakness of man confuted; we have now to expose the illusion of the second, which is founded on the excess, or the nature of the afflictions themselves.

PART II. Nothing is more usual with persons afflicted by God, than to justify their complaints and their murmurs by the excess, or the nature of their afflictions. We always wish our crosses to have no resemblance to those of others;

others ; and lest the example of their fortitude and of their faith condemn us, we seek out differences in our grievances, in order to justify that of our dispositions and of our conduct. We persuade ourselves that we could bear with resignation, crosses of any other description ; but that those with which we are overwhelmed by the Lord, are of such a nature as to preclude consolation ; that the more we examine the lot of others, the more do we find our own misfortune singular, and our situation unexampled ; and, that it is impossible to preserve patience and serenity in a state, where chance seems to have collected solely for us a thousand afflicting circumstances, which never before had happened to others.

But, to take from self-love, a defence so weak, and so unworthy of faith, I would have only forthwith to answer you, that the more extraordinary our afflictions appear, the less ought we to believe them the effects of chance ; the more evidently ought we to see in them, the secret and inscrutable arrangements of a God singularly watchful over our destiny ; the more should we presume that, under events so new, he doubtless concealeth new views, and singular designs of mercy upon our soul ; the more should we say to ourselves, that he consequently meaneth us not to perish with the multitude, which is the party of the reprobate, seeing that he leadeth us by ways so uncommon and so little trodden. This singularity of misfortunes ought, in the eyes of our faith, to be a soothing distinction : he hath always conducted his chosen, in matter of affliction, as well as in other things, by new and extraordinary ways. What melancholy and surprising adventures in the life of a Noah, a Lot, a Joseph, a Moses, and a Job ? Trace, from age to age, the history of the just, and you will always find in their various vicissitudes, something,

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I know not what of singular and incredible, which has staggered even the belief of the subsequent ages. Thus, the less your afflictions resemble those of others, the more should you consider them as the afflictions of God's chosen: they are stamped with the mark of the just: they enter into that tradition of singular calamities, which from the beginning of ages forms their history. Battles lost, when victory seemed certain; cities looked upon as impregnable, fallen at the sole approach of the enemy; a kingdom, once the most flourishing in Europe, stricken with every evil which the Lord in his wrath can pour out upon the people; the court filled with mourning, and all the royal race almost extinct; such, Sire, is what the Lord in his mercy reserved for your piety; and such are the unprecedented misfortunes which he prepared for you, to purify the prosperities of a reign, the most brilliant in our annals. The singularity of the unfortunate events with which God afflicteth you, is intended for the sole purpose of rendering you equally pious as a Christian, as you have been great as a King. It would seem, that every thing was to be singular in your reign; the prosperities, as the misfortunes; in order that, after your glory before men, nothing should be wanting to your piety before God. It is a striking example, prepared by his goodness, for our age.

And behold, my dear hearer, a striking instance, both to instruct and to confute you, when you complain of the excess of your misfortunes and of your sufferings. The more God afflicteth, the greater is his love and his watchfulness over you. More common misfortunes might have appeared to you as the consequences merely of natural causes: and though all events are conducted by the secret springs of his Providence, you might perhaps have had

room to suppose, that the Lord had no particular designs upon you, in providing for you only certain afflictions which happen every day to the rest of men. But, in the grievous and singular situation in which he placeth you, you can no longer hide from yourself, that his regards are fixed on you alone, and that you are the special object of his merciful designs.

Now, what more consoling in our sufferings? God seeth me; he numbereth my sighs; he weigheth mine afflictions; he beholdeth my tears to flow; he maketh them subservient to mine eternal sanctification. Since his hand hath weighed so heavily, and in so singular way upon me, and since no earthly resource seems now to be left me, I consider myself, as having at last become an object more worthy of his cares and of his regards. Ah! If I still enjoyed a serene and happy situation, his looks would no longer be upon me; he would neglect me, and I should be blended before him with so many others, who are the prosperous of the earth. Beloved sufferings, which, in depriving me of all human aids, restore to me my God, and render him mine only resource in all my sorrows! Precious afflictions, which, in turning me aside from all creatures, are the cause that I now become the continual object of the remembrance and of the mercies of my Lord!

I might reply to you, in the second place, that common and momentary afflictions would have aroused our faith but for an instant. We would soon have found, in every thing around us, a thousand resources to obliterate the remembrance of that slight misfortune. Pleasures, human consolations, the new events which the world is continually offering to our sight, would soon have beguiled our sorrow, and restored our relish for the world and for

its vain amusements; and our heart, always in concert with all the objects which flatter it, would soon have been tired of its sighs and of its sorrow. But the Lord, in sending afflictions in which religion alone can become our resource, hath meant to preclude all return towards the world, and to place betwixt our weakness and us a barrier which can never be shaken by either time or accidents; he hath anticipated our inconstancy, in rendering precautions necessary to us, which might not perhaps have always appeared equally useful. He read in the character of our heart, that our fidelity in flying the dangers of and separating ourselves from the world, would not extend beyond our sorrow; that the same moment which beheld us consoled would witness our change; that, in forgetting our chagrins, we would soon have forgotten our pious resolutions; and that short-lived afflictions would have made us only short-lived righteous. He hath therefore established the continuance of our piety upon that of our sufferings; he hath lodged fixed and constant afflictions, as sureties for the constancy of our faith; and lest, in leaving our soul in our own power, we should again restore it to the world, he hath resolved to render it safe, by attaching it for ever to the foot of the cross. We are thoroughly sensible ourselves that a great blow was required to rouse us from our lethargy; that we had been little benefited by the slight afflictions with which the Lord had hitherto been pleased to visit us; and that scarcely had he stricken us, when we had forgotten the hand that had inflicted so salutary an wound. Of what then, O my God, should I complain? That excess which I find in my troubles, is an excess of thy mercies. I do not consider that the less thou sparest the patience the more thou hastenest his cure, and that all the utility and all the security of our sufferings consists in the rigour of thy blows. My sweetest consolation in the af-

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flitting state in which thy providence O Lord, hath been pleased to place me, shall then be, in future, to reflect that at least thou sparest me not ; that thou measurest thy rigours and thy remedies upon my wants, and not upon my desires ; and that thou hast more regard to the security of my salvation than to the injustice of my complaints.

I might still reply to you : Enter into judgment with the Lord, you who complain of the excess of your sufferings ; place in a balance, on the one side your crimes, and on the other your afflictions ; measure the rigour of all his chastisements upon the enormity of your offences ; compare that which you suffer with that which you ought to suffer ; see if your afflictions go the same length as your senseless pleasures have done ; if the keenness and the continuance of your sorrows correspond with those of your profane debaucheries ; if the state of restraint in which you live equals the licentiousness and the depravity of your former manners ; and should your afflictions be found to over-balance your iniquities, then boldly reproach the Lord with his injustice. You judge of your sufferings by your inclinations, but judge of them by your crimes. What ! not a single moment of your worldly life but what has perhaps made you deserving of an eternal misery, and you murmur against the goodness of a God who commuteth these everlasting torments, so often merited, into a few rapid and momentary afflictions, and even against which the consolations of faith hold out so many resources !

What injustice ! what ingratitude ! Ah ! have a care, unfaithful soul, lest the Lord listen to thee in his wrath ; have a care, lest he punish thy passions, by providing for thee, here below, whatever is favourable to them ; lest thou be not found worthy in his sight of these temporal afflictions ;

flitions; lest he reserve the time of his justice and of his vengeance, and that he treat thee like those unfortunate victims who are ornamented with flowers, who are nursed and fattened with so much care, only because they are destined for the sacrifice, and that the knife which is to stab, and the pile which is to consume them, are in readiness upon the altar. He is terrible in his gifts as in his wrath; and seeing that guilt must be punished either with fleeting punishments here below, or with eternal pains after this life, nothing ought to appear more fearful in the eyes of faith than to be a sinner, and yet prosperous on the earth.

Great God! let it be here then for me the time of thy vengeance; and since my crimes cannot go unpunished, hasten, O Lord, to satisfy thy justice. The more I am spared here, the more shalt thou appear to me as a terrible God, who refuseth to let me go for some fleeting afflictions, and whose wrath can be appeased by nothing but mine eternal misery. Lend not thine ear to the cries of my grief, nor to the lamentations of a corrupted heart, which knows not its true interests. I disown, Lord, these too human sighs which the sadness of my state still continually forces from me; these carnal tears which affliction so often maketh me to shed in thy presence. Listen not to the intreaties which I have hitherto made to obtain an end to my sufferings; complete rather thy vengeance upon me here below; reserve nothing for that dreadful eternity, where thy chastisements shall be without end, and without measure. I ask thee only to sustain my weakness; and, in shedding sorrows through my life, shed likewise upon it thy grace, which consoles, and recompenses with such usury, an afflicted heart.

To all these truths, so consoling for an afflicted soul, I might still add, that our suffering appear excessive only through the excess of the corruption of our heart; that the keenness of our afflictions springs solely from that of our passions; that it is the impropriety of our attachments to the objects lost, which renders their loss so grievous; that we are keenly afflicted only when we had been keenly attached; and that the excess of our afflictions is always the punishment of the excess of our iniquitous loves. I might add, that we always magnify whatever regards ourselves; that the very idea of singularity in our misfortunes, flatters our vanity, at the same time that it authorises our murmurs; that we never wish to resemble others; that we feel a secret pleasure in persuading ourselves that we are single of our kind: we wish all the world to be occupied with our misfortune alone, as if we were the only unfortunate of the earth. Yes, my brethren, the evils of others are nothing in our eyes: we see not that all around us are, perhaps, more unhappy than we; that we have a thousand resources in our afflictions, which are denied to others; that we derive a thousand consolations in our infirmities, from wealth, and the number of persons watchful over our smallest wants; that, in the loss of a person dear to us, a thousand means of softening its bitterness still remain from the situation in which Providence hath placed us; that, in domestic divisions, we find comforts in the tenderness and in the confidence of our friends, which we had been unable to procure among our relatives; lastly, that we find a thousand human indemnifications to our misfortunes, and that, were we to place in a balance, on the one side our consolations, and on the other our sufferings, we should find, that there are still remaining in
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our state more comforts, capable of corrupting us, than crosses calculated to sanctify us.

Thus, it is almost solely the great and the prosperous of the world, who complain of the excess of their misfortunes and sufferings. The unfortunate majority of the earth, who are born to, and live in penury and distress, pass in silence, and almost in the neglect of their sufferings, their wretched days : the smallest gleam of comfort and ease restores serenity and cheerfulness to their heart : the slightest consolations obliterate their troubles : a moment of pleasure makes up for a whole year of sufferance : while those fortunate and sensual souls, amidst all their abundance, are seen to reckon, as an unheard-of misfortune, the disappointment of a single desire ; we view them turning into a martyrdom for themselves, the weariness and even the satiety of pleasures ; drawing from imaginary evils, the source of a thousand real vexations ; feeling tenfold more anguish for the failure of a single acquisition, than pleasure in the possession of all they enjoy ; in a word, considering, as the greatest of misfortunes, the least interruption, however trifling, to their sensual happiness.

Yes, my brethren, it is the great and powerful alone who complain ; who continually imagine themselves the only unhappy, who never have enough of comforters ; who, on the slightest reverse, see assembled around them, not only those worldly friends whom their rank and fortune procure, but likewise all the pious and enlightened ministers of the gospel, distinguished by the public esteem, and whose holy instructions would, in general, be much better bestowed, on so many other unfortunate individuals, who are destitute of every worldly resource and religious

gious assistance, and to whom they would likewise be so much more beneficial. But, before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, your afflictions shall be weighed with those of so many of your unfortunate fellow-creatures, and whose misfortunes are so much the more dreadful, as they are more hidden and more neglected; it will then be demanded at you, if it belonged to you to complain and to murmur: it will be demanded, if you were entitled to lay such stress upon calamities, which would have been consolations to so many others: if it was your business to murmur so highly against a God, who treated you with such indulgence, while his hand was so heavy on such an infinity of unhappy fellow-creatures: if they had less right to the riches, and to the pleasures of the earth, than you: if their soul was no less noble, and less precious before God than yours; in a word, if they were either more criminal, or of another nature than you?

Alas! It is not only our own self-love, but it is likewise our hardness towards our brethren, which magnifies to us our own misfortunes. Let us enter those poor unprovided dwellings, where shame conceals such bitter and affecting poverty; let us view those asylums of public compassion, where every calamity seems to reign: it is there that we shall learn to appreciate our own afflictions: it is there that touched to the heart with the excess of so many evils, we shall blush to give even a name to the slightness of ours; it is there that our murmurs against Heaven shall be changed into thanksgivings, and that, less taken up with the slight crosses, sent us by the Lord, than with so many others from which he spareth us, we shall begin to dread his indulgence, far from complaining of his severity. My God! how awful shall be the judgment of the great and the mighty, since, besides the inevitable abuse of their prosperity

prosperity, the affliction, which ought to have sanctified its use, and expiated its abuses, shall become themselves their greatest crimes!

But how employ afflictions in sanctifying the dangers of their station, or in working out salvation, since they seem to cast such invincible obstacles in their way? This is the last pretext drawn from the incompatibility which afflictions seem to have with our salvation.

PART III. It is very surprising, that the corruption of the human heart finds, even in sufferances, obstacles to salvation, and that Christians continually justify their murmurs against the wisdom and the goodness of God, by accusing him of sending crosses incompatible with their eternal salvation. Nothing is more common, however, in the world, than this iniquitous language; and when we exhort the souls afflicted by God to convert these fleeting afflictions into the price of heaven and eternity, they reply, that, in this state of distress, they are incapable of every thing; that the obstacles and vexations which they are continually encountering, far from recalling them to order and to duty, serve only to irritate the mind, and to harden the heart; and that tranquillity must be restored before they can turn their thoughts towards God.

Now, I say, that, of all the pretexts employed in justification of the unchristian use made of afflictions, this is the most absurd and the most culpable. The most culpable, for it is blaspheming Providence to pretend, that it places you in situations incompatible with your salvation. Whatever it doth or permitteth here below, it only doth or permitteth in order to facilitate to men the ways of eternal life; every event, prosperous or improsperous, in the

measure of our lot, is meant by it as a mean of salvation and of sanctification ; all its designs upon us tend to that sole purpose ; whatever we are, even in the order of nature, our birth, our fortune, our talents, our age, our dignities, our protectors, our subjects, our masters : all this, in its views of mercy upon us, enters into the impenetrable designs of our eternal sanctification. All this visible world itself, is made only for the age to come : whatever passeth, hath its secret connections with that eternal age, where things shall pass no more ; whatever we see, is only the image and trust of the invisible things. The world is worthy of the cares of a wise and a merciful God, only inasmuch as, by secret and adorable relations, its diverse revolutions are to form that heavenly church, that immortal assembly of chosen, where he shall for ever be glorified. To pretend, then, that he placeth us in situations, which not only have no relation to, but are even incompatible with our eternal interests, is to make a temporal God of him, and to blaspheme his adorable wisdom.

But, not only nothing is more culpable than this pretext, I say, likewise, that nothing is more foolish : for, it is only by detaching itself from this miserable world, that a soul returns to God ; and nothing, says St. Augustine, so effectually detaches from this miserable world, as when the Lord sheddeth salutary sorrows over its dangerous pleasures. " Lord," said an holy king of Judah, " I had neglected thee in prosperity and in abundance ; the pleasures of royalty, and the splendour of a long and glorious reign, had corrupted my heart ; the flatteries and the deceitful words of the wicked, had lulled me into a profound and a fatal sleep ; but thine hand hath been upon me, in pouring out upon my people all the scourges of thy wrath, in raising up against me mine own children and subjects, whom I had loaded

loaded with favours; and I awoke: thou hast humbled me, and I have had recourse to thee; thou hast afflicted me, and I have sought thee: and I have found out that I ought not to have my trust in men; that prosperity is a dream; glory a mistake; the talents which men admire, vices concealed under the brilliant outsides of human virtues; the whole world, a deception which feeds us with only vain phantoms, and leaves nothing solid in the heart; and that thou alone art worthy to be served, for thou alone forsakest not those who serve thee."

Behold the most natural effect of afflictions: they facilitate all the duties of religion; hatred of the world in rendering it more disagreeable to us; indifference towards all creatures, by giving us experience, either of their perfidy by infidelities, or of their frailty by unexpected losses; privation of pleasures, by placing obstacles in their way; the desire of eternal riches, and consoling returns towards God, by leaving us almost no consolation among men: lastly, all the obligations of faith become more easy to the afflicted soul; his good desires find fewer obstacles, his weakness fewer rocks, his faith more aids, his lukewarmness more resources, his passion more checks, and even his virtue more meritorious opportunities.

Thus the church was never more fervent and purer than when she was afflicted; the ages of her sufferings and persecutions were the ages of her splendor and of her zeal. Tranquillity afterwards corrupted her manners; her days became less pure and less innocent as soon as they became more fortunate and powerful; her glory ended almost with her misfortunes; and her peace, as the prophet said, was more bitter, through the licentiousness of her children,
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than even her troubles had ever been through the barbarity of her enemies.

Even you, who complain that the crosses with which the Lord afflicteth you discourage you and check any desire of labouring towards your salvation, you well know that happier days have not been for you, more holy and more faithful : you well know that then, intoxicated with the world and its pleasures, you lived in a total neglect of your God, and that the comforts of your situation were the spurs of your corruption, and the instruments of your iniquitous desires.

But such is the perpetual illusion of our self-love. When fortunate, when every thing answers to our wishes and the world smiles upon us, then we alledge the dangers of our state to justify the errors of our worldly manners : we say that it is very difficult, at a certain age and in a certain situation, when a rank is to be supported, and appearances to be kept up with the world, to condemn ourselves to solitude, to prayer, to flight from pleasures, and to all the duties of a gloomy and a Christian life. But, on the other side, when under affliction ; when the body is struck with lassitude, and fortune forsakes us ; when our friends deceive, and our masters neglect us ; when our enemies overpower, and our relations become our persecutors ; we complain that every thing estranges us from God in this state of bitterness and sorrow ; that the mind is not sufficiently tranquil to devote any thoughts to salvation ; that the heart is too exasperated to feel any thing but its own misfortunes ; that amusements and pleasures now become necessary, must be sought to lull its grief, and to prevent the total loss of reason, in giving way to all the horrors

horrors of a profound melancholy. It is thus, O my God ! that by our eternal contradictions we justify the adorable ways of thy wisdom upon the lots of men, and that we provide for thy justice, powerful reasons to overthrow one day the illusion, and the falsity of our pretexts.

For, besides, be our sufferings what they may, the history of religion holds out righteous characters to our example, who, in the same situation as we, have held their soul in patience, and turned their afflictions into a resource of salvation. Do you weep the loss of a person dear to your heart ? Judith in a similar affliction, found the increase of her piety and faith, and changed the tears of her widowhood into those of retirement and penitence. If a pining health render life more gloomy and bitter than even death itself, Job found, in the wrecks of an ulcerated body, motives of compunction, longings for eternity, and the hopes of an immortal resurrection. If your character in the world be stained by calumnies, Susanna held out an unshaken soul under the blackest aspersions ; and knowing that she had the Lord in testimony of her innocence, she left to him the care of avenging her upon the injustice of men. If your fortune be the victim of treachery, David, dethroned, considered the humiliation of his new state as the just punishment of the abuse he had made of his past prosperity. If an unfortunate union become your daily cross, Esther found, in the caprices and frenzies of a faithless husband, the proof of her virtue, and the merit of her meekness and patience. In a word, place yourself in the most dismal situations, and you will find righteous, who have wrought out their salvation in the same ; and without applying to former ages for examples, look around, (the hand of the Lord is not yet shortened,) and you will see souls who, loaded with the same crosses as you, make
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a very different use of them, and find means of salvation in the very same events, where you find only a rock to your innocence, or a pretext for your murmurs. What do I say? you will see souls whom the mercy of God hath recalled from their errors by pouring out salutary sorrows upon their life; by overturning an established fortune; by chilling an envied favour; by sapping an health, apparently unalterable; by terminating a profane connection through a glaring inconstancy: You yourself, then, a witness of their change and of their conversion, have lessened the merit of it, from the facilities provided by chagrin and afflictions; you have placed little confidence in a virtue which misfortunes had rendered as if necessary; you have said that it required little exertion to forsake a world which was become tired of us; that at the first gleam of good-fortune pleasures would soon be seen to succeed to all this great show of devotion, and that they had devoted themselves to God only because they had nothing better to do. Unjust that you are! and at present, when there is question of returning to him in your affliction, you say that it is not possible; that an heart pressed and bowed down with sorrow is incapable of paying attention to any thing but his grief, and that we are more hardened than touched in this state of distress and misfortune; and after having censured and cast a stain upon the piety of afflicted souls, as a measure too easy and to which little merit is attached, as it required almost no exertion, you excuse yourself from adopting it in your affliction, and from making a Christian use of it, because you pretend that it is not possible in it to pay attention to any thing but to your sorrow. Answer, or rather tremble lest you find the rock of your salvation in a situation which ought to be its surest resource. After having abused prosperity, tremble lest you now make your misfortunes the fatal instruments of your destruction, and
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left you shut upon yourself all the ways of goodness which God might open to you in order to recal you to him.

When, O my God! will the time come that my soul, exalting itself through faith above all creatures, shall no longer worship but thee in them; shall no longer attribute events to them of which thou alone art the author; shall recognise in the diverse situations in which thou placest it the adorable arrangements of thy providence; and, even amid all its crosses, shall taste that unalterable peace which the world with all its pleasures can never bestow?

How melancholy, in effect, my brethren, when visited and afflicted of God, to seek for consolation in rising up against the hand which strikes us: in murmuring against his justice; in casting ourselves off from him, as it were in a frenzy of rage, despair, and revenge, and to seek consolation in our own madness! What an horrible situation is that of a foolish soul, whom God afflicteth, and who for consolation flies in the face of his God; seeks to ease his troubles, in multiplying his trespasses: yields himself up to debauchery, in order to drown his sorrows; and make the overwhelming sadness of guilt, an horrible resource against the sadness of his afflictions!

No, my brethren, religion alone can truly console us in our misfortunes. Philosophy checked complaints; but it did not soften the anguish. The world lulls cares, but it does not cure them: and amidst all its senseless pleasures, the secret sting of sadness always remains buried in the heart. God alone can comfort our afflictions; and is another necessary to a faithful soul? Weak creatures! You may easily, by vain speeches, and by that customary language of compassion and tenderness, make yourselves to be
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understood by the ears of the body ; but, there is none but the God of all consolation who can speak to the heart : in the excess of my pains, I vainly sought consolation among ye : I have sharpened my sufferings, while thinking to soften them, and thy vain consolations have been to me only fresh sorrows.

