THE

DEVOUT CHRISTIAN

INSTRUCTED

IN

THE FAITH OF CHRIST,

FROM

The Written Word.

BY THE RIGHT REV. DR. GEORGE HAY.

Refined and Corrected.

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The great commendation, given by God himself of his servant Job, was, that he "was a simple and upright man, one that feared God, and avoided evil," Job i. 8; and we find throughout the whole scripture, that nothing recommends a soul more to the favour of God, than simplicity and sincerity of heart in seeking him; as on the contrary nothing is more detestable to him than a double-minded man, that walked not sincerely with his God. Thus we are assured by the wise man, that "a perverse heart is abominable to the Lord as his will is in them that walk sincerely," Prov. xi. 20; that "dissemblers and crafty men provoke the wrath of God," Job xxxvi. 13; that "The simplicity of the just shall guide them, and the deceitfulness of the wicked shall destroy them," Prov. xi. 3; and that "The justice of the upright shall make his way prosperous, and the wicked man shall fall by his own wickedness," Prov. xi. 5. Hence we are commanded to "think of the Lord in goodness, and seek him in simplicity of heart," Wisd. i. 1; but "be not incredulous," says the Holy Ghost, "to the fear of the Lord; and come not to Him with a double heart," Eccles. i. 36; for "wo to them that are of double heart...and to the sinner that goeth on the earth two ways," Eccles. ii. 14. Such an one needs not expect any favour from God; or that his Holy Spirit will enlighten and direct them. Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, and...the holy spirit of discipline will fly from the
deceitful,” Wisd. i. 4; and our blessed Saviour himself assures us, that his heavenly Father hides the secrets of his Divine wisdom from “the wise and prudent, and reveals them to little ones,” Matt. xi. 25; that is, to those who apply to him with a simple and sincere heart, such as is found in little children.

There is no case wherein we stand in greater need of this Divine wisdom to conduct us, and consequently wherein a sincere and upright heart with God is more necessary to succeed in obtaining it, than when we are in search of the true religion. When we consider the numberless jarring and contradictory sects into which Christianity is divided in these parts of the world where we live; when we see the one condemning what the other approves, and approving what others condemn; some embracing certain articles as Divine truths revealed by God, and others rejecting them with horror as the doctrine of devils, common sense must convince us, if we allow ourselves to think at all, that it is absolutely impossible that both parties can be right; or that both their jarring faiths can be from God, and consequently that if the faith of either side be from God, and therefore true, the faith of the opposite sect must be false, and consequently the offspring of Satan, the father of lies and of falsehood. Our heart shudders at the thought of belonging to such a sect as this, however its members may assume to themselves the specious name of Christians; but whilst we see on the one hand that the whole tenor of the scripture points out to us only one true faith, without which “it is impossible to please God.” Heb. vi., one spouse of Jesus Christ, one house of God, one true church, to which “The Lord daily adds all that are to be saved,” Acts ii.; and on the other hand perceive such numbers of disagreeing, self-contradicting sects among those who call themselves Christians, each one pretending to be the true church of
Christ, and vaunting that the doctrine it behoves is the one true faith revealed by him; the mind is confounded and at a stand how to discover, among such confusion of opinions that one true church with which the truth is to be found.

It is in seeking to discover this, that sincerity and uprightness of heart before God are essentially necessary; the difficulties one must find in making this search are immense; the prejudices of education the favour of friends, the fear of what the world will say, worldly interest and the like, will all be set to work by the enemy of our souls, to blind the understanding that it may not see the truth, and to avert the will from embracing it. Nothing but a particular grace from heaven can enlighten the mind to perceive the light through such clouds of darkness, and fortify the soul with courage to embrace it in spite of all these difficulties. It is, without doubt, the will of God that "all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of truth," 1 Tim. ii. 4; but it is also his holy will that in order to come to this knowledge, we must seek it with those dispositions of a sincere and upright heart, without which, as we have seen above, we need never expect to obtain it. Now this sincerity of heart must shew itself, (1.) In an earnest desire to know the truth, for "the beginning of wisdom is the most true desire of discipline," Wisd. vi. 18; and "blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled," Matt. v. (2.) In a firm resolution to embrace this heavenly wisdom, this knowledge of the Divine truth of Jesus Christ, wherever it shall be found, and whatever it may cost us; preferring it before every worldly consideration, and ready to forfeit every thing in this life, rather than deprive our souls of so great a treasure; thus the wise man, when God discovered his heavenly wisdom to him, says, "I preferred her before
kingdoms and thrones and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her; neither did I compare to her any precious stone; for all gold in comparison of her, is as a little sand, and silver in respect of her shall be counted as clay; I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light," Wisd. vii. 8. So also St. Paul says of himself, "What things were gain to me, those I have counted loss for Christ; furthermore, I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord," Phil. iii. 7. (3) In fervent and frequent prayer to God to discover his truth to us, and lead us into the right way; "If any one of you wants wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all abundantly, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him," James i. 5. "Wherefore I wished," says the wise man, "and understanding was given me: and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me," Wisd. vii. 7. (4) In labouring diligently to find out the truth, using every means in our power for that purpose, for "if thou shalt call for wisdom, and incline thy heart to prudence, if thou shalt seek her as money and dig for her as a treasure; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and shalt find the knowledge of God; because the Lord giveth wisdom, and out of his mouth cometh prudence and knowledge; he will keep the salvation of the righteous and protect them that walk in simplicity," Prov. ii. 3.

Faith is the gift of God, "for by grace you are saved, through faith and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. It is God alone, who by his holy grace can elevate the understanding to embrace his holy faith and fortify the heart against all the difficulties we may encounter in doing so; and this gift he will never refuse to bestow on those who seek the truth with a sincere heart, and use their best endeavours to find it. It was to lend a
INTRODUCTION.

helping hand to all such, in this important search, that I published The Sincere Christian Instructed in the Faith of Christ, in which I have endeavoured to facilitate their labour in seeking for the true faith, by pointing out to them the only sure road which can conduct them to it, and explaining to them, in an easy and familiar manner, all the most necessary articles of the Christian faith itself, the knowledge and explicit belief of which are required to make a well-instructed Christian. But though any sincere Christian may, by the help of these instructions, have acquired the object of his pursuit, and through the blessing of heaven, got his sincerity rewarded with the light of the true faith of Christ, to his unspeakable comfort, yet he must not flatter himself that his work is now done, or that this alone is sufficient to secure his salvation; the sincerity of his heart in searching for the truth, now that he has found it, must be followed by devotion in practising it; the infinite goodness of God in crowning his endeavours with success by "calling him out of darkness into his admirable light," 1 Pet. ii. 9, demands the most cordial acknowledgments of gratitude and love, and every service in his power, in return for so much goodness; the singular grace he has received in being brought to the knowledge of the truth, as the first step in the road to salvation, whilst it is a convincing proof of the sincere desire which God has to bring him to a happy eternity, lays him under the strictest obligations to dedicate himself wholly to the service of so good a God, and to co-operate to the utmost of his power with his Divine will, in order to complete the work so happily begun. Now, this can only be accomplished by a continual obedience to the commands of God, both in abstaining from every thing that is evil, and in practising all those good works of piety, justice, and charity, which the law of God requires to be done.
It is a fatal error, which some have adopted in belief, but many more in practice, that faith alone, without works, will be able to bring us to salvation. This is indeed a deplorable but convincing proof of that excess of blindness to which the heart of man is capable of running in matters of religion, when deprived of that light which the Divine Providence has given us to direct us in his service. One should scarce think it possible that a reasonable creature who had any feeling of right and wrong within his own breast, could seriously persuade himself that a God of infinite purity and holiness, could ever admit to his chaste embraces, and to the eternal enjoyment of his Divine presence, a rebel to his law, a soul sullied with crimes, merely because he pretended to believe in him; and surely, if we open the holy scripture, we find almost in every page such convincing proofs of the necessity of innocence of life, and the practice of good works, in order to be saved, that one must wilfully shut his eyes against the light, who does not perceive them.

In these holy writings we are told, that faith unaccompanied by good works is but a dead faith, which in the sight of God is the same as no faith; or rather worse than no faith at all. Now the difference betwixt a dead faith and living faith, is the same as betwixt a dead man and a living man; when we see a man who has all the ordinary signs of life, whose pulse beats and lungs breathe, and who performs all the vital actions as other men do, we pronounce him a living man; because it is from those effects of life that we safely judge him to be so; but if none of these effects appear, if he neither shows any signs of life, nor can perform any of the actions of life, we without hesitation pronounce him to be a corpse, a dead man. We know that where life is, it must produce some or other of these effects proper to itself, and therefore we conclude,
that where none of them are to be found, life is no longer there. In the same manner it is with regard to our faith, which like the life in man is a most active principle that never fails to show itself by the most manifest signs where it is alive; and by producing effects proper to itself in our whole conduct.

To understand what are the signs of a living faith, and what those effects are which it naturally produces in our conduct; we must observe that there are chiefly two things which powerfully excite man to action, or restrain him from it, to wit, duty and interest: when we are convinced that it is our duty to do, or to avoid doing, any thing proposed; that we are bound to either of these by the strong ties of justice, charity, gratitude, or honour; this persuasion never fails, in well disposed minds, to push us on powerfully to do what duty thus requires to be done, and to restrain us with equal force from doing what duty forbids. I say, in well disposed minds, because it but too often happens that a mind vitiated by evil habits, violent passions, or sordid affections, acts in direct opposition even to known duty, in order to gratify its mistaken selfish views; yet such is the influence of the sense of duty upon us, that even when we act contrary to it, we are stung with remorse, and stand self-condemned at the bar of our own conscience for doing so: and if it should happen, as it often may, that our selfish views are gratified in acting according to our duty, yet if it should be asked us, what were the motives of our conduct? we would be ashamed to give our selfish gratifications for the reason, but would glory to have it thought by others, that nothing but a sense of duty influenced us. Instances of the force which a lively sense of duty has upon our actions, and of the desire we have to be thought to act from this motive, are to be found in every station of life; in the obedience of children and of servants to their parents
and masters, and especially of soldiers to their leaders; in any act one performs of justice, humanity, or charity, and in the service done to our country, or to the more limited societies of which we are members. In all which, and other such cases, the principal motive we pretend to act by, and which we always wish others should think we act by, is a sense of the duty which these different relations we stand in require from us.

The other motive which powerfully operates upon the mind of men is interest; and its mighty influence in our breasts is well known to every one from his own experience, whether it present itself to us under the view of procuring us some kind of good, as pleasure, gain, or honour, or of preserving us from the contrary evil. No sooner does any thing appear to us under this view, than immediately we feel ourselves strongly inclined to pursue it, or avoid it. What is it that impels us to drink bitter potions, or to undergo some painful amputation, but the persuasion that our doing so is necessary for the recovery of health, or the preservation of life? And who would be persuaded, for any worldly consideration, to throw himself over a rugged precipice, or drink a cup of deadly poison?

But if each of these motives be such a powerful incitement to action when single, they become next to insuperable when joined together in any matter of importance, for when we are fully persuaded that it is both our strictest duty, and at the same time our greatest interest to do or not to do, any thing proposed, it is next to impossible for us to resist the influence which such combined force has upon us: and in every occurrence of life, if in any case we do resist it, we shall find upon impartial examination that our resistance is owing either to our ignorance of the presence of these motives, or our not adverting to them, or that we are not persuaded of them; or do not consider the
mater itself to be a thing of such importance as to deserve our attention.

Now our Holy Faith assures us as a most sacred truth, that it is the bounden duty of man, in every sense of the word, to obey the commands of God; that God, both as our Creator and Redeemer, has the most absolute dominion over us, and the most unalienable right in justice to every service and obedience that we can yield him; that as our only true Benefactor, the Author and Source of all the good we either enjoy or expect, he most justly deserves from us every possible return of gratitude and love: and that as Christians we are still further bound to serve him by the solemn voluntary dedication of ourselves to him in baptism: and consequently that we are guilty of the highest injustice, the deepest ingratitude, and the blackest infidelity, if we offend and disobey him. The same Holy Faith also assures us, on the authority of God himself, that it is our highest and only true interest to serve and obey him to the utmost of our power; that our supreme and only happiness, both in this life and for all eternity in the life to come, depends entirely upon our doing so; and that on the contrary it will prove a source of misery and affliction to us in this life, and condemn us in eternal misery in the next, if we disobey him. Hence it is evident, that if we really believe these great truths, if we have a lively faith and feeling sense of them, the natural consequence which this must necessarily produce in us, is to make us regulate all our actions by the light they give us, and make us live a life of piety and virtue, by loving and serving God and obeying his holy commands, and diligently avoiding every thing that can offend him; and this is what God himself assures us in holy writ, where he says, “He that believeth God taketh heed to the commands,” Ecclus. xxxii. 28: in which words he joins our believing God, that is, having a
true and lively faith in him and in the great truths he has revealed, and our steady obedience to the commands, as two things necessarily connected together; the latter being a natural and necessary consequence of the former. To the same purpose he also says, “In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin,” Ecclus. vii. 4. This frequent remembrance of our last end, that is of the great truths of eternity which our Holy Faith teaches us, and on which our highest interest depends, is both the principal means to enliven our faith of these truths, and is, at the same time, the constant attendant on a lively faith of them; and this God himself assures us will be the most effectual means to preserve us from sin. Hence the Scripture, in different places declares, that “the just man lives by faith,” that is, the light of faith is the principle of life in him, to wit, of that spiritual life by which he lives to God; all his actions are the fruits of that faith, and regulated by its light—all his designs are directed by faith—all his works are guided by it—he fears nothing but what faith teaches him he ought to fear—he desires nothing but what faith tells him he ought to desire—he loves nothing but what this Divine light teaches him he ought to love—he hopes for nothing but what it tells him he ought to hope for—and hates nothing but what it points out to him as deserving his hatred. These are the effects which a lively faith produces in the soul—these are the natural signs of that living faith by which the just man lives to God. And, indeed, if we only examine our own hearts we shall see, from what passes there, what powerful influence the truths of faith have upon us, when we have a proper sense of them: for, when we fast or pray, or chastise our body with St. Paul, or mortify our passions, or deny ourselves, or do any other such act of Christian virtue, what is it that moves us to do so? These things
are all contrary and unpleasant to the natural inclinations of flesh and blood; it is even painful to our corrupted nature to perform them; why then do we perform them? On examining ourselves with attention, we shall clearly see that faith is the spring from which all such actions flow; we are moved to do them because we firmly believe what our faith teaches us, that it is both our duty and our greatest interest to do so. If, therefore, a life of piety and obedience to the commands of God, be the natural effects which a lively faith produces in our conduct, where faith is alone, where it gives none of these signs of life, where it produces none of those effects which are proper to a lively faith, and much more if we live in sin, which is directly opposite to the light of faith, we must necessarily conclude that such faith is but a dead faith, a mere carcase or phantom of faith, and far, very far from that faith by which we live to God; and this is the very conclusion which St. James draws from a long train of reasoning—“Even so,” says he, “faith, if it has not works, is dead in itself,” James ii. 17; and after more reasoning upon the matter, he concludes with these words, “as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also,” verse 26. Now such a dead faith as this is the same in the sight of God as no faith, as St. James declares, when he challenges us to give proof of our having any faith at all, if we have not works along with it, as a thing impossible. “Show me,” says he, “thy faith without works, and I will show thee, by works, my faith,” James ii. 18. Nay, such a dead faith is worse than no faith at all; it is an object of abomination before God, as is attested by St. Paul, who says of such people, “they profess that they know God, but in their works they deny him, being abominable and incredulous, and to every good work reprobate,” Titus i. 16.
Now can any man in his senses imagine that such a dead faith as this will be able to bring one to heaven? The whole tenor of scripture gives the lie to such a fancy. "What shall it profit," says St. James with surprise, "if a man say he hath faith, but have not works, shall faith be able to save him?" No, no, he assures us, and confirms his conclusion by a striking example: "If a brother or sister be naked, and want daily bread, and one among you say to him, Go in peace, be you warmed and filled, yet give him not those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit?" Will your saying so be of any profit to your brother in distress? or will your good wishes to him be of any profit to yourself, while you refuse to supply his wants? Certainly no; neither will your faith be of any use to you without good works. Nay, he says more: "You believe," says he, "there is one God; you do well; but the devils believe" this as well as you; yea, they do more, they tremble through this their belief; but as this faith alone will never be able to deliver them from their misery, or bring them to heaven, so neither will your faith, if it go no farther than theirs, be able to save you. Finally, the holy apostle brings the example of Abraham and others to confirm what he says, and then concludes, as an evident truth, "Do you see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only?" James ii.

St. Paul is no less clear upon this head, and assures us in express terms, that nothing will avail us in Christ—nothing gain us a saving interest in him, but a lively faith—a faith animated by charity, and productive of good works. "In Christ Jesus," says he, "neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by charity," Gal. v. 6. Charity is to faith what the soul is to the body; it animates faith, and gives it life, vigour, and action; and therefore to show us that a dead
faith, unaccompanied with good works, will never bring us to heaven, the Holy Ghost declares by these words of the apostle, that the only thing that will be of any avail to us at all in Christ, is a living faith, animated by charity, and productive of good works. And what these good works are, our Saviour himself tells when, explaining the substance of charity to be the love of God, he says, “If you love me keep my commandments,” John xiv. 15, and “he that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loves me,” John xiv. 21; and therefore, in another place, he makes the keeping of the commandments an express condition of obtaining eternal life, “If thou wilt enter into life,” says he, “keep the commandments,” Matt. xix. 17. And indeed, as it is impossible to be saved without loving God, and as the very essence of the love of God consists in keeping his commandments, it manifestly follows, that a bare dead faith without love and obedience, will never bring us to salvation; and therefore, St. Paul puts this very case of having faith without charity, and declares its insufficiency in these words, “If I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing;” 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

Besides, does not Christ himself assure us, that the sentence of eternal reprobation will be passed upon the wicked at the last day, precisely for their want of good works? for, immediately after that dreadful sentence, he adds, as the cause of passing it, “for I was hungry and ye gave me no meat,” &c. He does not condemn them because they did not believe in him, or because they embraced a false faith, but because having true faith in him, and believing these very truths he had revealed, they took no care to animate and enliven their faith by charity, or to accompany it with good works. Nay, upon another occasion, speaking of the same great day of accounts, he
says, "In that day many shall say unto me, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and done many wonderful works in thy name?" Here we see not only true faith, but a strong faith, a faith capable of working miracles, and this faith, and the miracles wrought in virtue of it, made use of by those who had it, as a recommendation to mercy and favour with the great Judge; and yet, because this faith was not attended with good works, because it was not enlivened by charity, because it did not produce in them obedience to the commandments, it was so far from being of service to them, that our Saviour immediately adds, "Then will I profess to them, I never knew you, depart from me, you that work iniquity," Matt. vii. 22. So true is that declaration of St. Paul, "If I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." And therefore, Christ declares in express terms, "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. vii. 21. And was not the unprofitable servant condemned precisely for not improving his talent? and the barren tree cut down and cast into the fire, precisely because it brought not forth good fruit? Does not St. Paul assure us, that "Jesus Christ is become the cause of eternal salvation to all that obey him?" Heb. v. 9. And do we not find throughout the whole Scripture, that eternal life and happiness are every where proposed as a reward to good works? and on the contrary, that wrath and indignation will be the portion of those who obey not the commands? It were endless to cite all the different texts where these truths are declared, as they are to be found almost in every page of the Scripture. See
INTRODUCTION.


We must therefore conclude, that though the true faith of Christ, the firm belief of those sacred truths of eternity which he revealed to the world, be absolutely necessary to salvation; although this faith be the first step to our salvation; although it be the foundation upon which all Christian perfection is built, and the root from which every other Christian virtue springs, insomuch that no Christian virtue can exist, unless it be grounded upon the true faith of Christ, and rise from that root, any more than a house can stand in the air without a foundation, or a tree grow upon the surface of the earth without a root; although, in fine, true faith in Christ, and in his Divine truths, be so strictly required by Almighty God, that nothing we can possibly do without faith can be acceptable to him, for he expressly declares, that "without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. vi.; yet this very Divine faith, though of such absolute necessity, will never bring a soul to heaven alone, unless it be productive of good works in obedience to the commandments of God, unless it be a living faith, "a faith that worketh by charity."