Great God ! It is at thy feet, that I mean henceforth to pour out all the bitterness of mine heart : it is with thee alone, that I mean to forget all my grievances, all my sufferings, all creatures. Hitherto I have given way to chagrins and to sadness altogether human ; a thousand times have I wished that thy wisdom were regulated by the mad projects of my heart ; my thoughts have wandered ; my mind hath formed a thousand delusive dreams ; my heart hath pursued these vain phantoms : I have longed for an higher birth, more fortune, talents, fame, and health : I have lulled myself in these ideas of an imaginary happiness. Fool that I am ! As if I were capable of altering at my pleasure the immutable order of thy Providence ! As if I had been wiser, or more enlightened than thee, O my God, upon my true interests ! I have never entered into thine eternal designs upon me ; I have never considered the sorrows of my situation as entering into the order of mine eternal destination ; and, even to this day, my joys and my sorrows have depended upon the created alone : consequently my joys have never been tranquil, and my sorrows have always been without resource. But henceforth, O my God ! thou shalt be mine only comforter : and I will seek in the meditation of thy holy law, and in my submission to thine eternal decrees, those solid consolations which I have never found in the world, and which, in softening our afflictions here below, secure to us, at the same time, their immortal reward hereafter.

SERMON XIII.

ON PRAYER.

MATTHEW xv. 22.

Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David.

SUCH is the lamentation of a soul touched with its wretchedness, and which addresses itself to the sovereign physician, in whose compassion alone it hopes to find relief. This was formerly the prayer of a woman of Canaan, who wished to obtain from the Son of David the recovery of her daughter. Persuaded of his power, and expecting every thing from his usual goodness to the unfortunate, she knew no surer way of rendering him propitious, than the cry of her affliction, and the simple tale of her misfortune. And this is the model which the church now proposes to us, in order to animate and to instruct us how to pray; that is to say, in order to render more pleasing, and more familiar to us this most essential duty of Christian piety.

For, my brethren, to pray, is the condition of man; it is the first duty of man; it is the sole resource of man; it is the whole consolation of man; and, to speak in the language of the Holy Spirit, it is the whole man.

Yes, if the entire world, in the midst of which we live, be but one continued temptation; if all the situations in which we may be, and all the objects which environ us, seem united with our corruption, for the purpose of either weakening or seducing us; if riches corrupt, and poverty exasperate; if prosperity exalt, and affliction depress; if business prey upon, and ease render effeminate; if the sciences inflate, and ignorance lead us into error; if mutual intercourse trivially engage us too much, and solitude leave us too much to ourselves; if pleasures seduce, and pious works excite our pride; if health arouse the passions, and sickness nourish either lukewarmness, or murmurings; in a word, if, since the fall of nature, every thing in, or around us, be a fresh danger to be dreaded; in a situation so deplorable, what hope of salvation, O my God! could there be still remaining to man, if, from the bottom of his wretchedness, he had it not in his power to make his lamentations, to be continually mounting towards the throne of thy mercy, in order to prevail that thou thyself may come to his aid; that thou may interfere to put a check upon his passions, to clear up his errors, to sustain his weakness, to lessen his temptations, to abridge his hours of trials, and to save him from his backslidings?

The Christian is therefore a man of prayer; his origin, his situation, his nature, his wants, his place of abode, all inform him that prayer is necessary. The church herself, in which he is incorporated through the grace of regeneration, a stranger here below, is always plaintive and full of lamentation; she recognises her children only through their sighs which they direct towards their country; and the Christian who does not pray, cuts himself off from the assembly of the holy, and is worse than an unbeliever.

How comes it then, my brethren, that a duty not only so essential, but even so consoling for man, is at present so much neglected? How comes it that it is considered either as a gloomy and tiresome duty, or as appropriated solely for retired souls; insomuch that our instructions upon prayer scarcely interest those who listen to us, who seem as if persuaded that they are more adapted to the cloister than to the court?

Whence comes this abuse, and this universal neglect in the world of prayer? From two pretexts, which I now mean to overthrow: *1stly*, They do not pray, because they know not, say they, how to pray, and consequently, that it is lost time; *2dly*, They do not pray, because they complain that they find nothing in prayer but wanderings of the mind, which render it both insipid and disagreeable. First pretext, drawn from their ignorance of the manner in which they ought to pray. Second pretext, founded on the disgusts and the difficulties of prayer. You must be taught, therefore, how to pray, since you know it not. And, *3dly*, the habit of prayer must be rendered easy to you, since you find it so troublesome and difficult.

PART I. "The commandments which I command you, said formerly the Lord to his people, are neither above your strength, nor the reach of your mind: they are not hidden from you, nor far off, that you should say, who shall go up for us to Heaven and bring them to us, that we may hear them and do them? Nor are they beyond the sea, that you should say, who shall go over the sea for us and bring them unto us, that we may hear them and do them? But the word is very nigh unto you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it."

Now, what the Lord said in general of all the precepts of the law, that we have no occasion to seek beyond ourselves for the knowledge of them, but that they may be all accomplished in our heart and in our mouth, may more particularly be said of the precept of prayer, which is as if the first and the most essential of all.

Nevertheless, what they commonly oppose in the world against this duty is, that, when they come to prayer, they know not what to say to God, and that praying is a secret of which they have never as yet been able to comprehend any thing. I say then, that the source of this pretext springs from three iniquitous dispositions: the first is, that they are mistaken in the idea which they form of prayer; the second is, that they are not sufficiently sensible of their own wretchedness and wants; and the third is, that they do not love their God.

1^{stly}, I say that they are mistaken in the idea which they form of prayer. In effect, prayer is not an exertion of the mind, an arrangement of ideas, a profound knowledge of the mysteries and counsels of God; it is a simple emotion of the heart; it is a lamentation of the soul, deeply affected at the sight of its own wretchedness; it is a keen and inward feeling of our wants and of our weakness, and an humble confidence which it lays before its Lord, in order to obtain relief and deliverance from them. Prayer supposes in the soul which prays, neither great lights, uncommon knowledge, nor a mind more cultivated and exalted than that of the rest of men; it supposes only more faith, more contrition, and a warmer desire of deliverance from its temptations and from its wretchedness. Prayer is neither a secret nor a science which we learn from men; nor is it an art, or a private method, upon which it is necessary

fary to consult skilful teachers, in order to be master of its rules and precepts. The methods and the maxims thereupon, pretended to be laid down to us in our days, are either singular ways which are not to be followed, or the vain speculations of an idle mind, or a fanaticism, which may stop at nothing, and which, far from edifying the church, hath merited her censures, and hath furnished, to the impious, matter of derision against her, and to the world, fresh pretexts of contempt for, and disgust at prayer. Prayer is a duty, upon which we are all born instructed: the rules of this divine science, are written solely in our hearts; and the spirit of God is the sole master to teach it.

An holy and innocent soul, who is penetrated with the greatness of God, struck with the terror of his judgments, touched with his infinite mercies, who only knows to humble himself before him, to acknowledge, in the simplicity of his heart, his goodness and wonders, to adore the orders of his providence upon him, to accept before him of the crosses and afflictions imposed upon him by the wisdom of his counsels; who knows no prayer more sublime, than to be sensible before God of all the corruption of his heart; to groan over his own hardness of heart and opposition to all good, to entreat of him, with a fervent faith, to change him, to destroy in him that man of sin, which, in spite of his firmest resolves, continually forces him to make so many false steps in the ways of God: a soul of this description is a thousand times more instructed in the knowledge of prayer than all the teachers themselves, and may say with the prophet, "I have more understanding than all my teachers." He speaks to his God as a friend to a friend; he is sorry for having offended him; he upbraids himself for not having, as yet, sufficient force to renounce all to
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please him; he takes no pride in the sublimity of his thoughts; he leaves his heart to speak, and gives way to all its tendernefs before the only object of his love. Even when his mind wanders, his heart watches and speaks for him; his very disgusts become a prayer, through the feelings which are then excited in his heart; he is tenderly affected, he sighs, he is displeas'd with, and a burden to himself, he feels the weight of his bonds, he exerts himself as if to break and throw them off, he a thousand times renews his protestations of fidelity, he blushes and is ashamed at always promising, and yet being continually faithless: such is the whole secret, and the whole science of prayer. And what is there in all this beyond the reach of every believing soul?

Who had instructed our poor woman of Canaan in prayer? A stranger, and daughter of Tyre and Sidon, who was unacquainted with the wonders of the law, and the oracles of the prophets; who had not yet heard from the mouth of the Saviour, the words of eternal life; who was still under the shadows of ignorance and of death; she prays, however; her love, her confidence, the desire of being granted, teach her to pray; her heart being touched, constitutes the whole merit and the whole sublimity of her prayer.

And surely, if, in order to pray, it were requisite to rise to those sublime states of prayer, to which God exalteth some holy souls; if it were necessary to be wrapt in extacy, and transported even up to heaven, like Paul, there to hear those ineffable secrets which God exposeth not to man, and which it is not permitted, even to man himself, to reveal; or, like Moses upon the holy mountain, to be placed upon a cloud of glory, and, face to face, to see God: that is to say, if it were necessary to have attained to that de-
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gree of intimate union with the Lord, in which the soul, as if already freed from its body, springs up even into the bosom of its God; contemplates at leisure his infinite perfections; forgets, as I may say, its members which are still upon the earth; is no longer disturbed, nor even diverted by the phantoms of the senses; is fixed, and is absorbed in the contemplation of the wonders and the grandeur of God; and, already participating in his eternity, could count a whole age passed in that blessed state, as only a short and rapid moment; if, I say, it were necessary, in order to pray, to be favoured with these rare and excellent gifts of the Holy Spirit, you might tell us, like those new believers of whom St. Paul makes mention, that you have not yet received them, and that you know not what is even that spirit which communicates them.

But prayer is not a special gift set apart for privileged souls alone; it is a common duty imposed upon every believer; it is not solely a virtue of perfection, and reserved for certain purer and more holy souls; it is, like charity, an indispensable virtue, requisite to the perfect as to the imperfect; within the capacity of the illiterate equally as of the learned, commanded to the simple as to the most enlightened; it is the virtue of all men; it is the science of every believer; it is the perfection of every creature. Whoever has a heart, and is capable of loving the Author of his being; whoever has a reason capable of knowing the nothingness of the creature and the greatness of God, must know how to adore, to return him thanks, and to have recourse to him; to appease him when offended; to call upon him when turned away; to thank him when favourable; to humble himself when he strikes; to lay his
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wants before him, or to entreat his countenance and protection.

Thus, when the disciples ask of Jesus Christ to teach them to pray, he doth not unfold to them the height, the sublimity, the depth of the mysteries of God; he solely informs them that, in order to pray, it is necessary to consider God as a tender, bountiful, and careful father: to address themselves to him with a respectful familiarity, and with a confidence blended with fear and love; to speak to him the language of our weakness and of our wretchedness; to borrow no expressions but from our heart; to make no attempt of rising to him, but rather to draw him nearer to us; to lay our wants before him, and to implore his aid; to wish that all men bless and worship him; and that his reign be established in all hearts; that his will be done, as in heaven so in earth; that sinners return to the paths of righteousness; that believers attain to the knowledge of the truth; that he forgive us our sins; that he preserve us from temptations; that he assist our weakness; that he deliver us from our miseries. All is simple, but all is grand in this divine prayer; it recalls man to himself, and, in order to adopt it as a model, nothing more is required than to feel our wants, and to wish deliverance from them.

And behold why have I said that the second iniquitous disposition, from whence the pretext, founded upon not knowing how to pray proceeded, is, that they do not sufficiently feel the infinite wants of their soul. For, I ask you, my brethren, is it necessary to teach a sick person to entreat relief? is a man pressed with hunger difficulted how to solicit food? is an unfortunate person beaten with the tempest,

tempest, and on the point of perishing, at a loss how to implore assistance? Alas! doth the urgent necessity alone not amply furnish expressions? In the sole sense of our evils, do we not find that animated eloquence, those persuasive emotions, those pressing remonstrances which solicit their cure? Has a suffering heart occasion for any matter to teach it to complain? In it every thing speaks, every thing expresses its affliction, every thing announces its sufferings, and every thing solicits relief; even its silence is eloquent.

You yourself, who complain that you know not what method to take in praying, in your temporal afflictions, from the instant that a dangerous malady threatens your life, that an unlooked for event endangers your property and fortune, that an approaching death is on the point of snatching from you a person either dear or necessary; then you raise your hands to heaven; then you send up your lamentations and prayers; you address yourself to the God who strikes and who relieves; you then know how to pray; you have no need of going beyond your own heart for lessons and rules to lay your afflictions before him, nor do you consult able teachers in order to know what to say to him; you have occasion for nothing but your grief, your evils alone have found out the method of instructing you.

Ah! my brethren, if we felt the wants of our soul as we feel those of the body; if our eternal salvation interested us as much as we are for a fortune of dirt, or for a weak and perishable health, we would soon be skilful in the divine art of prayer; we would not complain that we had nothing to say in the presence of a God of whom we have so much to ask; the mind would be little difficulted in finding wherewith to entertain him; our evils alone

would speak ; in spite of ourselves, our heart would burst forth in holy effusions, like that of Samuel's mother before the ark of the Lord ; we would no longer be master of our sorrows and tears ; and the most certain mark of our want of faith, and that we know ourselves not, is that of not knowing what to say to the Lord in the space of a short prayer.

And, after all, is it impossible that, in the miserable condition of this human life, surrounded as we are with so many dangers ; made up ourselves of so many weaknesses ; on the point, every moment, of being led astray by the objects of vanity, corrupted by the illusions of the senses, and dragged away by the force of example ; a continual prey to the tyranny of our inclinations, to the dominion of our flesh, to the inconstancy of our heart, to the inequalities of our reason, to the caprices of our imagination, to the eternal variations of our temper ; depressed by loss of favour, elated by prosperity, enervated by abundance, soured by poverty, led away by customs, shaken by accidents, flattered with praise, irritated by contempt ; continually wavering between our passions and our duties, between ourselves and the law of God ; is it possible, I say, that in a situation so deplorable, we can be diffculted what to ask of the Lord, or what to say to him, when we appear in his presence ? O my God ! why then is man not less miserable ? Or why is he not better acquainted with his wants ?

Ah ! if you told us my dear hearer, that you know not where to begin in prayer ; that your wants are so infinite, your miseries and your passions so multiplied, that, were you to pretend to expose them all to the Lord, you would never have done : if you said to us, that the more you
search

search into your heart, the more your wounds unfold, the more corruption and disorders do you discover in yourself, and that, despairing of being able to relate to the Lord the endless detail of your weaknesses, you present your heart wholly to him, you leave your evils to speak for you, you ground your whole art of prayer on your confusion, your humiliation, and your silence; and that in consequence of having too much to say to him, you say nothing; if you speak in this manner, you would speak the language of faith, and that of a penitent king, who, contemplating his repeated relapses, and no longer daring to speak to his God in prayer, said, "Lord, I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long: for mine iniquities are gone over my head, as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My heart panteth, my strength faileth me; for I will declare mine iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin. Forfake me not, O Lord: O my God! be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation." Such is the silence of compunction which forms before God the true prayer.

But to complain that you have no longer any thing to say, when you wish to pray: Alas! My dear hearer, when you present yourself before God, do your past crimes hold out nothing for you to dread from his judgments, or to ask from his mercy? What! your whole life has perhaps been only a sink of debaucheries; you have perverted every thing, grace, your talents, your reason, your wealth, your dignities, all creatures; you have passed the best part of your days in the neglect of your God, and in all the delusions of the world and of the passions; you have vilified your heart by iniquitous attachments, defiled your body, disordered your imagination, weakened your lights, and even extinguished every happy disposition which nature

had placed in your soul; and the recollection of all this furnishes you with nothing in the presence of God! And it inspires you with no idea of the method you ought to adopt, in having recourse to him, in order to obtain his forgiveness of such accumulated crimes? And you have nothing to say to a God whom you have so long offended? O man! Thy salvation, then, must either be without resource, or thou must have other means of accomplishing it than those of the divine clemency and mercy.

But, my dear hearer, I go further. If you lead a Christian life; if returned from the world and from pleasures, you are at last entered into the ways of salvation, you are still more unjust in complaining that you find nothing to say to the Lord in your prayers. What! The singular grace of having opened your eyes, of undeceiving you with regard to the world, and withdrawing you from the bottom of the abyss; this blessing so rare, and denied to so many sinners, doth it give rise to no grateful feelings in your heart, when at his feet? Can this recollection leave you cold and insensible? Is nothing tender awakened by the presence of your benefactor, you who pride yourself upon never having forgotten a benefit, and who pompously display the feeling and the excess of your gratitude towards the creatures?

Besides, if you feel those endless tendencies, which in spite of your change of life, still rise up within you against the law of God; that difficulty which you still have in doing well; that unfortunate inclination which you still find within you towards evil; those desires of a more perfect virtue, which always turn out vain; those resolutions to which you are always faithless; those opportunities, in which you find yourself the same; those duties, which

which always meet the same repugnance in your heart : in a word, if you feel that inexhaustible fund of weakness and of corruption, which remains with you after your conversion, and which alarms so much your virtue, you will not only have ample matter to address the Lord in prayer, but your whole life will be one continual prayer. All the dangers which shall threaten your weakness, all the accidents which shall shake your faith, all the objects which shall open afresh the former wounds of your heart, all the inward emotions which shall prove that the man of sin lives always within you, will lead you to look upwards to Him from whom alone you expect deliverance from them. As the apostle said, every place will be to you a place of prayer ; every thing will direct your attention to God, because every thing will furnish you with christian reflections upon yourself.

Besides, my dear hearer, even granting that your own necessities should not be sufficient to fill the void of your prayer, employ a portion of it with the evils of the church ; with the dissentions of the pastors ; with that spirit of schism and revolt which seems to be forming in the sanctuary ; with the relaxation of believers ; with the depravity of manners ; with the sad progress of unbelief, and the diminution of faith among men. Lament over the scandals of which you are a continual witness ; complain to the Lord, with the prophet, that all has forsaken him ; that every one seeks his own interest ; that even the salt of the earth hath become tasteless, and that piety has become a traffic. Entreat of the Lord, the consummation of his elect, and the fulfilment of his designs upon his church ; religious princes, faithful pastors, humble and enlightened teachers, knowing and disinterested guides ; peace to the churches ;

churches; the extinction of error, and the return of all who have gone astray.

What more shall I add? Entreat the conversion of your relations, friends, enemies, protectors, and masters; the conversion of those souls to whom you have been a stumbling-block; of those whom you have formerly estranged from piety through your derisions and censures; of those who perhaps owe their irreligion and freethinking solely to the impiety of your past discourses; of those of whom your examples or sollicitations have formerly either perverted the virtue, or seduced the weakness. Is it possible that these great objects, at once so sad and so interesting, cannot furnish attention to your mind, or some feeling to your heart? Every thing which surrounds you teaches you to pray; every object, every accident which you see around you, provides you with fresh opportunities of raising yourself to God; the world, retirement, the court, the righteous, the sinful, the public and domestic occurrences, the misfortunes of some, and the prosperity of others; every thing, which meets your eyes, supplies you with subject of lamentation, of prayer, of thanksgiving. Every thing instructs your faith; every thing excites your zeal; all grieves your piety, and calls forth your gratitude; and, amid so many subjects of prayer, you cannot supply a single instant of prayer! Surrounded with so many opportunities of raising yourself to God, you have nothing to say to him when you come to appear in his presence? Ah! My brethren, how far removed must God be from an heart, which finds it such a punishment to converse with him, and how little must that master and friend be loved, to whom they never wish to speak!

And behold the last and the principal cause of our incapacity in prayer. They know not how to pray and to speak to their God, because they do not love him. When the heart loves, it soon finds out how to communicate its feelings, and to affect the object of its love ; it soon knows what it ought to say : Alas ! it cannot express all that it feels. Let us establish regularity once more in our hearts, my brethren ; let us substitute God in place of the world ; then shall our heart be no longer a stranger before God. It is the irregularity of our affections, which is the sole cause of our incapacity in prayer ; eternal riches can never be fervently asked, when they are not loved ; truths can never be well meditated upon, when they are not relished ; and little can be said to a God who is hardly known ; favours which are not desired, and freedom from passions which are not hated, can never be very urgently solicited ; in a word, prayer is the language of love ; and we know not how to pray, because we not how to love.

But, as you will say, doth an inclination for prayer depend upon us ? And how is it possible to pray, with disgusts and wanderings of the mind, which are not to be conquered, and which render it insupportable ? Second pretext, drawn from the disgusts and the difficulties of prayer.

PART II. One of the greatest excesses of sin, is undoubtedly that backwardness, and, I may say, that natural dislike which we have to prayer. Man innocent, would have founded his whole delight in holding converse with God : all creatures would have been as an open book, where we would have incessantly meditated upon his works and his wonders ; the impressions of the senses, under the
command

command of reason, would never have been able to turn him aside, in spite of himself, from the delight and the familiarity of his presence; his whole life would have been one continued contemplation of the truth, and his whole happiness in his innocence would have been founded on his continual communications with the Lord, and the certainty that he would never forsake him.

Man must therefore be highly corrupted, and sin must have made strange alterations in us, to turn into a punishment what ought to be our happiness: It is however only too true, that we almost all bear in our nature this backwardness, and this dislike to prayer; and upon these is founded the most universal pretext, which is opposed to the discharge of this duty, so essential to christian piety. Even persons, to whom the habit of prayer ought to be rendered more pleasing and more familiar, by the practice of virtue, continually complain of the disgusts and of the constant wanderings which they experience in this holy exercise; inasmuch that, looking upon it either as a wearisome duty, or as a lost trouble, they abridge its length, and think themselves happily quit of a yoke and of a slavery, when this moment of weariness and restraint is over.

Now, I say, that nothing is more unrighteous than to estrange ourselves from prayer, on account of the disgusts and wanderings of the mind, which render it painful and disagreeable to us; for these disgusts and wanderings originate, 1st, From our lukewarmness and our infidelities; or, 2dly, In our being little accustomed to prayer; or, 3dly, In the wisdom even of God, who tries us, and who wishes to purify our heart, by withholding for a time the sensible consolations of prayer.

Yes,

Yes, my brethren, the first, and the most common source of the disgusts and the dryness of our prayers, is the lukewarmness and the infidelity of our life. It is, in effect, an injustice, to pretend that we can bring to prayer a serene and tranquil mind ; a cool imagination, free from all the vain phantoms by which it is agitated ; an heart affected with, and disposed to relish the presence of its God, while our whole life, though otherwise virtuous in the eyes of man, shall be one continual dissipation ; while we shall continue to live among objects the most calculated to move the imagination, and to make those lively impressions on us which are never done away ; in a word, while we shall preserve a thousand iniquitous attachments in our heart, which, though not absolutely criminal in our eyes, yet trouble, divide, and occupy us, and which weaken in us, or even totally deprive us of any relish for God, and the things of heaven.

Alas ! my brethren, if the most retired and the most holy souls ; if the most reclusive penitents, purified by long retreat and by a life altogether devoted to heaven, still found in the sole remembrance of their past manners disagreeable images, which forced their way even into their solitude, to disturb the comfort and the tranquillity of their prayers ; do we expect that in a life, regular I confess, but full of agitations, of occasions by which we are led away, of objects which unsettle us, of temptations which disquiet, of pleasures which enervate, of fears and hopes which agitate us, we shall find ourselves, in prayer, all of a sudden new men, purified from all those images which fill our mind, freed from all those attachments which come to divide, and perhaps to corrupt our heart, in tranquillity from all those agitations which continually make such violent and such dangerous impressions upon our

soul; and that, forgetting for a moment the entire world, and all those vain objects which we have so lately quitted, and which we still bear in our remembrance and in our heart, we shall, all of a sudden, find ourselves raised, before God, to the meditation of heavenly things, penetrated with love for eternal riches, filled with compunction for innumerable infidelities which we still love, and with a tranquillity of mind and of heart, which the profoundest retirement, and the most rigorous seclusion from the world, frequently do not bestow? Ah! my brethren, how unjust we are, and into what terrible reproaches against ourselves shall the continual complaints made by us against the duties of piety one day be turned!

And to go farther into this truth, and to enter into a detail, which renders it more evident to you; you complain, in the first place, that your mind, incapable of a moment's attention in prayer, wanders from it, and flies off in spite of yourself. But how can it be otherwise, or how can you find it attentive and collected, if every thing you do takes off its attention and unsettles it; if in the detail of conduct you never recollect yourself; if you never accustom yourself to that mental reflection, to that life of faith, which, even amid the dissipations of the world, finds ample sources of holy reflections? To have a collected mind in prayer, you must bring it along with you; it is necessary that even your intercourse with sinners, when obliged to live among them, the sight of their passions, of their anxieties, fears, hopes, joys, chagrins, and wretchedness, supply your faith with reflections, and turn your views towards God, who alone bestows collection of mind and the tranquillity of prayer. Then, even on quitting the world and those worldly conversations, where duty alone shall have engaged your presence, you will find no difficulty in going

ing to recollect yourself before God, and in forgetting at his feet those vain agitations which you have so lately witnessed. On the contrary, the designs of faith which you shall there have preserved; the blindness of the worldly, which you shall there have inwardly deplored, will cause you to find new comforts at the feet of Jesus Christ; you will there, with consolation, recreate yourself from the weariness of dissipation and of worldly nothings; you will lament, with increased satisfaction, over the folly of men who so madly pursue after a vapour, a chimerical happiness, which eludes their grasp, and which it is impossible ever to attain, for the world in which they seek it cannot bestow it; you will there more warmly thank the Lord for having with so much goodness, and notwithstanding your crimes, enlightened and discerned you from that multitude which must perish; you will there see, as in a new light, the happiness of those souls who serve him, and whose eyes being opened upon vanity, no longer live but for the truth.

2dly, You complain that your heart, insensible in prayer, feels nothing fervent for its God, but, on the contrary, a disgust which renders it insupportable. But how is it possible that your heart, wholly engrossed with the things of the earth, filled with iniquitous attachments, inclination for the world, love of yourself, schemes for exalting your station, and desires perhaps of pleasing; how is it possible, I say, that your heart, compounded with so many earthly affections, should still have any feeling for the things of heaven? It is wholly filled with the creatures; where then should God find his place in it? We cannot love both God and the world. Thus, when the Israelites had passed the Jordan, and had eaten of the fruits of the earth, "the manna ceased on the morrow after they had
" eaten

“eaten of the old corn of the land, neither had the children of Israel manna any more;” as if to shew that they could not enjoy at the same time both the heavenly nourishment, and that of the earth.

Love of the world, said St Augustin, like a dangerous fever, sheds an universal bitterness through the heart, which renders the invisible and eternal riches insipid and disgusting to us. Thus, you never come to prayer, but with an insurmountable disgust: Ah! It is a proof that your heart is diseased: that a secret fever, and perhaps unknown to yourself, causes it to languish, saps and disgusts it; that it is engrossed by a foreign love. Mount to the source of your disgusts towards God, and every thing connected with him, and see if they shall not be found in the iniquitous attachments of your heart; see if you are not still a slave to yourself, to the vain cares of dress, to frivolous friendships, to dangerous animosities, to secret envies, to desires of rank, to every thing around you: these are the source of the evil: apply the remedy to it; take something every day upon yourself; labour seriously towards purifying your heart; you will then taste the comforts and the consolations of prayer; then, the world no longer engrossing your affections, you will find your God more worthy of being loved: we soon ardently love the only object of our love.

And, after all, render glory here to the truth: Is it not true, that the days in which you have been more guarded upon yourself; the days in which you have made some sacrifices to the Lord, of your inclinations, of your indolence, of your temper, of your aversions; is it not true that, in these days, you have addressed your prayers to the Lord, with more peace, more consolation, and more delight?

light? We encounter, with double pleasure, the eyes of a master, to whom we have lately given some striking proof of fidelity; on the contrary, we are in pain before him, when we feel that he has cause of a thousand just reproaches against us; we are then anxious and under restraint; we endeavour to hide ourselves from his view, like the first sinner; we no longer address him with that overflowing heart, and that confidence, which a conscience pure and void of offence inspires; and the moments when we are under the necessity of supporting his divine presence, are anxiously counted.

Thus, when Jesus Christ commands us to pray, he begins with ordering us to watch. He thereby means us to understand that vigilance is the only preparation to prayer; that to love to pray, it is necessary to watch; and that fondness for and consolations in prayer, are granted only to the recollection and to the sacrifices of vigilance. I know that, if you do not pray, you can never watch over yourself and live holily; but I likewise know, that, if you exert not that vigilance which causes to live holily, you can never pray with comfort and with consolation. Prayer, it is true, obtains for us the grace of vigilance; but it is yet more true, that vigilance alone can draw down upon us the gift and the usage of the prayer.

And from thence, it is easy to conclude, that a life of the world, even granting it to be the most innocent; that is to say, a life of pleasure, continual gaming, dissipation, and theatrical amusements, which you call so innocent, when attended with no other harm, than that of disqualifying you for prayer; when this worldly life, which you so strongly justify, should contain nothing more criminal, than that of disgusting you at prayer, of drying up your heart,

heart, of unsettling your imagination, of weakening your faith, and of filling your mind with anxiety and trouble ; when we should judge of the security of this state merely from what you continually tell us, that you are incapable of arranging yourself for prayer, and that, on your part, it is always attended with an insupportable disgust and weariness ; I say, that for these reasons alone, the most innocent worldly life is a life of sin and reprobation ; a life for which there is no salvation ; for salvation is promised solely to prayer ; salvation is not attainable, but through the aid of prayer ; salvation is granted only to perseverance in prayer ; consequently, every life which places an invincible obstacle in the way of prayer can have no pretensions to salvation. Now, you are fully sensible yourselves, my brethren, that a life of dissipation, of gaming, of pleasure, and of public places, puts an essential obstacle in the way of prayer ; that it places in your heart, in your imagination, in your senses, an invincible disgust at prayer ; an unsettledness incompatible with the spirit of prayer ; you continually complain of this ; you even make use of it as a pretext not to pray ; and from thence be assured that there is no salvation for the worldly life, even the most innocent ; for, wherever prayer is impossible, salvation must likewise be so. First reason of the disgusts and of the wanderings of our prayers ; the lukewarmness and the infidelity of our life.

The second is, our little usage of prayer. We pray with disgust, because we seldom pray. For, *1^{stly}*, It is the practice alone of prayer which will gradually calm your mind, which will insensibly banish from it the images of the world and of vanity, which will disperse all those clouds which produce all the disgusts and the wanderings of your prayers. *2^{dly}*, You must ask for a long time before

fore you can obtain; you must press, solicit, and even importune; the sweets and the consolations of prayer are the fruit and the reward of prayer itself. *3dly*, There must be familiarity, in order to find pleasure in it. If you seldom pray, the Lord will be a strange and an unknown God to you, as I may say, before whom you will feel yourself embarrassed, and under a kind of restraint; with whom you will never experience those overflowings of heart, that sweet confidence, that holy freedom, which familiarity alone bestows, and which constitute the whole pleasure of the divine intercourse. God requires to be known, in order to be loved. The world loses by being examined; the surface, and the first glance of it, are alone smiling. Search deeper, and it is no longer but emptiness, vanity, anxious care, agitation, and misery. But the Lord must be tasted, says the prophet, in order to feel how good he is. The more you know, the more you love him; the more you unite yourself to him, the more do you feel that there is no true happiness on the earth, but that of knowing and of loving him.

It is the use, therefore, of prayer, which alone can render prayer pleasing. Thus we see, that the generality of persons who complain of the disgusts and of the wanderings of their prayers, seldom pray; think this important duty fulfilled, when they have bestowed upon the Lord a few hasty moments of thoughtlessness and restraint; forsake it on the first symptoms of disgust; make no exertion to reduce and to familiarise their mind to it; and far from considering prayer as being rendered only more necessary to them, by their invincible repugnance to it, they regard that very repugnance as a legal excuse, which dispenses them altogether from it.

But how find time in the world, you will say, to make so long and so frequent an use of prayer? You, my dear hearer, not find time to pray? But wherefore is time given to you, but to entreat of God to forget your crimes, to look upon you with eyes of compassion, and to place you one day among the number of his holy! You have not time to pray? But you have not time, then, to be a Christian? For, a man who prays not, is a man who has no God, no worship, and no hope. You have not time to pray? But prayer is the beginning of all good; and if you do not pray, you have not yet performed a single work for eternal life. Ah! my brethren, is time ever wanting to solicit the favours of the earth, to importune the master, to besiege those who are in place, to bestow upon pleasures, or upon idleness? What useless moments! What languid and tiresome days, through the mere gloom which ever accompanies idleness! What time lost in vain ceremonials, in idle conversations, in boundless gaming, in fruitless subjections, in grasping at chimeras which move farther and farther from us! Great God! And time is wanted to ask heaven of thee, to appease thy wrath, and to supplicate thine eternal mercies! How humbly, O my God, must salvation be estimated, when time is wanted to entreat of thy mercy to save us! And how much are we to be deplored, to find so many moments for the world, and to be unable to find a single one for eternity! Second cause of the disgusts, and of the wanderings of our prayers; the little use of prayer itself.

It is true, my brethren, that this reason is not so general, but what souls, the most faithful to prayer, are often seen to experience all those disgusts and those wanderings of which I speak: but I say, that these disgusts proceed from

from the wisdom of God, who means to purify them, and who leads them by that path, only in order to fulfil his eternal designs of mercy upon them; last reason; that consequently, far from being repulsed by what they find gloomy and disagreeable in prayer, they ought to persevere in it, with even more fidelity, than if the Lord had shed upon them the most abundant and the most sensible consolations.

1stly, Because you ought to consider these disgusts as the just punishment of your past infidelities. Is it not reasonable, that God make you expiate the criminal voluptuousness of your worldly life by the disgusts and the sorrows of piety? Weakness of temperament does not perhaps permit you, to punish, by corporeal sufferings, the licentiousness of your past manners; is it not just that God supply that, by the punishment, and the inward afflictions of the mind? Would you pretend to pass in an instant from the pleasures of the world to those of grace; from the viands of Egypt, to the milk and honey of the land of promise, without the Lord having first made you to undergo the barrenness and the fatigues of the desert; and, in a word, that he should not chastise the delights, If I may venture to say so, of guilt, but by those of virtue.

2dly, You have so long refused yourself to God, in spite of the most lively inspirations of his grace, which recalled you to the truth and to the light; you have so long suffered him to knock at the gate of your heart before you opened it to him; you have disputed, struggled against, wavered, deferred so much, before you gave yourself to him; is it not just that he leave you to solicit for some time before he give himself to you with all the consolations of his grace? The delays and the tarryings of the Lord are the just punishment of your own.

But, even admitting these reasons to be less weighty, how do you know if the Lord thereby mean not to render this exilement and this separation in which we live from him more hateful to you, and to increase the fervency of your longings for that immortal country where truth, seen in open day, will always appear lovely, because we shall see it such as it is? How do you know if he thereby mean not to inspire you with new compunction for your past crimes, by making you sensible, at every moment, of the contrariety and disgust which they have left in your heart to the truth and to righteousness? Lastly, How do you know, if the Lord mean not, by these disgusts, to perfect the purification of what may as yet be too human in your piety? If he mean not to establish your virtue upon that truth which is always the same, and not upon inclination and fancy, which incessantly change; upon rules which are eternal, and not upon consolations which are transitory; upon faith which never fails to sacrifice the visible for the invisible riches, and not upon feeling which leaves to the world almost the same empire that grace hath over your heart? A piety wholly of fancy goes a short way, if not sustained and confirmed by the truth. It is dangerous to let our fidelity depend upon the feeling dispositions of an heart which is never an instant the same, and upon which every object makes new impressions. The duties which only please when they console, do not please long; and that virtue which is solely founded on fancy, can never sustain itself, because it rests only upon ourselves.

For, after all, if you seek only the Lord in your prayers, provided that the way by which he leads you conduct to him, it ought to matter little to you whether it be by that of disgusts or of consolations, for, being the surest, it ought

ought always to appear preferable to all others. If you pray only to attract more aids from heaven in relief of your wants, or in support of your weakness, faith teaching you that prayer, even when accompanied with those disgusts and those drynesses, obtains the same favours, produces the same effects, and is equally acceptable to God, as that in which sensible consolations are found: What do I say? that it may become even more agreeable to the Lord, through your acceptance of the difficulties which you there encounter; faith teaching you this, you ought to be equally faithful to prayer as if it held out the most sensible attractions, otherwise it would not be God whom you sought, but yourselves; it would not be eternal riches, but vain and fleeting consolations; it would not be the remedies of faith, but the supports of your self-love.

Thus, be whom you may who now listen to me, imitate the woman of Canaan; be faithful to prayer, and in the fulfilment of this duty you will find all the rest sustained and rendered easy. If a sinner, pray: it was through prayer alone that the publican and the sinful woman of the gospel obtained feelings of compunction, and the grace of a thorough penitence; and prayer is the only source and the only path of righteousness. If righteous, still pray; perseverance in faith and in piety is promised only to prayer; and by that it was that Job, that David, that Tobias persevered to the end. If you live amid sinners, and your duty does not permit you to withdraw yourself from the sight of their irregularities and example, pray: the greater the dangers, the more necessary does prayer become; and the three children in the flames, and Jonah in the belly of a monster, found safety only through prayer. If the engagements of your birth, or of your station, attach you to the court of kings, pray: Esther, in the court of Ahasue-

rus, Daniel in that of Darius, the prophets in the palaces of the kings of Israel, were solely indebted to prayer for their life and salvation. If you live in retirement, pray: solitude itself becomes a rock, if a continual intercourse with God does not defend us against ourselves; and Judith, in the secrecy of her house, and the widow Ann in the temple, and the Anthonies in the desert, found the fruit and the security of their retreat in prayer alone. If established in the church for the instruction of the people, pray: all the power and all the success of your ministry must depend upon your prayers; and the apostles converted the universe solely because they had appropriated nothing to themselves but prayer and the preaching of the gospel. Lastly, Be whom you may, I again repeat it, in prosperity, or in indigence, in joy or in affliction, in trouble or in peace, in fervency or in despondency, in lust or in the ways of righteousness, advanced in virtue, or still in the first steps of penitence, pray: prayer is the safety of all stations, the consolation of all sorrows, the duty of all conditions, the soul of piety, the support of faith, the grand foundation of religion, and all religion itself. O my God! shed then upon us that spirit of grace and of prayer which was to be the distinguishing mark of thy church, and the portion of a new people; and purify our hearts and our lips, that we may be enabled to offer up to thee pure homages, fervent sighs, and prayers worthy of the eternal riches which thou hast so often promised to those who shall have well entreated them.

SERMON XIV.

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

MATTHEW V. 43.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy : But I say unto you, love your enemies.

IT is commonly believed that a degree of indulgence and caution had been used by the legislator of the Jews, in publishing the law on forgiveness of injuries, that obliged to accommodate it, in some respect, to the weakness of a carnal people, and otherwise persuaded that, of all virtues, that of loving an enemy was the most difficult to the heart of man, he was satisfied with regulating and prescribing bounds for revenge. It was only in order to prevent great excesses, says St. Augustin, that he meant to give authority to smaller ones. The law, like all the others, had its fanciness, its goodness, its justice ; but it was rather an establishment of polity than a rule of piety. It was calculated to maintain the internal tranquillity of the state ; but it neither touched the heart, nor struck at the root of hatreds and revenge. The only effect proposed was either to restrain the aggressor, by threatening him with the same punishment with which he had grieved his brother, or to put a check
upon

upon the irritation of the offended, by letting him see that, if he exceeded in the satisfaction required, he exposed himself to undergo all the surplus of his revenge.

Philosophers, in their morality, had also placed the forgiveness of injuries among the number of virtues; but that was a pretext of vanity, rather than the rule of discipline. It is because revenge seemed to them to carry along with it something, I know not what, of mean and passionate, which would have disfigured the portrait, and the proud tranquillity of their sage: that it appeared disgraceful to them to be unable to rise superior to an injury. The forgiveness of their enemies was solely founded, therefore, upon the contempt in which they held them. They avenged themselves by disdaining revenge; and pride readily gave up the pleasure of hurting those who have injured us, for the pleasure which was found in despising them.

But the law of the gospel, upon loving our enemies, neither flatters pride nor spares self-love. In the forgiveness of injuries nothing ought to indemnify the Christian, but the consolation of imitating Jesus Christ, and of obeying him; but the claims, which, in an enemy, prove to him a brother; but the hope of meeting, before the Eternal Judge, with the same indulgence which he shall have used towards men. Nothing ought to limit him in his charity, but charity itself, which hath no bounds, which excepts neither places, times, nor persons, which ought never to be extinguished. And, should the religion of Christians have no other proof against unbelief than the sublime elevation of this maxim, it would always have this pre-eminence in sanctity, and consequently in apparent truth overall the sects which have ever appeared upon the earth.

Let us unfold, therefore, the motives and the rules of this essential point of the law : the motives, by establishing the equity of the precept through the very pretexts which seem to oppose it ; the rules, by laying open the illusions under which every one justifies to himself their infractions : that is to say, the injustice of our hatreds, and the falsity of our reconciliations.

PART I. The three principles which usually bind men to each other, and by which are formed all human unions and friendships, are fancy, cupidity, and vanity. *Fancy.* We follow a certain propensity of nature, which being the cause of our finding, in some persons, a greater similarity to our own inclinations, perhaps also greater allowances for our faults, binds us to them, and occasions us to find, in their society, a comfort which becomes weariness in that of the rest of men. *Cupidity.* We seek out useful friends ; from the moment that they are necessary to our pleasure or to our fortune, they become worthy of our friendship ; interest is a grand charm to the majority of hearts ; the titles which render us powerful, are quickly transmuted into qualities which render us apparently amiable, and friends are never wanting, when we can pay the friendship of those who love us. *Lastly. Vanity.* Friends who do us honour are always dear to us ; it would seem that, in loving them, we enter, as it were, into partnership with them, in that distinction which they enjoy in the world ; we seek to deck ourselves, as I may say, with their reputation ; and, being unable to reach their merit, we pride ourselves in their society, in order to have it supposed that, at least, there is not much betwixt us, and that like loves like.

These are the three great ties of human society. Religion and charity unite almost nobody ; and from thence it

is, that from the moment men offend our fancy, that they are unfavourable to our interests, or that they wound our reputation and our vanity, the human and brittle ties which united us to them are broken asunder; our heart withdraws from them, and no longer finds in itself, with respect to them, but animosity and bitterness. And behold the three most general sources of those hatreds which men nourish against each other; which change all the sweets of society into endless inveteracies; which empoison all the delight of conversations, and all the innocency of mutual intercourse; and which, attacking religion in the heart, nevertheless present themselves to us under appearances of equity, which justify them in our eyes, and strengthen us in them.

I say, from the moment that men offend our fancy; and this is the first pretext, and the first source of our withdrawing from, and of our hatreds against our brethren. You say that you cannot accord with such a person; that every thing in him offends and displeases you; that it is an antipathy which you cannot conquer; that all his manners seem fashioned to irritate you; that to see him would answer the sole purpose of augmenting the natural aversion which you have to him; and that nature hath placed within us hatreds and likings, conformities and aversions, for which she alone is to be answerable.

To this I might at once answer, by establishing the foundations of the Christian doctrine upon loving our brethren: Is that man, in consequence of displeasing, and being disagreeable to your fancy, less your brother, child of God, citizen of Heaven, member of Jesus Christ, and inheritor of the eternal promises? Doth his humour, his character, whatever it may be, efface any one of those august tracts which he hath received upon the sacred font, which
 unite

which unite him to you by divine and immortal ties, and which ought to render him dear and respectable to you? When Jesus Christ commands us to love our brethren as ourselves, doth he mean to make a precept which costs nothing to the heart, and in the fulfilment of which we found neither difficulty nor hardship? Ah! What occasion had he to command us to love our brethren, if, in virtue of that commandment, we were obliged to love only those for whom we feel a natural fancy and inclination. The heart hath no occasion, on this point, for precept; it is its own law. The precept then supposes a difficulty on our part: Jesus Christ hath, therefore, foreseen, that it would be hard upon us to love our brethren; that we should find within us antipathies and dislikes which would withdraw us from them; and behold why he hath attached so much merit to the observance of this single point, and hath so often declared to us that, to observe it, was to observe the whole law. Aversion to our brethren, far then from justifying our estrangement from them, renders to us, on the contrary, the obligation of loving them more precise, and places us personally in the case of the precept.