But what do I say, that faith will not save us without good works? instead of saving us, or of being of any service to us, it will prove in the end our greatest adversary, and bring on us a more dreadful condemnation. When the soul of a bad Christian is presented before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, her faith which lay dormant during her mortal life, will then rise up against her, to her incredible confusion; it will then present before her eyes, in the most lively colours, how much she had it in her power to have lived a good life, and secured her eternal salvation; how well she knew what God required of her to do for that purpose, and what abundant helps she had to enable
her to do it; how strong her obligation was to serve God from justice, gratitude and interest, and how great her madness and folly in not complying with it. From all which it will draw this necessary conclusion, that since "she knew so well her master's will, and did it not, she has nothing to expect but to be beaten with many stripes;" since so many talents were bestowed upon her, which she did not improve, she can only look for the fate of the unprofitable servant, to "be cast into utter darkness, where there is nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth;" and since Almighty God gave her so many graces which she abused, so much time for repentance which she neglected, nothing remains for her "but to be thrown into the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Seeing, therefore, that the practice of good works, the works of virtue and piety, by a continual obedience to the commands of God, is so essentially necessary for securing the great work of our salvation; the sincere Christian, who has acquired the object of his wishes, and is come to the knowledge of the true faith of Christ, must not flatter himself that all is done, or that his cheerfully embracing that holy faith, and becoming a member of the church of Christ will, alone, be sufficient to bring him to the enjoyment of Christ; one half of the work is only done, and the less half too; and therefore, from a sincere Christian inquiring after the truth, now that he has found it, he must become a devout Christian in practising it; otherwise he will never obtain the wished-for crown of immortality. The infinite goodness of Almighty God in bringing him out of darkness to his admirable light, in preference to so many others to whom this grace is refused, strictly demands on his side a correspondence with so much goodness by gratitude and love, of which the great proof,
which God requires, is obedience to his holy commandments. Wherefore the sincere Christian, now brought to the truth, and become a member of the church of Christ, must consider as addressed to himself in particular, those serious advices which St. Peter and St. Paul gave to their late converted disciples, and in them to all others who are called to the Christian faith: “Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for what things a man shall sow, these also shall he reap; for he that soweth in the flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption, but he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting. And in doing good, let us not fail, for in due time we shall reap, not failing. Therefore, whilst we have time, let us do good to all men,” Gal. vi. 7. “You were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk ye as the children of light, for the fruit of the light is in all goodness, and justice, and truth, proving what is well pleasing to God, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness,” Eph. v. 8. “By Christ, God hath given us most great and precious promises; that by these you may be made partakers of the Divine nature, flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world. And you, giving all diligence, join with your faith, virtue; and with virtue, knowledge; and with knowledge, abstinence; and with abstinence, patience; and with patience, goodness; and with goodness, brotherly love; and with brotherly love, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they will make you to be neither empty nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that hath not these things with him, is blind and groping, forgetting his being purged from his old sins. Wherefore, brethren, labour the more, that by good works you may make your calling and election sure: for doing these things you shall not sin at any time, and so an entrance
shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” 2 Pet. i. 10.

As therefore in the former part of this work, I endeavoured to conduct the sincere Christian, who seeks the truth, from the first principles of Christianity to the full knowledge of the church of Christ, in which alone his holy faith is to be found, and explained to him all those truths of that Divine faith which it is necessary for every one to know in order to be a well instructed Christian; so the design of this present work is to instruct the Devout Christian, who having found and embraced the true faith which he sincerely sought for, is now firmly resolved to practise it in all the different branches of his duty which the law of God demands from him. In doing this, I have made it my particular care to be plain and clear, that what I advance may be understood by the meanest capacity. I have purposely avoided all particular opinions about any moral duty, and endeavoured to stick close to the plain, simple decisions of God’s holy word. With this view I have even avoided many human reasons, which might laudably have been brought to confirm and enforce any duty, and as much as possible have given the answers to the questions proposed, in the words of the Scripture, or in equivalent terms, evidently contained in the texts adduced to prove them. Indeed, my principal intention was, that these instructions on the law of Christ should be, as the title bears, from the written word, because proofs of such authority admit of no evasion. God has said it! and who will dare to deny it? Proofs of this kind are, of all others, the most persuasive to a sincere Christian; and I have found, by experience, that instructions to the Christian people, built upon, and illustrated from a proper choice of such proofs are, of all others, the
most penetrating to their hearts, and the most fruitful in their effects. Perhaps those who have such instructions to give, may find some help from this work; at least, if they choose to follow this method, it will save them a great deal of labour in collecting such scripture testimonies themselves, as they will here find them collected to their hand, on all the chief duties of Christian morality. I only beg the devout reader not to pass slightly over what is here contained. The subject is important; it deserves the most serious application; let him therefore ponder well and meditate on the great truths here laid down; let him remember, as he peruses the sacred testimonies here collected, that it is God who speaks in them—that they are therefore eternal truths—that no human reason can invalidate them—that heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall never pass away; and that, therefore, all the suggestions of flesh and blood, all the evasions of self-love, are to be rejected and condemned as lying monitors, when they dare to oppose themselves to this heavenly light. But above all, let him make it his constant endeavour to regulate his life and conduct by these Divine laws, which alone will bring him to eternal happiness, "for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified," Rom. i. 18.
THE
DEVOUT CHRISTIAN
INSTRUCTED IN THE FAITH OF CHRIST,
FROM
THE WRITTEN WORD.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAW OF GOD IN GENERAL.

Q. 1. WHAT is the law of God?
A. It is the manifestation of his will to man, declaring what he requires of man to do and to avoid, in order to please God and save his own soul.

Q. 2. Where is this manifestation of the will of God to be found?
A. In the ten commandments; which are an abridgment of all that we have to do, as the creed is an abridgment of all we have to believe, and the Lord's prayer an abridgment of what we have to ask of God, in order to be saved.

Q. 3. When did God manifest his will to man in the ten commandments?
A. After he had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, and carried them through the Red Sea, into the wilderness, he there appeared to the whole people in a most awful manner, and with his own mouth promulgated, in the hearing of the whole multitude, the ten commandments; and he afterwards wrote them with his own finger on two tables of stone, and gave them to Moses, to be preserved in the ark, as the continual rule of our actions.

Q. 4. What account does the scripture give of this awful scene?
A. It is thus described in the Book of Exodus, chap. xix. "And God said to Moses, Go to the people and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their garments; and
let them be ready against the third day; for on the third day
the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people, upon
Mount Sinai; and thou shalt appoint certain limits to the
people round about, and thou shalt say to them, Take heed ye
go not up into the Mount, and that ye touch not the borders
thereof; every one that toucheth the Mount, dying he shall die;
no hands shall touch him, but he shall be stoned to death, nor
shall he be shot through with arrows; whether it be beast or
man he shall not live. And Moses came down from the Mount
to the people, and sanctified them, and when they had washed
their garments, he said to them, Be ready against the third day,
and come not near your wives. And now the third day was
come, and the morning appeared; and behold thunders began
to be heard, and lightning to flash, and a very thick cloud to
cover the Mount, and the noise of the trumpet sounded ex-
ceeding loud, and the people that were in the camp feared...And
all Mount Sinai was on a smoke, because the Lord was come
down upon it in fire, and the smoke rose from it as out of a
furnace; and all the Mount was terrible. And the sound of
the trumpet grew, by degrees, louder and louder, and was drawn
out to a greater length. Now from the midst of all this dread-
ful apparatus, the voice of God was heard by the whole people,
when he pronounced to them his law, saying,

"I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land
of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have
no strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself a
graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven
above or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are
in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not adore them, nor
serve them: I am the Lord thy God, mighty and jealous,
visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, to the
third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing
mercy to thousands of them that love me, and keep my com-
mandments.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain,
for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the
name of the Lord his God in vain.

"Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day; six days
shalt thou labour, and do all thy work, but the seventh day is
the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: on it thou shalt do no man-
ner of work; thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man
servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger
that is within thy gate. For in six days the Lord made heaven
and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and
rested on the seventh day: therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.

"Honour thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land, which the Lord thy God will give thee.

"Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house. Neither shalt thou covet his wife, nor his servant, nor his hand-maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his."

Q. 5. Why did God proclaim his law in so tremendous a manner?

A. For several reasons. (1.) To give credit and authority to Moses, and to persuade the world that he was sent by God; thus God says to Moses, "Lo now I will come to thee in the darkness of a cloud, that the people may hear me speaking to thee, and may believe thee for ever," Ex. xix. 9. (2.) To teach us with what profound reverence and respect we ought always to receive instructions on the laws of God, and hear his word: which appears, from the great preparation he required of his people, to fit them for receiving his law, and the distance he obliged them to keep from the mountain, while it was given to them. (3.) To fill our minds with the wholesome fear of God, considering how tremendous and awful a Being he is; and (4.) To make us exceeding careful in keeping and obeying his commands; for, when "all the people saw the voices and the flames, and the sound of the trumpet, and the Mount smoking, being terrified and struck with fear, they stood afar off, saying to Moses, Speak thou unto us and we will hear; let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die. And Moses said to the people, Fear not, for God is come to prove you, and that the dread of him might be in you, and you should not sin," Ex. xx. 18.

Q. 6. Why did God begin the declaration of his law, by these words, I am thy Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage?

A. To imprint in our hearts a just sense of the infinite power, dominion, authority, and majesty of our Divine Lawgiver, who is the "Lord our God," a Being of infinite perfections, who has an unlimited power and the most absolute dominion over us, and over all creatures, who can do with us whatever he pleases, and who alone can defend us from all dangers, deliver us from all evils, and bestow upon us all good both for time and eternity; and from this consideration to make us receive his law with greater respect, and observe it with the greatest fidelity.
Q. 7. Why does God add to the first command these words, “for I am the Lord thy God, strong and jealous, visiting,” &c.?

A. To imprint in our minds a just sense of his infinite power and severity as our judge, and of his ardent zeal for the faithful observance of his law, assuring us that he will most undoubtedly punish all those who transgress it, and amply reward those who are careful to obey it.

Q. 8. Is this law of God, as contained in the ten commandments, a new law?

A. No; it is the same law that God, in creating man, had imprinted in his mind at the beginning by the light of reason; for, except the single article of determining the seventh day of the week to be set apart for the service of God, the ten commands contain nothing but the natural duties of man to God, and to his neighbour, the knowledge of which God has engraven in the bottom of our heart by the light of nature, and by the sense which every one has of right and wrong; which, had man continued in the state of innocency, would have been in all cases, a full and sufficient rule to guide and direct him in all his conduct. But the heart of man having been corrupted by sin, he gave not the proper attention to this light, which, in process of time, by the repetition of sin, became so dark and obscure, that it seemed almost quite extinguished; for this reason, God of his infinite mercy, was pleased to give his chosen people, in order to preserve them from the general corruption of the rest of mankind, an external renovation of this Divine law contained in the ten commandments; and in so doing he manifested his special love and predilection for that people, the posterity of his servant Abraham, for which the royal prophet warmly exhorts them to be grateful to God, and to thank and praise him for such a distinguished mercy. “Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem, praise thy God, O Zion…… who had declared his word to Jacob, his justice and his judgment to Israel, he hath not done in like manner to every nation, and his judgment he hath not made manifest to them,” Ps. cxlvii. 1, 19.

Q. 9. Are we Christians obliged to obey the ten commands given to the Jews?

A. Most undoubtedly; because though the ceremonial law given to the Jews, and what regarded their policy and forms of judgment, as being intended only for their nation, and a figure of the good things then to come, be no ways binding upon Christians, but was wholly abrogated when the gospel
appeared and the Jews ceased to be a nation, yet the ten commandments, excepting only the termination of the seventh day, as they are only an external declaration of the eternal law of God, imprinted on our heart by the light of nature, can never be abrogated, nor cease to be binding upon every human creature. Hence our blessed Saviour makes the observance of them an absolute condition of salvation. "If thou wilt enter into life," says he, "keep the commandments," Matt. xix. 17; Luke xviii. 20; and this he declared in answer to the question expressly put to him by the young man, "What must I do to possess eternal life?" And whereas the Jews, blinded by their passions and carnal views, had put false glosses and explications on several of the commandments, he was pleased, in his Divine sermon on the Mount, to correct these false interpretations, and explain the true sense and meaning of these commandments, declaring at the same time, the absolute obligation that his followers have of observing them, and assuring us that he was "come not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it," Matt. v. 17; and to show us the permanency and indefectibility of his Divine law, he immediately adds, with his usual asseveration, "Amen, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall not pass from the law till all be fulfilled," verse 18.

Q. 10. How great is our obligation to obey the law of God?

A. Besides what we have seen at large in the introduction, we must further observe, that obedience to the law of God is the very end of our being, the very end which God had in creating us: "Let us all hear together," says Solomon, "the conclusion of the discourse: fear God and keep his commandments, for this is all man," Eccles. xii. 13; that is, this is all and all to man; this is the whole business and duty of man; this is all he has to do in this world; in a word, this is his perfection, his happiness, his all: for as the sun was created to give light, and the fire to heat, the water to refresh, the air to breathe, the earth to produce its fruits, and these fruits to nourish man; so man himself was created to fear God, and keep his commandments; and as these creatures would become monsters and useless if they ceased to perform the end for which God created them, so man is no less so if he disobey the commands of God; whatever he does without this, is all nothing, for "circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God," 1 Cor. vii. 19; and after all, what are the commands of God, but the manifestation of his will to man? Now as every man, with reason, expects and requires that his will
should be obeyed by those under his authority, how much more must we be obliged to obey the will of God, who has the most absolute and unalienable authority over us, as his creatures, and can do with us whatever he pleases?

Q. 11. In what manner ought we to obey the commandments?

A. We must obey them in the manner in which Jesus Christ requires us; not according to the false explications of the Jews, nor after the example of the Pharisees, but according to the true interpretation which Jesus Christ has given us of them, and with that perfection which he points out to us in the gospel.

Q. 12. In what does this perfection of our obedience to the law consist?

A. Our Saviour has a very remarkable saying in the gospel, which will explain this to us. "I tell you," says he, "except your justice exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven," Matt. v. 20. The scribes were the doctors of the law, and the Pharisees were a precise set of men, making profession of a more than ordinary exact observance of the law; and upon that account, were greatly esteemed among the people; and it must be owned there were many things in their conduct exceedingly laudable, and which may even be a reproach to us Christians; for they abhorred all manner of blasphemy and profanation of the name of God; they had a horror of all sorts of uncleanness; they observed the sabbath day with a scrupulous exactness; they made open profession of piety; they fasted frequently; and were very charitable to the poor; yet notwithstanding all this, our Saviour expressly declares, that except we keep the law in a more perfect manner than they did, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; because their exactness in these duties was accompanied with several essential failings, for which Christ pronounced woes against them; and in the careful avoiding of these defects, our obedience to the law must exceed theirs, if we desire to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Now their defects in keeping the law, were chiefly these following, (1.) They carefully avoided smaller sins, and made a great noise about outward observances, but neglected the more essential duties which the law prescribed; on this account, our Saviour says to them, "Wo to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have let alone the weightier things of the law, judgment and mercy and faith; these things you ought to have done and not
to leave those others undone. Blind guides who strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel,” Matt. xxiii. 23. Thus they thought it a crime when hungry to pull ears of corn on the sabbath, but they made no scruple to “devour the houses of widows,” Matt. xxiii. 14. They thought it a crime to eat with unwashed hands, but they thought it no sin to “shut the kingdom of heaven against men, and not to suffer those that are going in, to enter,” verse 13. They would not enter the palace of Pilate upon a feast day, for fear of defiling themselves, as he was a heathen; but they thought nothing of accusing the Son of God falsely, and condemning him to the death of the cross. Such then was the mistaken justice of the Pharisees on this point.

(2.) They were careful to avoid the outward crimes which were expressly forbidden by the law, but they took no care to cleanse their hearts from the internal crimes of bad thoughts, hurtful desires, covetous wishes, anger, hatred, malice, envy, revenge, and the like; for which reason our Saviour says to them, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but within you are full of extortion and uncleanness. You are like the whitened sepulchres, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men’s bones, and all filthiness. So you also, outwardly indeed, appear to men just, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity,” Matt. xxiii. 25. “You serpents, generation of vipers, how will you escape the judgment of hell?” verse 13.

(3.) They were filled with pride and self-conceit, and when they did any thing good in itself, they attributed it all to themselves, and to their own strength, taking all the praise to themselves, and not giving glory to God; hence they were self-conceited, arrogant, vain boasters of their own works, and despisers of others.—Thus the proud Pharisee, that went up to the temple to pray, exalted himself on account of some good things he did, above all other men, and particularly above the humble publican, who with a contrite heart was crying for mercy at the same time; and on account of this pride Jesus Christ declared, that with all his good works, he was condemned in the sight of God.

(4.) They did all their works to be seen and praised by men; they cared little or nothing whether or not they pleased God, provided they pleased the world, and got the applause and esteem of men, Matt. xxiii. 5. When they gave alms, “they sounded the trumpet before them...that they might be honoured by men.”
When they prayed they spoke much, and "stood praying in the streets and synagogues that they might be seen by men;" when they fasted, "they disfigured their faces, that they might be seen by men to fast," Matt. vi. But for this reason, our Saviour declared, that they could get no reward from God in heaven, for all their pretended good works, but had already received their reward in the applause of the world, which they sought for.

From this we see in what manner we are obliged to keep the commandments of God, and what is required of us, that our justice may exceed that of the Pharisees, and entitle us to a place in the kingdom of heaven, which their justice was incapable of acquiring; for (1.) We must keep the whole law, and perform all the duties, prescribed by it, great and small; we must not lay a stress on small matters and neglect the greater duties, neither must we neglect small duties from the vain pretence, that they are of little consequence. "Those things you ought to do, and not to leave these others undone," says Christ himself; and, "He that neglects small things, shall fall by little and little," as the wise man assures us. We must be particularly careful not to let ourselves be so blinded by our passions and depraved affections, as not to see the malice of those things which flatter and please them, and by that means overlook them; but we must carefully observe whatever the Divine law prescribes; for, "whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all," James ii. 10. (2.) We must not only be exact in performing all the external duties, which the law ordains, and in abstaining from all these exterior crimes which it forbids, but we must be equally careful in purifying our hearts and cleansing all the inward affections of the soul, never dwelling in our thoughts upon any thing that is sinful, much less taking any pleasure in such thoughts, or consenting to them, or desiring any unlawful object, well knowing that " perverse thoughts separate from God," Wisd. i. 3; and that not only those who do evil actions, are "worthy of death, but also they who consent to those who do them," Rom. i. 32. (3.) We must accompany our obedience with a profound humility, firmly persuaded that of ourselves we can do no good at all, that it is God who works in us "both to will and to accomplish according to his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 13; and that all the good we do, is owing to his merciful assistance; and therefore, that all the praise and glory is due to him alone. Hence we ought to accompany our obedience with a total diffidence in ourselves, and an entire confidence in God, humbly begging his assistance before we begin any
thing, and from our heart giving thanks to him when it is ended; not assuming the praise of any thing to ourselves, nor valuing ourselves in our own mind when any thing succeeds, but sincerely acknowledging when we have done all, that "We are but unprofitable servants." (4.) We must have a pure intention in all we do, seeking only to please God, by every thing we do, in obedience to his will, being well assured that God will reward no actions but such as are done for his sake; and therefore, "whether we eat or drink, or what ever else we do, we must do all to the glory of God," as St. Paul requires, 1 Cor. x. 31.

Q. 13. Are all obliged to know the commands?

A. Most undoubtedly; the obligation all lie under of keeping the commands, obliges all at the same time to know them; for how can they obey what they do not know? Now we may observe three different degrees of perfection in knowing the commands. (1.) To know the words of the commands by heart; this is the first and lowest degree of our knowledge of the commands; it is necessary to be had, but it is to little purpose if we rest in it, and go no further. (2.) To know the sense and meaning of the words, and the various duties and obligations which are contained in them. This is a great deal more than the former, and most necessary, but not sufficient; for though we should know ever so perfectly what our duty is, this knowledge, if we rest there, and go no farther, instead of bringing us to heaven, will rather increase our condemnation. (3.) To know the law of God in practice, to love it, to make it the rule of our conduct, and in everything to act according to our light; this is the true saving knowledge which we must all study to acquire; because this alone will bring us to eternal happiness. "Be ye doers of the word," says the holy apostle James, "and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves;...... for he that hath looked into the perfect law of liberty, and hath continued therein, not becoming a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work; this man shall be blessed in his deed," James i. 22, 25. "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified," Rom. ii. 13.

Q. 14. By what means can we acquire this practical knowledge of the law?

A. Chiefly by serious and attentive meditation upon the law itself, upon its beauty and excellency, on the strict obligation we have to obey it, and on the great advantages of keeping it with our whole heart. Thus Almighty God, after exhorting us by the mouth of the wise man to this practical knowledge of
the law in these words, "My son, keep my commandments, and thou shalt live, and my law as the apple of thy eye," immediately adds, as the means to acquire it, "bind it upon thy fingers, write it upon the tables of thy heart," Prov. viii. 2; that is, have it always before your eyes, as if it were bound upon your fingers, and let it sink deep into your heart, by serious meditation. And this he ordained still more clearly by his prophet Moses, who says, "These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising; and thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be, and shall move between thy eyes, and thou shalt write them in thy entry, and on the doors of thy house," Deut. vi. 6.

Nothing can be more express than this, nor show more manifestly how much it is our duty frequently, or rather continually, to meditate on the law of God, to have it always before our eyes, and study in everything to conform ourselves to it. And besides these strong injunctions to do so, we have many promises in scripture of the most ample blessings to encourage us; thus, "Blessed is the man...whose will is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he shall meditate day and night; he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters; which shall bring forth its fruits in due season, and his leaf shall not fall off, and all, whatsoever he shall do, shall prosper," Ps. i. 1; "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord: blessed are they that search his testimonies, that seek him with their whole heart," Ps. cxviii. 1.

Q. 15. What are the excellencies of the law of God?

A. They are beautifully described by David in the following words: "The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls: the testimony of the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones: the justices of the Lord are right, rejoicing hearts: the commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes: the fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever: the judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves: more to be desired than gold and many precious stones; and sweeter than honey and the honey-comb; for thy servant keepeth them, and in keeping them there is a great reward," Ps. xviii. 8.