But besides, ought a Christian to be regulated by fancy and humour, or by the principles of reason, of faith, of religion, and of grace? And since when is the natural fancy, which we are commanded by the gospel to oppose, become a privilege which dispenses us from its rules? If the repugnance felt for duties were a title of exemption, where is the believer who would not be quit of the whole law, and who would not find his justification and his innocence, in proportion as he felt a greater degree of corruption in his heart? Are our fancies our law? Is religion only the support, and not the remedy of nature? Is it not a weakness, even in the eyes of the world, to regulate our

steps and our sentiments, our hatreds and our love towards men, merely upon the caprices of a fancy for which we can give no reason ourselves? Do men of this description do great credit, I do not say to religion, but to humanity? And are they not, even to the world itself, a spectacle of contempt, of derision, and of censure? What a chaos would society be, if fancy alone were to decide upon our duties, and upon reciprocal attentions, and if men were to be united by no other law? Now, if the rules even of society, exact, that fancy alone be not the sole principle of our conduct towards the rest of men, should the gospel be more indulgent on that point? The gospel, which preaches only self-denial; which every where commands us to do violence upon ourselves, and to strive against our fancies and our affections; which demands that we act through views superior to flesh and blood, and that we hesitate not to sacrifice to the sanctity of faith, and to the sublimity of its rules, not only our caprices, but our most legal inclinations.

It is therefore absurd, to alledge to us an aversion to your brother, which is itself your guilt. I might further say: You complain that your brother is displeasing to you, and that it is not possible for you to bear with, or to be in agreement with him; but do you suppose, that you yourself are displeasing to none? Can you guarantee to us, that you are universally liked, and that every one applauds and approves you? Now, if you exact, that every thing offensive in your manners be excused, upon the goodness of your heart, and on account of those essential qualities upon which you pride yourself; if to you, it appear unreasonable to be offended at nothings, and by certain follies of which we cannot always command; if you insist upon being judged by the consequence, by the ground-

work,

work, by the rectitude of your sentiments and conduct, and not in consequence of those humours which sometimes involuntarily escape you, and upon which it is very difficult to be always guarded against one's self: have the same equity for your brother; apply the same rule to yourself; bear with him as you have occasion to be borne with your self; and do not justify by your estrangement from him, the unjust averfions which may be had to yourself. And this rule is so much the more equitable, as that you have only to cast your eyes upon what is continually passing in the world, to be convinced that those who are loudest in trumpeting forth the faults of their brethren, are the very persons with whom nobody can agree, who are the pests of societies, and a grievance to the rest of men.

And I might here demand of you, my dear hearer, if this principle of contrariety, which renders your brother so insupportable to you, be not more in yourself, that is to say, in your pride, in the capriciousness of your temper, in the contrariety of your character, than in this; demand of you, if all the world see in him what you believe to see yourself; if his friends, his relations, his intimates look upon him with the same eyes that you do? What do I know! I might demand of you, if that which displeases you in him, be not perhaps his good qualities: if his talents, his reputation, his credit and his fortune, have not perhaps a greater share in your averfion, than his faults; and if it be not his merit or his rank which have hitherto in your sight constituted his whole crime. We are so easily deceived in this point! Envy is a passion so masked, and so artful in disguising itself! As there is something mean and rascally in it, and as it is a secret confession made to ourselves of our own mediocrity, it always shews itself to us under foreign outsides, which completely conceal

ceal it from us ; but fathom your heart, and you will see that all those, who either surpass, or who shine with too much lustre near you, have the misfortune to displease you ; that you find amiable, only those who have nothing to contest with you ; that all who rise above, or are even equal to you, constrain and hurt you ; and that to have a claim to your friendship, it is necessary to have none either to your pretensions or expectancies.

But I go still further, and I entreat you to listen to me. I admit your brother to have more faults than even you accuse him of having. Alas ! You are so gentle and so friendly towards those, from whom you expect your fortune and your establishment, and whose temper, haughtiness, and manners shock you ! You bear with all their pride, their repulses, their scorns ; you swallow all their inequalities and caprices : You are never disheartened ; your patience is always greater than your antipathy and your repugnance, and you neglect nothing to please. — Ah ! If you regarded your brother, as he upon whom depends eternal salvation, as he to whom you are to be indebted, not for a fortune of dirt, and an uncertain establishment, but for the fortune even of your eternity, would you follow, with regard to him, the caprice of your fancy ? Would you not conquer the unjust antipathy which estranges you from him ? Would you suffer so much in putting your inclinations in unison with your eternal interests, and in doing upon yourself so useful and so necessary a violence ? You bear with every thing for the world and for vanity ; and you cry out, how hard ! from the moment that a single painful proceeding is exacted of you for eternity.

And say not that there are caprices of nature, of which no account can be given, and that we are not the masters of

of

of our fancies and likings. I grant this to a certain point ; but there is a love of reason and of religion, which ought always to gain the day over that of nature. The gospel exacts not that you have a fancy for your brother, it exacts that you love him ; that is to say, that you bear with him, that you excuse him, that you conceal his faults, that you serve him ; in a word, that you do for him whatever you would wish to have done for yourself. Charity is not a blind and capricious fancy, a natural liking, a sympathy of temper and disposition ; it is a just, enlightened, and reasonable duty ; a love which takes its rise in the impulses of grace, and in the views of faith. It is not rightly loving our brethren, to love them only through fancy ; it is loving one's self. Charity alone enables us to love them as we ought, and it alone can form real and stedfast friends. For fancy is continually changing, and charity never dieth ; fancy seeks only itself, and charity seeketh not its own interests, but the interest of whom it loves ; fancy is not proof against every thing, a loss, a proceeding, a disgrace, and charity riseth superior to death : fancy loves only its own conveniency ; and charity findeth nothing amiss, and suffereth every thing for whom it loveth ; fancy is blind, and often renders even the vices of our brethren amiable to us ; and charity never giveth praise to iniquity, and in others loveth only the truth. The friends of grace are therefore much more to be relied on than those of nature. The same fancy which unites the manners, is often, a moment after, the cause of separating them ; but the ties formed by charity, eternally endure.

Such is the first source of our likings and of our hatreds, the injustices and the capriciousness of our fancy. Interest is the second : for nothing is more common than to hear you justifying your animosities, by telling us that
such

such a man hath neglected nothing to ruin you; that he has been the mean of blasting your fortune; that he continually excites vexatious matters against you; that you find him an insuperable impediment in your way, and that it is difficult to love an enemy so bent on injuring you.

But granting that you speak the truth, I answer to you: to all the other ill's which your brother hath caused to you, why should you add that of hating him, which is the greatest of all, since all the others have tended to ravish from you only fleeting and frivolous riches, while this is the cause of ruin to your soul, and deprives you for ever of your claim to an immortal kingdom? In hating him, you injure yourself much more than all his malignity with respect to you could ever do: he hath usurped the patrimony of your fathers; it may be so; and, in order to avenge yourself, you renounce the inheritance of the heavenly Father, and the eternal patrimony of Jesus Christ. You take your revenge then upon yourself; and, in order to console yourself for the ill's done to you by your brother, you provide for yourself one without end and without measure.

And moreover, Does your hatred towards your brother restore any of those advantages which he hath snatched from you? Does it meliorate your condition? What do you reap from your animosity and your rancour? In hating him, you say that you console yourself; and this is the only consolation left to you. What a consolation, great God! is that of hatred, that is to say, of a gloomy and furious passion, which gnaws the heart, sheds anguish and sorrow through ourselves, and begins by punishing and rendering us miserable! What a cruel pleasure is that of hating, that is to say, of bearing on the heart a load of
rancour

rancour, which empoisons every moment of life! What a barbarous method of consoling one's self! And are you not worthy of pity, to seek a resource in your evils, which answers no purpose but that of eternising, by hatred, a transitory injury?

But let us cease this human language, and speak that of the gospel, to which our mouths are consecrated. If you were Christian, my dear hearer; if you had not lost faith, far from hating those whom God hath made instrumental in blasting your hopes and your projects of fortune, you would regard them as the instruments of God's mercies upon your soul, as the ministers of your sanctification, and the blessed rocks which have been the means of saving you from shipwreck. You would have been lost in credit and in elevation; you would then have neglected your God; your ambition would have increased with your fortune, and death would have surpris'd you in the vortex of the world of passions, and of human expectancies. But, in order to save your soul, the Lord, in his great mercy, hath raised up obstacles which have stop't your course. He hath employed an envious person, a rival to supplant you, to keep you at a distance from favours, and to place himself betwixt you and the precipice, into which you was running headlong, for ever to perish: He hath seconded, as I may say, his ambition; he hath favoured his designs; and, through an incomprehensible excess of goodness towards you, he hath crossed your worldly schemes: He hath raised up your enemy in time, in order to save you in eternity. You ought therefore to adore the eternal designs of his justice and of his mercy upon men; to consider your brother as the blessed cause of your salvation: to entreat of God, that, seeing his ambition or his bad intentions have been employed to save you, he may inspire him
with

with sincere repentance, and that the person who hath been the instrument of your salvation be not permitted to perish himself.

Yes, my brethren, our hatreds proceed entirely from our want of faith. Alas! if we regarded every thing which passes, as a vapour without substance; if we were thoroughly convinced that all this is nothing, that salvation is the great and important affair, and that our treasure and our true riches are only in eternity, where, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be; if we were convinced of it, alas! we would consider men, who passionately quarrel and dispute with each other, for the dignities of the earth, as children who fall out among themselves for the play-things which amuse their eye, whose childish hatreds and animosities turn upon nothings, which infancy alone, and the feeble state of reason magnify in their eyes. Tranquil on the greatest and most important events, on the loss of the patrimony of their fathers, and the fall of their family, and keen even to excess, when deprived of any of the little trifling objects which delight their infancy. Thus, O my God, foolish and puerile men feel not the loss of their heavenly inheritance, of that immortal patrimony, bequeathed to them by Jesus Christ, and which their brethren are already enjoying in heaven. They unconcernedly see the kingdom of God, and the only true riches pass away from them; and like children, they are inflamed with rage, and mutually arm against each other, from the instant that their frivolous possessions are encroached upon, or that any attempt is made to deprive them of those childish play-things, the only value or importance of which, is that of serving to deceive their feeble reason, and to amuse their childhood.

For a Christian, interest is therefore an unworthy and criminal pretext for his hatred towards his brethren; but vanity, which is their last resource, is still less excuseable.

For, my brethren, we wish to be approved, and to have our faults as well as our virtues applauded; and although we feel our own weaknesses, yet we are so unreasonable, as to exact that others see them not, and that they even give credit to us for certain qualities, which we inwardly reproach to ourselves as vices. We could wish that all mouths were filled solely with our praises; and that the world, which forgives nothing, which spares not even its masters, should admire in us what it censures in others.

In effect, you complain, that your enemy hath both privately and publicly decried you; that he hath added calumny to slander; that he hath attacked you in the tenderest and most feeling quarter, and that he hath neglected nothing to blast your honour and your reputation in the opinion of men.

But, before replying to this, I might first say to you, mistrust the reports which have been made to you of your brother; the most innocent speeches reach us so empoisoned, through the malignity of the tongues which have conveyed them; there are so many mean flatterers, who seek to be agreeable at the expence of those who are not so; there are so many dark and wicked minds, whose only pleasure is in finding out evil where none is meant, and in sowing dissention among men; there are so many volatile and imprudent characters, who unseasonably, and with an envenomed air, repeat what at first had been only said with the most innocent intentions; there are so many men, naturally given to the hyperbole, and in whose mouth every

thing is magnified, and departs from the natural and simple truth; I here appeal to yourself. Has it never happened to you, that your most innocent sayings have been empoisoned, and circumstances added to your recitals, which you had never even thought of? Have you not then exclaimed against the injustice and the malignity of the repeaters? Why might not you, in your turn, been deceived? And if every thing which passes through a variety of channels, be in general adulterated, and never reach us in its original purity, why should you suppose that discourses, which relate to you alone, were exempted from the same lot, and were entitled to more attention and belief?

You will no doubt reply, that these general maxims are not the point in question, and that the actions of which you complain, are not doubtful, but positive. I admit it; and I ask if your brother have not on his side, the same reproaches to make to you; if you have always been very lenient and very charitable to his faults; if you have always rendered justice, even to his good qualities; if you have never permitted him to be reviled in your presence; if you have not aided the malignity of such discourses by an affected moderation, which hath only tended to blow up the fire of detraction, and to supply new traits against your brother; I ask you, if you are even circumspect towards the rest of men; if you readily forgive the weakness of others; if your tongue be not in general, dipt in worm-wood and gall; if the best established reputation, be not always in danger in your hands; and, if the saddest and most private histories, do not speedily become matter of notoriety, through your malignity and imprudence; O man! Thou pushest delicacy and sensibility to such lengths, upon whatever regards thyself! We have occasion for all the terror of our ministry, and for all the other most weighty

weighty inducements of religion, to bring thee to forgive to thy brother, a single speech, frequently a word which imprudence, which chance, which circumstances, which perhaps a just resentment hath forced from him ; and the licentiousness of thy discourses towards others, knows neither the bonds of politeness, nor that of decency which the world itself prescribes.

But, granting that you have nothing to reproach yourself on the part of moderation towards your brother. What do you gain by hating him ? Do you thereby efface the fatal impressions which his discourses may have left on the minds of men ? On the contrary, you inflict a fresh wound upon your heart ; you give yourself a stab which carries death to your soul ; you wrench the sword from his hands, if I may speak in this manner, in order to plunge it into yourself. By the innocency of your manners, and the integrity of your conduct, make the injustice of his discourses evident : destroy, by a life free from reproach, the prejudices to which he may have given rise against you : make the meanness and the iniquity of his calumnies revert upon himself, by the practice of those virtues, exactly opposite to the faults which he imputes to you : such is the just and legal manner of revenging yourself. Triumph over his malice, by your manners and by your silence : you will heap living coals upon his head ; you will gain the public on your side ; you will leave nothing to your enemy, but the infamy of his passion, and of his impositions. But hating him, is the revenge of the weak, and the sad consolation of the guilty ; in a word, it is the only refuge of those who can find none in virtue, and in innocence.

But let us now quit all these reasonings, and come to the essential point. You are commanded to love those who
despitefully

despitefully use and calumniate you ; to pray for them, to entreat their conversion of God, that he change their rancorous heart, that he inspire them with sentiments of peace and of charity, and that he place them among the number of his holy. You are commanded to consider them as already citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, with whom you shall form only one voice in singing the immortal praises of grace. You are commanded to look upon injuries as blessings, as the punishment of your hidden crimes, for which you have so often merited to be covered with confusion before men ; as the price of the kingdom of God, which is promised to those alone, who with piety bear with persecution and calumny.

For, after all, it must come to this. Self-love alone would make us to love those who love us, who praise us, who publish our virtues, false or true ; such was the whole virtue of the Pagans ; for, said Jesus Christ, if ye love those that love you, what reward have ye ; do not even the publicans so ? But religion goes farther : it requires us to love those who hate and persecute us : it fixes at that price the mercies of God upon us, and declares to us, that no forgiveness is to be expected for ourselves, if we grant it not to our brethren.

And candidly, would you have God to forget the crimes and the horrors of your whole life, to be insensible to his own glory, which you have so often insulted, while you cannot prevail upon yourself to forget a word ; while you are so warm, so delicate, and so passionate upon the interests of your glory ; you who perhaps enjoy a reputation which you have never merited ; you, who, were you to be known such as you are, would be covered with eternal shame and confusion ; you, in a word, of whom the most
injurious

injurious discourses only imperfectly represent the secret wretchedness, and of which God alone knoweth the extent? Great God! how little shall sinners have to say for themselves, when thou wilt pronounce against them the sentence of their eternal condemnation!

You will probably tell us, that you perfectly agree to the duties which religion hereupon imposes, but that the laws of honour have prevailed over those of religion; that, if discourses and proceedings of a certain description be tranquilly submitted to, lasting dishonour and infamy, in the eyes of men, must necessarily follow; that to forgive through motives of religion, is nevertheless a stain of cowardice, which the world never pardons, and that on this point, honour acknowledges neither their exception nor privilege.

What is this honour, my brethren, which is to be bought only at the price of our souls, and of our eternal salvation? And how worthy of pity, if guilt alone can save from ignominy! I know that it is here that the false laws of the world seem to prevail over those of religion; and that the wisest themselves, who execrate this abuse, are however of opinion that it must be submitted to. But I speak before a Prince, who, wiser than the world, and filled with a just indignation against a madness so contrary to the maxims of the gospel, as well as to the interests of the state, hath shewn to his subjects what is the true honour, and who, in forcing criminal arms from their hands, hath marked with lasting infamy those barbarous modes of revenge, to which the public error had detached a deplorable glory.

What, my brethren, an abominable maxim, which the barbarity of the first manners of our ancestors alone hath consecrated, and handed down to us, should prevail over
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all the rules of Christianity, and all the most inviolable rules of the state ! It should be no dishonour to bathe your hands in your brother's blood, while it would be one to obey God, and the prince, who holds his place in the world ! Glory would no longer then be but a madness, and cowardice but a noble respect for religion, and for our master. You dread passing for a coward ! Shew your valour then by shedding your blood in the defence of your country ; go and brave dangers at the head of our armies, and there seek glory in the discharge of your duty ; establish your reputation by actions worthy of being ranked among the memorable events of a reign so glorious ; such is that valour, which the state requires, and which religion authorises. Then despise these brutal and personal vengeance ; look upon them as a childish ostentation of valour ; which is often used as a cover to actual cowardice ; as the vile and vulgar refuge of those who have nothing signal to establish their character ; as a forced and an equivocal proof of courage, which the world wrests from us, and against which the heart often revolts. Far from imputing shame to you, the world itself will make it a fresh title of honour to you ; you will be still more exalted in its opinion ; and you will teach your equals, that misplaced valour is nothing but a brutal fear ; that wisdom and moderation ever attend true glory ; that whatever dishonours humanity can never do honour to men ; and that the gospel, which inculcates and commands forgiveness, hath made more heroes than the world itself, which preaches up revenge.

You will perhaps say that these maxims do not regard you, that you have forgotten all the subjects of complaint which you had against your brother, and that a reconciliation hath put an end to the eclat of your misunderstandings and of your quarrel. Now, I say, that it is more especially,

ally on this point that you are grossly deceived ; and, after having shewn to you the injustice of our hatreds, it is my duty now to prove to you the falsity of our reconciliations.

PART II. There is not a precept in the law which leaves less room for doubt or for mistake, than that which obliges us to love our brethren ; and, nevertheless, there is none upon which more illusions and false maxims are founded. In effect, there is not almost a person who doth not say, that he hath heartily forgiven his brother, and that his conscience is perfectly tranquil on that head ; and, nevertheless, nothing is more rare than sincere forgiveness, and there is a few instances of a reconciliation which changes the heart, and which is not merely a false appearance of renewed amity ; whether it be considered in its principle, or whether the proceedings and consequences of it be examined.

I say, in its principle ; for, my brethren, in order that a reconciliation be sincere and real, it is necessary that it take its source in charity, and in a Christian love of our brother. Now, human motives engross, in general, a work which can be the work of grace alone. A reconciliation takes place, in order not to persist against the pressing entreaties of friends ; in order to avoid a certain disagreeable eclat, which would necessarily follow an open hostility, and which might revert upon ourselves, in order not to exclude ourselves from certain societies, from which we would be under the necessity of banishing ourselves were we obstinately to persist in being irreconcilable to our brother. A reconciliation takes place through deference to the great, who exact of us that compliance, in order to acquire a reputation for moderation and greatness of soul ; in order to avoid giving transactions to the
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public which would not correspond with that idea which we would wish it to have of us ; in order, at once, to cut short the continual complaints and the insulting discourses of an enemy, who knows us perhaps only too well, and who has once been too deep in our confidence, not to merit some caution and deference on our part, and that by a reconciliation, we should endeavour to silence him. What more shall I say ? We are reconciled perhaps like Saul, in order more securely to ruin our enemy, and to lull his vigilance and precautions.

Such are, in general, the motives of those reconciliations which every day take place in the world. And what I say here is so true, that sinners who shew no sign of piety on any other occasion, are however reconciled to their brethren in daily instances ; and they who cannot prevail over themselves in the easiest duties of the Christian life, appear as heroes in the accomplishment of this one, which, of all others, is the most difficult. Ah ! it is because they are heroes of vanity and not of charity : it is, that they leave that part of the reconciliation which alone is heroical and arduous in the fight of God, viz. an oblivion upon the past injury, and a total revolution of our heart towards our brother ; and they retain of it only that part which is glorious in the fight of men, viz. an appearance of moderation, and a promptitude towards amity, which the world itself praises and admires.

But, if the greatest part of reconciliations turn out to be false when their motives are examined, they are not less so, if we consider them in their proceedings. Yes, my brethren, what measures and negociations ! What formalities and sollicitudes in concluding them ! What attentions, to bestow, and cautions to observe ! What interest to conciliate,

ciliate, obstacles to remove, and steps to accomplish! Thus your reconciliation is not the work of charity, but of the wisdom and skill of your friends; it is a worldly affair; it is not a religious step; it is a treaty happily concluded; it is not a duty of faith fulfilled; it is the work of man, but it is not the deed of God: in a word, it is a peace which comes from the earth, it is not the peace of Heaven.

For, candidly, have men been able, through their arrangements and the ingenuity of their measures in reconciling you with your brother, to revive that charity which was extinguished in your heart? Have they been able to restore that treasure to you which you had lost? They have succeeded, indeed, in terminating the scandal of declared enmity, and in establishing between you and your brother the outward duties of society; but they have not changed your heart, which God alone can do; they have not extinguished that hatred, which grace alone can extinguish. You are therefore reconciled, but you still love not your brother; and, in effect, if you sincerely loved him, would so many mediators have been required to reconcile you? Love is its own mediator and interpreter. Charity is that brief word, which would have saved to your friends all those endless toils which they have been obliged to employ in order to reclaim you; it is not so measured; it frankly confesses what it sincerely feels. Now, before giving way, you have insisted upon a thousand conditions; you have disputed every step; you have been resolute in not going beyond a certain point; you have exacted that your brother should make the first advances towards meeting you. Charity knows nothing of all these rules; it hath only one, and that is, oblivion upon the injury and to love our brother as ourself.

I grant that certain prudential measures are to be observed, and that too hasty or ill-timed advantages might often be not only unsuccessful, but even the means of hardening your brother still more against you. But I say that charity ought to regulate these measures, and not vanity: I say, and I repeat it, that all these reconciliations which are with such difficulty concluded, where both parties are resolute in yielding only to a certain point, and even that with precautions so strict and so precise; where so many expedients and so much mystery are necessary, are the fruits of fleshly prudence; they correct the manners, but they affect not the heart; they bring the persons, but not the affections nearer; they re-establish civilities, but leave the same sentiments; in a word, they terminate the scandal of hatred, but not the sin. Thus Jesus Christ plainly commands us to go our way and be reconciled to our brother. He says not to us, do not go too far, lest your brother take advantage of it; be first convinced that he will meet you halfway; seek not after him, lest he consider your proceeding as an apology for his complaints, as a tacit acknowledgment of your blame, and a sentence pronounced against yourself. Jesus Christ plainly tells us: Go thy way and be reconciled to thy brother. He desires that the reconciliation take place through charity alone; he supposes, that in order to love our brother, we have no occasion for mediators, and that our heart should be fully capable of every thing required without any foreign interference.