Q. 16. What are the advantages we reap from keeping the law of God?

A. They are many and excellent; for, (1.) By keeping the commands of God, we give him supreme honour and worship, and do him a most acceptable homage, for "obedience is better
than sacrifice;" and by this means we discharge the most essential duty we owe to our Creator, and give him the most convincing proof of our love. (2.) We become friends and brethren of all the saints in heaven, who by their obedience to the law of God, arrived securely at the possession of that eternal bliss which they now enjoy. (3.) We become friends and brethren of Jesus Christ, who expressly says, "Whoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." (4.) We become conformable to the image of Christ, who had the law of his Father in the midst of his heart, and "was obedient to death, even the death of the cross." (5.) In consequence of this we become friends of the great God himself, and are placed in such a particular manner under the protection of his Divine providence, that he makes every thing turn out to our greater benefit and advantage, for "all things work together for good to them that love God." (6.) We become the temples of the ever blessed Trinity, and are in a special manner beloved by God; for Christ himself says, "If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him," John xiv. 23. (7.) We are sure that our prayers will be heard to our greatest advantage, for "Whosoever we shall ask, we shall receive of him, because we keep his commandments," 1 John iii. 22. (8.) We are sure that he will so far bless the work of our hands, or in such manner employ the other resources of his providence, as to supply us with all the necessaries of this life, in that measure and proportion which may be most for the good of our souls: for Jesus Christ himself assures us, that if we "seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, all those things shall be added to us," Matt. vi. 33; and moreover, that he will give us that interior peace and content of mind which the world cannot give, and which will be a comfort and support to us under all the trials and difficulties to which this our mortal pilgrimage is continually exposed. (9.) We shall, if we persevere to the end in our steady obedience to the law of God, obtain a happy death, and the eternal salvation of our souls, for, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," Matt. xix. 17.

Q. 17. What then are the great motives that should induce us to a faithful observance of the law of God?

A. Duty and interest.

Q. 18. In what is our duty founded?

A. Chiefly in two things, justice and gratitude. Our duty in justice rises from the absolute and supreme dominion which
God has over us and over all creatures, as being the work of his own hands, made only for his pleasure, and having a total dependence upon him: Our duty in gratitude arises from the unspeakable goodness of God, and the love he has for us and daily shows towards us in the most endearing manner.

Q. 19. How does our interest oblige us to keep the commandments of God?

A. Because our only true and real happiness, both in this life and in the next, in time and eternity, depends upon our doing so.

CHAPTER II.

THE SUPREME DOMINION OF GOD OVER US, AND HOW MUCH WE ARE BOUND IN JUSTICE TO SERVE HIM.

Q. 1. Is it necessary to have a proper knowledge of the supreme dominion of God, before we enter upon the explication of his commandments?

A. It is highly proper, and in some degree, necessary, considering the corruption of our heart, and its backwardness to obey him; for by having a just sense of his authority and power over us, and being convinced how much it is our indispensable duty to obey him, we shall be stirred up to greater fervour, and a stronger resolution to comply with our duty, and yield to our sovereign Lord the obedience we owe him. And hence, when he first published his law, he began by putting his people in mind of his great power and supreme dominion, saying, "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Now in order to form a proper idea of his supreme dominion over us and over all creatures, we must both consider his Almighty power in itself, and then his authority over us.

§ 1. Of the Almighty Power of God.

Q. 2. By what means can we acquire a proper knowledge of the Almighty power of God?

A. By considering the innumerable and stupendous effects which his power has produced and can produce, and the admirable and inconceivable manner in which he acts in producing them.
Q. 3. What are we chiefly to consider in the effects produced by the power of God;

A. (I.) Their stupendous greatness; of which the scripture saith, "He doth things great and incomprehensible, and wonderful, of which there is no number," Job ix. 10. Take a view of the globe of this earth; what an amazing fabric it is! what immense power must that be which could first create it! what Almighty strength, that could establish it on its solid foundation, adorn it with such a wonderful variety of mountains and valleys, draw out from its bowels those surprising aqueducts which every where flow through it, and dig that immense and fathomless basin which contains the ocean? What are all the most celebrated works of human power, if compared to this single work of the power of God? and yet this is but a mite to the whole. Raise up your thoughts to the heavenly bodies; consider the sun, that amazing globe of fire, many hundred times larger than the earth itself; take a view of the planets that surround him, of the blazing comets that from time to time approach him; consider the immense regions which these traverse in the course of their rotation, and the inconceivable velocity with which they run their course! beyond these behold the firmament of heaven, amazing sphere! boundless circumference! adorned with innumerable stars, worlds upon worlds! what a stupendous work is all this! what amazing strength that could create it! what unbounded power that continues to preserve and govern it! Such is the power of the great God whom we serve. He it is "that prepared the earth for evermore, and filled it with cattle and four-footed beasts; he that sendeth forth light, and it goeth; and hath called it, and it obeyeth him with trembling: and the stars have given light in their watches and rejoiced; they were called and they said, here we are: and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to him that made them: This is our God, and there shall no other be accounted of in comparsion of him," Bar. iii. 32. "He is thy praise and thy God, that hath done these great and terrible things, which thy eyes have seen," Deut. x. 21. "The firmament on high is his beauty, the beauty of heaven with its glorious show; the sun when he appeareth showing forth at his rising, an admirable instrument the work of the Most High....Great is the Lord that made him!...The glory of the stars is the beauty of heaven, the Lord enlighteneth the world from on high. By the words of the Holy One they shall stand in judgment, and shall never fail in their watches. Look upon the rainbow, and bless him that made it; it is very beau-
tiful in its brightness. It encompasseth the heaven about with
the circle of its glory. The hands of the Most High have dis-
played it...What shall we be able to do to glorify him? For
the Almighty himself is above all his works. The Lord is
terrible and exceeding great, and his power is admirable!”
Ecclus. xliii.

(2.) Their amazing multitude and variety. Who can
conceive or form an idea of the immense variety of the works
of God in the creation? The royal prophet acknowledges with
astonishment, that they are beyond all computation. “Thou
hast multiplied thy wonderful works, O Lord my God,” says
he, “and in thy thoughts there is no one like to thee: I have
declared, and I have spoken, they are multiplied above number;”
Ps. xxxix. 6. “Look up to heaven,” says Almighty God him-
self to Abraham, “and number the stars if thou canst,” Gen.
xv. 5. It is God alone “who can tell the number of the stars,
and calleth them all by their names,” Ps. cxlvi. 4. Take a view
of this earth on which we dwell; what an amazing variety do
we find there of beasts on the earth, of birds in the air, of fishes
in the waters, of plants and herbs and trees without number,
of insects and creeping things, beyond all comprehension?
The same royal prophet, astonished at the sight, cries out with
surprise, “How great are thy works, O Lord! thou hast made
all things in wisdom; the earth is filled with thy riches; so is
this great sea which stretches wide its arms; in it there are
creeping things without number; creatures little and great,”
Ps. ciii. 24. “There,” says the wise man, “are great and
wonderful works, variety of beasts and of all living things, and
the monstrous creatures of whales. Through him is established
the end of their journey, and by his word all things are regu-
lated,” Ecclus. xliii. 27. But what shall we say of the num-
bers beyond number of those spiritual beings, of those holy
angels, who assist continually before the throne of God? “Is
there any numbering of his soldiers?” says one of Job’s friends,
Job xxv. 3. Oh! no, says Daniel, “Thousands of thousands
minister to him, and ten hundred times a hundred thousand
stand before him,” Dan. vii. 10. And who was it that created
such a vast variety of beings? “Look upon heaven and earth,
and all that is in them, and consider that God made them out
of nothing, and mankind also,” 2 Mach. vii. 28. “Ask now
the beasts, and they shall teach thee: and the birds of the air,
and they shall tell thee: speak to the earth, and it shall answer
thee; and the fishes of the sea shall tell; who is ignorant that
the hand of the Lord made all these things? In whose hand
is the soul of every living thing, and the spirit of all flesh of man," Job xii. 7. But what amazing power must that be, which could produce such numberless beings, and bestow upon each their various powers, faculties, properties, and natures? How are we lost in astonishment at the thought? How is our mind bewildered and confounded? "Great are the works of our Lord, sought out according to all his will; his work is praise and magnificence," Ps. cx. 2. "Sing ye a Psalm to his name; give glory to his praise, say unto God, How terrible are thy works, O Lord!...Come and see the works of God, who is terrible in his counsels," Ps. lxx. 2. "The Lord is terrible and exceeding great, and his power is admirable," Ecclus. xliii. 31.

(3.) The wonderful effects of his power, which he daily performs among all creatures throughout the universe. Indeed that immense power of God, which made all things at first, can surely do with them whatever he pleases; for his holy word assures us, that "whatsoever the Lord pleases he hath done in heaven, in earth, in the sea, and in all the depths," Ps. cxxxv. 5; "that all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing before him, and he doth according to his will with the powers of heaven, as among the inhabitants of the earth, and there is none that can resist his hand, or say to him, Why hast thou done it?" Dan. iv. 32; and that "at a beck he can destroy the whole world," 2 Mach. viii. 18. But let us consider the effects of his infinite power, as described in the holy scriptures themselves. "He is wise in heart," says Job, "and mighty in strength,...for he it is "who removed mountains, and they whom he overthrew in his wrath knew it not. Who shakest the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. Who commandest the sun, and it riseth not, and shuttest up the stars as it were under a seal. Who alone spreadeth out the heavens, and walketh upon the waves of the sea," Job ix. So also the wise man thus beautifully describes this Almighty power of God: "By his commandment he maketh the snow to fall apace, and sendeth forth swiftly the lightnings of his judgment. Through this are the treasures opened, and the clouds fly out like birds. By his greatness he hath fixed the clouds, and the hail-stones are broken. At his sight shall the mountains be shaken, and at his will the south wind shall blow. The noise of his thunder shall strike the earth, so doth the northern storm and whirlwind. And as the birds lighting upon the earth he scattereth snow, and the falling thereof is as the coming down of locusts...He shall pour frost as salt upon the earth,
and when it freezeth, it shall become like the tops of thistles... at his word the wind is still, and with his thought he appeaseth the deep,” Ecclus. xliii. “I will destroy,” says God himself, “and swallow up at once; I will lay waste the mountains and hills, and will make all their grass to wither. And I will turn rivers into islands, and will dry up the standing pools. I will lead the blind into the way which they know not, and in the paths which they were ignorant of. I will make them to walk; I will make darkness light before them; and crooked things straight,” Is. xlii. 14. But there is no place where the wondrous works of God are more beautifully described, than in the interrogations which he himself makes to Job upon this subject; for in them such majesty and grandeur appear, that one can scarce peruse them without feeling himself struck with a sacred horror. “Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that wrappeth up sentences in unskilful words? Gird up thy loins like a man; I will ask thee, and answer thou me, Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if thou hast understanding, Who hath laid the measure thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it? Upon what are its bases grounded? Or who laid the corner stone thereof? Who shut up the sea with doors, when it broke forth as issuing out of the womb? When I made a cloud the garment thereof, and wrapt it up in a mist as in swaddling bands, I set my bounds around it and made it bars and doors. And I said, Hitherto shalt thou come, and shalt go no farther, and here shalt thou break thy swelling waves. Didst thou, since thy birth, command the morning, and show the dawning of the day its place? And didst thou hold the extremities of the earth, shaking them, and hast thou shaken the ungodly out of it?...Hast thou entered into the depths of the sea, and walked in the lowest parts of the deep? Have the gates of death been open to thee, and hast thou seen the darksome doors?...Hast thou entered into the storehouses of the snow, or hast thou beheld the treasures of the hail?...By what way is the light spread, and the heat divided upon the earth? Who gave a course to violent showers, or a way for noisy thunder?...Who is the father of rain, or who begot the drops of dew? Out of whose womb came the ice? And the frost from heaven, who hath gendered it? The waters are hardened like a stone, and the surface of the deep is congealed. Canst thou bring forth the day star in its time, and make the evening star to rise upon the children of the earth? Dost thou know the order of the heavens, and
canst thou set down the order thereof on the earth? Canst thou send lightnings, and will they go? And will they return and say to thee, here we are? Who hath put wisdom into the heart of man? or who gave the cock understanding? Wilt thou take the prey for the lioness, and satisfy the appetite of her whelps, when they couch in the dens and lie in wait in holes? Who provideth food for the raven, when her young ones cry to God, wandering about because they have no meat?” Job xxxviii. What a wonderful display is there here of the Almighty power of God, and of the amazing things he performs among his creatures! Oh! with what reason does the wise man cry out, “Who is able to declare his works, for who shall search out his glorious acts? and who shall show forth the power of his majesty? Nothing may be taken away or added; neither is it possible to find out the glorious works of God. When a man hath done, then shall he begin again, and when he leaveth off, then he shall be at a loss,” Eccles. xviii. 2. For God is so great and incomprehensible, that when a man has done all he can to find out the greatness of his power, and his boundless perfections, he is still to begin; for what he has found out is but a mere nothing in comparison with his infinity.

And indeed all the wondrous works which God has done, however great and stupendous, what are they all if compared with what he can do? “There are many things hidden from us that are greater than these which we see, for we have seen but a few of his works,” Ecclus. xliii. 36. But there are infinitely more still, and more wonderful things in the boundless womb of possibility, which the Almighty power of God is able to produce if he please, for “with God all things are possible,” Matt. xix. 26. “The Lord is as a man of war, Almighty is his name,” Exod. xv. 3. Numbers of worlds could he create if he had a mind, in the vast expanse of his immensity, each of them as far superior to the present creation in perfections, as this earth itself is to an ant-hillock. What amazing power, then, is the power of God, infinitely above all thought and comprehension! “He is great, and does wonderful things; he is God alone,” Ps. lxxxv. 10.

Q. 4. What effects ought the consideration of this infinite power of God to produce in our souls?

A. Principally these following: (1.) It ought to excite us to praise and glorify him with all our powers and affections. “Give ye magnificence,” says the holy prophet Moses, “to our God; the works of God are perfect and all his ways are judg-
ments,” Deut. xxxii. 3. “There is none among the Gods,” says David, “like to thee, O Lord; and there is none according to thy works. All the nations thou hast made shall come and adore before thee, O Lord; and they shall glorify thy name, for thou art great, and dost wonderful things; thou art God alone.” Ps. lxxxv. 8. “The heavens shall confess thy wonders, O Lord; and thy truth in the church of the saints; for who in the clouds can be compared to the Lord? or who among the sons of God shall be like to God? God, who is glorified in the assembly of the saints, great and terrible, above all them that are about him. O Lord God of hosts, who is like to thee? Thou art mighty, O Lord, and thy truth is round about thee. Thou rulest the power of the sea, and appeasest the motion of the waves thereof......thine are the heavens, and thine is the earth; the world, and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded; the north and the south thou hast created......Let thy hand be strengthened, and thy right hand be exalted!” Ps. lxxxviii. 6.

(2.) It ought to produce in us sentiments of the most profound respect, fear and reverence towards so mighty a Being. This the prophet Jeremias declares, addressing himself to God, in these words, “There is none like to thee, O Lord: thou art great, and great is thy name in might. Who shall not fear thee, O King of nations? For thine is the glory; among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms there is none like unto thee. They shall be proved together to be senseless and foolish, a stock is the doctrine of their vanity... But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God, and the everlasting King; at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his threatening,” Jer. x. 6. The saints in heaven are penetrated with fear and reverence, on considering the wonderful works of God, how much more ought we poor mortals? Thus St. John heard these blessed spirits praising God, “Great and wonderful are thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, O King of Ages; who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and magnify thy name?” Rev. xv. 3. Even the heathen king Darius, when he saw the wonderful power of God, in delivering Daniel from the lions, immediately sent these orders to all his subjects, “It is decreed by me, that in all my empire and my kingdom, all men dread and fear the God of Daniel. For he is the living and eternal God for ever...he is the deliverer and the Saviour, doing signs and wonders in heaven and earth,” Dan. vi. 26. And no wonder the infinite power of God should produce this fear and dread of him in our minds, when we reflect what he is, and what we
are before him; the wise man proposes to us this consideration, addressing himself to God in these affecting terms: "Great power always belonged to thee alone; and who shall resist the strength of thy arm? For the whole world before thee is as the least grain of the balance, and as a drop of the morning dew, that falleth down upon the earth," Wisd. xi. 22. And Isaias, in a still stronger light, proposes to us the same important truth. "Who," says he, "hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and weighed the heavens with his palm? Who hath poised, with three fingers, the bulk of the earth, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath forwarded the spirit of the Lord; or who hath been his counsellor, and hath taught him?.....Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the smallest grain of a balance; behold the islands are as a little dust.....all nations are before him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to him as nothing and vanity," Is. xl. 13; and hence the royal prophet says to God, "Thou art fearfully magnified: wonderful are thy works, and these my soul knoweth right well," Ps. cxxxviii. 14.

(3.) This holy fear and dread of God, in order to be agreeable to him, and salutary to our own souls, must be accompanied with a continual attention to keep his commandments, and a horror at the very thought of offending so great a God by sin; our obligation to this is a necessary consequence which flows from the Almighty power of God, as must evidently appear to every human creature who seriously reflects upon it. Moses was very sensible of this, and makes use of it in a very strong light, to excite his people to fear, love, and serve God. "Circumcise the foreskin of your heart," says he, "and stiffen your neck no more; because the Lord your God, he is the God of gods, and the Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and terrible, who accepteth no person, nor taketh bribes.....Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him only; to him thou shalt adhere, and swear by his name. He is thy praise and thy God, that hath done for thee those great and terrible things, which thy eyes have seen.....Therefore, love the Lord thy God, and observe his precepts and ceremonies, his judgments and commandments at all times," Deut. x. 16, xi. 1. And indeed, what man in his senses would choose to insult a Being whose Almighty power can crush him to atoms—torment him in whatever manner he pleases, or reduce him to nothing in an instant? "The Lord killeth and maketh alive; he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth back again. The Lord maketh poor and
maketh rich—he humbleth and he exalteth," 1 Kings (Sam.) ii. 6. "See ye," says God himself, "that I alone am, and there is no other God besides me: I will kill, and I will make alive, I will strike and will heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand......If I shall whet my sword as the lightning, and my hand shall take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to my enemies, and repay them that hate me. I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh, of the blood of the slain and of the captivity, and of the bare head of the enemies," Deut. xxxii. 39. How dreadful must it be to fall into the hands of such a God, who can do what he pleases, and will not spare his enemies? The prophet Jeremias, confounded at this thought, cries out thus to God, "O most mighty, great and powerful, the Lord of Hosts is thy name: great in council, and incomprehensible in thought, whose eyes are upon all the ways of the children of Adam, to render unto every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his devices!" Jer. xxxii. 18. Hear, also, how the prophet Nahum describes the terrors of his avenging power against his enemies:

"The Lord is a jealous God and a revenger; the Lord is a revenger and hath wrath; the Lord taketh vengeance on his adversaries, and is angry with his enemies. The Lord is patient and great in power, and will not cleanse and acquit the guilty. The Lord's ways are in a tempest and a whirlwind, and clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea and drieth it up, and bringeth all the rivers to be a desert......The mountains tremble at him, and the hills are made desolate: and the earth hath quaked at his presence, and the world and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before the face of his indignation? and who shall resist in the fierceness of his anger? His indignation is poured out like fire, and the rocks are melted by him," Nahum i. 1. What a dreadful description is herein given us! How powerful a motive is this to make us obey the commands of this great God with fear and trembling. What madness and folly is it—what desperate presumption for man, who is but a worm of the earth, to dare to attack, by wilful sin, this Almighty God, who created the universe, who holds the thread of his life in his hand, and can, in a moment, let him drop into hell? What can he expect by making his God his enemy, but the loss of all good, and the incurring of all misery, both for time and eternity? The moment he engages in this desperate war, the sword of the Almighty is drawn against him, and the perils of death, judgment and hell on all sides surround him.
What madness must it be to be drawn from our allegiance to God, fly anything in this world, whether of its goods or evils? What folly to be afraid of the weakness of men, and not be afraid of the power of God? "Fear ye not the reproaches of men," says God himself, "and be not afraid of their blasphemies, for the worm shall eat them up as a garment, and the moth shall consume them as wool, but my salvation shall be for ever, and my justice from generation to generation.... Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a mortal man, and of the son of man, that shall wither away like grass? And thou hast forgotten the Lord thy Maker, who stretched out the heavens, and founded the earth. And thou hast been afraid continually all the day at the presence of his fury, who had afflicted thee, and had prepared himself to destroy thee: where is now the fury of the oppressor?.... But I am the Lord thy God who trouble the sea, and the waves thereof swell; the Lord of hosts is my name," Is. li. 7, 12. And Christ himself in the gospel draws the same conclusion from the mighty power of God, "I say to you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will show you whom you shall fear; fear ye him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say to you, fear him," Luke xii. 4.

(4.) Another noble effect which this wholesome fear of God, when accompanied with a good conscience, naturally produces in our souls, is a great and firm confidence in the protection of the Almighty, which is a source of infinite joy and consolation to us, in the midst of all the unavoidable dangers to which we are daily exposed. As nothing is more dreadful than to be at enmity with, so nothing is more desirable than to be in friendship with him, "If God be for us, who is against us?" Rom. viii. 31. The holy prophet David, whose heart, as we have seen above, was penetrated with the fear of God, and "who was delighted in the way of his testimonies above all riches, who was exercised in his commandments, and meditated upon his justifications," Ps. cxviii., thus expresses the great confidence he had in his Divine protection. "Our God is our refuge and strength, a helper in troubles which have found us exceedingly; therefore, we will not fear when the earth shall be troubled and the mountains shall be removed into the heart of the sea," Ps. xlvi. 1. "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? While the wicked draw near against me to eat my flesh, my enemies that troubled me, have
themselves been weakened and have fallen. If armies in camp
should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear; if a
battle should rise up against me, in this will I be confident,"
Ps. xxvi. 1. Now, whence does this confidence in God arise?
Who are those whom God protects? The same royal prophet
tells us: "Who is the man," says he, "that feareth the Lord.
He hath appointed him a law in the way that he hath chosen.
His soul shall dwell in good things, and his seed shall inherit
the land: the Lord is a firmament to them that fear him," Ps.
xxiv. 12. God himself confirms the same thing. "To whom,"
says he, "shall I have respect, but to him that is poor, and
little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my
words?" And a little after he adds, "Hear the word of the
Lord, you that tremble at his word; your brethren that hate
you, and cast you out, for my name's sake, they shall be
confounded," Is. lvi. 2, 5: and the beloved disciple adds,—
"Dearly beloved, if our heart do not reprehend us, we have
confidence towards God: and whatsoever we shall ask, we shall
receive of him: because we keep his commandments, and do
those things that are pleasing in his sight," 1 John iii. 21.
What a source of consolation must it be to a soul to be on such
friendly terms with the Almighty God, against whose will not
a hair of our head can fall to the ground! It was this con-
sideration which supported the valiant Judas, when attacked
by most powerful armies; that threatened to destroy the holy
place; for when numbers of the people fled away for fear, "he
calling together seven thousand that were with him, exhorted
them not to fear the multitude of their enemies, who came
wrongfully against them, but to fight manfully... for," said he,
"they trust in their weapons, and in their boldness; but we
trust in the Almighty Lord, who, at a beck, can utterly destroy
both them that come against us, and the whole world!" 2
Mach. viii. 16; and in consequence of this his confidence, he
obtained, with his handful of men, a most complete victory
over all their multitudes.

Q. 5. What do we find of wonderful in the manner in which
Almighty God exercises his power?

A. If the stupendous effects which his power has produced
are so exceedingly amazing, the admirable manner in which he
acts is infinitely more so, and infinitely exceeds the compr-
prehension of any created understanding. For (1.) when he
performs any work, however great and astonishing it may be,
he requires no length of time to complete it; he does it in an
instant: he speaks the word, and immediately the work is done.
Consider the vast fabric of this universe; what a grand production it is; what an infinite variety of beings it contains; "He spoke the word, and they were made; he commanded, and they were created," Ps. cxlviii. 5. "And God said, Be light made, and the light was made. And God said, Let there be a firmament made amidst the waters; and it was so. And God said, Let the waters that are under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so done. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the green herb, and trees yielding fruit; and immediately the earth was covered with all these productions. And God said, Let there be lights made to shine in the firmament of heaven, and to give light upon the earth; and in an instant the sun and moon, and all the stars appeared," Gen. i. What an amazing power is here displayed? Who can, in the smallest degree, conceive its greatness! What is all the power of man if compared with this? A mere nothing. The smallest work produced by man can never be performed but in some length of time, and the greater it is the more time is required; but God in an instant—in the twinkle of an eye, created the most stupendous objects.

(2.) When man has any work to do, it costs him toil and labour, and he must exert the strength he has, and after a little labour, he must rest to recruit it. But with God it is not so; every thing is easy to him, the greatest as well as the smallest; it costs him no toil, it gives him no fatigue, it requires no exertions; it is enough that he wills it, be it what it will, and his all-powerful will is instantly fulfilled. "Behold," says he, "I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; shall any thing be hard for me?" Jer. xxxiii. 27. No, no; his word alone is sufficient to create, in an instant, ten thousand worlds. Oh tremendous power! how is the mind of man confounded at the thought! Alas! "the pillars of heaven tremble and dread at his beck," Job xxvi. 11. David was amazed when he considered this mighty power, and mentions it with fear and trembling: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were established, and all the power of them by the spirit of his mouth...Let all the earth fear the Lord, and all the inhabitants of the world be in awe of him; for he spoke, and they were made; he commanded, and they were created," Ps. xxxii. 6, 8.

(3.) His Almighty power depends on no other—it is essential to himself—it is identified with his very nature—he stands in no need of any one to assist him—he alone is powerful. The world has often admired the power of kings and potentates, who have conquered nations and overturned empires, and been
the terror and scourge of their fellow-creatures; but was it by their own personal power they did so? was their power inherent in themselves? by no means: it was by the strength of other men, and of the numerous armies they commanded, that all their famous deeds were performed. But God has no need of such helps—he possesses, in himself, the plenitude of power, and by his Almighty word alone he does whatever he pleases. "Who is like to me?" says God himself, "let him call and declare... Is there a God beside me—a maker whom I have not known? I am the Lord that make all things—that alone stretch out the heavens—that establish the earth, and there is none with me," Is. xlv. 7, 8, 24.

(4.) Even in those works which a man performs by himself, what can he do without the proper tools and instruments? What can the husbandman do without his plough, or the smith without his hammer?—the soldier without his arms, or the mason without his trowel? But the great God has no occasion for any such means—his all-powerful will stands in stead of all! "By his power the seas are suddenly gathered together, and his wisdom has struck the proud one. His spirit has adorned the heavens, and his artful hand hath brought forth the winding serpent," Job. xxxi. 12. "By the word of the Lord the heavens were established, and all the powers of them by the spirit of his mouth," Ps. xxxii. 6. Now this word of God—this spirit or breath of his mouth, is not like the words of man, which requires to be pronounced by the lips and tongue, and imply some force used—some exertion made; the word of God is nothing but the internal act of his will, than which nothing can be produced, even by man himself, with greater ease and velocity. This is the three fingers with which he poises the bulk of the earth; this his palm with which he weighs the heavens; this the hollow of his hand in which he measures the waters, Is. xl. 12; this his right hand by which he does such wondrous things; this, in a word, is his beck, at which the pillars of heaven tremble, and with which alone he can destroy the whole world and reduce it again to nothing!

(5.) But what above all other considerations bewilders our imagination, and totally confounds our understanding, is, that the power of God is so amazingly great, and acts in a manner so singular, so immensely different from every thing we know, and so peculiar to itself alone, that it has no need, I don't say, of exertions and efforts, of external helps and instruments, but not even of matter to act upon, which all the works of men presuppose as existing before the smallest thing can be made by
them. But it is not so with God; take a view once more, of all the wonders of the creation, consider the mighty fabric itself, and the innumerable multitude of beings, both spiritual and material, both animate and inanimate that it contains; "Look upon heaven and earth and all that is in them, and consider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also," 2 Mach. vii. 28. Oh! here indeed we are altogether lost in wonder! what an amazing strength must that be, what incomprehensible power, which can in an instant, without the least labour or toil, by a simple act of the will create, I do not say a grain of sand, or the smallest insect, but innumerable worlds out of mere nothing, where there was not the smallest appearance of being, not even the shadow of existence before! How tremendous that Almighty Being, whose power operates even upon nothing itself, and when, as St. Paul assures us, "call eth those things that are not as those that are," Rom. iv. 17; and not only "giveth strength to the weary, but even gives force and might to them that are not!" Is. xl. 29. How vain does all the strength of man appear, when compared to the power of God! what a mere nothing are the greatest potentates of the earth, when compared to him whose name is The Almighty! "Who is like to thee, among the strong, O Lord? who is like to thee, glorious in holiness, terrible and praise-worthy, doing wonders?" Ex. xv. 11. "Thine, O Lord, is magnificence and power, and glory and victory, and to thee is praise; for all that is in heaven and earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art above all princes; thine are riches, and thine is glory, thou hast dominion over all, in thine hand is power and might, in thy hand greatness, and the empire of all things," 1 Chron. xxix. 11.

§ 2. Of the Supreme Dominion of Jurisdiction which God has over all creatures.

Q. 6. What is understood by dominion?

A. These words, strength, power, and dominion, have each their proper signification. Strength, properly signifies that personal force, vigour or ability, which one possesses in himself, and by which he can produce certain effects. Dominion signifies that right, title or authority, which one has to exert his strength on other beings. Power signifies both the one and the other; but whereas Strength more properly signifies personal abilities, whether of body or mind, which are intrinsical to the person in whom it resides; power also signifies these extrinsical abilities which one has from the help of others joined with him; as the
power which kings have, by means of their armies, or which is found in different states joined together in league or society. We have seen how infinitely great the strength and power of God are which he possesses in himself alone, and by which he can do whatever is possible to be done in heaven, in earth, and in all creatures, and even in mere nothing. We now come to consider his dominion over all things, or that supreme authority, that unlimited right, which he has, to use his Almighty power over all his creatures, in whatever manner he pleases.

Q. 7. How many kinds of dominion are there?

A. Two kinds: the dominion of jurisdiction, and the dominion of property.

Q. 8. What is the dominion of jurisdiction?

A. The dominion of jurisdiction is the authority and right that one has to govern others, to lay commands upon them, to make laws, and to enforce obedience to his commands and laws by rewards and punishments. This is the dominion which is competent to kings, lords, and potentates, and to all who possess any lawful authority over others. It always implies a corresponding obligation upon the subjects, to obey the laws and perform the commands of such lawful superiors.

Q. 9. Has God this dominion of jurisdiction over all creatures?

A. All possible dominion over all creatures essentially belongs to God, and his dominion over them, both of jurisdiction and property, is an absolute dominion, perfectly complete, and without all exception or limitation; it is also an inalienable dominion, and so essentially belongs to him, that it can never be weakened or diminished, nor is it possible for any creature ever to withdraw itself from subjection to him.

Q. 10. To what does the dominion of jurisdiction, which God has over his reasonable creatures, extend?

A. It extends to all such creatures, and to every thing they are capable of doing; for (1.) It embraces all intelligent beings, whether angels or men; from the most sublime spirit in heaven, to the lowest of the human race, from the king upon the throne, to the poorest beggar; for he is "the only Mighty, the King of kings, and Lord of lords," 1 Tim. vi. 15. "Bless the Lord," says David, "all ye his angels, ye that are mighty in strength, and execute his words, hearkening to the voice of his orders. Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts, you ministers of his that do his will," Ps. cii. 20. "Thine, O Lord," says Solomon, "is magnificence and power...thou art above all princes...in thy hand is greatness and the empire of all things," 1 Chron. xxix.
11. (2.) His authority over all these intelligent beings extends to every thing whatsoever, that he pleases to require of them; there is no action of theirs so indifferent in itself, that he cannot make the matter of a law, and require their obedience to it, under the severest penalty; his Divine will is the supreme rule of all righteousness, which every reasonable creature is indispensably obliged to obey. (3.) His Divine authority extends to all manner of punishments, which he has the most unlimited right to inflict upon those who presume to disobey him, of whatever kind, in whatever manner, and to whatever extent, his infinite wisdom and justice shall judge proper. "Who shall say to thee, O God, what hast thou done? or who shall withstand thy judgment? or who shall come before thee, to be a revenger of wicked men? or who shall accuse thee, if the nations perish, which thou hast made? For there is no other God but thou... neither shall king nor tyrant in thy sight, inquire about them whom thou hast destroyed," Wisd. xii. 12. Hence when God gave the law to his people, he began by these tremendous words, I AM THE LORD THY GOD, to put them in mind of his supreme dominion over them, and of the unreserved obedience which they essentially owed to him; and for the same reason, in many places of the law, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of Leviticus, he frequently intersperses these words, I am the Lord, and ends the whole with this clause, "Keep all my precepts, and all my judgments and do them, I am the Lord," Lev. xix. 37; showing that this alone was sufficient to engage their obedience to every thing he had commanded them, and to obviate every difficulty which their self-love, senses or reason could suggest to the contrary.

Q. 11. How does this dominion of God extend to irrational and inanimate creatures?

A. Here indeed, the sovereign authority of the Almighty shines forth in the most splendid manner; for his dominion over irrational and inanimate creatures, makes those beings sensible of his commands, though in themselves they have no sense, and procures the most exact and perfect obedience, even from those that have no understanding. His power and authority over them is such, that he may command them whatever he pleases, and whatever he commands them, his commands are instantly obeyed. "Praise the Lord," says the royal prophet, "from the earth, ye dragons and all ye deeps, fire, hail, snow, ice, stormy winds, which fulfil his word," Ps. cxlvi. 7. "Thou hast founded the earth, and it continueth: by thy ordinance the day goeth on; for all things serve thee," Ps.
cxviii. 91. "O Adonai Lord, great art thou, and glorious in thy power, and no one can overcome thee. Let all thy creatures serve thee; because thou hast spoken and they were made, thou didst send forth thy spirit and they were created, and there is no one that can resist thy voice: the mountains shall be moved from the foundations with the waters, the rocks shall melt as wax before thy face," Judith xvi. 16.

Q. 12. Are there any particular examples in scripture of this ready obedience in these creatures to the command of God?

A. Yes, there are great numbers, besides those that happened at the creation, which we have seen above (Q. 5, No. 1.) Thus Jesus Christ said to the leper, "I will, be thou clean, and immediately his leprosy was cleansed." To the good centurion, who with so great faith acknowledged this his sovereign dominion over all creatures, he made this reply, "As thou hast believed, so be done unto thee: and his servant, who was lying at home sick of the palsy, was healed at the same hour." When the disciples were overtaken at sea by a violent tempest, "raising up he commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm; but the men wondered saying, What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey him?" Matt. viii. When St. Peter's mother-in-law was "taken with a great fever, he commanded the fever, and it left her," Luke iv. 39: with many other instances of the like nature, of which the holy scriptures are full. What is still more surprising, all these creatures give him this ready obedience not only when he speaks to them himself in person, but even when he gives them his orders by the mouth of his holy servants, who commanded them in his name; witness the great and wondrous things performed by Moses and the other prophets, and particularly that of Joshua who commanded the sun to stand still, and it obeyed him; and the wonderful cure of the lame man by St. Peter, when he said: "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk... and forthwith his feet and soles received strength, and he, leaping up, stood and walked, and went in with them to the temple, walking and leaping and praising God," Acts iii. 6. To show the same supreme dominion of the Almighty over inanimate creatures, the scripture says, "He sendeth forth the light, and it goeth; he hath called it, and it obeyeth him with trembling... The stars were called and they said, Here we are, and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to him that made them," Bar. iii. 33. What amazing power! what prodigious dominion is this! of whose commands nothing is insensible, to whose orders no creature makes resistance, and whose authority
is felt, is understood and obeyed by the whole creation! How absolute! how unlimited is this Divine dominion!

Q. 13. How is this dominion of God essential to him?

A. The meaning of this is, that the supreme dominion which God possesses, he has from himself alone; it did not fall to him by lot, he did not receive it by inheritance, it was not given him by another, he did not acquire it by violent invasion, nor did he receive it from the election and by the consent of his subjects: he possesses it from himself alone, it is essential to his nature, it is intrinsically due to his infinite perfections, he possesses it in his own right, because he alone is essentially worthy of it, and because all things are the work of his hands; hence, “The four and twenty ancients fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and adore him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour, and power; because thou hast created all things, and for thy will they are, and have been created,” Rev. iv. 10; and again, “I beheld,” says St. John, “and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the ancients: and the number of them were thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, The lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them; I heard all saying, To him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction, and honour, and glory, and power, for ever and ever,” Rev. v. 11. In another place he gives us a most awful description of this supreme Lord of all, who was pleased to appear to him in all the glories of his majesty; in these words: “And I saw heaven opened, and beheld a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and with justice does he judge and fight. And his eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns, and he had a name written which no man knoweth but himself. And he was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood: and his name is called, THE WORD OF GOD. And the armies that are in heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp two-edged sword, that with it he may strike the Gentiles. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine press of the fierceness of the wrath of God the Almighty; and he hath on his garment and on his thigh written KING OF
THE SUPREME DOMINION OF GOD.

KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS," Rev. xix. 11. In which glorious name, written upon his garment and on his thigh, it is clearly declared, that sovereign and universal dominion essentially belongs to him alone; for as the scripture declares of God that Almighty is his name, Ex. xv. 3; because Almighty power essentially belongs to him; so here he carries the awful name of King of kings and Lord of lords, because he no less essentially possesses the most absolute dominion over all creatures.

Q. 14. What is meant by saying this supreme dominion of God is inalienable?

A. This is a necessary consequence of its being essential to him, and means that this supreme dominion over all creatures can never be diminished, can never be restrained, can never be lost or taken from him; he can no more cease to have it, than he can cease to be God, and creatures can no more cease to be subject to him, than they can cease to be creatures; hence he is called in scripture, the God of dominion, for thus the wise man says, "There is one most high Creator Almighty, and a powerful King, and greatly to be feared, who sitteth upon his throne, and is THE GOD OF DOMINION," Ecclus. i. 8. For this reason his dominion, like himself, is an eternal dominion and must remain for ever and ever; "Thy kingdom," says David, "is a kingdom of all ages, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations," Ps. cxliv. 13. "His power is an everlasting power, and his kingdom is to all generations: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing before him, for he doth according to his will, as well with the powers of heaven as among the inhabitants of the earth, and there is none that can resist his hand, and say to him, Why hast thou done it?" Dan. iv. 31. "And all people, tribes, and tongues shall serve him: his power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away, and his kingdom shall not be destroyed," Dan. vii. 14; and therefore, "To the king of ages, immortal, and invisible, the only God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever, Amen," 1 Tim. i. 17.

Q. 15. What effects ought the consideration of this supreme dominion of God to produce in our souls?

A. Chiefly these two. (1.) A most profound humility, a reverential awe and dread of his infinite majesty. This is what St. Peter most earnestly recommends to all, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Be thou humble, therefore, under the mighty hand of God," 1 Pet. v. 6. St Paul in like manner says, "Let us serve, pleasing God, with fear and reverence: for our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 28. And
indeed if so great veneration is shown to the majesty of earthly kings and potentates, which is scarce a shadow of majesty, if compared with God; if their subjects tremble and are confounded in their presence, so as sometime to be unable to speak a word before them; with what sentiments of veneration, with what profound respect ought our hearts to be penetrated in the presence of the most High God, the most august majesty of the increated, all-powerful King of heaven and earth? With what reverential dread and awe ought we to be overwhelmed, every time we call to mind his Divine presence? every time we hear his adorable name pronounced? "Hear, O foolish people," says he himself, "and without understanding; Will you not then fear me? saith the Lord," Jer. v. 21. Me! who am the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Me! who have the universe for my kingdom; all creatures for my subjects; for my throne, immensity; for my sceptre, omnipotence; for my diadem, eternity; for my soldiers, thunders and lightning, tempests and deluges, famines, plagues, and earthquakes; Me! whose anger none can resist; Me! who have your life in my hand, and can destroy you whenever I please; who have the whole world in my power, and can reduce it to nothing in an instant; Me! so tremendous a prince; and you worms of the earth, my creatures, my vassals, my slaves! and will you not fear me? "If I be your master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts," Mal. i. 6. O great God, truly "There is none like to thee, O Lord; thou art great, and great is thy name in might. Who shall not fear thee, O King of nations? for thine is the glory; among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms there is none like unto thee."....for "the Lord is the true God, he is the living God and the everlasting King: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his threatening," Jer. x. 6, 10. "Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket before him, and are accounted as the smallest grain of a balance...All the nations are before him as if they had no being at all and are counted to him as nothing and vanity," Is. xl. 15, 17. "What then is man, O Lord, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Ps. viii. 5. "What is the number of my days, that I may know what is wanting to me? Behold thou hast made my days measurable, and my substance is as nothing before thee; and indeed all things are vanity; every man living," Ps. xxxviii. 5. And shall this vanity, this nothing dare to set up its crest, and to walk with a high head and a stretched out neck, in the presence of the Almighty. Alas! how miserable a delusion
would this be! "For if any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiteth himself," Gal. vi. 3, and how fatal is his deception, by which the great Almighty God becomes his declared enemy, and threatens him with utter ruin and destruction! "If his pride mount up even to heaven, and his head touch the clouds, in the end he shall be destroyed, like a dunghill, and they that have seen him shall say, Where is he? as a dream that fleeth away he shall not be found, he shall pass in a vision of the night," Job xx. 6. And why so? "Behold I am against thee, O proud man, saith the Lord, the God of hosts, for the day is come, the time of thy visitation; and the proud one shall fall, he shall fall down, and there shall be none to lift him up; and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him," Jer. l. 31. "Wherefore let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, who resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble," 1 Pet. v. 6.