Such are the steps of reconciliations; thence, the motives being almost always human, the proceedings faulty, their consequences can be only vain and of no effect. I say the consequences; for, my brethren, in what do the far greater part of those reconciliations which every day
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take place in the world, terminate? What is the fruit of them? What is it, which is commonly called a reconciliation with our enemy? I shall explain it to you.

You say, in the first place, that you are reconciled to your brother, and that you have heartily forgiven him; but, that you have taken your resolution to see him no more, and from henceforth to have no father intercourse with him: And upon this footing, you live tranquil; you believe that nothing more is prescribed by the gospel, and that a confessor hath no title to demand more. Now I declare that you have not forgiven your brother, and that you are still, with respect to him, in hatred, in death, and in sin.

For I demand of you: do we dread the sight of those we love? And, if your enemy be now your brother, what can there be so hateful and so disagreeable to you in his presence? You say that you have forgiven, and that you love him; but, in order to avoid all accidents, and that his presence may not arouse vexatious ideas, you find it more proper to exclude yourself from it. But what is that kind of love which the sole presence of the beloved object, irritates against it, and inflames with hatred and wrath? You love him! That is to say, that perhaps you would not wish to injure, or to destroy him. But that is not enough: religion commands you likewise to love him: for honour, indolence, moderation, fear, and want of opportunity, are sufficient inducements to prevent you from injuring him; but you must be Christian to love him; and that is precisely what you are not willing to be.

And, candidly, would you that God loved you, upon the condition that he should never see you? Would you
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be satisfied with his goodness, and with his mercy, were he forever to banish you from his presence? For you well know that he will treat you, as you shall have treated your brother. Would you think yourself much in favour with the prince, were he to forbid you ever to present yourself before him? You constantly say, that a man is in disgrace, when he is no longer permitted to appear before the master; and you pretend to persuade us that you love your brother, and that no rancour remains in your heart against him, while his sole presence displeases and irritates you.

And what less equivocal mark can be given, of animosity against your brother, than that of being unable to endure his presence? It is the very extreme of hatred and of rancour. For many settled hatreds exist, which yet are kept under a kind of check; are, as far as possible, concealed, and even borrow the outward semblance of friendship and of decency; and though unable to reconcile the heart to duty, yet have sufficient command over themselves, to preserve appearances to the world. But your hatred is beyond all restraint; it knows neither prudence, caution, nor decency; and you pretend to persuade us that it is now no more! You still shew the most violent proofs of animosity, and even these you would have us to consider as the indubitable signs of a Christian and sincere love.

But, besides, are Christians made to live estranged, and unconnected with each other? Christians! The members of one body, the children of the same Father, the disciples of the same Master, the inheritors of the same kingdom, the stones of the same building, the particles of the same mass! Christians! The participation of one same spirit, of one same redemption, of one same righteousness!

ness! Christians! Sprung from one bosom, regenerated in the same water, incorporated in the same church, redeemed by one ransom, are they made to fly each other, to make a punishment of seeing each other, and to be unable to endure each other? All religion binds, unites us together; the sacraments in which we join, the public prayers and thanksgivings which we sing, the ceremonies of that worship in which we pride ourselves, the assembly of believers at which we assist; all these externals are only symbols of that union which ties us together. All religion itself, is but one holy society, a divine communication of prayers, of sacrifices, of works and of well-doings. Every thing connects and unites us, every thing tends to make of our brethren and of us, only one family, one body; one heart, and one soul; and you believe that you love your brother, and that you preserve, with respect to him; all the most sacred ties of religion, while you break through even those of society, and that you cannot endure even his presence?

I say much more: How shall you indulge the same hope with him? For, by that common hope, you are eternally to live with him, to make his happiness your own, to be happy with him, to be reunited with him in the bosom of God, and with him to sing the eternal praises of grace. Ah! How could the hope of being for ever united with him be the sweetest consolation of your life, if it appear so desirable to live in separation from him, and if you find even his presence a punishment? Renounce then the promises and all the hopes of faith; separate yourself as an accursed from the communion of believers; interdict to yourself the altar and the awful mysteries; banish yourself from the assembly of the holy; no longer come there to offer up your gifts and your prayers, since all these religi-

ous duties, supposing you in union with your brother, become derisions, if you be not so, depose against you in the face of the altars, and proclaim to you to quit the holy assembly as a publican and a sinner.

Perhaps alarmed at these holy truths, you will finally tell us, that you will so far conquer yourself as to see your brother, and to live on good terms with him; that you will not be wanting in civilities; but that, for the rest, you know where to stop, and that he need not reckon much upon your friendship.

You will not be wanting in civilities! And that, my dear hearer, you believe is to pardon and to be reconciled to your brother, and to love him as yourself? But that charity which the gospel commands is in the heart; it is not a simple decorum, a vain outside, an useless ceremony; it is real feeling, and an active love; it is a sincere tenderness, ever ready to manifest itself in actions. You love as a Jew and as a Pharisee, but you love not as a Christian and as a disciple of Jesus Christ. The law of charity is the law of the heart; it regulates the feelings, changes the inclinations, and pours the oil of peace and of lenity over the wounds of an angry and wounded will; and you turn it into a law wholly external, a pharisaical and superficial law, which regulates only the outside, which settles only the manners, and is fulfilled by vain appearances.

But you are not commanded that you shall merely refrain from wounding the rules of courtesy, and that you shall pay to your brother all those duties which society mutually imposes; it is the world which prescribes this law; these are its rules and customs. But Jesus Christ commands

commands you to love him ; and, while your heart is estranged from him, it is of little importance that you keep up the vain externals of courtesy. You refuse to religion the essential part ; and the only difference betwixt you and those sinners who persist in not seeing their brethren is, that you know how to constrain yourself for the world, and you know not how to thwart yourself for salvation.

And surely, my brethren, if men were united together by the sole ties of society, they no doubt would discharge their duty, by keeping up all the externals of politeness, and by maintaining that mutual commerce of cares, attentions, and courtesies, which constitute, as it were, the whole harmony of the body politic. But we are united together by the sacred and close ties of faith, of hope, of charity, and of religion. In the midst of the world we form a society wholly internal and holy, of which charity is the invisible bond, and altogether distinct from that civil society which legislators have established. Consequently, by fulfilling with regard to your brethren the external courtesies, you satisfy the claims which civil society hath upon you, but you do not fulfil those of religion ; you disturb not the political order, but you overturn the order of charity ; you are a peaceable citizen, but you are not a citizen of heaven ; you are a man of the age, but you are not a man of the age to come ; the world may acquit you, and demand no more, but what you do is a blank in the sight of God, because you are not in charity ; and your condemnation is certain. Come and tell us after this, that you will not be wanting in decorum, and that religion exacts no more of us. It exacts then only dissimulations, outsides, and vain appearances ? It exacts then nothing true, nothing real, nothing which changes the heart ? And the great precept of charity, which alone gives reality to all our works,

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would no longer then be but a false pretence and a vain hypocrisy ?

And trust not solely to us on this point ; consult the public itself. See if, in spite of all the appearances which you still keep up with your brother, it be not an established opinion in the world that you love him not : and if the world do not act in consequence of that persuasion. See if your creatures, if all who approach and who are attached to you, do not affect to keep at a distance from your brother. See if all those who hate him, or who are in interests opposite to his, do not court your friendship and form closer ties with you, and if all those who are inimical to your brother do not profess themselves your friends. See if those who have favours to expect from you do not begin by forsaking him, and if they do not think that in so doing they are paying court to you. You see that the world knows you better than you know yourself ; that it is not mistaken in your real sentiments ; and that, in spite of these vain shews towards your brother, you are actually in hatred and in death, and that in this respect the world itself is of our opinion ; that world, which, on every other occasion, we have constantly to combat.

Behold in what terminate the greatest part of the reconciliations which are every day made in the world. They once more see each other, but they are not reunited ; they promise a mutual friendship, but it is never given ; their persons meet, but their hearts are always estranged ; and I had reason to say, that the hatreds are unchangeable, and that almost all the reconciliations are mere pretences ; that the injury may be forgiven, but that the offender is never loved ; that they may cease to treat their brother as an enemy, but that they never regard him as a brother.

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And, behold what takes place every day before our eyes. In the world are to be seen public characters, families of illustrious names, who still preserve with each other certain measures of decency, which they cannot indeed break through without scandal, yet, nevertheless, live in different interests, in public and avowed sentiments of envy, of jealousy, and of mutual animosity; thwart and do every thing in their power to ruin each other, view each other with the most jealous eyes, and make all their creatures partisans in their resentments and aversions; divide the world, the court, and the city; interest the public in their quarrel, and establish in the world the opinion and the scandal that they hate each other; that they would mutually destroy each other; that they still, it is true keep up appearances; but that, at bottom, their interests and affections are ever estranged. Yet, notwithstanding all this, each party lives in a reputation of piety, and of the practice of good works; they have distinguished and highly esteemed confessors; in mutually discharging to each other certain duties, yet living otherwise in a public and avowed hostility, they frequent the sacraments, they are continually in the intercourse of holy things, they coolly approach the altar, they frequently and without scruple present themselves at the penitential tribunal, where, far from confessing their hatred before the Lord, and weeping over the scandal with which it afflicts the people, they make fresh complaints against their enemy; they accuse him, in place of accusing themselves; they make a boast of the vain external duties which they pay to him, and alledge them as marks of the heart not being rancorous: What shall I say? And the very ministers of penitence, who should have been the judges of our hatred, frequently become its apologists, adopt a party with the public, enter into all the animosity and prejudices of their penitents, proclaim the jus-

tice of their quarrel, and are the cause that the only remedy destined to strike at the root of the evil, answers no other purpose than that of decorating it with the appearances of godliness, and of rendering it more incurable.

Great God! Thou alone canst close the wounds which a proud sensibility hath made in my heart, by nourishing unreasonable and iniquitous hatreds which have corrupted it in thy sight. Enable me to forget fleeting and momentary injuries, in order that thou may forget the crimes of my whole life. Is it for me, O my God! to be so feeling and so inexorable to the slightest insults, I who have such necessity for thy mercy and indulgence? Are the injuries of which I complain to be compared with those with which I have a thousand times dishonoured thy supreme grandeur? Must the worm of the earth be irritated and inflamed at the smallest marks of disdain, while thy sovereign majesty hath so long, and with so much goodness, endured his rebellions and his offences?

Who am I, to be so keen upon the interests of my glory; I who dare not in thy presence cast mine eyes upon my secret ignominy; I who would deserve to be the reproach of men, and the outcast of my people; I who have nothing praise-worthy, according even to the world, but the good fortune of having concealed from it my infamies and my weaknesses; I to whom the most biting reproaches would still be too gentle, and would treat me with too much indulgence; I, in a word, who have no salvation now to hope, if thou forget not thine own glory, which I have so often insulted?

But no, great God! thy glory is in pardoning the sinner, and mine shall be in forgiving my brother. Accept, O Lord,

Lord, this sacrifice which I make to thee of my resentments. Estimate not its value by the puerility and the slightness of the injuries which I forget, but by that pride which had magnified them, and had rendered me so feeling to them. And, seeing thou hast promised to forgive us our trespasses whenever we shall have forgiven the trespasses of our brethren, fulfil, O Lord, thy promises. It is in this hope that I presume to reckon upon thine eternal mercies.

SERMON

SERMON XV.

THE WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER.

LUKE vii. 37.

And behold a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster-box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

FROM such abundant tears, so sincere a confusion, and a proceeding so humiliating and uncommon, it may easily be comprehended how great must once have been the influence of the passions over the heart of this sinner, and what grace now operateth within her. Palestine had long beheld her as the shame and the reproach of the city; the Pharisee's household views her to-day as the glory of grace, and a model of penitence: What a change, and what a spectacle!

This soul, fettered, but a moment ago, with the most shameful and the most indissoluble chains, finds nothing now capable of stopping her; and, without hesitation, she flies to seek, at the feet of Jesus Christ, her salvation and deliverance: this soul hitherto plunged in the senses, and
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living totally for voluptuousness, in a moment sacrifices their liveliest charms, and their dearest ties: this soul, lastly, impatient till then of every yoke, and whose heart had never acknowledged other rule than the caprice of its inclinations, commences her penitence by the most humiliating proceedings, and the most melancholy subjections. How admirable, O my God! are the works of thy grace! And how near to its cure is the most hopeless wretchedness, when once it becomes the object of thine infinite mercies! and how rapid and shortened are the ways by which thou conductest thy chosen!

But whence comes it, my brethren, that such grand examples make so trifling an impression upon us? From two prejudices, apparently the most opposite to each other, yet, nevertheless, which proceed from the same principle, and lead to the same error.

The first is, that we figure to ourselves that conversion of the heart required by God as merely a cessation of guilt, the abstaining from certain excessive irregularities, which even decency itself holds out as improper. And as we are at last brought to that, either by age, new situations, or even our own inclinations which time alone has changed, we never think of going farther; we believe that all is completed, and we listen to the history of the most affecting conversions, held out to us by the church, as to lessons, which no longer, in any degree, regard us.

The second goes to another extreme: we represent Christian penitence to ourselves, as a horrible situation, and the despair of human weakness; a state without comfort or consolation, and attended by a thousand duties, every one more disgusting than another to the heart; and repulsed,
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through the error of that gloomy image, the example of a change find us little disposed to be affected, because they always find us discouraged.

Now, the conversion of our sinner confutes these two prejudices so dangerous for salvation. *1stly*, Her penitence not only terminates her errors, it likewise expiates and makes reparation for them. *2dly*, Her penitence begins, it is true, her tears and her sorrow; but it is likewise the commencement to her of new pleasures. Whatever she had despoiled Jesus Christ of in her errors, she restores to him in her penitence: behold their reparation! but with Jesus Christ she finds, in her penitence, that peace and those comforts which she had never experienced in her errors: behold their consolations! The reparations, and the consolations of her penitence, are the whole history of her conversion, and the subject of this discourse.

PART I. The office of penitence, says St. Augustin, is that of establishing order wherever sin hath introduced corruption. It is false, if it be not universal; for order solely results from a perfect subordination of all desires and emotions which spring up in our hearts; every thing must be in its place, in order that that divine harmony, which sin had disturbed, may be restored; and, while the smallest particular there remains deranged, in vain do you labour to repair the rest; you only rear up an edifice, which, being improperly arranged, is continually giving way in some of its parts, and confusion and disorder prevail through the whole.

Now, behold the important instruction held out to us in the conversion of this sinner! Her sin comprised several disorders: *1stly*, An iniquitous use of her heart, which
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had never been taken up but with creatures : *2dly*, A criminal abuse of all natural gifts, which she had made the instruments of her passions : *3dly*, A shameful abasement of her senses, which she had always made to contribute to her voluptuousness and ignominy : *Lastly*, An universal scandal in the notoriety of her errors. Her penitence makes reparation for all these disorders : all, consequently are forgiven ; for nothing is neglected in the repentance.

I say, *1stly*, An iniquitous use of her heart. Yes, my brethren, every love, which has for its object only the creature, degrades our heart : it is a disorder, to love for itself that which can neither be our happiness nor our perfection, nor, consequently our ease. For, to love, is to seek our felicity in that which we love ; it is the hope of finding in the object beloved, whatever is wanting to our heart ; it is the calling it in aid against that shocking void which we feel within ourselves, in the confidence that they shall be able to fill it : to love, is to look upon the object beloved as our resource against all our wants, the cure of all our evils, and the author of all our good. Now, as it is in God alone that we can find all these advantages, it is a disorder, and a debasement of the heart, to seek for them in a vile creature.

And, at bottom, we feel sensibly ourselves the injustice of that love : however passionate it be, we quickly discover in the creatures which inspire it, weaknesses and defects which render them unworthy of it : we soon find them out to be unjust, fanciful, false, vain, and inconstant : the deeper we examine them, the more we say to ourselves, that our heart has been deceived, and that this is not the object which it sought. Our reason inwardly blushes at the weakness of our passion ; we no longer submit to our chains,

chains, but with pain; our passion becomes our burden and our punishment. But punished, without being undeceived in our error, we see, in a change, a remedy for our mistake: we wander from object to object, and if some one at last chance to fix us, it is not that we are satisfied with our choice, it is that we are tired of our inconstancy.

Our sinner had wandered in these ways: iniquitous loves had been the cause of all her misfortunes, and of all her crimes; and, born to love God alone, he alone it was whom she had never loved. But scarcely hath she known him, says the gospel, when, blushing at the meanness of her former passions, she no longer acknowledges, but him alone, to be worthy of her heart: all in the creature appears to her empty, false and disgusting: far from finding those charms, from which her heart had formerly with such difficulty defended itself, she no longer sees in them, but their frivolity, their danger, and their vanity. The Lord alone, in her sight, appears good, real, faithful, constant to his promises, magnificent in his gifts, true in his affection, indulgent even in his anger, alone sufficiently great to fill the whole immensity of our heart; alone sufficiently powerful to satisfy all its desires; alone sufficiently generous to soften all its distresses; alone immortal, and who shall for ever be loved: lastly, to love whom, can be followed by the sole repentance of having loved him too late:

It is love therefore, my brethren, which makes true penitents: For penitence is only a changing of the heart; and the heart does not change, but in changing its love: penitence is only the re-establishment of order in man; and man is only in order when he loves the Lord, for
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whom he is made : penitence is only a reconciliation with God ; and your reconciliation is fictitious, if you do not restore to him your heart : in a word, penitence obtains the remission of sins, and sins are remitted only in proportion to our love.

Tell us no more then, my brethren, when we hold out these grand examples for your imitation, that you do not feel yourselves born for devotion, and that your heart is of such a nature, that every thing which is denominated piety is disagreeable to it. What ! My dear hearer, your heart is not made for loving its God ? Your heart is not made for the Creator who hath given it to you ? What ! You are born then for vanity and falsehood ? Your heart, so grand so exalted, and which nothing here below can satisfy, has been bestowed on you, solely for pleasures which weary you ; creatures which deceive you ; honours which embarrass you ; a world which tires, or disgusts you ? God alone, for whom you are made, and who hath made you what you are, should find nothing for himself in the principle of your being ? Ah ! You are unjust towards your own heart : You know not yourself, and you take your corruption for yourself. And in effect, if not born for virtue, what then is the melancholy mystery of your lot ? For what are you born ? What chimera then are you among men ? You are born then only for remorse, and gloomy care ? the author of your being, hath drawn you from non-entity, only to render you miserable ? You are gifted then with a heart only to pursue an happiness, which either is visionary, or which flies from you, and to be a continual burden to yourself ?

O man ! open here thine eyes ; fathom to the bottom the destiny of thy heart, and thou wilt acknowledge that

these turbulent passions, which fill thee with such repugnances to virtue, are foreign to thy nature; that such is not the natural state of thy heart; that the author of nature and of grace had bestowed on thee a more sublime lot; that thou wert born for order, for righteousness, and for innocence; that thou hast corrupted an happy nature, by turning it towards iniquitous passions; and that if not born for virtue, we know not what thou art, and thou becomest incomprehensible to thyself.

But you are mistaken, when you consider as inclinations incompatible with piety, those warm propensities towards pleasure which are born with you. From the instant that grace shall have sanctified them, they will become dispositions favourable for salvation. The more you are animated in the pursuit of the world and its false pleasures, the more eager shall you be for the Lord, and for true riches; the more you have been found tender and feeling by creatures, the easier shall be the access of grace to your heart: in proportion as your nature is haughty, proud, and aspiring, the more shall you serve the Lord, without fear, without disguise, without meanness: the more your character, now appears easy, light, and inconstant, the easier it will be for you to detach yourself from your criminal attachments, and to return to your God. Lastly, your passions themselves, if I may venture to speak in this manner, will become the means of facilitating your penitence. Whatever had been the occasion of your destruction, you will render it conducive towards your salvation; you will see and acknowledge, that to have received a tender, faithful, and generous heart, is to have been born for piety, and that a heart which creatures have been able to touch, holds out great and favourable dispositions towards grace.

Peruse what remains to us of the history of the just, and you will see that those who have at the first been dragged away by mad passions, who were born with every talent calculated for the world, with the warmest propensities towards pleasures, and the most opposite to every thing pious, have been those in whom grace hath operated the most wonderful change. And, without mentioning the sinner of our gospel, the Augustines, the Pelagius', the Fabioles', those worldly and dissipated souls, so obstinate and rooted in their debaucheries, and so diametrically opposite, it would seem, to piety; what progress have they not since made in the ways of God? And their former propensities, have, as I may say, only paved the way for their penitence. The same soil which nourishes and produces great passions, gives birth likewise to the greatest virtues, when it pleases the Lord to change the heart. My God! Thou hast made us all for thee, and in the incomprehensible arrangement of thy Providence, and of thy mercy towards man, even our weaknesses are to conduce towards our sanctification. It is thus, that our sinner made reparation for the iniquitous use of her heart.

But, *2dly*, The love which she had for Jesus Christ was not one of those vain and indolent sensibilities, which are rather the natural emotions of an easily affected heart than real impressions of grace, and which never produce any thing in us, further than that of rendering us satisfied with ourselves, and persuading us that our heart is changed: the sacrifices, and not the feelings, prove the reality of love.

Thus, the second disorder of her sin having been the criminal and almost universal abuse of all creatures; the second reparation of her penitence, is the rigorously abstaining

flaining from all those things which she had abused in her errors. Her hair, her perfumes, the gifts of body and of nature, had been the instruments of her pleasures; for none is ignorant of the use to which a deplorable passion can apply them; this is the first step of her penitence: the perfumes are abandoned, and even consecrated to a holy ministry; her hair is neglected, and no longer serves but to wipe the feet of her deliverer; beauty, and every attention to the body, are neglected, and her eyes are blinded with tears. Such are the first sacrifices of her love: she is not contented with giving up cares visibly criminal, she even sacrifices such as might have been looked upon as innocent, and thinks, that the properest way of punishing the abuse she had formerly made of them, is, by depriving herself of the liberty she might still have had of employing them.

In effect, by having once abused them, the sinner loses the right he had over them; what is permitted to an innocent soul, is no longer so to him who has been so unhappy as to deviate from the right path: Sin renders us, as it were, anathematized to all creatures around us, and which the Lord had destined to our use. Thus, there are rules for an unfaithful soul, not made for other men: he no longer enjoys, as I may say, the common right, and he must no more judge of his duties by the general maxims, but by the personal exceptions which concern him.