(2.) The other effect which the supreme dominion of Almighty God ought to produce in us, is a continual attention to do his will, and exactly to obey his holy commandments. Our obligation to this is a necessary consequence of his dominion and authority over us; and this obligation is so great that no power in heaven or earth can exempt us from it; we can no more cease to be strictly obliged to obey the commands of God, than we can cease to be his creatures; this obligation is as essential to us, as his sovereign dominion is to him. And the necessity we lie under of complying with it so absolute, that we have nothing to expect but ruin and destruction, devastation and misery, if we refuse to obey him, and rebel against him. All which will still more clearly appear, if we consider attentively (1.) That we are his creatures; whatever we are, whatever we have, we are altogether the work of his hands; he created us, and he created us out of nothing; consequently he has the most absolute power over us, and the most incontestible right to our obedience, and to every possible service we can do to him; and of course we are strictly obliged in every thing, without exception, to serve him and to obey him. Moses speaks with astonishment of the sins of his people, precisely as being an infringement of this supreme title that God has to their obedience as our Creator, and considers their disobedience as the greatest folly. "Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people? Is not he thy Father that made thee, and possessed thee and created thee?..Thou hast forsaken the God that begot thee, and hast forgotten the Lord that created thee," Deut. xxxii. 6, 18. What obligation can
any man have to obey those who have dominion over him in this world, equal or comparable to what we owe to God as our Creator, or what right can an earthly superior have to the service and obedience of those under him, equal or comparable to the title that the Creator has to the service of his creatures? What is the authority of parents over their children—masters over their servants—kings over their subjects, if compared to the authority which God has over all creatures? Alas! all earthly dominion, and all the obedience due to it, is but adventitious, accidental, partial, and temporal; but the dominion of the Creator, and our obligation to obey him is essential, indefeasible, universal, and eternal. If, therefore, it be great injury to earthly superiors, when their subjects disobey their lawful commands, who can conceive the unparalleled injury done to the Almighty Creator, when we, worms of the earth, refuse to obey him, and transgress his sacred laws? What greater title can a man have to the use and service of anything, than to that of the work of his own hands? The gardener has a perfect right to the fruits of his garden; the husbandman to the produce of his land; the builder of a house on his own property—to the use and rents of the house which he builds; the merchant to the profits of his commerce. Now we are wholly the handy-work of God; he made us what we are—he created our very substance out of nothing—every thing we have belongs to him—we are altogether his undoubted property; how incontestable, then, must his right be to all service and obedience from us! and how great our obligation to serve and obey him!

But (2.) We must further consider that God, by his Almighty power, not only created us, but he still continues, by the same Almighty power, every moment to preserve us; insomuch, that should he withdraw his hand from us for an instant, that instant we should immediately return to our primitive nothing: for as the light of the day so essentially depends upon the sun, that if the sun should cease to shine, that instant light would cease to exist, so we, and all we have, so essentially depend upon the continual preservation of God, that the moment he should cease to preserve us, we should cease to be: for "he upholdeth all things by the word of his power," Heb. i. 3. "By him all things consist," Col. i. 17. And "how could anything endure," says the wise man to God, "if thou wouldest not? or be preserved, if not called by thee?" Wisd. xi. 26. God is a self-existent, necessary, and indefectible being, perfectly sufficient for himself, and absolutely independent of any
other; but we, and all creatures, have no being of ourselves—we are nothing, and of ourselves always tend to nothing, and continually depend upon him for our very existence. How immensely does this increase our subjection to him, and our strict obligation to serve and obey him? And as we wholly depend upon him for our existence, so we equally depend upon him for every thing else without exception. It is God "who covereth the heaven with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth; who maketh grass to grow on the mountains, and herbs for the service of man; who giveth to beasts their food, and to the young ravens who call upon him," Ps. cxlvi. 8. And therefore, "The eyes of all hope in thee, O Lord, and thou givest them meat in due season; thou openest thy hand, and fillest with thy blessing every living creature," Ps. cxliv. 15. "What thou givest to them, they shall gather up; when thou openest thy hand, they shall all be filled with good: but if thou turnest away thy face, they shall be troubled; thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust," Ps. ciii. 28. See here what an immense dependence we have upon God for every thing, and consequently how immense our obligation is to serve and obey him. Nay, whatever powers or faculties we have, whether of soul or body, are all the work of the great God; they are given us by him—he can take them from us when he pleases, and they so essentially depend upon him, that without his concurrence we could not exercise them—no, not for a moment: "Without me," says Jesus Christ, "you can do nothing," John xv.; not so much as think a thought, nor speak a word, nor move either hand or foot. If a house be once built by the builder, it stands in no further need of the workman's hand for its preservation; if the seed be once thrown into the ground, it stands in no further need of the sower for its growth, and the production of its fruit; if a watch be once finished by the workman, and wound up, it suffices by itself to continue its motion: but we have such an absolute dependence upon the Hand that made us, that we can neither exist, nor increase, nor act, nor move, without his continual conservation and assistance. Who can conceive the extent of this total dependence we have on him? Judge then how immense our obligation must be to serve and obey him!

Yet this is not all; for (3.) The very end for which we have our being—the design that God had in creating us, and for which he made and preserves us, is to serve and obey him. Our blessed Saviour says of himself, "I came down from heaven,
not to do my own will, but to do the will of him that sent me," John vi. 38. And it is no less true of us, that we were created by Almighty God, and are placed by him in this world, not to do our own will, but the will of him that created us. God created this world and all things in it, not out of any necessity, nor through force, but out of his own free choice, because he was pleased to do so, and for such ends and uses as he thought proper to assign to every creature, that all might concur, in their respective spheres, to this ultimate and supreme end, to give him pleasure and glory. "Every one," says he, "that calleth upon my name, I have created him for my glory," Is. xliii. 2. And every creature promotes this glory of the Creator, by faithfully performing those effects for which he made them. Thus the sun was created to glorify God by giving light and heat; the water by serving to cool and refresh; the earth by producing nourishment to man and beast; and man was created to glorify God, by serving and obeying him. This is the very end of his being; he has no existence but for this purpose. But what an infinite obligation does this lay him under to comply with his end! How indispensable is his duty to serve and obey his Creator! Whatever is destined for any particular end, and for that alone, if either it does not, or cannot, comply with that end, is good for nothing—is to no purpose at all. If the sun should cease to give light and heat—the water to cool and refresh, and the earth to produce meat for man and beast, what would be the use of them? to what purpose would they serve? they might as well not be at all. So man, if he refuse to serve and obey God, is good for nothing; whatever he does else, is to no purpose: he is like an abortive—a mere nuisance in the eyes of his Creator. And on the other hand, as every thing is the more perfect in its kind, and the more excellent and valuable, the more perfectly it accomplishes the end of its being; so the more perfectly man complies with the noble end for which he is created, by serving and obeying God, the more excellent and perfect he is; and hence the wise man, after a long discourse on the ways of man, draws this conclusion, "Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is all man," Eccles. xii. 13; that is his whole business—his whole duty—his highest perfection—his only happiness—his all!

Add to all this, (4.) The absolute necessity we all lie under of complying with this end of our being, by serving and obeying God, seeing otherwise it is impossible for us to escape the dismal effects of his justice and vengeance: "The Lord hath made
all things for himself," Prov. xvi. 4; that is, for his own pleasure and glory; this is the great, the supreme, the ultimate end which the Almighty has in view in all his works; and in the accomplishment of this, it is impossible he should be ever disappointed; to this great end we must all unavoidably contribute, whether we will or not, for endless eternities; we can no more be dispensed with in this, than we can cease to be creatures; but here lies the great, the dreadful difference—if we cheerfully comply with the immediate end of our being in this life, by carefully serving him and keeping his commandments, we shall be happy for all eternity, in the enjoyment of God himself in heaven, glorifying his infinite goodness and mercy; but if we refuse to serve and obey him here, we shall be condemned to the eternal torments of hell hereafter, there for ever to exalt and glorify his justice. One of the two must unavoidably be our fate; glorify him we must, whether we will or not; and there is no escaping this alternative of glorifying him, either in heaven as trophies of his mercy, or in hell as victims of his eternal vengeance; by serving and obeying him here we shall secure the former; but if we disobey his holy commandments here, the latter must be our fate for ever! For God is a "God whose wrath no man can resist, and under whom they stoop that bear up the world," Job ix. 13. "Thou art terrible," says David to him, "and who can resist thee from the time that thy wrath shall break out? Thou hast caused judgment to be heard from heaven: the earth trembled and was still," Ps. lxxv. Neither is it possible for sinners to fly from his avenging justice. "There shall be no flight for them," says God himself, "and I will slay the last of them with the sword. They shall flee, and he that shall flee of them, shall not be delivered. Though they go down even to hell, thence shall my hand bring them out; and though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they be hid in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them away from thence: and though they hide themselves from my eyes in the depths of the sea, there will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them: and if they go into captivity before their enemies, there will I command the sword, and it shall kill them. And I will set my eyes upon them for evil, and not for good," Amos ix. 1. Oh! how terrible it is to fall into the hands of this avenging God! How great, then, our obligation to serve and obey him!
§ 3. Of God's Dominion of Property over all Creatures.

Q. 16. What is the dominion of property?
A. It is the authority and right which one has to the possession and the use of anything that belongs to him; so that no other can deprive him of it without a crime; and he himself is at full liberty to use it as he pleases; to sell it—to give it away—to consume it—to destroy it, or any other way to dispose of it, without being accountable to any one for his conduct. This kind of dominion belongs to every man with regard to those things which are entirely his own property.

Q. 17. Has God this dominion of property over all creatures?
A. He has, in the most unlimited manner; so that they, and every thing that belongs to them, are wholly and inalienably the property of God; he is their sole Lord and Master—he can do with them what he pleases—none can hinder him—none can resist him—nor can any one find fault with him for whatever he does—or say to him, Why dost thou so? He is absolute and independent in whatever way he chooses to treat them; he is accountable to none for his conduct towards them. This the royal prophet humbly acknowledges in these terms: “Blessed art thou, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, from eternity to eternity. Thine, O Lord, is magnificence and power, and glory and victory, and to thee is praise; for all that is in heaven and in earth is thine: thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art above all princes: thine are riches, and thine is glory: thou hast dominion over all—in thy hand is power and might—in thy hand greatness, and the empire of all things,” 1 Chr. xxix. 10. This dominion of God, the haughty Nabuchodonosor confessed in the most humble manner, in these words, after having experienced the effects of it to his cost: “And I praised and glorified him who liveth for ever and ever; for his power is everlasting power, and his kingdom is to all generations—all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing before him; for he doth according to his will, as well with the powers of heaven, as among the inhabitants of the earth; and there is none that can resist his hand, or say to him, Why hast thou done it?” Dan. iv. 32. This also was a source of comfort and confidence to the good Mordecai; for when he, and all the people of Israel, were upon the brink of destruction, from the malice of the wicked Haman, he had recourse to God for deliverance, and began his prayer in this manner—“O Lord God, Almighty King, for all things are in thy power, and there is none that
can resist thy will; if thou determine to save Israel. Thou hast made heaven and earth, and all things that are under the cope of heaven: Thou art Lord of all, and there is none that can resist thy Majesty," Esth. xiii. 9.

Q. 18. On what is this dominion of property, which Almighty God has over all creatures, founded?

A. On the same grounds with his dominion of jurisdiction, to wit, his being our Creator, our preserver, and our last end. And indeed (1.) with regard to our creation and conservation, who does not see what an immense right this gives to God to do with us what ever he pleases?—what greater property can one have in any thing, than in the work of his own hands? If a painter makes a picture—if a sculptor makes a statue—if an artist of any kind makes such a piece of work as is proper to his art, if they make these things of their own materials, and for themselves, have they not full power of them, to do with them what they please? If the painter should tear or burn his picture—if the sculptor should grind his statue to powder, or throw it into the sea, could any one find fault with them for doing so, or call them to an account for their conduct? The ready answer of each would be, It is my own, I can do with it what I please. Or could the picture itself, or the statue, if they had sense, complain of such treatment? If they did, the ready answer would be by him that made them—What injury have I done you? You had your being as a picture, or statue, from me; it was my own, and cannot I take my own again from you when I please? And what reply could be made to these answers? Now if this be unexceptionally the very nature of property, and especially over the works of one's own hands, who can conceive the supreme power that God has over us from this consideration of his being our Creator? and still more from the continual and essential dependence we have on him as our conservator? Though the painter lays on the colours on canvass, and makes the figure and form of the picture, yet he did not make the colours themselves, nor give the canvass its existence; though the sculptor cuts and carves the wood or stone, and forms it into the figure of a man, yet he did not create the substance of the wood, nor give being to the stone; but the great God not only gives us the figure and form we have, and whatever else we possess, but he gives us our very substance—our very existence—our being: he makes us what we are, not out of any matter independent on him, but he creates the very matter itself of which we are composed, out of nothing. We have nothing but what is wholly his gift; and as we
cannot subsist one instant without him, so we, and all that we
have, and all things else, still continue his absolute property,
and wholly dependent upon him. Consequently, in whatever
way he is pleased to treat us, he can do us no injury. If he
bestow any gift or benefit on us, it is the effect of his pure
liberality, without any right or title on our part to receive it;
and in giving it to us, he does not give up his property to it, but
can, without the least shadow of injustice, take it from us when
he wills. If he bestow his gifts more upon one than another,
who can find fault with him? he does no injury to those that
receive less. "Is it not lawful for me," says he, "to do with my
own what I will?" Matt. xx. 15. What do I owe you?—what
did I ever receive from you? "Who hath given me before that
I should repay him? All things that are under heaven are
mine," Job. xli. 2. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine,
saith the Lord of hosts," Hag. ii. 9. "Behold the heaven is the
Lord thy God's, and the heaven of heavens, the earth, and all
things that are therein," Deut. x. 14. "The most high ruleth
in the kingdom of men, and he will give to whomsoever it shall
please him, and he will appoint the basest man over it," Dan.
iv. 14. In like manner, if he should reduce us to poverty—
afflict us with pain—oppress us with sickness—overwhelm us
with miseries—who shall dare to complain? or who has a right
to oppose him? "Cannot I do with you as the potter, O
House of Israel? saith the Lord. Behold, as clay is in the
hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O House of Israel,"
Jer. xviii. 6. "O man, who art thou that repliest against God?
Shall the thing formed, say to him that formed it, Why hast
thou made me thus? O hath: not the potter power over the
clay—of the same lump to make one vessel into honour, and
another into dishonour?" Rom. ix. 20. "The potter tempering
soft clay, with labour fashioneth every vessel for our service, and
of the same clay he maketh both vessels that are for clean use,
and likewise such as serve to the contrary; but what is the use
of these vessels the potter is the judge," Wis. xv. And who shall
then dare to find fault with the Almighty, whatever way he shall
be pleased to treat us. "Wo to him that gainsayeth his Maker,
a shred of the earthen pots: shall the clay say to him that
fashioneth it, What art thou making? and thy work is without
hands?" Is. xlv. 9.

But (2.) This will still further appear, if we reflect on what
we have seen above, that we are created only for God—that we
have our existence only for his service and pleasure—that the
very end of our being is only to do his will. Thus all the
saints in heaven continually cry out to him, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast, created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created," Rev. iv. 11. This being the only end of our existence necessarily carries along with it such an absolute, intrinsic, and perpetual subordination, on our part to his will and pleasure, that do what he will with us—demand what service he pleases from us—cost what it may to accomplish his will, we can never have reason to complain, as if he did us any wrong, or demanded too much from us; for how can we complain for being employed, or used in that for which alone we were created, and for which alone we have any being at all. And hence if he should be pleased to overturn the whole world—to annihilate all creatures—to reduce us to ashes, who can find fault with him for it? He only uses his own indefeasible right; creatures have their being only for his pleasure, and whatever his pleasure is to do with them, he has the most just and essential title and right to do it. Hence "if he shall overturn all things, or shall press them together, who shall contradict him?" Job. xi. 10; and, "if he examine on a sudden, who shall answer him; or who can say, Why dost thou so?" Job. ix. 12. But to put this matter in its proper light, let us consider the right that man has to use all the inferior creatures as he pleases, precisely because they were created for his use and service. For when God proposed to create man he said, "Let us create man to our image and likeness; and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping thing that moveth upon the earth." And when he had created him he gave him this dominion in these words, "Rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth. Behold I have given you every herb, bearing seed upon the earth, and all trees that have in themselves seed of their own kind, to be your meat." Gen. i. 26. Here then we see that the common Creator of all things was pleased to make these inferior creatures for the use of man; that this is the immediate end of their being, and consequently he has received from his Maker a dominion of property over them. Now how does he use this right? He uses it every way he pleases—in whatever manner he sees it can contribute to his service, convenience, pleasure, or amusement, without paying the smallest regard to any suffering, oppression or pain, to which his doing so may expose these poor creatures themselves. Some of them he deprives of their natural liberty, for his
amusement; he uses one kind of them to hunt after, pursue, and kill others, for his diversion; some he loads with heavy burdens for his service; others he condemns to hard and daily labour for his work; nay, others he kills and skins, and cuts into pieces, and devours their very flesh for his food. Now if by using them in this manner he does them no injury—if he only uses his own right given him by their and his own common Creator, although he neither be the author of their being, nor the ultimate end for which they were created, and although the right he has to their service be not essential to him but given him by another; how infinitely greater right has the supreme Lord of all, to dispose of us as he pleases, and do with us whatever he wills, seeing we have our very being from him, and that the ultimate, essential, and necessary end of our being is to serve and please him? There is an infinitely greater distance between God and man, than between man and the meanest insect; and he has an infinitely stronger right to do with us what he pleases, than we can possibly have to do according to our will with the most worthless of the creatures. And though he should require the most severe service from us, though he should command us to be burnt alive or crucified for his honour, we could have no more reason to complain of him as imprudent, unjust, or cruel for doing so, than the ox or the sheep could complain of us for cutting their throats and eating them. The just answer to such complaints from them, would be, that they were made for our use, and have their being for that end; and the same answer, but with infinitely greater reason, Almighty God would make to any such complaints from us, "You have your being for no other end but to contribute to my pleasure!"

Q. 19. What consequences flow from this supreme dominion of property which God has over us?

A. A great and most important duty flows as a necessary consequence from this truth, namely, that we ought not only to be penetrated with an awful dread and reverential fear of this tremendous sovereign, who has us so absolutely in his power, and on whom we so essentially depend; that we ought not only to make it the whole study and the continual employment of our life to please and serve him, by faithfully obeying his commandments, which is the very end for which he gives us our being; but also, that amidst all the sufferings and crosses which he may be pleased to send upon us in this our mortal life, of whatever kind they may be, and from whatever immediate source they may flow, we should preserve our souls
in a perfect resignation to his holy will, receive them with all submission from his hand, and suppress every emotion of discontent, repining, or murmuring at them. We ought to remember, that he alone is our absolute Lord and Master, and that in whatever way it is his will and pleasure to deal with us, he only uses his own right; that we have our existence for no other end but to contribute to his pleasure and do his will, whatever it may cost us; that he can never be unjust, or cruel, or injurious to us, whatever way he treats us, but we are highly unjust and injurious to him, and counteract the very end of our creation, when we repine or murmur against him, and refuse to serve him in the way in which he desires our service. Wherefore, in the midst of all our afflictions, however grievous they may be, whether in soul or body—whether of a public or private nature—whether in our goods, persons, or reputation, or of whatever kind they may be, the thought that he who sends them upon us, is our sovereign Lord ought to keep down every rising of our passions, or impatience, and make us receive them all with the most profound humility and resignation.

And indeed if the extrinsical, adventitious dominion which man has over the inferior creatures, and was given him by their common Creator, authorizes him to use them as he pleases, without regard to what it may cost them; how much more must the absolute, essential, and independent dominion which God has over us, entitle him to do with us whatever he has a mind? and how much ought the sense of this supreme right of God to do so, to suppress all murmuring on our part, whatever trials or afflictions he may be pleased to send us? In fact, this is the effect which this consideration produced in all the holy servants of God, in the midst of their severest trials. Thus when Job was reduced in a few hours, from the greatest opulence to the most abject poverty, when he lost all his children at once by a violent death, and was himself afflicted with a most loathsome disease; “In all these things, Job sinned not by his lips, nor spoke he any foolish thing against God; but fell down upon the ground and worshipped, and said...naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it has pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord,” Job i. 21. In like manner, when the venerable High Priest Eli was told, by Samuel the prophet, all the evils that were to come upon his family, he heard the whole without the least emotion, and at the end he expressed himself in the most submissive manner, “It is the Lord, let him do what is good in his sight,”
1 Kings (Sam.) iii. 18. David was remarkable for his profound submission to this sovereign dominion of God, insomuch that when he was flying from the face of his rebel son Absalom, in great distress and affliction, and Semei came out against him and cursed him in a most outrageous manner, and one of David's officers said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse the king? I will go and cut off his head;" David, considering Semei's behaviour as a trial sent him from God, replied, "Let him alone, and let him curse; the Lord hath bid him curse David, and who is he that shall say, Why hath he done so?" 2 Kings (Sam.) xvi. 9. Also upon this same occasion of his flying from Absalom, when he sent back the ark of God to the city of Jerusalem, he said, "If I shall find grace in the sight of the Lord, he will bring me again, and will show me both it and his tabernacle. But if he shall say to me, Thou pleasest me not; I am ready, let him do that which is good before him," 2 Kings (Sam.) xv. 25. And he tells us that this was his general conduct upon all such occasions, "Thou hast made me a reproach to the fool, I was dumb and I opened not my mouth; because thou hast done it," Ps. xxxviii. 9. Jesus Christ himself, the King of saints, when oppressed in the garden with grief and sorrow, so as to fall into an agony and sweat of blood, cried indeed to his Father, if it were possible, to remove from him the cup of his passion, but immediately added with a most profound submission, "Yet not my will, but thine be done." And when afterwards Saint Peter drew his sword to defend him, he expressly forbade him, would allow no resistance, and gave this only reason, "The chalice," says he, "which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" John xviii. 11. In a word, such was the conduct of all the saints of God, and in so doing they found a source of great consolation in all their sufferings; such also would it be to us, if by a frequent and serious meditation on the supreme dominion which Almighty God has over us, and over all creatures, and the total subjection we owe to him, we endeavour, on all occasions, to resign ourselves to his holy will, and pay that entire submission to his sovereign authority, and the dispositions of his holy providence, which he so justly deserves, and which our duty so strictly requires from us.