Now, upon this principle, you are continually demanding of us, if the use of such and such an artifice in dress be a crime? If such and such public pleasures be forbidden? I mean not here to decide for others; but I ask at you who maintain their innocency, whether you have never made a bad use of them? Have you never made these
cares

cares of the body, these amusements, and these artifices instrumental towards iniquitous passions? Have you never employed them in corrupting hearts, or in nourishing the corruption of your own? What! Your entire life has perhaps been one continued and deplorable chain of passions and evils; you have abused every thing around you, and have made them instrumental to your irregular appetites; you have called them all in aid, to that unfortunate tendency of your heart; your intentions have even exceeded your evil; your eye hath never been single and you would willingly never have had that of others to have been so with regard to you; all your cares for your person, have been crimes; and when there is question of returning to your God, and of making reparation for a whole life of corruption and debauchery, you pretend to dispute with him for vanities, of which you have always made so infamous an use? You pretend to maintain the innocency of a thousand abuses, which, though permitted to the rest of men, would be forbidden to you? You enter into contestation, when it is intended to restrict you from the criminal pomps of the world: You to whom the most innocent, if such there be, are forbidden in future, and whose only dress ought henceforth to be sackcloth and ashes? Can you still pretend to justify cares, which are your inward shame, and which have so often covered you with confusion at the feet of the sacred tribunal? And should so much contestation and so many explanations be required, where your own shame alone should amply suffice?

Besides, the holy sadness of piety no longer looks upon, but with horror, that which has once been a stumbling-block to us. The contrite soul examines not whether he may innocently indulge in it; it suffices for him to know, that it has a thousand times been the rock upon
which

which he has seen his innocence split. Whatever has been instrumental in leading him to his evils, becomes equally odious in his sight, as the evils themselves; whatever has been assisting to his passions, he equally detests as the passions themselves; whatever, in a word, has been favourable to his crimes, becomes criminal in his eyes. Should it even happen that we might be disposed to accord it to his weakness, ah! his zeal, his compunction, would reject the indulgence, and would adopt the interests of God's righteousness against men; he could not prevail upon himself to permit abuses, which would be the means of recalling to him his past disorders; he would always entertain a dread that the same manner of acting might recal the same dispositions, and that, engrossed by the same cares, his heart would find itself the same; the sole image of his past infidelities disturbs and alarms him; and, far from bearing about with him their sad remains, he would wish to have it in his power to remove even from the spots, and to tear himself from the occupations, which renew their remembrance. And, surely, what kind of a penitence must that be, which still permits us to love all those things which have been the occasion of our greatest crimes? And, while yet dripping from a shipwreck, can we too strenuously form the resolution of for ever shunning those rocks upon which we had so lately split?

Lastly, true penitence causes us to find every where matter of a thousand invisible sacrifices. It does not confine itself to certain essential privations; every thing which flatters the passions, every thing which nourishes the life of the senses, every superfluity which tends solely to the gratification of self-love, all these become the subject of its sacrifices: and, like a sharp and grievous sword, it every where makes divisions and separations painful to the heart,

heart, and cuts even to the quick, whatever in the smallest degree approached too near to the corruption of our propensities. The grace of compunction at once leads the contrite soul to this point; it renders him ingenious in punishing himself, and arranges matters so well, that every thing serves in expiation of his crimes; that duties, social intercourse, honours, prosperity, and the cares attendant upon his station, become opportunities of proving his merit; and that even his pleasures, through the circumspection and faith with which they are accompanied, become praiseworthy and virtuous actions.

Behold the divine secret of penitence! As it officiates here below towards the criminal soul, says Tertullion, as the justice of God, and as the justice of God shall one day punish guilt by the eternal privation of all creatures which the sinner hath abused, penitence anticipates that terrible judgment; it every where imposes on itself the most rigorous privations; and if the miserable condition of human life render the use of present things still requisite, it employs them much less to flatter than to punish the senses, by the sober and austere manner in which it applies them.

You have only to calculate thereupon the truth of your penitence. In vain do you appear to have left off the brutal gratification of the passions, if the same pomp and splendour are requisite towards satisfying that natural inclination, which courts distinction through a vain magnificence; the same profusions, in consequence of not having the courage to deprive self-love of accustomed superfluities; the same pleasures of the world, in consequence of being unable to do without it; the same advantages on the part of fortune, in consequence of the continual desire of rising superior to others: in a word, if you can part with
nothing

nothing, you exclude yourself from nothing ; even admitting that all those attachments which you still preserve should not be absolute crimes, your heart is not penitent ; your manners are apparently different, but all your passions are still the same ; you are apparently changed, but you are not converted. How rare, my brethren, are true penitents ! How common are vain and superficial conversions ! And how many souls, changed in the eyes of the world, shall one day find themselves the same before God !

But it is not enough to have attained to that degree of self-denial, which keeps us without the circle of attraction ; to the allurements of guilt ; those laborious atonements must likewise be added, which wash out its stains. Thus, in the third place, the sinner of our gospel is not contented with having sacrificed her hair and her perfumes to Jesus Christ ; she prostrates herself at his feet, she washes them with her tears, she wipes, she kisses them : and as the third disorder of her sin had been a shameful subjection of her senses, she begins the reparation of these criminal lewdnesses, by the humiliation and disgust of these lowly services.

New instruction : it is not sufficient to remove from the passions those allurements which incite them ; it is likewise necessary that laborious exertions of such virtues as are most opposite to them, insensibly repress, and recal them to duty and order. You were fond of gaming, pleasures, amusements, and every thing which composes a worldly life ; it is doing little to cut off from these pleasures that portion which may still conduct to guilt ; if you wish that the love of the world be extinguished in your heart, it is necessary that prayer, retirement, silence, and acts of charity, succeed to these dissolute manners ; and that, not satisfied

tified with shunning the crimes of the world, you likewise fly from the world itself. By giving yourself up to boundless and shameful passions, you have fortified the empire of the senses and of the flesh; it is necessary that fasting, watching, the yoke of mortification, gradually extinguish these impure fires, weaken these tendencies, become ungovernable through a long indulgence of voluptuousness, and not only remove guilt from you, but operate, as I may say, to dry up its source in your heart. Otherwise by sparing, you only render yourself more miserable: the old attachments which you shall have broken without having weakened, and, as it were, rooted them from your heart by mortification, will incessantly be renewing their attacks; your passions, become more violent and impetuous by being checked and suspended without your having weakened and overcome them, will make you undergo agitations and storms, such as you had never experienced even in guilt: you will behold yourself on the point, every moment, of a melancholy shipwreck; you will never taste of peace in this new life. You will find yourself more weak, more exhausted, more animated for pleasure, more easy to be shaken, and more disgusted with the service of God, in this state of imperfect penitence, than you had even been formerly in the midst of dissipation: every thing will become a rock to you; you will be a continual temptation to yourself; you will be astonished to find within you a still greater repugnance to duties; and, as it is hardly possible to stand out long against yourself, you will soon become disgusted with a virtue by which you suffer so much; and, in consequence of your having wished to be only a tranquil and mitigated penitent, you will be an unhappy one, without consolation, without peace, and consequently without perseverance. To augment and multiply the sacrifices is to abridge the sufferings in virtue; and whatever we are in-

duced to spare to the passions, becomes rather the punishment and the disgust than the softening of our penitence.

The last disorder which had accompanied the sin of the woman of our gospel, was the publicness of the scandal attending the corruption of her conduct. The scandal of the law, which was dishonoured in the opinion of the Romans and of so many other gentiles, spread throughout Palestine, and who, witnessing the ill-conduct of our sinner, took occasion, no doubt, from it, to blaspheme the name of the Lord, to despise the sanctity of his law, to harden themselves in their impious superstitions, and to look upon the hope of Israel and the wonders of God, as related in the holy books, as fictions invented to amuse a credulous people.

Scandal of place: Her ill-conduct had been conspicuous in the city, that is to say, in the capital of the country; from whence the reports of such accidents were soon circulated throughout Judea. Now, behold the scandals for which her penitence makes reparation: the scandal of the law, by renouncing the superstitious traditions of the Pharisees, who had adulterated their precepts; and by confessing Jesus Christ, who was the end and the fulfilment of them. For, too frequently, after having dishonoured religion in the minds of the impious, through our excesses and scandalous conduct, we again dishonour it through our pretended piety; we create for ourselves a kind of virtue altogether worldly, superficial, and pharisaical; we become superstitious without becoming penitent; we make the abuses of devotion succeed to those of the world; the only reparation we make for the scandal of our debaucheries, is that of a sensual piety; and we reflect more disgrace upon virtue, through the weaknesses and illusions

lusions which we mingle with it, than we did by our open and avowed excesses. Thus the impious are more hardened in their iniquity, and more removed from conversion, by the example of our false penitence, than ever they had formerly been by the example even of our vices.

Lastly, the scandal of place : That same city which had been the theatre of her shame and of her crimes, becomes that of her penitence. She goes not into retired places to give vent to her sorrows and her tears ; she takes no advantage, like Nicodemus, of the shades of night to come to Jesus Christ, nor waits the opportunity of his being in a retired corner of the city, in order to conceal from the eyes of the public the first steps of her conversion. In the face of that great city which she had scandalised by her conduct, she enters into the house of the pharisee, and is not afraid of submitting to have as spectators of her penitence, those who had been witnesses of her former crimes. For often, after having despised the world's opinion in debauchery, it becomes dreaded in virtue : the eyes of the public did not appear formidable to us during our dissipation ; they become so in our penitence ; our vices were carelessly laid open to view ; our virtues are backward and cautious ; we dare not at first declare openly for Jesus Christ ; we are ashamed to shew ourselves in a light so new to us ; we have gloried in vice as if it had been a virtue, and we blush for being virtuous, as though it were a shame.

As our fortunate sinner had not been timid in evil, so is she not timid in good ; she bears, even with a holy insensibility, the reproaches of the pharisee, who recounts in the presence of all the guests, the infamy of her past manners. For the world, typified by that pharisee, feels a gratification in the mean pleasure of recalling the former errors
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of those whom grace hath touched : far from reaping any edification from their present good conduct, it is continually dwelling upon their past irregularity ; it tries to weaken the merit of what they now do, by renewing upon every occasion the remembrance of what they have done ; it would appear that the errors which they lament authorise those which we love, and in which we still continue to live ; and that it is more allowable for us to be sinners, since real and sincere penitents repent of having been so. It is thus, O my God ! that every thing worketh out our destruction, and that, instead of blessing and praising the riches of thy mercy when thou withdrawest worldly and dissolute souls from the ways of perdition, and instead of being excited by these grand examples, to have recourse to thy clemency, always so ready to receive the repentant sinner ; insensible and blind to his penitence, we are occupied only in recalling his errors, as if we were entitled from thence to say to ourselves, that we have nothing to dread in debauchery ; that one day or other we shall likewise become contrite ; and that the sincerest penitents, having once been perhaps still more deeply involved than we in mad passions, we need not despair of one day or other being able to quit them as well as they ! O inexplicable blindness of man, that finds inducements to debauchery even in the examples of penitence !

Such were the reparations of our sinner. But if it be an error to represent to ourselves a change of life as the simple cessation of our former debaucheries, without adding to that those expiations which wash them out ; it is likewise another not less dangerous, the considering these expiations as involving you in a situation, gloomy, wretched, and hopeless. Thus, after having mentioned to you
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the reparations of her penitence, it is proper that I now lay before you the consolations.

PART II. Come unto me, says Jesus Christ, all ye who are weary of the ways of iniquity; take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

This promise, addressed to all criminal souls, who are always miserable in debauchery, is completely fulfilled in the instance of the sinner of our gospel. In effect, every thing which had formerly been to her, in her dissipations, an inexhaustible fund of disgust, becomes now, in her penitence, a fruitful source of consolation; and with Jesus Christ she is happy, through the same means which, during her guilt, had occasioned all her miseries.

Yes my brethren, an iniquitous love had been her first guilt, and the first source of all her distresses; the first consolation of her penitence, is a holy dereliction for Jesus Christ, and the wide difference between that divine and new love, and the profane love which had hitherto engrossed her heart. I say the difference in the object, in the proceedings, and in the correspondence.

In the object: the depravity of her heart, had attached her to men, corrupted, inconstant, deceitful, rather companions of her debauchery than real friends, less watchful to render her happy, than attentive to the gratification of their own inordinate passions; to men, who always join contempt, to a gratified passion; to Ammons, in whose eyes, from the moment that they have obtained their wishes, the unfortunate object of their love becomes vile and hateful;

hateful; to men whose weaknesſes, artifices, tranſports and defects ſhe well knew, and whom ſhe inwardly acknowledged to be unworthy of her heart, and to whom ſhe paid any attention, more through the unfortunate bias of paſſion, than the free choice, of her reaſon; in a word, to men, who had never yet been able to fix the natural inſtability, and love of change, of her heart. Her penitence attaches her to Jeſus Chriſt, the model of all virtue, the ſource of all grace, the principle of all light; the more ſhe ſtudies him, the more does ſhe diſcover his greatneſs and ſanctity; the more ſhe loves him, the more does ſhe find him worthy of being loved: to Jeſus Chriſt, the faithful, immortal, and diſinterested friend of her ſoul, who is concerned for her eternal intereſts alone; who is intereſted only in what may render her happy; who is even come to ſacrifice his eaſe, his glory and his life, in order to ſecure her immortal happineſs; who has diſtinguiſhed her, from among ſo many women of Judah, by an overflowing of mercy, when ſhe had rendered herſelf the moſt conſpicuous of her ſex, by the exceſs of her wretchedneſs; who expects nothing from her, but is willing to beſtow on her, far more than ſhe could ever have hoped; *laſtly*, to Jeſus Chriſt, who has tranquilized her heart, by purifying it; who has fixed its inſtancy, and ſubdued the multiplicity of its deſires; who has filled the whole extent of her love; who has reſtored to her that internal peace, which creatures had never been able to beſtow.

O my ſoul! How long ſhalt thou continue to love in creatures, what is but thine affliction and puniſhment? Wouldſt thou ſuffer more by breaking aſunder thy chains, than thou now doſt in bearing them? Would virtue and innocence be more painful, than thoſe ſhameful paſſions which at preſent debase and rend thee? Ah! Thou ſhalt find

find every thing light and easy, in comparison with the cruel agitations which render thee so unhappy in guilt. Difference in the object of her love.

Difference in the steps. The excess of passion had led her to a thousand steps, in opposition to her inclination, her glory, and her reason; had led her to make a sacrifice to men of her quiet, her inclinations, her honour, and her liberty; to shameful condescensions, and disagreeable submissions; to important sacrifices, for which the only return was their thinking themselves more entitled from thence to exact still more: for such is the ingratitude of men; the more you allow them to become masters of your heart, the more they erect themselves its tyrant: in their opinion, the excess of your attachment to them diminishes its merit; and they punish you for the fervour and the shame of your transports, by taking occasion, even from thence, to suffer all, even to their gratitude, to be cooled.

Behold the grateful returns experienced by our sinner in the ways of the passions! But in her penitence every thing is reckoned: the slightest step which she takes for Jesus Christ is noticed, is praised, is defended by Jesus Christ himself. The pharisee vainly endeavours to lessen her merit, (for the world never studies but to diminish the value of the virtues of the just), the Saviour undertakes her defence: "Seest thou this woman?" said he to him, as if he thereby meant to say, Knowest thou all the merit of the sacrifices which she makes to me, and how far the strength and the excess of her love for me extend? She hath not ceased to wash my feet with tears, and to wipe them with the hairs of her head. He reckons, he observes every thing; a sigh, a tear, a simple movement of the heart; nothing is lost upon him of whatever is done

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for him ; nothing escapes the exactness of his glances, and the tenderness of his heart ; we are well assured that we serve no ungrateful master ; he overvalues even the slightest sacrifices. “ Seest thou this woman ? ” He would, it appears, that all men view her with the same eyes that he did : that all men should be as equitable estimators as himself of her love, and of her tears : he no longer sees her debaucheries ; he forgets a whole life of error and guilt ; he sees only her repentance and her tears.

Now, what consolation for a contrite soul, to have it in her power to say to herself, Till now, I have lived only for error and vanity ; my days, my years, my cares, my inquietudes, my distresses, all are hitherto lost, and no longer exist, even in the memory of those men for whom alone I have lived, for whom alone I have sacrificed every thing ; my rectitude, my attentions, my anxieties, have never been repaid but with ingratitude ; but, henceforth, whatever I do for Jesus Christ will receive its full estimation ; my sufferings, my afflictions, the slightest sacrifices of my heart ; my sighs, my tears, which I had so often shed in vain for creatures ; all shall be written in immortal characters in the book of life : all these shall eternally exist in the remembrance of that faithful Master whom I serve ; all these, in spite of the defects mingled with them by my weakness and my corruption, shall be excused, and even purified through the grace of my Redeemer ; and he will crown his gifts by rewarding my feeble deserts : I no longer live but for eternity ; I no longer labour in vain ; my days are real, my life is no longer a dream. O my brethren, what a blessed gain is piety ! And how great are the consolations which a soul recalled to Jesus Christ receives, in compensation for the trifling losses which he sacrifices to him !

Lastly

Lastly, Difference in the certitude of the correspondence. That love of creatures which actuated our sinner, had always been attended with the most cruel uncertainties. One is always suspicious of an equal return of love: the heart is ingenious in rendering itself unhappy, and in tormenting itself with vain fears, suspicions, and jealousies: the more generous, true, and frank it is itself, the more doth it suffer: it is the martyr of its own distrusts. You know this well; and it does not belong to me to pretend to speak from this place the language of your extravagant passions.

But what a new destiny in the change of her love! Scarcely is her love of Jesus Christ commenced, when she is certain of being beloved: she hears from his divine mouth the favourable sentence, which, in remitting her sins, confirms to her the love and the affection of him who remits them: not only are her debaucheries forgotten, but she is urged to be convinced in her own mind, that they are forgotten, pardoned, and washed out; all her fears are prevented, and ground is no more left for mistrust or uncertainty; nor can she longer suspect the love of Jesus Christ, without at the same time suspecting his power, and the faithfulness of his promises.

Such is the lot of a contrite soul on quitting the tribunal where Jesus Christ, through the ministry of the priest, has remitted debaucheries, which he has washed out with his tears and his love. In spite of that uncertainty inseparable from the present state of life, whether he be worthy of love or hatred, an internal peace bears testimony in the bottom of his heart that he is restored to Jesus Christ: he experiences a calm and a joy in his conscience, which can be the fruit of righteousness alone. Not that he is entirely de-

livered from alarm and apprehension on account of his past infidelities, and that, in certain moments, more forcibly struck with horror at his past errors, and the severity of God's judgments, he is not tempted to consider all as hopeless to him; but Jesus Christ, who himself excites these storms in his heart, has quickly calmed them; his voice still inwardly says to him, as formerly to Peter alarmed upon the waves: "O thou of little faith, wherefore doubtest thou?" Have I not given thee sufficient proofs of my kindness and my protection? Reflect upon all that I have done in order to withdraw thee from the ways of iniquity: I seek not with such perseverance the sheep that I love not; I recal them not from so far, to let them perish before my eyes; distrust then no more my affection; dread only thine own lukewarmness or inconstancy. First consolation of her penitence; the difference of her love.

The second is the sacrifice of her passions. She throws at the feet of Jesus Christ her perfumes, her hair, all the attachments of her heart, all the deplorable instruments of her vanities, and of her crimes; and do not suppose that in acting thus she sacrifices her pleasures; she sacrifices only her anxieties and her punishments.

In vain is it said that the cares of the passions constitute the felicity of those possessed by them; it is a language in which the world glories, but which experience belies. What punishment to a worldly soul, anxious to please, are the solicitous cares of a beauty, which fades and decays every day! What attentions and constraints! They must take upon themselves, upon their inclinations, upon their pleasures, upon their indolence: what inward vexations, when these cares have been unavailing, and when more fortunate charms have attracted the general attention!

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What tyranny is that of custom! It must, however, be submitted to, in spite of deranged affairs, a remonstrating husband, tradesmen who murmur, and who dearly sell the remissions perhaps required. I say nothing of the cares of ambition: what a life is that passed in designs, projects, fears, hopes, alarms, jealousies, subjection, and meannesses! I speak not of a profane connection: what terrors lest the mystery be laid open! What eyes to shun! What spies to deceive! What mortifying repulses to undergo from the very person for whom they have perhaps sacrificed their honour and their liberty, and of whom they dare not even complain! To all these, add those cruel moments when passion, less unruly, allows us leisure to inspect ourselves, and to feel the whole infamy of our situation; those moments in which the heart, born for more solid joys, wearies of its own idols, and finds ample punishment in its disgusts and in its own inconstancy. World profane! If such be the felicity thou vauntest so much, distinguish thy worshippers, and, by crowning them with such an happiness, punish them for the faith which they have so credulously given to thy promises.

Behold what our sinner casts at the feet of Jesus Christ, her bonds, her troubles, her slavery; in appearance, the instruments of her pleasures, in truth the source of all her afflictions. Now, granting that this were the only consolation of virtue, is it not a sufficiently grand one, that of deliverance from the keenest anxieties of the passions? To have your happiness no longer dependant upon the inconstancy, the perfidy, and the injustice of creatures; to have placed yourself beyond the reach of events; to possess in your own heart all that is wanting towards your happiness, or to suffice, as I may say, to yourself? What do you lose, in sacrificing gloomy and anxious cares, in order

der to find peace and inward joy ; and to lose all for Jesus Christ, is it not, as the apostle says, to have gained all ? Thy faith hath made thee whole, said the Saviour to the woman ; go in peace. Behold the treasure which she receives in return for the passions sacrificed to him : behold the reward and the consolation of her tears and of her repentance, that peace of mind which she had never, as yet, been able to find, and which the world hath never bestowed. Fools ! says a prophet ; misery to you, then, who drag on the load of your passions, as the ox in labouring drags on the chains of the yoke which galls him, and who rush on to your destruction by the way even of anguish, subjection and constraint !

Lastly, By her sin she had been degraded in the eyes of men : they beheld with contempt the shame and the infamy of her conduct ; she lived degraded from every right which a good reputation and a life free from reproach bestow ; and the pharisee is even astonished that Jesus Christ should condescend to suffer her at his feet.

For the world, which authorises whatever leads to dissipation, never fails to cover dissipation itself with infamy ; it approves, it justifies the maxims, the habits, and the pleasures which corrupt the heart ; and yet it insists that innocency and regularity of manners be united with corruption of heart ; it inspires all the passions, yet it always blames the consequences of them ; it requires you to study the art of pleasing, and it despises you from the moment that you have succeeded ; its lascivious theatres resound with extravagant praises of profane love, and its conversations consist only of biting satires upon those who yield themselves up to that unfortunate tendency ; it praises the graces, the charms, the miserable talents which light

up impure desires, and it loads you with everlasting shame and reproach from the moment that you appear inflamed with them. O how infinitely above description wretched are those who drag on in a still beloved world, and which they find themselves incapable of doing without, the miserable wrecks of a reputation, either blasted or but feebly confirmed; and wherever they shew themselves, to arouse the remembrance or the suspicion of their crimes!