Q. 20. As God has such an unlimited power and authority over us, does he use it in an arbitrary and despotic manner, and treat us with harshness and severity?

A. Far from it; nothing can be more engaging than the tenderness and affection with which he exercises his dominion.
over us. If he lay some commands upon us, he takes care they be only such as are most just and reasonable in themselves, and always tend to our real happiness; if he require of us to mortify our irregular passions, he does so, because he knows they are the greatest enemies of our peace, and that our indulging them would make us miserable: the service he requires from us is exceedingly moderate, is of no manner of use to himself, and cannot add the smallest mite to his happiness, but its whole tendency is to our good, and yet he rewards it in the most ample manner, as if he had reaped some great advantage from it. He treats us not as servants but as children, assuring us that he has the bowels of a father towards us, yea that his love to us exceeds that of the tenderest mother to her darling child. He knows our weakness, and has compassion on our miseries, and treats our frailties with the greatest indulgence; even when we offend him, he pities and spares us, and is ready to receive us again with open arms, upon our repentance. See how beautifully the scripture declares this his admirable disposition towards us:—"Great power always belong to thee alone, and who shall resist the strength of thy arm?.....but thou hast mercy upon all, because thou canst do all things, and winkest at the sins of men, for the sake of repentance. For thou lovest all things that are, and hastest none of the things which thou hast made; for thou didst not appoint or make anything hating it.....But thou sparest all because they are thine, O Lord, who lovest souls," Eccl. xi. 22. "For so much then as thou art just, thou orderest all things justly, thinking it not agreeable to thy power to condemn him who deserveth not to be punished. For thy power is the beginning of justice, and because thou art Lord of all, thou makest thyself gracious to all....for thou, being master of power, judgest with equity, and with great favour disposest of us," Eccl. xii. 15. Oh! what sentiments of gratitude and love ought this to excite in our souls, towards so bountiful a master! Let us only consider seriously, and have a lively sense imprinted in our souls of who he is, and who we are! how absolute his power, and how unlimited our subjection! how infinite his dominion, and how total our dependence! what he might justly demand from us, and what he does require of us! and this cannot fail to convince us of the immense obligation we lie under to serve and obey him to the utmost of our power, and to submit with the most profound respect and resignation to every dispensation of his providence towards us. From all which we see in the most convincing manner, how strictly we are bound to serve God,
and how indispensable our duty in justice is to obey his holy commandments.

Q. 21. Whence arises our duty in gratitude to obey God?

A. From his infinite love towards us, and the wondrous effects of this love, in the benefits he has bestowed, and daily does bestow upon us.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE INEFFABLE GOODNESS AND LOVE OF GOD TOWARDS MAN AND OUR DUTY IN GRATITUDE TO KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS.

Q. 1. What things are chiefly to be considered in explaining the goodness and love of God to man?

A. They are all comprehended by St Paul under four heads; to wit: The length, the breadth, the height, and depth of his love; and the apostle earnestly prays for his beloved Ephesians, that they may have a full sense and comprehension of the infinite goodness of God in all these its four dimensions. "I bow my knee," says he, "to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that......being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length, and height and depth; to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God," Eph. iii. 14, 17. In which words he also declares, that this holy knowledge of the love of God and of Christ, is the powerful means to fill us with the fulness of God, that is, to implant in our souls all heavenly virtues and graces, by which God dwells in our souls, and satiates all our powers and faculties with the sweets of his divine presence; and consequently is a most efficacious motive to excite and enable us to keep all his holy commandments.

§ 1. Of the Length of the Love of God.

Q. 2. What is meant by the length of the love of God?

A. By this is meant its eternal duration. Great honour would it be for us, had Almighty God loved us only from the first moment of our existence, when we were first formed in our mother's womb; but his love for us was long before we had
a being; and what he said to his prophet Jeremias, is, in regard
to his love for us, equally true of every one of us, "Before I
formed thee in the bowels of thy mother, I knew thee," Jer. i. 5.
Still more honourable for us would his love have been, had it
only begun with the creation of the world, but it was prior to that
also; even before the world began, we were present in the mind
of God; before he created the heavens or the earth, he knew
us, and we were the objects of his love; so that each of us may
say with truth, what the Divine Wisdom says of itself, "The
depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived...the
mountains with their huge bulk had not yet been established;
before the hills I was brought forth," Prov. viii. 24; to wit,
I was conceived in the knowledge of the Almighty, and brought
forth in the resolution which his love for me had taken to bring
me in due time into being; even then he had appointed to heap
his benefits upon me, and chose me to be a member of his holy
church, and to sanctify me by the blood of his Son Jesus:
"He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the
world, that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in
charity," Eph. i. 4. But how long before the foundation of the
world did God know and love us? Oh! here no term can be
assigned; the knowledge and love of God are as essential as
himself; what he knows and loves in time, he knew and loved
from all eternity. From all eternity then we were present in
the mind of God; from all eternity he loved us; from all
eternity he decreed to bring us into being in time; to draw us
out of nothing, in which we then were, and to bestow upon us
all those admirable effects of his love, compassion, and good-
ness for us, which since the first moment of our existence we
have actually received. "I have loved thee," says he himself,
"with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking
pity on thee," Jer. xxx. 3. Oh! what an amazing idea does it
give us of the love of God, to reflect that so great a being, per-
fectly happy in himself, and who had not the smallest need of
us, should from all eternity have been employed in thinking
upon, and loving such poor ungrateful creatures as we are!
What return can we make for such eternal goodness? How
incumbent must it be on us, always to employ our thoughts on
so loving an object, and make it our continual study to love
and serve him, and to obey his holy commands!

§ Of the Breadth of Divine Love.

Q. 3. What is meant by the breadth of the love of God for
us?
A. By this is meant the extension of his benevolence towards us, which embraces all that immensity of benefits and favours which his love for us makes him daily bestow upon us here; and that still greater store of good things which he has prepared for us hereafter. For to love, is, properly speaking, to wish well to the beloved object, and do him good; and as, the doing good is the natural effect, and the most convincing proof of the sincerity of our love, so the more excellent the good is, which we do, and the more numerous the benefits which we confer, the more we show the greatness of our love to the object of it. In this view then, the benevolence or good-will of God to man, is no less infinite in its breadth or extension, than eternal in its duration; for it embraces all possible good things, both in the order of nature, and in the order of grace, and in the order of glory, both for soul and body, for time and for eternity; vast numbers of which he actually does bestow upon all mankind; and all others he wills and desires to give us, and undoubtedly would do so, did not we ourselves, by the perversity of our hearts, put a hinderance to the designs of his mercy towards us.

Q. 4. What is understood by the goods in the order of nature?

A. All those benefits of God, which we enjoy as human creatures, and which are common to all mankind in general. Now concerning these, the following particulars are chiefly to be considered:—First; our very being itself; which is wholly the gift of God; for as to the share our parents had in bringing us to existence, it is so trifling when compared to what is done by God, that it does not even deserve to be named; they, neither created the soul, which is our most excellent part, nor did they form any member or portion of the body; no, not even a hair or a nail, nor did they so much as know, whether we were to come to light or not, or what kind of a being we were to be. This the holy mother of the seven Machabees was very sensible of when exhorting her sons to suffer martyrdom, she put them in mind that they owed their whole being to God alone who created it: and that if they lost it for his sake, he would restore it to them again; but as for me, says she, “I know not how you were formed in my womb; for I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life, nor did I frame the limbs of every one of you. But the Creator of the world formed the nativity of man,” 2 Mach. vii. 22. Now this benefit of our existence is a favour of the highest value, far exceeding any other natural good that we can enjoy; it is indeed the foundation of all other goods
whatsoever, since without it, we can enjoy no other; hence our Saviour says, "Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment," Matt. vi. 25, and do we not cheerfully part with every thing we possess, to preserve our life when it is in danger? yea, to preserve or recover any of our senses or faculties which are necessary for the welfare of our being? Now, if we are so much indebted to our parents for the part they contributed to this so great a benefit, though it was so little, and though they were only as mere instruments in the hand of God, that we can never repay them to the full of what we owe them on that account; what must our obligation be to the Almighty, to whom we owe the whole of what we are, who created our soul out of nothing, who with the most exquisite wisdom and art formed all our members in our mother's womb, gave us all our senses, powers, and faculties, an understanding to know him, and a heart to love him, our memory, our power of speech, and in short every thing we are or have? what return of gratitude can we make to him, that can bear the smallest proportion to what we owe him? How indispensable then must our duty be, to make him at least all the return we can, by loving him, serving him, and obeying his holy commandments? But to show the greatness of this benefit in its proper light, the following considerations are not to be passed over.

The first is, that in bestowing this favour upon us, Almighty God, out of his pure goodness and predilection for us, gave us the preference to an infinite number of others, whom he could have produced to being instead of us, but who never were, and never will be, brought to light. The infinite wisdom of the Creator saw from all eternity in the most distinct order, all that innumerable multitude of human creatures, which it was possible for his Almighty power to create, and being resolved according to the views of his incomprehensible providence, to give existence only to a determinate number, he was pleased to make choice of us to be of that happy number, leaving all the rest in an eternal nothing! How highly favoured are we by this election! What singular privilege is here shown to us! The question was the bestowing of one of the greatest of favours; the number of those who were capable of receiving it was infinite; none of them had the smallest merit which could entitle them to a preference; all were upon a perfect equality; all were equally nothing. Why then exclude such infinite numbers, and favour us? why give us the preference to them, who were all equally deserving? No other answer can be given to this
question, but, because it was the good-will and pleasure of God
to do so; it was the sole effect of his love for us, to prefer us
to so many thousands. But how greatly does this predilection
on the part of God increase our obligation to him? What an
immense favour was done to Noah and his family when they
were saved from the common destruction in which all the rest
of mankind was involved? How great was the predilection
shown to Lot, in delivering him alone from the dreadful per-
dition to which all his fellow-citizens in Sodom were condemned!
How great then the love shown to us by Almighty God, in
bringing us to being, preferably to so many others, and extri-
cating us from that eternal nothing in which millions of possible
creatures must remain for ever? Especially when we reflect
that Noah and Lot were good men, friends and servants of God,
antainted by the crimes, which brought such a judgment on the
others: but we had no kind of merit, no claim, no title on our
part, which could in the smallest degree move God to give us
the preference.

The second consideration on this matter is this; that instead
of having any merit on our part to move God to prefer us to
others, and bring us into being, there were the strongest reasons
against it; to wit, the numberless crimes and injuries which we
have committed against him since we had our being; the abuse
of that free will with which he has adorned us, and which is
the highest ornament of our nature; and our unparalleled in-
gratitude in making use of our very members, powers, and
faculties, and of the numberless benefits he has bestowed upon
us, as so many arms by which to affront and offend him. All
this he foresaw distinctly before he created us, yea, he saw it
from all eternity, for "The works of all flesh are before him,
and there is nothing hid from his eyes; he seeth from eternity
to eternity, and there is nothing wonderful before him," Ecclus.
xxix. 24. Yet nothing of all this was able to hinder the effects
of his predilection for us. "I see," says he, "the injuries such
an one will do if I create him. I see the abuse he will make
of all his faculties both of soul and body, to my dishonour;
evertheless let my goodness triumph over his ingratitude. I
will create him preferably to others, though I know that many
of these others would be more faithful and grateful to me."
Here we see a prodigy of love indeed beyond all example, and
which, if we have any feeling in our heart at all, cannot fail to
melt it down in affections of the most sensible gratitude
towards so merciful and bounteous a father. Add to all this, in
the third place, that he not only gave us our being, for once,
when he first made us, but he continues to renew the same gift every moment of our existence by his continual conservation, without which we should, if left to ourselves, in an instant return to our original nothing; and though our daily sins against him justly deserve that he should abandon us and reduce us again to non-existence, yet his infinite goodness still bears with our infidelity, and keeps us in being, to give us time and place for repentance.

Lastly, he not only preserves us in being, but he continues also to preserve all our senses, powers, and faculties, and to cooperate with us in every, even the smallest use, we make of any of them; for as without his conservation we could not subsist one moment in being; so without his continual cooperation we could not move hand nor foot nor tongue, nor use any one of those faculties he has given us; for “It is he who giveth to all, life and breath and all things,” and it is “in him we live and move and have our being,” Acts xvii. 25, 28; and therefore the prophet Isaiah says to him, “Lord, thou hast wrought all our works for us,” Is. xxvi. 12. What stupendous goodness is here again displayed! what a total dependence have we upon our God! what a faithful and assiduous assistance does he give us. But what return of gratitude do we owe to him for it!

If now, in the second place, we leave this little world of our own being and take a view of the great world around us, what amazing effects of the infinite goodness of God towards us, do everywhere present themselves before us! wherever we turn our eyes we find the footsteps of his love, every creature we perceive about us is a proof of his goodwill to us; every creature co-operates to our service, to supply our wants; to relieve our necessity, or to afford us some convenience or comfort; and every one of course displays the beneficent hand of God in having created us for that purpose. The heavenly bodies, in their unwearyed circuit, enlighten our daily habitation, and were created to shine in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day and the night; for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years,” Gen. i. 14. Who can enumerate the numberless benefits we reap from the fire, the water, and the air? What innumerable services do we receive from the earth, both in the vast variety of plants, and herbs, and fruits, and trees which it produces on its surface, and the manifold treasures of useful minerals it contains in its bowels? What shall we say of the living creatures about us, which yield us food and raiment in such variety and abundance, and labour and toil in any way
we please both for our service and pleasure? All these things the goodness of God created for the use and service of man; whom "he set over the works of his hands; he subjected all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen; moreover the beasts also of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, that pass through the paths of the sea," Ps. viii. 6; that all might contribute to his happiness, and convince him of the unbounded extent of the Divine goodness towards him. Let us open our eyes and look around us, and see if there be any one thing we have occasion for, but he has provided for us. What delicacy of love has not our good God shown us even in the minutest things? What gratitude and love ought we not then to return to him for such unmerited goodness.

Not only does his love to us appear in the manifold benefits he heaps upon us by means of the inferior creation, but still more resplendently in the numberless favours which, by the disposition of his providence our fellow-creatures, men are made the instruments in his hands of procuring for us. What shall we say of the care and attention paid to our wellbeing by our parents in our infant state, when we cannot move a finger to help ourselves? What shall we say of the benefits of society, in which kings and princes, magistrates and rulers are employed by his Divine providence to protect and defend the meanest amongst us, to secure our property and defend us from injuries? What shall we say of that strict command he lays upon all, to love their neighbour as themselves, and the powerful motive he brings to enforce it, assuring us that what we do to the least of our brethren, he esteems as done to himself? But what is still more surprising, he has made such a connexion among mankind, by the amiable disposition of his providence, as to lay us under a necessity of helping and serving one another, insomuch that it is impossible for us to promote our own welfare without at the same time contributing to that of others, even of those we never saw, yea, even of those that are yet unborn. It is a most delightful consideration to reflect on this, and to see what multitudes of men the goodness of God makes use of to serve us. Take one instance in the morsel of bread we eat for our daily aliment. How many of our fellow-creatures have been employed to prepare it for our use? How many in labouring the ground where it grows; in sowing the seed; in reaping the corn; in trashing it out in the barn; in grinding it at the mill; in bringing it into market; in baking it into bread? How many artists have been employed in preparing the necessary instruments for each of these to perform their respective
parts, in such a multiplicity of labours, carpenters, smiths, masons, and others such; nor is this all; the seed itself, from whence the bread is produced, could not have been sown, if it had not been provided by the labour and industry of others, and that in a continued succession of husbandmen, and of all the various artists necessary for their work, from the very beginning of the world. What an amazing idea does this give us of the wonderful providence of God, and of his goodness towards us, in employing such multitudes of our brethren, who knew nothing about us, who existed ages before we were in being, in preparing that morsel of bread which we eat for our daily food; and in putting them under such unavoidable necessity of not being able to serve themselves, without at the same time helping us; the same reflection is equally to be made in regard to every good thing we enjoy; in all the different kinds of meat and drink, and clothing, in the various arts and sciences, in the studies of the learned, in the good books they publish, and in every thing else that any one does for the good and benefit of mankind: What infinite obligations then do we not lie under to our great Creator, whose amiable providence has so beneficently disposed all things for our good? Truly "The Lord is sweet to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works!" Ps. cxliv. 9.

Great indeed and admirable are all these effects of the Divine goodness; but it does not stop here: he not only has ordained all the visible creatures about us for our service, but he even employs his heavenly spirits, those beings of such superior excellency to us, to be our guardians and attendants, to guide and direct us, to guard us from our enemies, and to defend us from many dangers; "There shall no evil come unto thee," says the royal prophet, "nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling; for he hath given his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways; in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone," Ps. xc. 10. "And "are they not all ministering spirits," says St. Paul, "sent to minister for them, who shall receive the inheritance of salvation!" Heb. i. 14. What an exalted idea does this give us of the boundless love of God towards us, when we consider, who we are; who are sent to guard us; who he is that sends them, and for what end! Oh! how greatly are we honoured by such goodness! how great is our obligation then to correspond with it, by a faithful obedience to his holy commandments.

Such then are the general effects of the Divine goodness towards all mankind; for "he makes his sun to rise on the
good and bad, and raineth on the just and unjust," Matt. v. 45. It is true, in the distribution of these common benefits, he divides many of them in different degrees, giving to some more and to others less; but even this he does for the most beneficent purposes, according as he knows to be most proper for the real good of the receivers. And this very unequal division of many of these benefits, gives each of us another just occasion to see the particular goodness of God towards himself, by considering how liberal he has been to us, above what he is to many others. How many do we find of our brethren, who are of the same mould and nature with ourselves, deprived of many of those good things which we enjoy, and subjected to many sufferings, of which we are free? Some are confined to their beds with lingering and painful distempers; some deprived of the integrity or use of some of their members; many lame, blind, deaf, palsied, half men! many reduced to extreme penury, without a house to receive them, or clothes to cover them, and forced to seek their bread from the charity of others. Let us cast our eyes on all such, and ask ourselves this question, Why are these so miserable, and I so happy? why so many good things to me, and so few to them? perhaps my sins deserve much worse than theirs, and yet God treats me with such lenity and mercy! What an ample field does this afford us, to admire and adore the infinite goodness of God to us, and to excite in our hearts the most sensible affections of gratitude and love to him!

Nor must we imagine, that because these common effects of the Divine goodness were made for all mankind in general, therefore God has not any special regard for each of us in particular: his holy word assures us that "he made the great and the small, and hath equally care for all," Wisd. vi. 8; that "not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your heavenly Father, or is forgotten before God;" yea, that, "the very hairs of our head are all numbered," Matt. x.—Luke xxi. The goodness of God extends to each one in particular, no less than to all in general; and when he gave being to all the other creatures for the use of man, he had each individual before his eyes, in regard to the proportion of those benefits he intended for him, as distinctly as he had the whole: so that each one of us in particular can say with the greatest truth, what the Divine Wisdom says of itself in another sense, "When he prepared the heaven, I was there; when with a certain law and compass he prepared the depths—when he established the sky above, and poised the fountains of waters—when he compassed the sea.
with its bounds, and set a law to the waters, that they should not pass their limits—when he balanced the foundations of the earth, I was with him," Prov. viii. 27. Though I had not then received existence, yet I was distinctly present to his infinite knowledge, as the end of that great work, for whose use and service he created it, and on the same ground it is that, though Christ died for all men universally, yet St. Paul applies his death no less entirely to himself than if he had died for him alone. "I live in the faith of the Son of God," said he, "who loved me, and delivered himself for me," Gal. ii. 20. How endearing a consideration is this! and what an affecting motive does it afford, to excite us still more and more to love and serve that good and gracious God, who shows such special love and kindness to each of us in particular! Such, then, is the extension or breadth of the love of God to man, considered only in regard to those good things which are in the order of nature. But what an incredible addition does it receive, when to these are also joined the far more excellent goods which are in the order of grace and glory! But as it is in them that we see the sublimity or height of the love of God, we shall particularly consider them under that view.

§ 3. The Height of the Love of God.

Q. 5. What is meant by the height of the love of God?

A. By this is understood the inconceivable excellency and sublimity of those supernatural effects of his love, which he bestows upon us in this world by his grace, and has prepared for us in the world to come, in his eternal glory; which are so far superior in value and dignity, to all those goods which he bestows on us in the order of nature, that they will not admit of a comparison with them; and have this further advantage also over them, that whereas Almighty God in giving us all kinds of natural goods, gives us only the use of them, reserving to himself the full power of taking them from us again when he pleases; he has, on the contrary, bound himself by his sacred promise, that when once he bestows his supernatural goods on a soul, he will never deprive her of them again in this world, unless by her own fault in the abuse of her free will, she forfeits them and throws them from her, and in the world to come, when in possession of his eternal glory, he will put her under the happy impossibility of ever having it in her power to forfeit it.
Q. 6. Wherein does the sublimity of these supernatural goods consist?