Such had been the afflictions and the disgraces, with which the passions and the debaucheries of our sinner were followed; but her penitence restores to her more honour and more glory than had been taken from her by the infamy of her crimes. This sinner, so despised in the world, whose name was never mentioned without a blush, is praised for the very things which even the world considers as most honourable, viz. kindness of heart, generosity of sentiments, and the fidelity of an holy love; this sinner, with whom no comparison durst ever be made, and whose scandal was without example in the city, is exalted above the pharisee; the truth, the sincerity of her faith, of her compunction, of her love, merits at once the preference over a superficial and pharasaical virtue: *Lastly*, This sinner, whose name was concealed, as if unworthy of being pronounced, and whose only appellation, is that of her crimes, is become the glory of Jesus Christ, the praise of grace, and an honour to the gospel. O matchless power of virtue!

Yes, my brethren, virtue renders us a spectacle, worthy of God, of angels, and of men: it once more exalts a fallen reputation; it renews our claim, even here below, to rights and honours which we had forfeited; it washes out stains, which the malignity of men would wish to be immortal:

immortal : it rejoins us to the servants of Jesus Christ, and to the society of the just, of whose intercourse we were formerly unworthy : it calls forth in us a thousand laudable qualities, which the vortex of the passions had almost forever engulfed : *Lastly*, it attracts more glory to us, than our past manners had attached shame and contempt. While Jonah is rebellious to the will of God, he is the curse of Heaven, and of the earth ; even idolaters are under the necessity of separating him from their society, and of casting him out, as a child of infamy and malediction ; and the belly of a monster is the only asylum in which he can conceal his reproach and shame. But touched with contrition, scarcely hath he implored the eternal mercies of the God of his Fathers, when he becomes the admiration of the proud Ninevah ; when the grandes and the people unite to render him honour still then unheard of ; when the prince himself, full of respect for his virtue, descends from the throne, and covers himself with sackcloth and ashes, in obedience to the man of God. Those passions which the world praises and inspires, had drawn upon us the contempt even of the world ; virtue which the world censures, and combats, attracts to us, however unwillingly on its part, its veneration and homages.

What, my dear hearer, prevents you then from terminating your shame, and your inquietudes, with your crimes ? Is it the reparations of penitence which alarm you ? But the longer you delay the more they multiply, the more debts are contracted, the more you increase the necessity of new rigours to your weakness. Ah ! if the reparations discourage you at present, what shall it one day be, when your crimes, multiplied to infinity, almost no punishment whatever shall be capable of expiating them ? They shall then plunge you into despair ; and you will adopt the miserable party

party of casting off all yoke, and of no longer reckoning upon your salvation; you will raise up to yourself new maxims, and modes of reasoning, in order to tranquilize your mind in freethinking; you will consider as needless a penitence which will then appear to you impossible. When the embarrassments of the conscience come to a certain point, we feel a kind of gloomy satisfaction in persuading ourselves, that no resource is left; we calm ourselves on the foundation of truths, when we see ourselves so far removed from what they prescribe; we fly to unbelief for a remedy, from the moment that we believe it is no longer to be found in faith; from the moment that the chaos becomes inexplicable to us, we have soon settled it in our minds, that all is uncertain. And besides, what should there be so melancholy and so rigorous in reparations, whose holy merit ought to spring from love?

Unbelieving soul! you dread being unable to support the holy sadness of penitence; yet you have hitherto been able to bear up against the internal horrors of guilt: virtue in your eyes seems wearisome beyond sufferance; yet, have you long dragged on under the stings of an ulcerated conscience, which no joy could enliven. Ah! Since you have hitherto been able to bear up against all the inward anguish, the bitterneffes, the disgusts, the gloomy agitations of iniquity, no longer dread those of virtue: in the pains and sufferances inseparable from guilt, you have undergone trials far beyond what may be attached to virtue; and doubly so, because grace softens, and renders even pleasing, the sufferings of piety, while the only sweetener of guilt is the bitterneffes of guilt itself.

My God! Is it possible, that, for so many years past, I have had strength to wander in such arduous and dreary ways,

ways, under the tyranny of the world, and of the passions, and that I should be unable to live with thee, under all the tenderness of thy regards, under the wings of thy compassion, and under the protection of thy arm? Art thou then so cruel a master? The world which knows thee not, believes that thou renderest miserable those who serve thee: but we, O Lord, we know that thou art the gentlest and best of masters, the tenderest of all fathers, the most faithful of all friends, the most munificent of all benefactors; and that thou givest a foretaste, by a thousand inward consolations with which thou indulgest thy servants here below, of that eternal felicity which thou preparest for them hereafter.

SERMON

SERMON XVI.

THE WORD OF GOD.

MATTHEW iv. 4.

It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

NOTHING can give a better idea of the power and of the sublimity of the word of the gospel, than the images employed by Jesus Christ to foretell its effects. One while it is a sacred sword, which is to divide father from child, husband from wife, brother from sister, and man from himself; to bend all minds under the yoke of faith, to subjugate the Cæsars, to triumph over sages and the learned, and to exalt the standard of the cross upon the wrecks of idols, and of empires; through that is represented to us its might, which the whole world hath been unable to resist.

One while it is a divine fire, spread in an instant throughout the earth, which goes to dissolve the mountains, to depopulate the cities, to people the forests, to reduce into ashes the profane temples, to inflame the minds of men, and to make them fly, like madmen, to death, in the sight of nations; and under these parabolical traits are figured to us the promptitude of its operations, and the rapidity of its victories.

One while it is a mysterious leaven, which joins and reunites the whole mass; which binds all its parts together, and impresses upon them one general efficacy and virtue; which overthrows the distinctions of Jew and Gentile, of Greek and Barbarian, and gives to all the same name and the same being: and here you comprehend how great must be its sanctity and inward might, seeing it hath purified the whole universe, and of all nations hath made but one people.

Another time it is a seed, which at first appears lost in the earth, but afterwards springs up, and multiplies an hundred fold. And behold the first cause of the fecundity: not the husbandman who sows, but the invisible Author who giveth the increase.

But at present Jesus Christ compares it to bread, which serves as the food of man; and he thereby means to inform us that the word of the gospel is a powerful and solid nourishment, often pernicious to such as receive it into a diseased and corrupted heart, and useful only to souls who, with an holy appetite, nourish themselves with it, and who bring to this place a heart prepared to listen to it.

To confine myself then to this idea, I shall say nothing of the wonders which this word, announced by twelve poor and humble men, formerly wrought throughout the universe. I shall pass over in silence the sanctity of its doctrine, the sublimity of its counsels, the wisdom of its maxims; and limiting myself to the instruction, and to that which may render the word of the gospel which we announce beneficial to you, I shall inform you, firstly, what are the dispositions which ought to accompany you to this holy place for the purpose of hearing it; and, secondly,

ly, in what mind you ought afterwards to listen to it : Two duties not only neglected, but even unknown to the greatest part of the believers, who run in crowds to the feet of these Christian pulpits, and which are the ordinary cause of our ministry being attended with so little fruit.

PART I. It is not the body of external works, says St. Augustin, which distinguishes the just from carnal Christians : it is the invisible spirit which animates them. Pious actions are frequently common to the good and the wicked ; it is the disposition of the heart which discriminates them. All run, says the apostle, but all reach not the goal, for it is not the same spirit which impels them.

Now, to apply this maxim to my subject ; of all the duties of Christian piety, there is undoubtedly none of which the external is more equally fulfilled by the worldly, and by the pious, than that of coming to hear the word of the gospel. All run in crowds, like the Israelites formerly to the foot of the holy mountain, to hear the words of the law. Our temples are hardly sufficient to contain the multitude of believers : profane assemblies break up, to swell the number of the holy assembly at the hours of instruction ; and the ages which have seen the zeal of Christians so relaxed on every other duty of religion, have not it would seem, witnessed it in this. Nevertheless, of all the ministries confided to the church for the consummation of the chosen, there is almost none so unprofitable as that of the word ; and the most efficacious mean which the church hath, in every age, employed for the conversion of men, is become, at present, its feeblest resource. You, my brethren, are yourselves a melancholy proof of this truth. Never were instructions more frequent than in our days, and never were conversions so rare.

It is of importance, therefore to explain the causes of so common and so deplorable an abuse : now, the first is undoubtedly in the want of those dispositions which ought to accompany you to this holy place, in order to listen to the word of salvation. And surely, if St Paul formerly commanded all believers to purify themselves before coming to eat the bread of life : if he declared to them, that not to distinguish it from ordinary food was to render themselves guilty of the body of the Lord, we have no less reason to tell you that you ought to prove yourselves and to prepare your soul before you come to participate in that spiritual food which we break for the people ; and that not to distinguish it from the word of men, in your manner of listening to it, is to render yourselves guilty even of the word of Jesus Christ.

The first disposition required of you by the sanctity of this word, when you come to hear it, is a sincere desire that it may be useful to you. Before coming to our temples, you ought privately, in your own house, to address yourself to the Father of Light, to entreat him to bestow upon you that ear of the heart which alone makes his voice to be heard ; to give to his word that efficacy, that inward unction, those attractions so powerful and so successful in the conversion of sinners, that he may overcome that insensibility which you have opposed to all the truths hitherto heard ; that he fix those momentary feelings which you have so often experienced while listening to us, but which have never been productive of any consequences towards your salvation ; that to us he give that zeal, that wisdom, that dignity, that fulness of his spirit, those piercing lights, that divine vehemence which carries conviction to the heart, and which never speaks in vain ; that he form in our hearts the relish of those truths which he putteth in

our mouths; that he render us insensible to your praises, or to your censures, in order that we may be more useful to your wants; that the ardent desire to accomplish your salvation, fully compensate the want of those talents denied to us by nature; and that we honour our ministry, not by seeking to please, but to save you.

And surely, if the Israelites, before approaching mount Sinai, to hear the words of the law which the angel was to announce to them, were obliged, by the order of the Lord; to purify themselves, to wash their garments, and even to abstain from the holy duties of marriage, in order to prepare themselves for that grand operation, and to carry nothing to the foot of the mountain unworthy of the sanctity of the law they went to hear; is it not, says a holy father, much more reasonable, when you come to hear the words of a more holy law, that you bring there at least those precautions of faith, of piety, of external respect, which mark in you a sincere desire of conforming your manners to those maxims which we are to announce to you? What, my brethren! are the precepts of Jesus Christ, the words of eternal life, to be listened to with less precaution than the ordinances of a figurative law? Is it because they are no longer announced to you by an angel from heaven? But are not we, equally as he, the instruments of God to promulgate his word, and, like him, do we not speak in his place? Did the angel upon the mountain bear more the mark of divinity than we bear of him? He wrote the law upon tables of stone; the grace of our ministry engraves it on hearts. He promised milk and honey; and we announce real and everlasting riches. The thunders of heaven, which accompanied his menaces against the transgressors of the law, overthrew the people struck with terror at the foot of the mountain: but what were these threatenings

threatenings and temporal maledictions, their cities demolished, their wives and children led into captivity, when compared to that eternal misery which we are instructed continually to foretel to the violators of the law of God? Separate what we are from the ministry which we fill, and what is there here, either less awful or less respectable, than upon mount Sinai?

And, nevertheless, what preparations accompany you to an action so holy and so worthy of respect? A vain curiosity which you wish to gratify; an irksome leisure which you are well pleased to have amused; a religious spectacle, the pleasure of which you wish to share; a custom which you follow, because the world hath adopted it? What do I know? The pleasure, perhaps of pleasing a master, by imitating his respect for the word of the gospel, and, far more, in order to attract his regards than those of divine mercy? Once more, what do I know? Perhaps views still more criminal, and of which we cannot speak without degrading the dignity of our ministry. No motive of salvation leads you here; no view of faith prepares you, no sentiment of piety accompanies you to this place; in a word, your coming to listen to the holy word is no work of religion.

First cause of the inutility of our ministry. For how is it possible that a proceeding altogether profane send a disposition to grace? And that in this multitude of believers, assembled in this holy place, the goodness of God distinguish you from among the crowd, to open your heart to the word of life; you who have brought hither only those dispositions which are most calculated to keep at a distance that mercy? My brethren, as religion hath nothing grander, in one sense, than the charge of the doctrine and of truth,

so piety likewise knows nothing so important, and which requires more religious precautions, than a proper attention to, and the being well instructed in them.

The second disposition which ought to accompany you to this holy place, is, a disposition of grief and shame, founded on the little fruit you have hitherto reaped from so many truths already heard. You ought to reflect upon all those feelings of compunction, which the Lord, through the ministry of the word, hath operated in your hearts, yet, which have never been attended with any success towards your salvation; so many pious resolutions, inspired in this place, which seemed to promise a change of life, yet which have all vanished on the first temptation. For what in this, ought most to alarm you, is, that all those truths which have made only such momentary impressions on you, are so many witnesses, who shall one day depose against you before the tribunal of Jesus Christ: in proportion to the times that the word of the gospel hath failed to touch you even to repentance, so many times hath it rendered you more unworthy of obtaining the grace of repentance. Faith, on this point, admits of no medium; and if you depart unchanged, you depart, in some respect more culpable than before, because, to all your other crimes, you have added that of contempt of the holy word.

Behold the reflections which ought to occupy your faith; and when you enter the assembly of believers, you ought, while trembling over the past, to demand it yourself: Am I going to hear a word which shall judge me, or truths which shall deliver me? Am I going to offer up to the compassion of God a docile and willing heart, or to his justice fresh motives of condemnation against myself? It is now so long since truths have been announced to me, the force of which
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my utmost deference to the passions, cannot weaken in my mind, for, in spite of myself they make me inwardly acknowledge the error of my ways; yet, have I taken a single step towards quitting them? I have so long been warned, that the body of a Christian is the temple of God; have I, in consequence, become more temperate and chaste? I have so long heard it said, that, "if thine eye be evil, pluck it out, and cast it far from thee;" have I attained strength for such separations, which I know to be so indispensable towards my salvation? I have so long been told, that to defer, as I have done, from day to day, my penitence, is to be determined to die in sin; do I, even now, find myself more disposed to quit my deplorable situation, and with a willing heart to begin the work of my salvation?

Great God! Cease not to give me a heart susceptible to truths, which always affect, but never change me; and punish not the abuse which I make of thy word, by depriving it, with regard to me, of that efficacy which thou still permittest it to have, in order to recal me from my errors to penitence! And, my brethren, how many believers who listen to me, formerly feeling to those truths which we announce, no longer offer to them now, but a tranquil, and an hardened heart? They neglected those happy times, when grace was yet willing to open this way of conversion; and ever since so continued and so fatal a negligence, they listen to us with indifference, and the most terrible truths in our mouths, are no longer in their ears, but sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal.

Now, I ask your own hearts, my brethren, if this feeling of sorrow, for the little advantage you have hitherto reaped from so many instructions, is even known to you? Doth

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that outward pomp, with which you come here, worldly women announce that disposition? Do not the same indecent and vain cares, which fit you for profane spectacles, accompany you to our instructions, where the world is condemned? Do you make the smallest difference there in your appearance? And doth it not seem, either that we are to announce the foolish maxims of the theatres, or that you come for the sole purpose of insulting, by an indecent carriage, even in the eyes of the world, the holy maxims of the gospel!

But what do I say, my dear hearer? Far from reproaching to yourselves so many truths, heard hitherto without fruit, alas! you are perhaps delighted at your insensibility; you perhaps pride yourselves and indulge a deplorable vanity, in listening to us with indifference; you perhaps consider it as giving you an air of consequence, and as a proof of superiority of mind, that what others are affected by, should leave you tranquil and calm; you perhaps make a vain boast of your insensibility. It seems, that in you it would be a weakness to be affected by truths, which formerly triumphed over philosophers, and Cæsars; by truths, evidently come down from heaven, and which bear with them such divine marks of sublimity and wisdom; by truths, which do such honour to man, and alone worthy of reason; by truths, so soothing and consolatory to the heart, and alone calculated to bestow internal tranquillity and peace. *Lastly*, By truths, which propose to us such grand interests, and towards which we can never be indifferent, without folly and madness. You vaunt the little success of our zeal, and that all our discourses leave you exactly as they found you; and in declaring this, you think you are doing honour to your reason. I do not say to you, that you make a boast of being in that depth of

the abyfs, and in that ftate of reprobation which is now almoft beyond resource, and which is worthy both of horror and pity ; but I fay to you, that the fureft and moft eftablifhed mark of a light and frivolous mind, of a weak and limited reafon, of an ill-formed heart, equally incapable of elevation and dignity, is that of finding nothing which ftrikes, which aftonifhes, which fatisfies, and which interefts you, in the wife and fublime truths of the morality of Jefus Chrift.

For the finners of another character ftill preferve at leaft fome remains of refpect for, and a certain confcioufnefs of the truth which fubfifts with a life altogether criminal, but which is always the mark of a good heart, of a heart which ftill retains a relifh for good, of a judicious reafon, which, though led away by the world and the paffions, knows to do juftice to itfelf, ftill feels the force of that truth which condemns it, and leaves within us resources of falvation and repentance. Thefe finners, at leaft, acknowledge that we are right ; they change nothing, it is true, of their manners ; but the truth, at leaft, affects, difturbes, agitates, and excites within them fome feeble defires of falvation, and hopes of a future conversion ; they are forry to find themfelves even too fufceptible of the terrors of faith ; they are almoft afraid of liftening to us, left they lofe that falfe tranquillity, which is the only comfort of their crimes ; on quitting our inftructions, they feek, in diffipation, to enliven a fund of anxiety and fadnefs, which the truths they come from hearing have left in their foul ; they immediately hurry into the world and its pleasures, with that inward fling which the word of God hath left in their heart, there to feek out a foothering and deceitful hand which may draw it out, and which may clofe up that wound from which alone its cure ought to flow ; they
dread

dread the breaking of their chains; they turn away their head that they may not see that light which comes to disturb the comfort of their sleep. They love their passions, I confess, but, at least, they insult not the truth; on the contrary they render glory to his might, by erecting defences against it; they are feeble sinners, who, dreading their incapability of defence against God, fly from and shun him. But for you, you make a vain-glorious boast of listening to him with indifference, and not dreading him; you find it grand and philosophical to have placed yourselves above all these vulgar terrors; you believe that the pride of your reason would be dishonoured by any religious dread; and while you are internally the meanest and the most cowardly soul, the most dejected by the first danger which threatens you, the most disheartened by the smallest accident, the very shuttle-cock of every frivolous hope and fear of the earth, you pique yourself upon an undaunted courage against the truth; that is to say, that you are possessed of every thing which is mean and vulgar in fear, and you are ashamed of having that only portion of it which is dignified and reasonable; you have no resistance to offer against the world, and you make a vain parade of a senseless valour against God.

Second disposition which ought to accompany you to our instructions, a sorrow for the little fruit you have hitherto reaped from them. The last disposition is a grateful feeling for that mean of salvation still provided for you by God, in preserving the sacred trust of the truth, and in continuing amid you the succession of those ministers, alone authorised to announce to you the holy word.

In effect, the most terrible chastisement with which God formerly struck the iniquities of his people, was that of rendering

rendering his word rare and precious among them. As he saith through his prophet Amos, "And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the east even to the west, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." And not only he ceased to raise up true prophets in Israel, but he likewise permitted false teachers to spring up among his people, who turned the tribes away from his worship, and preached gods to them which their fathers had never known.

Now, my brethren, it is a signal mercy of God, that notwithstanding the iniquities which seem to have attained to their utmost height among you, he still raiseth up to you prophets and pastors, who hold out a sound and faultless word. It is a most singular protection of the Lord, that error hath not been permitted to prevail over truth among us. And what have you done to merit the being thus distinguished from so many other nations? Why is it that you are not involved in the same condemnation? Why have you dwelt in the happy land of Goshen, alone shone upon by the lights of heaven, while all the rest of Egypt was enveloped in darkness? Is it not the sole mercy of God who hath marked you out from among so many nations which applaud themselves in their error? You are still under the care of your pastors; you still receive from their mouths the doctrine of the apostles; truth still flows upon you in a pure and divine stream; Christian pulpits still resound in every part with the maxims of faith and of piety; and, by preserving to you the doctrine and the blessings of instruction, the goodness of God still provides for you a thousand means of salvation.

Nevertheless, when you come to listen to us, do you bring a heart filled with gratitude? Do you consider as a
signal

signal blessing of God, the charge of the truth and of the holy word, which he hath preserved, and permitteth still to be announced to you? Do you ever say with the prophet, "He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them?"

Alas! you bring here only vanity and an irreligious disgust; the most wearisome of your moments are those which you employ in listening to truths which ought to compose the whole consolation of your life. We are even obliged to respect your langours and disgusts, by often mingling human ornaments with the truth, which is thereby weakened; it would indeed appear that we come here to speak to you for ourselves; and you give the same attention to us as you do to troublesome mendicants who are soliciting your favour. You have no regret for moments occupied by the frivolous pleasures of a profane spectacle; there alone it is that every thought of business, of fortune, and of family is rejected as an intrusion, and that, all else forgotten, the mind, formed for more serious matters, feasts with avidity on chimerical adventures; it is from thence that you always come out occupied and delighted with the lascivious maxims promulgated by a criminal theatre. You dwell with transport on those parts which have made the most dangerous impressions upon the heart; you come filled with their remembrance even to the foot of the altar. These images, so fatal to innocence, can no longer be effaced; while, on quitting the word, the only portion retained by your memory is perhaps the defects of him who hath announced it to you.

My brethren, God no longer punisheth in a grievous manner the contempt of his word. He, no doubt, might still transport his gospel amidst those barbarous nations who
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have never heard his name, and abandon anew his heritage: He might draw from out of their deserts ferocious and infidel nations, and deliver up to them our temples and our habitations; as he formerly delivered up those churches so celebrated, which the Turtulliens, the Cyperians, the Augustins, had illustrated, and where now not a trace of Christianity remains but in the insults which Jesus Christ there receives, and in the shackles with which believers are there loaded: He might do it; but he avengeth himself more secretly, and perhaps more terribly. He leaveth to you still the spectacle and all the outward ceremony of the preaching of the gospel, but he turneth the whole fruit of it upon the simple and ignorant inhabitants of the country; the terrors of faith are no longer but for them. He no longer withdraweth his prophets from cities; but he taketh away from them, if I may venture to say so, the power and the influence of their ministry; he striketh these holy clouds with dryness and unfruitfulness; he raiseth up to you such as render truth flowry and beautiful, but who do not render it amiable; who please, but who do not convert you; he permitteth the holy terrors of his doctrine to be weakened in our mouths: he no longer draweth forth from the treasures of his mercy, grand characters like those raised up in the ages of our forefathers, who renewed cities and kingdoms, who led the great and the people, and who changed the palaces of kings into houses of penitence: he permitteth that we, weak men, succeed to these apostolic men.

What more shall I add? We assemble here, like Paul formerly in Athens, idle and curious spectators, whose only view is that of hearing something new; while those who perform the functions of their ministry, among your vassals, see with consolations at their sect, like Esdras formerly, simple Israelites, who are unable to retain their
tears

tears, in hearing only the words of the law. We amuse the leisure and the idleness of princes and the great of the earth, while, in the country, holy ministers bring forth Jesus Christ, and reap an abundant harvest: in a word, we preach and they convert. It is thus, O my God, that in secret thou exercisest severe and terrible judgments.

But, my brethren, why may not we say here to you, what Paul and Barnabas formerly said to the unbelieving Jews? "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the gentiles." We shall therefore turn to the nations hitherto abandoned, towards those humble and poor people buried in ignorance; who cultivate your lands, and who will, with faith and gratitude, receive that grace which you reject. Ah! our labours would be much more availing, our yoke more easy, our ministry more consoled; we should not then, it is true, reckon among our hearers names celebrated in history; but we would reckon the names of those who are written in heaven: we should not see there assembled all those titles, and splendid dignities, which form the whole glory of the world which passeth away; but we would there see faith, piety, and innocence, which compose the whole glory of the Christian who eternally endureth; we should not hear there vain applauses given to the language of the man, and not to that of faith; but we would behold those tears flowing which are the immortal praise of grace: our pulpits might not indeed be surrounded with so much pomp; but our hearers would be a spectacle worthy of angels, and of God.

Such are the dispositions which ought to prepare you for our instructions. It is necessary now to instruct you on the mind in which you ought to listen to us.

PART II. In order towards instructing you on the mind in which you ought to listen to the holy word, it is required only to establish at first what are its authority and its end. Its authority, which is divine, demands a respectful and docile mind ; its end, which is the conversion of hearts, demands a spirit of faith, which searches in it only such lights as may enable it to quit its errors, and such remedies as may cure its evils.

Ally, I say that its authority is divine. Yes, my brethren, the word which we announce to you is not our word, but the word of him who sendeth us. From the moment that we are established by him in the holy ministry, through the way of a legitimate call, he willeth that you consider us as sent by him, as speaking to you here on his part, and as only lending our weak voice to his divine words. We bear, it is true, that treasure in vessels of earth ; but it thereby loses nothing of its majesty. Like those pitchers which Gideon formerly employed against the enemies of the Lord, the sound may be mean and contemptible ; but truth, that divine light which God hath placed within us, is not, from thence, less descended from heaven, or destined, like the lamps of Gideon, still to strike with terror unfaithful souls.

Now, you owe, in the first place, to the authority of this divine word, a pious docility and an attention to it, rather in the light of disciples than of judges. In effect, we expose to you the rules of worship and of piety, the decisions of the gospel, the laws of the church, and the maxims of the holy. We come not here to give you our own opinions, our prejudices, our thoughts ; this is not a pulpit of controversy, it is the place of truth ; nothing which can afford room for disputation ought even to find
place

place in the pulpit of peace and of unity; we speak here in the name of the church, and are only the interpreters of her faith and of her doctrine.

Nevertheless, how many of those men, so wise in their own conceit, and who pique themselves upon sagacity and reason, come here with a mind set against, and, as it were, watchfully upon guard against all the terrors of the holy word! They make not a boast, like the sinners we have lately mentioned, of being callous to all truth; but they look upon our ministry as an art of exaggeration and hyperbole; the most holy emotions of zeal are only, in their opinion, studied tricks of human artifice; the most awful threatenings, only the fallies of a vain eloquence; the most incontrovertible maxims, only discourses adapted rather to custom than to truth. Such, my brethren, is the deplorable situation in which the greatest part of you find yourselves here. You always inwardly oppose to that truth which we announce the maxims and the prejudices of the world which contradict it; you are ingenious in weakening in your own breast, by specious reasons, the pretended excess of our maxims; you come here to combat, and not to yield to the force, or to the light of truth: you come here, it would seem, only in order to enter into contestation with God, to invalidate the eternal immutability of his word, to undertake the interests of error against the glory of truth, and to be the inward apologists of the world and of the passions, even in that holy place destined to condemn and to combat them. Ah! suffer that truth, at least, to triumph in its own temple; dispute not with it that feeble victory, it which has formerly triumphed over the whole universe; oppress it, and welcome, amidst the world, and in those assemblies of vanity which error collects, and where error is enthroned. Is it not

enough that you have banished it from the world, and that it dare no longer shew itself without being exposed to derisions and censures? Leave to us, at least, the melancholy consolation of daring still to publish it in the face of those altars which it hath raised up, and which ought surely to serve it, at least, as a place of refuge.

You accuse us of exaggeration. Great God! And thou one day wilt perhaps judge us for weakening the force and the influence of thy word, in consequence of not giving sufficient consideration to it at the feet of the altars! And thou wilt one day perhaps reproach us for having accommodated the holy severity of thy gospel to the indulgences and softenings of our age! And thou wilt perhaps range us one day among the workers of iniquity, because the lukewarmness and negligence of our manners have taken from the word which we announce that terror and that divine vehemence which can only be found in a mouth consecrated by piety and by penitence!

How, my brethren! The truths of salvation, such as Jesus Christ has set forth to us, would be incapable of alarming consciences, were the mind of man not to add extraneous terrors to them! Paul formerly exaggerated then, when the Roman governor, in spite of the pride of a false wisdom, and all the prejudices of an idolatrous worship, trembled, says St. Luke, while hearing him speak of righteousness, of temperance, and of the awful spectacle of a judgment to come? Paul then exaggerated, when the inhabitants of cities came striking their breasts, melting in tears at his feet, and bringing into the middle of the public places the lascivious or impious books, and all the other instruments of their passions, in order to make a sacrifice of them to the Lord?

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You accuse us of adding additional terrors to the words of the gospel; but where are the consciences which we disturb? Where are the sinners whom we alarm? Where are the worldly souls, who, seized with dread on their departure from our discourses, go to conceal themselves in the deepest solitudes, and, by holy excesses of penitence, to expiate the dissoluteness of their past manners? The ages which have preceded us have often seen such examples. Do we ever witness such instances now? Ah! Would to God, said formerly an holy father, that you could convict me of having inspired a single soul with these salutary terrors! Would to God, said he to some worldly sages of his time, who accused him of exaggerating the dangers and the corruption of the world; that a single instance might support your assertion! And I may say to you here, with even more reason than that grand character, would to God that the consequences of so blessed an indiscretion could be shewn to me! Would to God that you had examples with which to reproach us, in justification of your censures! Ah! We with pleasure would suffer the blame, could but the success be shewn to us with which we are reproached!

Alas! We manage only too much, perhaps, your weakness; we respect, perhaps too much, customs which a long usage has consecrated, in the fear of appearing to censure the grand examples by which they are authorized; we dare scarcely speak of certain irregularities, lest our censures should appear to fall rather on the persons than on the vices; we are obliged to content ourselves with shewing truths to you from afar, which we ought to place immediately under your eye, and even your salvation frequently suffers through the excess of our precautions and our timid prudence. What shall I say? Weakness often

extorts from us praises, where zeal ought to place anathemas and censures; like the world, we allow ourselves to be dazzled by names and titles; that which formerly encouraged the Ambroses intimidates us; and, because we owe you respect, we often keep back from you that truth which we ought still more to respect; yet, after all this, you accuse us of exaggerating, of overstraining truths, and of fashioning from them phantoms of our own brain, in order to alarm those who listen to us.

But, what advantage could we draw from an artifice so unworthy of that truth confided to us? These overstrained and puerile declamations might suit the venal eloquence of those Sophists who, amid the Grecian schools, anxiously fought to attract disciples to themselves, by vaunting the wisdom of their sect. But for us, my brethren, ah! our wish should be to have it in our power to render your path more easy, far from throwing fresh obstacles in the way. Wherefore should we dishearten you in the enterprise of salvation, by starting up chimerical difficulties? It is our duty to smooth such as may actually be found in it, and to tender you an assisting hand, in order to sustain your weakness.

Meditate, my brethren, upon the law of Jesus Christ; what do I say? Only open the gospel and read; then shall you find that we draw a veil of discretion over the severity of its maxims; then, far from complaining of our excesses, you will yourselves supply the deficiencies of our silence and of our softenings, and will say to yourselves what we dread to say, because you could never bear it. Great God! To bear his cross every day, to despise the world and all it contains, to live as a stranger upon the earth, to attach himself to thee alone, to renounce all which flatters
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the senses, incessantly to renounce himself, to consider as happy those who weep, or who are afflicted, behold the substance of thy holy law, and which every Christian undertakes. O what can the human mind add to the rigour of this doctrine! What could we announce to you more melancholy or more formidable to self-love? Consequently, your reproaches are merely a vain language of the world, and one of those fashions of speaking which no one examines, and each adopts; your conscience inwardly belies it; and when you speak candidly, you confess that we are in the right, and that the gospel is a preacher much more severe and more fearful for the world, and for those who love it, than it could be possible for us ever to be.

First duty which the authority of the holy word exacts of you, viz. a docile spirit.

Secondly, you owe to the authority of this holy word a spirit of sincerity, and inward application of it to yourself; that is to say, to be a rigorous examiner here of your own conscience; to have incessantly before your eyes, on one side, the state of your soul, and, on the other, the truths which we announce; to measure yourself according to that rule; to search into yourself by that light; to judge yourself by that law; to listen to, as if addressed to you alone, the holy maxims announced to the multitude; to consider yourself as alone here before Jesus Christ, who speaks to you alone through our mouth, and who sends us here perhaps for you alone. For, my brethren, no one here takes to himself that truth which attacks and condemns him; no one thinks himself an interested personage; it would seem that we form at pleasure to ourselves phantoms of the brain, for the purpose of combating them, and that the reality of that sinner whom we attack is no where in existence. The

lewd and dissolute person recognises not himself in the most animated and most striking traits of his passion. The man, loaded with ill-acquired wealth, and perhaps with the blood and spoils of the people, joins with us in deprecating that very iniquity in others, and sees not that he judges himself. The courtier, consumed with ambition, and who sacrifices conscience and integrity every day to that idol, frankly admits of the meanness of that passion in his equals, and looks upon it as a virtue, and as a deep experience of the court in himself. Every one continually views himself by certain favourable sides, which effectually hinder him from ever knowing himself such as he is. In vain do we mark you, as I may say, in the most pointed manner; you always inwardly find out some softened traits, which alter the resemblance. You whisper to yourself, I am not this man. And while the public makes application of such striking truths to us, we alone either succeed in being convinced that they are not drawn for us, or we only find out in them the defects of our brethren; in our own exactest portraits, we search out foreign likenesses; we are ingenious in turning the blow upon others, which truth had given to us alone; the malignity of the application is the only fruit which we reap from that picture of our vices made from the pulpit, and we rashly judge our brethren where we ought to have judged only ourselves. And thus it is, O my God! that men become corrupted, misapply every thing, and that even the light of truth seals up their eyes upon their own errors, and opens them only to see in others either what is not, or what it ought to have kept entirely hid from them!

Such are the duties, which the authority of the holy word exacts of you: let us now proceed to those attached to its end. Its end, my brethren, you know, is the conversion

version of hearts, the establishment of truth, the destruction of error and of sin, and the sanctification of the name of Jesus Christ ; all there is grand, elevated, important, and worthy of the most sublime function of the hierarchy ; and consequently, it is from thence to be inferred, that you ought to listen to us with a respectful and religious spirit, which despises not the simplicity of our discourses, and with a spirit, of faith, which seeks nothing human in it, nothing frivolous, nothing which does not correspond with the excellency and the dignity of its end.

I say a spirit of religious respect, which despises not the simplicity of our discourses ; for however enlightened you may in other respects be, you ought not in consequence of your pretended lights, to claim a title to neglect the instructions of the church to believers. The unction of the spirit will always inform you of something here, of which you would perhaps have remained ignorant. If possessed of that knowledge which is the cause of pride, you will be strengthened in that charity which edifies. If your mind acquire nothing new, your heart shall perhaps be made to feel new things ; you will there at least learn that your knowledge is nothing, if you be ignorant of the science of salvation ; that you are but a cloud without moisture, elevated, it is true, above other men, by your talents, and by the superiority of your knowledge, but empty of grace, and the sport of every wind and of every passion in the sight of God ; and, *lastly*, That a simple and pure soul, shall, in an instant, be taught the whole in the bosom of God, and shall be transformed from light to light ; while, on the contrary, that you, after an entire life of watchings and ardent study, and the attainment of an useless mass of knowledge and lights, shall perhaps reap for your portion, only eternal darkness.

What a mistake, my brethren, to banish yourselves from these holy assemblies, under pretence, that you already know enough, and likewise that you are already sufficiently versed in all the duties of piety, which you have long professed; and that Christian reading, and a small degree of reflection in private, go a greater way, and are attended with more benefit, than all our discourses! But, my dear, hearer, if you profess piety and righteousness, what sweeter consolation can you enjoy, than that of hearing the wonders of the Lord published, the ordinances of his holy law, truths which you love and practise, and of which you ought to wish the knowledge to be given to all men? What sight more soothing and consoling to you, than that of your brethren assembled here at the foot of the altar, attentive to the words of life, absent from the spectacles of the world, and removed from the occasions of sin, forming holy desires, opening their hearts to the voice of God, perhaps conceiving the premices of the holy spirit, and the commencement of their penitence, and to be enabled to join yourself with them, in order to obtain from the father of mercies, the completion in their soul of the work of salvation, which he hath begun to operate within them?

Not but that the most consolatory resources are furnished to Christian piety, by the meditation of the divine writings. But the Lord hath attached graces to the power of our ministry, and to the legitimate calling, which you will not find elsewhere. The most simple truths, in the mouth of the pastors, or of those who speak to you in their place, draw an efficacy from the grace of their mission, which is not inherent to them; the same book of Isaiah, which, when read from a chariot by that officer of the queen of Ethiopia, was to her, as a book sealed up, and only amused her leisure without enlightening her faith, explained by Philip, instantly

instantly became to her a word of life, and of salvation. And, *lastly*, You owe that example to your brethren, that edification to the church, that respect to the word of Jesus Christ, that uniformity to the spirit of peace and of unity, which binds us together. O banish yourselves, and so much the better, from those profane and criminal assemblies, where piety, alas! is always a stranger, suffering, and constrained; but here is its place, and its home; this is the assembly of the holy, seeing it is only towards their formation, that our ministry hath been established, and still continues to endure in the church.

I have said, in the second place, a spirit of faith; and, in this disposition, two others are comprised: a love of the holy word, independent of the talents of the man who announces it to you; a taste, formed by religion which comes not here in search of vain ornaments, but of the solid truths of salvation; that is to say, to listen to it, neither with a spirit of censure, nor with a spirit of curiosity.

And, in effect, your love of the word of Jesus Christ ought to render you blind, as I may say, to the defects of those who announce it to you; in a mouth even rude and unpolished, you ought to find it lovely, divine, and worthy of all your homage; in whatever shape it be presented to you, decked with pompous ornaments, or simple and neglected, provided that its celestial traits are still to be recognised, it preserves the same rights over your heart. And indeed, is any portion of its sanctity lost by passing through less brilliant, and less copious channels? Did the holy word of the Lord lose any thing of its dignity, whether he formerly gave it out, from a bush, mean and despicable to the sight, or from a cloud of glory; whether he gave

out his oracles in the midst of the desert, and in a tabernacle covered with the skins of animals, or in the temple of Solomon, the most magnificent which hath ever been raised up to the glory of his name? And did the faith of Israel make any distinction, when it was the same Lord who every where spake?

Nevertheless, how few among all those who listen to us, who do not constitute themselves judges and censurers of the holy word! They come here merely for the purpose of deciding on the merit of those who announce it, of drawing foolish comparisons, of pronouncing on the difference of the lights and of the instructions; they think it an honour the being difficult to please; they pass without attention over the most striking truths, and which might be of the most essential benefit to all; and the only fruit reaped by them from a Christian discourse, is confined to the miserable pride of having, better than any other, remarked its defects. This is so truly the case, that we may with justice apply to the greatest part of our hearers what Joseph, become the preserver of Egypt, said, through pure artifice, to his brethren: It is not to seek food that you are come here; it is as spies, to see the nakedness of the land. It is not to nourish yourselves with the bread of the word, or to seek assistance and efficacious remedies for your evils, that you come to listen to us; it is in order to find out cause for applying some vain censures, and to shew your skill in remarking our defects; which defects are perhaps a terrible punishment upon you of the Lord, who, in consequence of your crimes, refuseth more accomplished labourers in his vineyard, who would have been enabled to recal you to repentance.

But

But candidly, my brethren, however weak our language may be, do we not always say enough to overthrow you, to dissipate your errors, and to make you inwardly confess irregularities which you are unable to justify to yourselves? Are such sublime talents required to tell you that fornicators, extortioners, and men without mercy, shall never enter the kingdom of God; that unless you become penitent you shall perish; and that it matters little to become master of the whole world, if you thereby lose your soul? Is it not, in fact, that very simplicity which constitutes the whole force, and gives such energy to these divine truths? And ought they to be less alarming to the criminal soul, though in the mouth of the most obscure individual of the ministry?

And besides, granting that it were here permitted us to recommend ourselves, as the apostle formerly said to ungrateful believers, more attentive to censure the simplicity of his appearance and of his language, and, as he says himself, his contemptible figure in the eyes of men, than touched with the endless fatigues and dangers which he had surmounted, in order to announce to them the gospel, and to convert them to truth; were it permitted, we might say to you, my brethren, we sustain, solely on your account, the whole weight of a painful and laborious ministry; our cares, our watchings, our prayers, the endless toilings which qualify us for, and accompany us in these Christian pulpits, have no other object but that of your salvation. O do not our pains entitle us at least to your respect and gratitude? Is it possible that that zeal which suffers all, in order to secure your salvation, can ever become the melancholy subject of your derisions and censures?

fures? Demand of God, good and well, that, for the glory of the church and for the honour of his gospel, he raise up to his people labourers powerful in speech, of those men whom the sole unction of the spirit of God renders nervous and eloquent, and who announce the gospel in a manner worthy of its elevation and sanctity. But like wife demand, that, when we happen therein to fail, your faith may supply the deficiencies of our discourses; that your piety may render to truth, in your own hearts, that which it loses in our mouths; and that, through your unrighteous distastes, you force not the ministers of the gospel to have recourse, in order to please you, to the vain artifices and colouring of an human eloquence, to shine rather than to instruct, and, like the Israelites formerly, to go down to the Philistines to sharpen their instruments, destined solely to cultivate the earth; I mean to say, to seek in profane learning, or in the language of an hostile world, foreign ornaments to embellish the simplicity of the gospel; and to give to instruments, and to talents destined to increase, to multiply, and to strengthen the holy seed, a vain brilliancy and a subtlety which blunt its energy and its virtue, and which substitute a false splendor in the place of truth and zeal.

And now, my brethren, behold the last fault inimical to that spirit of faith; it is a spirit of curiosity. You do not sufficiently distinguish the holy gravity of our ministry from that vain and frivolous art which has nothing in view but the arrangement of the discourse and the glory of eloquence; you assist at our discourses with the same view as Augustin, still a sinner, did in former times at those of Ambrose. It was not, says that illustrious penitent, in order

der to learn from the mouth of the man of God the secrets of eternal life, which I had so long sought, nor the desire of finding in them remedies for the shameful and inveterate wounds of my soul, and which thou, O my God ! alone art acquainted with ; it was in order to examine whether his eloquence corresponded with his great reputation, and if his discourses warranted the unbounded applauses which his hearers bestowed upon him. The truths which he announced interested me not ; I was moved only by the beauty and the charms of the discourse.

And such is still, at present, the deplorable situation of far too many believers who listen to us ; who, like Augustin, loaded with crimes and fettered with the most shameful passions, far from coming here to seek remedies for their evils, come in search of vain ornaments, which amuse without curing the afflicted, which are the means of our pleasing the sinner, but have not influence towards making the sinner displeased with himself. They come here, it would appear, to say to us what the inhabitants of Babylon formerly said to the captive Israelites, “ Sing us one of the songs of Zion.” They come in search of harmony and delight, in the serious and important truths of the morality of Jesus Christ ; in the sighs of the sorrowful Zion, captive in a strange land ; and require of us that we flatter the ear while publishing the threatenings and the rigid maxims of the gospel.

O you who now listen to me, and whom this discourse regards, reflect for a moment, I entreat of you, upon yourselves ; your case is, as it were, desperate in the eyes of God ; your wounds, become virulent through their long-
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standing, no longer leave almost a hope of cure; your evils press, time is short; God, wearied with having so long borne with you, is at last on the point of striking and of surprizing you: behold the eternal miseries which we foretell to you, and which happen every day to your equals. You are not far distant from the fulfilment; we shew you the terrible sword of the Lord suspended over your head, and ready to fall upon you; and far from shuddering at the afterpart of your destiny, or taken any measures to avoid the impending blow, you childishly amuse yourselves in examining whether it shine and have a lustre; and you search, even in the terrors of the prediction, for the puerile beauties of a vain eloquence. Great God! How despicable and worthy of derision doth the sinner appear when we view him through thy light!

For, my brethren, are we then here upon a profane tribunal, for the purpose of courting with artificial words the suffrages of an idle assembly, or in a Christian pulpit, and in the place of Jesus Christ, to instruct, to reprove, and to sanctify you in the name, and under the eyes of him who sends us? Is it here a dispute for worldly fame, an idle exercise of the faculties, or the most holy and the most important ministry of faith? O why do you come to loiter away with our feeble talents, or to seek human qualifications where God alone speaketh and acteth? Are not the humblest instruments the most suitable to the mightiness of his grace? Do not the walls of Jericho fall when he pleaseth, at the sound of the weakest trumpets? O what matters it to us that we please, if we do not change you? Of what consequence is it to us the being eloquent, if you continue always sinners? What fruit can we reap
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from your applauses ; if you reap none yourselves from our instructions ? Our only praise, our only glory is the establishment of the reign of God in your hearts ; your tears alone, much rather than your applauses, can prove our eulogium ; and we covet no other crown than yourselves, and your eternal salvation.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