A. It consists in this: that by communicating his Divine grace to our souls, he gives us a new manner of existence—a supernatural being—a spiritual dignity, by which we are exalted from the low condition of our native dust, and servile state, to the sublime and eminent dignity of being really and truly the intimate friends of God, yea, of being his adopted children—partaking, in a most admirable manner, of his Divine nature, and united to him by the strictest ties of union. St. Peter, speaking of this effect of Divine grace, says, “He has given us great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the Divine nature,” 2 Pet. i. 4. And the wise man says of it, that “it is a vapour of the power of God, and a certain pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty, and therefore no defiled thing can come near it—that it is the brightness of eternal light.....and conveyeth itself into holy souls, and maketh friends of God,” Wisd. vii. 25. Hence our blessed Saviour says, “I will not now call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you,” John xv. 15. Here he not only shows the dignity of being his friends, to which he raises us, but also the intimate manner in which he treats us as his friends, by communicating his heavenly truths to us. But the effects of his love do not stop here. By this participation of himself, which his grace communicates to our souls, he exalts us to that inconceivable dignity of being his adopted children, “Behold,” says the beloved disciple, “what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God,” 1 John iii. 1. Now what human understanding can frame any idea of this most exalted dignity that we, who are by nature dust and ashes, and of ourselves nothing and vanity, should be so highly honoured as to be not only allowed, but even entitled to address ourselves to the great, eternal, incomprehensible Being, before whom the pillars of heaven tremble, with the confidence and affection of children? “for you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons whereby we cry Abba, Father,” Rom. viii. 15.

Now this dignity of being sons of God, is not an empty title of honour, which brings no solid advantage to our souls, but it is a dignity which carries along with it a full and perfect right to the greatest of all good—to the only real good—the
possession of God himself, and of his eternal glory in his kingdom; "We are the sons of God," says St. Paul, "and if sons, heirs also: heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17. Heirs of that eternal kingdom, in which God himself is our reward exceeding great! Heirs of that happiness which so far exceeds every thing in this world, that it cannot enter into the heart of man to form any conception of it! A happiness the possession of which can never be taken from us, and which will never cloy! a kingdom that will never end, where "we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord," 1 Cor. iii. 18; and where "we shall be like to him, because we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. So that what David says shall then justly be applied to us, "I have said, You are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High," Ps. lxxxi. 6; but what human mind, yea, what angelical understanding is capable of forming any adequate idea of such an extraordinary favour—such excessive liberality—such singular magnificence—such sublime benefits as the infinite love of God has here bestowed upon us? It has gone so far, that his omnipotence can go no further; for what can God Almighty give better or more excellent than himself? What return of gratitude and love are not we bound to make for such unparalleled goodness? Is there any obedience we can give him, which can bear the smallest proportion to what we owe him? And shall we refuse that little which we can do? What shocking ingratitude would this be!

But though the infinite goodness of God has prepared these most sublime goods for all mankind, and wills and desires that all should partake of them, for "God will have all mankind to be saved," 1 Tim. ii. 4; yet it is no less true that through the unsearchable judgments of the Almighty, which are always just and righteous, all mankind are not brought to the actual participation of them; "but he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy," Rom. ix. 15. Hence there opens to our consideration another most affecting view of the infinite love of God to us Christians, to whom he has shown such unspeakable mercy, by calling us to the knowledge and love of his Son Jesus, by making us members of his holy church, and by giving us, in her holy communion, so many and such powerful graces and helps to enable us to secure to ourselves the eternal inheritance of his glory; while thousands and thousands of others upon the face of the earth, of the same nature with ourselves, are left in ignorance and error, wandering about like sheep without a
pastor, in the paths that lead to destruction. Oh! here, indeed, we are lost in wonder, and confounded! Whence so singular a predilection for us? Whence so privileged a vocation? Whence that eternal love, by which "he hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in charity; and by which he hath predestinated us into the adoption of children, through Jesus Christ, unto himself?" Eph. i. 4. Whence that infinite goodness, which "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us to the kingdom of his beloved Son?" Col. i. 13; which has made us fellow-citizens with the saints and domestics of God—built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets; Jesus Christ being the head corner stone? Eph. ii. 18. Whence that amazing bounty, that we should be to God "a chosen generation—a kingly priesthood—a holy nation—a purchased people, that we may declare the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness to his admirable light?" 1 Pet. ii. 9. Was there any thing in us that could move God to show us such a distinguished mercy? No, no. "He hath called us by his holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the times of the world," 2 Tim. i. 9. "Not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us... that being justified by his grace, we may be heirs, according to hope, of life everlasting," Titus iii. 7. O how inexhaustible a fund we have of pious meditation, to show us the unspeakable love of God towards us Christians, and to excite in our souls the most feeling affections of love, gratitude, and praise to our gracious benefactor! What must have been our doom had we not been called to the true faith of Christ? How undeserving are we of such a mercy? How ungrateful have we hitherto been for it? How many thousands of those who are deprived of it, would have made a better use of such a favour than we have done! Why then has the Almighty bestowed that mercy upon us, and refused it to them? What do we owe him for such a distinguished favour? Do or suffer what we can for his sake, will it ever bear any proportion with what we owe him? How great, then, is our duty to serve him! How immense our obligation to keep his holy commandments, and do all we can to please him!
§ Of the Depth of the Love of God.

Q. 7. What is meant by the depth of the love of God?

A. Love, when sincere and disinterested, is a most surprising affection; once it gets entire possession of the heart, it sticks at nothing to accomplish its end; fixedly bent on doing good to its object, it thinks no treasures too great to be bestowed upon it; no sufferings too severe, no humiliations too mortifying to be undergone for its sake. In the sublime excellency of the treasures bestowed on man by Almighty God, we have seen the amazing height of his love for us; in the greatness of his sufferings, and the unheard of humiliations to which his ardent love for us has reduced him, in order to secure those treasures for us, we see the stupendous depth of Divine charity. To have a clear and affecting sense of this dimension of the love of God to us, the following truths must be seriously pondered.

(1.) Even the strongest love among men, when it is despised and disregarded, and especially when repaid with injuries, is apt at last to be changed into the most violent hatred; yes, as its very greatness and fervour increases, the malignity of the evil return it meets with, so it affords the stronger incentives to a resentment and revenge. Now where shall we find a love equal or comparable in any respect to the love of God for man? Or where shall we find a love, which has been so unworthily treated, so ill repaid, and so ignominiously abused, as his Divine love for man has been? Notwithstanding the numberless favours with which his infinite goodness condescends to caress us, in order to excite a grateful correspondence on our side, we, unhappy we! regardless of his infinite majesty, unmoved by his innumerable benefits, in contempt of the eternal happiness of his kingdom, in order to gratify some vile passion, or obtain some trifling interest, or the vain fumes of worldly applause think nothing of turning our backs upon our eternal lover, renouncing the sublime dignity of being his children, despising his friendship, and affronting him in the most outrageous manner, by preferring the vilest creatures, even the devil himself, before him! For what else do we do, every time we commit a mortal sin against him? And what has been the general conduct of mankind, since the unhappy fall of Adam to this day, but to treat the majesty of God in this unworthy manner? And this ungrateful behaviour is what he frequently complains of in the most moving terms. "Hear, O ye heavens," says he, "and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I
have brought up children, and have exalted them, but they have despised me!” Is. i. 2. “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and ye gates thereof, be very desolate, saith the Lord; for my people have done two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water,” Jer. ii. 12. “What is there that I ought to do for my vineyard, that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought wild grapes?” Is. v. 4. Now what might not justly be expected from such shocking ingratitude? Could we wonder if the Almighty should put on all the terrors of his justice to avenge the cause of his so much injured love? Did he not do so to the rebel angels, creatures of a much more excellent nature than man? Did he not, for their very first offence, disinherit them that instant, divest them of all his graces, and by an irrevocable sentence, “deliver them to infernal ropes, drawn down to the lower hell, into torments?” 2 Pet. ii. 4. Why has he not treated us in the same manner? Only the excess of his love for us can answer this question. Great indeed must this excess be, since the excess of our ingratitude does not extinguish it? O how truly does his holy word declare this! “Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it,” Cant. viii. 7. No; all that deluge of wickedness, with which he is daily affronted by man, is not able to put a stop to the effects of his goodness towards us; he still continues to heap favours upon us, he bears, with the most inconceivable patience, the innumerable outrages we daily do against him, and “waiteth that he may have mercy upon us,” Is. xxx. 18.

(2.) Great indeed must that love be, which such ingratitude on our part is not able to destroy, but all this is little to what it has further done: even from our very ingratitude itself, it redoubles its strength, and from what ought in all reason to extinguish it, it takes occasion beyond measure to increase its ardours; so that “where sin abounded grace hath abounded more,” Rom. v. 20. Our good God, not content with so patiently suffering the numberless sins we daily commit against him, and restraining during the whole course of our mortal life the punishment we so justly deserve, has even gone further and fallen upon a most effectual means to free us from that eternal misery to which we must otherwise have been condemned at last by his infinite justice. But what means, great God! how stupendous! how unheard of! and how much above what could ever have entered into the heart of man to imagine! Well knowing that every offence committed against him, from
the infinite malice it contains, requires in strict justice a satisfaction of infinite value, and seeing that neither man himself, nor any other pure creature was able to pay this debt for us; he himself, O unheard of Goodness! O unbounded love! he himself, our offended God, takes upon himself to pay this debt for us, his ungrateful offenders! and for this purpose, "he debases himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man, and in fashion found as a man," and in this his human nature, "he humbles himself, becoming obedient to death, even the painful, ignominious, disgraceful death of the cross," Phil. ii. 7. And there, with the last drop of his precious blood, discharges the heavy debt of eternal punishment, which we his ungrateful, outrageous enemies, owed for our sins to the Divine justice! O stupendous effects of Divine love! which nothing but infinite wisdom could invent, infinite goodness make choice of, and infinite power execute: O excess of charity! so much superior to the utmost reach of the human understanding, that without the supernatural light of Divine faith, it must appear as fables, dreams, or incredible chimeras! and is indeed, "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles, foolishness," 1 Cor. i. 23.

(3.) But who are we for whom the Almighty God shows such amazing love? Alas! "All nations are before him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to him as nothing and vanity," Is. xl. 17. David is astonished that God should so much as remember us. "What is man," says he, "that thou art mindful of him?" Ps. viii. 5; and in another place, "Lord, what is man, that thou art made known to him? or the son of man that thou makest account of him? man is like to vanity; his days pass away like a shadow," Ps. cxliii. 3. Job is no less surprised at such a wonder. "What is man," says he, "that thou shouldest magnify him? or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?" Job vii. 17. "He cometh forth like a flower, and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow, and never continueth in the same state. And dost thou think it meet to open thy eye on such an one?" Job xiv. 2. And yet this God of infinite majesty, who has no need of man, who is perfectly happy in himself without man, not only is mindful of him, yea, has him always in his remembrance; not only makes account of him, and magnifies him, not only opens his eyes upon him, but sets his heart and love upon him to such a degree, as to open all the veins of his sacred humanity, and shed the last drop of his precious blood to save him!

(4.) Could it ever have entered into the heart of man to
have asked this of God? who would ever have been so audacious as to have said to him, "O great God, your justice pursues me for my sins, I cannot escape it; I therefore beseech you to come down from heaven and make yourself a man, that you may die upon a cross to save me from the punishment I so justly deserve." Ridiculous, without doubt, insolent and rash to the highest degree, would every one deem him, who should have made such a prayer, not only to God, a Being of infinite greatness, but even to any earthly prince, yea to any friend or brother, though he had never in the smallest degree offended him. And yet this very thing, which it could never have entered into the heart of any one to ask him, the sovereign of the whole universe has done of his own accord for the very rebel slave who was a traitor to him!

(5.) To lay down our life for another, be he friend or equal or superior, is the highest pitch to which our love can go; "for greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friend," John xv. 13; and, hence, though we are the creatures of God, infinitely obliged to serve him, and made only for his pleasure, yet we think we love him to the highest degree if we offer ourselves to die for him; how excessive then must his love for us be, who has done that for us, his slaves and enemies, than which we could not do more for our dearest friend, for the most loving father, for God himself?

(6.) "Why did Christ," says St. Paul, "when as yet we were weak, according to the time, die for the ungodly? for scarce for a just man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man some one would venture to die; but God commendeth his charity towards us, because when as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us," Rom. v. 6; and died for us on purpose by his cruel and ignominious death to obtain for us remission of those very sins which we had committed against himself, and by which we have so often outraged and insulted his Divine majesty.

(7.) What shall we say of the endearing solicitude, anxiety, and concern, which our good Lord shows so continually, lest by our negligence and folly we should lose those invaluable benefits, which by his death he procured for us? his infinite love is not satisfied with having done and suffered so much to obtain them; he is no less solicitous that we should accept them, and profit by them, than if his own happiness depended on our doing so. How many warm invitations does he make to us throughout his holy scriptures, to return to him and accept the offers of his mercy? how many affecting lamentations at our obstinacy in
refusing? how many reproaches? how many threats? how many invitations? how many promises, to induce us to return from our sins to his friendship? "Turn ye, turn ye," says he, "from your evil ways, and why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Ezech, xxxiii. 11. How many preachers of his holy word does he send to sinners? how many spiritual guides and directors, as his ambassadors and ministers to treat with them on the great business of their reconciliation with him, as if he had been the offender and they the offended? "He hath given us to the ministry of reconciliation," says St. Paul, "we are therefore ambassadors for Christ, God as it were exhorting by us. For Christ we beseech you, be reconciled to God," 2 Cor. v. 18, 20. With what assiduity does he himself stand at the door of our heart, entreating us, by his holy inspirations, to open the door and make up our peace with him, promising the most endearing favours if we do so? "Behold," says he, "I stand at the door and knock, if any man shall open to me the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him and he with me,; to him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me on my throne, as I also have overcome and am set down with my Father on his throne," Rev. iii. 20. "O how good and sweet is thy spirit, O Lord, in all things! therefore thou admonishest them that err, and speakest to them concerning the things wherein they offend, that leaving their wickedness, they may believe in thee, O Lord," Wisd. xii. 1; yea, though they be obstinate in their wickedness, and deaf to his calls; though they reject them, and despise them, and even ridicule them: yet he does not for all that entirely abandon them; but as long as life remains he continues from time to time to invite them, to entreat them, and even "waiteth that he may have mercy on them," Is. xxx. 18; forgetful in a manner of his own majesty, he follows them with an unspeakable humility and patience, waiting the proper seasons for their conversion. What an amazing goodness is this in him? He is the master, we the slaves; he the offended, we the offenders; he the judge, we the criminals; he stands in no need of us, but we stand extremely in need of him; and yet he humbles himself in such an extraordinary manner to make us of slaves his friends, and we refuse it! to give us pardon of our sins, and we reject his offers! to free us from the guilt of our crimes, and we choose rather to remain sullied with their defilements. But if at last the sinner yield to such endearing importunity, and turn his heart to the Lord his God, by sincere repentance, who can conceive the joy, the exultation, the fondness with which his Divine goodness receives him? Witness
his behaviour to St. Mary Magdalene, Zaccheus the publican, and many others, and the parables he makes use of for this purpose of the lost sheep and prodigal son. St. Paul considering the inscrutable judgments of God, and his wondrous providence, cries out with astonishment, "Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! how incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways!" Rom. xi. 33. But how great reason have we to cry out with equal astonishment, O the depth of the goodness and love of God to man! How incomprehensible are the extreme humiliations to which it has reduced him! how inconceivable the endearing abasements to which he condescends for our sake!

(8.) Finally, who is this God who shows such amazing love for us? Oh this indeed is a consideration the most wonderful of all. For he is a being of infinite majesty, of infinite perfection, of infinite greatness; immense, incomprehensible, omnipotent; absolutely independent on any other, and on whom every thing else essentially depends; possessing in himself the plenitude of all possible happiness, which is so immense that nothing can possibly be added to it, and so entirely his own, that the smallest iota can never be taken from it; he is the origin and source of all being, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; so perfectly abounding in all good, that the most assiduous services of all mankind could not add one grain to his essential happiness, nor all the blasphemies of hell give him the smallest concern or affliction; a being in short of such excellency, that the whole creation in comparison with him, is a mere nothing! And yet this great God condescends to love this nothing with such amazing goodness! "Behold," says Moses, all astonished at this thought, "heaven is the Lord thy God's, and the heaven of heaven, the earth and all things that are therein: and yet the Lord has been closely joined to thy fathers and loved them," Deut. x. 14. O wonder of wonders indeed! that so great, so sublime a being should deign to think of us miserable sinners; but how much greater wonder is it that he should love us in such an amazing manner! if a man like ourselves had shown us so great love as to die for us, it would have been considered as a most extraordinary and surprising instance of love; how much is it above all astonishment that the King of heaven should do so; what return shall we make to him for such inconceivable goodness? Tobias the son, reflecting on the favours he had received from the angel Raphael, whom he believed only to be a man like himself, by name Azarias, though himself so highly indebted to him that he said,
"Brother Azarias, if I should give myself to be thy servant, I should not make a worthy return for thy care," Tob. ix. 1. But afterwards, when Raphael discovered himself to be an angel both to the father and son, their astonishment rose to such a pitch in reflecting that so sublime a being should have shown them so much love and kindness, that "they were troubled, and being seized with fear they fell upon the ground with their face......and there being prostrate for three hours they blessed God," Tob. xii. 16, 22. What ought then to be the feelings of our hearts, who have received favours infinitely more valuable than what Tobias received from the angel, and from a personage of a dignity infinitely superior to all the angels in heaven together? O how powerful a motive ought this to be, to engage us for ever in the love and service of our good God, and excite us to bless and praise his holy name continually; frequently repeating with the holy prophet, and from a heart filled with gratitude and love, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all that he hath done for thee; who forgiveth all thy iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion; who satisfieth thy desire with good things," Ps. cii. 1. "Thou art my God, and I will praise thee, thou art my God, and I will exalt thee. I will praise thee, because thou hast heard me and art become my salvation," Ps. cxvii. 28. "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify thy name for ever. For thy mercy is great towards me, and thou hast delivered my soul out of the lower hell," Ps. lxxxv. 12. Wherefore "I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God, while I have my being. Let my speech be acceptable to him, but I will take delight in the Lord," Ps. ciii. 33; and I will show the sincerity of my heart by a constant observance of his holy commandments, for, "with my whole heart I sought after thee; O Lord, let me not stray from thy commandments. Thy words have I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against thee. I have been delighted in the ways of thy testimonies, as in all riches. I will meditate on thy commandments: and I will consider thy ways. I will think of thy justifications; I will not forget thy words," Ps. cxviii. Oh happy those who enter into the spirit of these holy sentiments, and keep the commandments of their God! Happy for time! happy for eternity! They shall receive the hundred fold in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting.
CHAPTER IV.

OF OUR HAPPINESS IN THIS LIFE, IF WE KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS.

Q. 1. If true happiness even in this life, can only be found in the service of God, and in keeping his commandments, whence comes it that we are naturally so averse to his service?

A. One of the things that chiefly discourage us from serving God and keeping his commandments, is the false persuasion we have, that all the rewards of virtue are reserved for another world, whilst in this present life, it is accompanied with great difficulties and sufferings; and as we are naturally very much attached to present happiness, we cannot think of bereaving ourselves of those objects, in the enjoyment of which we imagine this happiness consists, or of suffering those miseries which we suppose would render us at present unhappy, even for the expectation of eternal bliss in the life to come. This however is a very unreasonable conduct; for though it were true, that the rewards of virtue were all reserved for the next life, this would, by no means, be a just reason to hinder us from pursuing it, when we consider on the one hand, the imperfection, insufficiency, vanity, insecurity, mutability, and short duration of all present enjoyments; and on the other hand, the perfection, excellency, dignity, stability, and eternity of that happiness and bliss, which God has prepared for us in his kingdom. But in fact, this is so far from being the case, that we can aver, with all truth, that the only real happiness even in this present life, can only be found in the service of God, and in the faithful observance of his holy commandments. It is true indeed, this happiness does not appear at first sight: the philosophy of Christ is like himself, "humble and mean" to the outward appearance, but within it is all divine: in the eyes of worldly-minded people, nothing is more foolish or despicable, "it is a scandal to the Jews, and a folly to the Gentiles; but to them that are called it is the power of God," 1 Cor. i. 23. And it is only those that set themselves in earnest to study and practise it, who find to their happy experience, the admirable felicity which it brings to its votaries: so that we may justly say of it to worldly-minded people, what our Saviour says on a different occasion, "Oh that thou hadst but known in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!" Luke xix. 14. It is therefore principally by trial that we can be convinced of this truth, as God himself
assures us by his prophet; for when his people proposed this very difficulty, and said, "He laboureth in vain that serveth God, and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinances, and that we have walked sorrowfully before the Lord of hosts? Wherefore now we call the proud people happy, for they that work wickedness are built up, and they have tempted God, and are preserved." To this God answers, by declaring the special care he has of the just; and ends with these words, "You shall return (to wit, from your evil ways,) and shall see the difference between the just and the wicked; and between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not," Mal. iii. 14, 18. Happy therefore are all they who set themselves in earnest to serve God; they will soon find to their delightful experience, how much it is their interest to do so. But although it be chiefly by experience that we come to be thoroughly convinced of this, yet both the sacred scripture and reason itself, founded on the Divine word, concur to assure us in the strongest manner of the certainty of this most important truth.

Q. 2. What are the direct proofs from scripture of the happiness of a virtuous life?

A. We have the following testimonies among others: (1) "O taste and see," says the royal prophet, "that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him," Ps. xxxiii. 8; and a little after it is added, "they that fear the Lord shall not want every good thing," verse 10. Here the royal prophet, from his own experience, exhorts all others to try, in order to be convinced of the happiness of serving God. (2.) Solomon in his admirable book of the Ecclesiastes, after he has considered all the ways of man, and declared from his own experience the vanity and folly of all the pleasures and enjoyments of this life, draws at last this admirable conclusion from the whole, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is all man," Eccles. xii. 13. This is all man, says he; that is, not only all his duty, all his perfection, but also all his happiness, his only true and real felicity; for he draws this conclusion in opposition to the vanity of all earthly happiness, which he had been exposing in all the former part of his discourse. (3.) Our blessed Saviour tenderly invites us to his service from the consideration of the happiness to be found in it, and the sweetness and easiness of it. "Come to me," says he, "all you that labour and are heavy laden and I will refresh you; take up my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is sweet, and my burden light," Matt. xi 28. Consider each of these
words; they are full of heavenly sweetness, and more than sufficient to convince us, that our real happiness, even in this life, is only to be found in the service of that Divine Master who pronounces them. But his infinite goodness, not content with so solemn a declaration in general, in another place descends to more particulars, and makes this sacred promise, confirmed with his usual asseveration: "Amen, I say to you, there is no man, who hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel, who shall not receive a hundred times as much now in this time......and in the world to come, life everlasting," Mark x. 29. Here we see, that the Son of God, who is truth itself, expressly distinguishes between the rewards of virtue in the next life and in this, and passes his sacred word for the latter as well as for the former. Now it is impossible that his promise should be made void; for "heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass;" consequently those who in earnest serve God, shall not only be rewarded with eternal bliss in the next life, but even here shall receive the hundred fold, that is the only true and solid happiness of their souls, so that although those who have no experience of the happiness of a virtuous life cannot comprehend this, yet in reality those who sincerely love God, are alone the truly happy.

§ 1. True Happiness not to be found in Worldly Enjoyments.

Q. 3. But how can this be, since the adversity of the good, and the prosperity of the wicked, are so common in the world, that they are to many an occasion of scandal, and the subject of admiration and astonishment to all?

A. To understand this we must observe, that there are two kinds of happiness and two kinds of misery of which we are capable in this life; the one is external and the other internal. External happiness consists in the enjoyment of all those things which are agreeable to flesh and blood—a good state of health—a life of ease, and abundance of the good things of this world, which gratify our sensuality, our vanity, and our curiosity; such as riches, honours, a good name, the esteem of others, amusements, diversions, and the like; all which give pleasure and contentment to our self-love, and are pleasing to our passions and natural appetites: and this is the happiness which the world promises to its votaries. External misery, on the other hand, consists in being deprived of these things, and afflicted with their contrary evils, which give pain and distress to our self-love, and to all our natural inclinations. Internal
happiness consists in the inward peace and content of the mind, fully satisfied in itself, and free from the boisterous storms of violent passions: and internal misery consists in the discontent and disturbance of the mind, dissatisfied in itself, and torn asunder with its passions. With regard to these two different kinds of happiness and misery, we must observe,

(1.) That they are, by no means, so connected together as always to accompany one another; for a man may have great abundance of external happiness, and yet not be happy in his own mind; as on the contrary, he may be perfectly happy and content in his own mind, though deprived of external happiness. The apostles were perfectly happy in their own interior, and yet utterly deprived of all external happiness; and who had greater abundance of all the good things of the world than Saul and Herod? and yet they were far from being happy in their own mind, from the violent passions that raged there. In like manner, a man may be in the highest degree of exterior misery, and yet be far from being miserable in his own mind, as was the case with the martyrs, and with the poor beggar mentioned by Thaulerus, and many others; as on the contrary, one may be exceedingly miserable in his own interior, even in the midst of external happiness; of which we have daily examples before our eyes in the world.

(2.) That though a man have abundance of all earthly enjoyments, even in the highest degree, yet he can never be truly happy if he have not, at the same time, peace and contentment in his own mind; and on the contrary, if a man be really possessed of inward happiness, if he enjoy peace of mind, and be fully satisfied in his present state, though he be deprived of all worldly enjoyments—though he be in poverty and sickness—though he be despised and calumniated, or whatever else he has to suffer, yet that man is truly happy in himself. Hence the wise man says, “Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasures without content,” Prov. xv. 16. The apostles were poor and mean in the world: and when thrown into prison, loaded with chains, and scourged in a most ignominious manner, yet were so happy and content in their own interior, that they rejoiced at these their sufferings!

(3.) The most ample possession of external happiness is utterly incapable, of itself, fully to satisfy the mind of man, or procure to him that internal peace and contentment in which true happiness consists. This we see from daily experience, both in ourselves and others. We often flatter ourselves with
the hopes, that if we had such and such a thing, we should be content and happy; but no sooner do we get it than we find ourselves disappointed, and as far from being satisfied as ever. Some new desire intrudes itself upon us—some new object, which we did not think of before, presents itself to our mind, in the acquisition of which we expect to find the wished-for contentment; but the moment we are in possession of it, we find ourselves no nearer that happiness we wish for than before. We may, indeed, find a flattering joy, a little self-complacency and empty satisfaction, on acquiring the present object of our desires, and this may continue for a little time, while the phantom of novelty lasts; but whenever this is dissolved, the soul begins to feel her former hunger, and that mighty void again appears within, which no created object is capable to fill up: "The eye is not filled with seeing," says the wise man, "neither is the ear filled with hearing," Eccles. i. 8. "A covetous man shall not be satisfied with money, and he that loveth riches shall reap no fruit from them," Eccles. v. 9. Nay, the same Divine oracle assures us, that it is as impossible to satisfy the desires of man with any earthly object, as to fill hell and destruction: "hell and destruction are never filled; so the eyes of men are never satisfied," Prov. xxvii. 20. Solomon gives us the most convincing proof of this, from his own experience. If ever any man could have been happy in the enjoyments of this world, he surely was the man; he had it entirely in his power to gratify every wish of his soul, and he sets himself on purpose to do so, and see if it would make him happy: "I said in my heart," says he, "I will go and abound with delights, and enjoy good things......I made me great works—I built me houses and planted vineyards—I made gardens and orchards, and set them with trees of all kinds—and I made me ponds of water, to water herewith the wood of the young trees. I got me men servants and maid servants, and had a great family; and herds of oxen, and great flocks of sheep, above all that were before me in Jerusalem: I heaped together for myself silver and gold, and the wealth of kings and provinces; I made me singing men and singing women, and the delights of the sons of men; cups and vessels to serve to pour out wine; and I surpassed in riches all that were before me in Jerusalem, my wisdom also remained with me. And whatsoever my eyes desired, I refused them not, and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure, and delighting itself in the things which I had prepared; and I esteemed this my portion, to make use of my own labour." After such an ample enjoy-
ment of all earthly pleasure, would we not conclude that Solomon was happy indeed? Yet it was quite the reverse; he declares in what follows not only that his heart was not satisfied, but that he found himself rather more miserable than before. “And when I turned myself,” says he, “to all the works which my hands had wrought, and to the labours wherein I had laboured in vain, I saw in all things vanity and vexation of mind, and that nothing was lasting under the sun,” Eccles. ii. Observe what he says; he not only found vanity in all these enjoyments, that is, an incapacity of satisfying his soul, but he found them accompanied with vexation of mind!

It must further be observed, that this vexation of mind which accompanies even the possession of these enjoyments is infinitely increased, so as even to render the soul completely miserable in the midst of them, if there be any one violent passion unsubdued or unsatisfied. Ahab, king of Israel, had all that abundance of earthly happiness which a great and powerful prince can be supposed to possess. In the midst of his enjoyments he cast his eye on a vineyard adjoining his palace, and wanted to purchase it from Naboth the proprietor; but he, unwilling to part with the inheritance of his fathers, refused to sell it to the king. What was this poor man’s vineyard to a king who had so many vineyards of his own, and possessions of all kinds in abundance? Yet, all he had besides was incapable to content him, while this vineyard was refused him; the want of it alone made him miserable in the midst of his plenty; and thus the scripture describes his situation on getting the refusal: “And Ahab came to his house angry and fretting, because of the word that Naboth had spoke to him, saying, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers; and casting himself on his bed he turned away his face to the wall, and would eat no bread,” 3 Kings xxi. 4. How convincing a proof is this of the insufficiency of all earthly goods to satisfy the soul of man, since the want of such a trifle could make even a great king miserable? No courtier perhaps was ever more in favour with his prince than Haman was with king Ahasuerus. This great emperor “advanced Haman and set his throne above all the princes that were with him. And all the king’s servants that were at the doors of the palace, bent their knees and worshipped Haman, for so the emperor had commanded them,” Esth. iii. 1. In the midst of all this grandeur, Mordecai the Jew, from a principle of religion, refused to pay him this homage of bending the knee before him as he
passed by: This trifling appearance of disrespect from a person whom Haman had every reason to despise, was such a sting to his pride, that it was sufficient alone to embitter his happiness, and rendered him, in the midst of every other thing his heart could desire, completely miserable. The scripture thus describes his situation: "And Haman was exceedingly angry; but dissembling his anger and returning to his house, he called together to him his friends and Zares his wife; and he declared the greatness of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and with how great glory the king had advanced him above all his princes and servants!......and whereas I have all things," said he, "I think I have nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting before the king's gate," Esth. v. 9. Good heavens! what an instance is this of the vanity of all earthly things, when we see such a trifle capable of embittering all their sweets, and of making one miserable in the midst of such abundance of them!

Another circumstance, which no less clearly shows the impossibility of finding true happiness in the enjoyments of the world, is this—that whereas nobody in this life can be free from various crosses, disappointments, and afflictions—no abundance of worldly enjoyments can possibly deliver their possessor from these sufferings, or support the mind in peace and tranquillity under them; they cannot ease pain—they cannot relieve from sickness—they cannot support the soul under infamy and disgrace, and much less can they give the smallest ease when the mind itself is oppressed with dejection, melancholy, or despair. "What will you do," says Isaias to all such, "in the day of visitation, and of the calamity which cometh from afar? to whom will ye fly for help; and where will you leave your glory?" Is. x. 3. The unhappy king Antiochus is a convincing proof of this: After a number of victories and great conquests, by which he increased his power and glory to a great degree, at last he met with a disappointment in attacking a rich city, which he wanted to plunder, and was obliged to depart from it in great sadness; and in this situation news was brought him of the defeat of one of his other armies by the Jews, and that they had again repaired the city and temple, which had been defaced and polluted. "And it came to pass, when the king heard these words, that he was struck with fear, and exceedingly moved; and he laid himself down on his bed, and fell sick for grief because it had not fallen out to him as he imagined: and he remained there many days, for great grief came more and more upon him, and he made account that he
should die: and he called for his friends and said to them—Sleep is gone from my eyes, and I am fallen away, and my heart is cast down for anxiety. And I said in my heart—Into what tribulation am I come, and into what floods of sorrow, wherein now I am, I that was pleasant and beloved in my power!” 1 Mach. vi. 8. See here how one disappointment, and a piece of bad news, undermined at once the happiness he had in all his other enjoyments; nor were they able to support him under the load of grief and dejection into which he was fallen, and of which he soon after died.

And this brings us to another consideration, which still further shows how incapable all worldly enjoyments are, to give us that peace and content of heart in which alone true happiness consists; and that is the instability of all these enjoyments, and the certainty we have that in a short time we must be for ever torn from them by death. What solid peace or content can a man enjoy in the possession of any earthly pleasure, when he reflects it may be taken from him—that he must be soon deprived of it—that he must for ever lose it, without the smallest hope of ever recovering it again? Nay, the more attachment he has to it while he possesses it, the more his torment must be at the thought of losing it. And when the hour of death approaches, who can conceive the agony of his soul? If he has passed his days in disobedience to the law of his Maker, and a neglect of his salvation, as is always the case with those who seek their happiness in worldly enjoyments, what misery must his be at the hour of death, from the sight of a deceitful world that now forsakes him; from the stings of a guilty conscience which now upbraids him; from the expectation of a dreadful judgment that now awaits him; from the indignation of a just God whom he has provoked; from an endless eternity that opens to his view; and from the secret voice that tells him in the bottom of his heart, that this eternity will be to him an eternity of woe? What will his riches then avail him? What consolation can his past pleasures then afford him? What support can all the honours of this world then yield him, to comfort his dejected soul against this load of sorrow? And what solid happiness, or content of mind, can a man find in any earthly enjoyments, if he ever allow himself to think a moment on what his latter end will be?

But (4.) Instead of finding happiness and peace of mind in these external enjoyments, we find that they are, generally speaking, destructive of internal happiness; and if we set our heart upon them, and give way to the natural bent of our minds
towards them, they are the principal source of our internal misery. Who can conceive the misery, anxiety, solicitude, and trouble of mind to which a man is continually exposed, who sets his heart on riches, and seeks his happiness in them? "All his days are full of sorrows and miseries," says the wise man, "even in the night he doth not rest in mind; for ......to the sinner God hath given vexation, and superfluous care to heap up and to gather together." Eccles. ii. 23—26. Besides, "They that will become rich fall into temptation, and the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For covetousness is the root of all evils, which some desiring have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows," 1 Tim. vi. 9. How can a man be happy in such a situation, and with such dispositions? Nay, the Holy Ghost assures us, not only that "The eye of the covetous man is insatiable in his portion of iniquity," but immediately adds, "he will not be satisfied till he consumes his own soul, drying it up," Ecclus. xiv. 9; and as for all our other irregular attachments to the enjoyments of this world, the same sacred truth assures us that they war against the soul, instead of giving her peace, and if yielded to, will make us a joy to our enemies. "Dearly beloved," says St. Peter. "I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires, which war against the soul," 1 Pet. ii. 11. And St. Paul thus describes what he had to suffer from this intestine war, excited in his soul by the desires of the flesh: "I know," says he, "that there dwelleth not in me, that is in my flesh, that which is good; for to will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good I find not. For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do......I find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me; for I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man; but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Rom: vii. 18. To the same purpose St. James declares, that all our miseries and dissensions arise from our unmortified lusts. "From whence are wars and contentions among you?" says he, "Come they not from this: your concupiscences which war in your members? You covet and have not—you kill and envy, and cannot obtain," James iv. 1. Hence the wise man says, "Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will." If thou give to thy soul her desires,
she will make thee joy to thy enemies," Ecclus. xviii. 30. And of the truth of this we are convinced by experience itself; for, what is the source from whence our troubles of mind commonly arise? Is it not the disappointments of our desires of external objects? We set our hearts upon riches, sensual pleasures, the praise and esteem of others, and the like; we wish for these things—we expect to find happiness in the possession of them—we labour—we toil to acquire them—we are in a continual agitation of mind in pursuit of them; now all elevated with hope in the view of success, and now as much dejected with fear and sorrow when we meet with disappointments; sometimes tormented with spleen against those who envy or oppose us; sometimes racked with despair when they get the victory over us. If at last we lose the object of our wishes, we are oppressed with sorrow for the loss of an imaginary happiness we could never have attained; and if we gain our desire, we are vexed with disappointment to find our expectations of happiness so exceedingly frustrated: yet, untaught even by experience itself. we set out after some other object with the same ardour—we pursue it amidst the same torments, and we are treated in the end with the same disappointment. So incapable are all external enjoyments to make us happy, and so destructive are they, when we set our hearts upon them, of that internal peace and content of mind, in which alone true happiness consists! The prophet Isaias thus describes the folly and misery of those who seek their happiness in these things, and not in God, "Your lips," says he, "have spoken lies, and your tongue uttereth iniquity......They trust in a mere nothing, and speak vanities; they have conceived labour; and brought forth iniquity. They have broken the eggs of asps, and have woven the webs of spiders; he that shall eat of their eggs shall die, and that which is brought out shall be hatched into a basilisk. Their webs shall not be for clothing; neither shall they cover themselves with their works—their works are unprofitable works......their thoughts are unprofitable thoughts; wasting and destruction are in their ways. They have not known the way of peace, and there is no judgment in their steps; their paths are become crooked to them; every one that treadeth in them knoweth no peace!" Is. lxx. 3.

(5.) The setting our hearts on the enjoyments of these external goods, of riches, honours, pleasures, and the like, and seeking our happiness in them, is not only destructive of that internal quiet and content of mind, which alone can make a man truly happy in this present life; but, what is of infinitely
greater importance, it is always exceedingly dangerous, and for
the most part entirely destructive of our eternal happiness in
the life to come. Our blessed Saviour declares this in express
terms in the gospel, when he says to his disciples, “Amen, I
say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom
of heaven; and again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to
pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter
into the kingdom of heaven,” Matt. xix. 23. And no wonder;
for it is exceedingly difficult for a person to possess riches and
abundance of the good things of this world, and not contract a
love and attachment to them? and when the heart becomes
once attached to them, who can conceive the depth of iniquity
into which this attachment is capable of plunging the poor
soul? Hence the scripture thus cautions us against this danger:
“If riches abound, set not your heart upon them,” Ps. lixi. 11.
Now there are several grievous sins, to which the very possession
of riches naturally exposes the poor soul, and experience itself
teaches us, how few escape from falling into them; the word of
God attests the same thing: “If thou be rich thou shalt not be
free from sin,” Ecclus. xi. 10. The reason is, because abun-
dance of riches gives one the means of easily gratifying all his
passions, and every desire of his heart, and considering the
depravity of our nature, it is not an easy matter to resist the
violence of our passions when we have it in our power to in-
 dulge them. Hence nothing is more common than to see the
rich people of the world become proud, and over-bearing, self-
conceited and vain-glorious; and the scripture assures us that,
“The house that is very rich, shall be brought to nothing by
pride,” Ecclus. xxi. 5. Forgetfulness of God and of the con-
cerns of the soul, is another pernicious effect of riches and
worldly enjoyments, as fatal experience shows us. Moses was
very sensible of this sad effect of worldly prosperity, and there-
fore foreseeing the great favours of this kind, which God was to
bestow upon his people in the land of promise, he warmly
exhorts them to guard themselves against this delusion: “The
Lord thy God,” says he,........“will bring thee into a good land,
......a land of wheat and barley, and vineyards......a land of
oil and honey, where without any want, thou shalt eat thy
bread and enjoy abundance of all things......that when thou
hast eaten and art full, thou mayest bless the Lord thy God,
for the land which he hath given thee. Take heed and beware,
lest at any time thou forget the Lord thy God, and neglect his
commandments......Lest, after thou hast eaten and art filled,
hast built goodly houses, and dwelt in them: and shalt have
herds of oxen and flocks of sheep, and plenty of gold and silver
and of all things, thy heart be lifted up, and thou remember
not the Lord thy God......lest thou shouldst say in thy heart,
My own might and the strength of my own hand hath achieved
all these things for me. But remember the Lord thy God, that
he hath given thee strength," Deut. viii. The same warning
he gives them on several different occasions, and particularly in
the sixth chapter of this book of Deuteronomy, which shows how
solicitous he was about this matter, and how much he appre-
hended this fatal effect of worldly prosperity; but foreseeing
that they would not observe in future ages his wholesome
advice, and that the hearts of his people would be corrupted by
the delusions of prosperity, he thus describes the goodness of
God to them, and foretells and complains of their ingratitude
to their God: "He set his people on high: that he might eat
the fruits of the field, that he might suck honey out of the rock,
and oil out of the hardest stone, butter of the herd, and milk
of the sheep, with the fat of the lambs, and of the rams of the
breed of Basan, and goats, with the marrow of wheat, and
might drink the purest blood of the grape: The beloved grew
and kicked: he grew fat and thick and gross, he forsook God
who made him, and departed from God his Saviour. They
provoked him by strange gods, and stirred him up to anger with
their abominations," Deut. xxxii. 13. God himself often com-
plains of this by his prophets, and particularly by Osee, where
he says, "According to their pastures they were filled and made
full; and they lifted up their heart and have forgotten me,"
Os. xiii. 6. In all which passages we see that pride and a for-
getfulness of God are indeed the natural, and but too fre-
cently the fatal consequences of worldly prosperity; and
consequently how dangerous it is for our eternal happiness.

Another pernicious consequence of worldly prosperity, and
which always accompanies the pride and a forgetfulness of God,
which it inspires, is, that it hardens our heart, and renders it
insensible to all the ordinary means which the Divine provi-
dence uses for our conversion. "I spoke to thee," says
Almighty God, "in thy prosperity, and thou saidst, I will not
hear; this hath been thy way from thy youth, because thou
hast not heard my voice," Jer. xxii. 21. Job beautifully de-
scribes this dismal effect of prosperity, and the miserable end
to which it conduces poor souls, in these words, "Their houses
are secure and peaceable, and the rod of God is not upon them;
their cattle have conceived and failed not; their cow hath
calved and is not deprived of her fruit: their little ones go out
like a flock, and their children dance and play; they take the
timbrel and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ," But where does all this end? he immediately adds, "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to hell." And the reason of this fatal end of worldly prosperity he subjoins, "who have said to God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what doth it profit us if we pray to him?" Job. xxi. 9. See here into what a depth of obduracy and insensibility worldly prosperity is capable of plunging the soul; and in what a dismal manner it ends at last; and though Almighty God should, out of his superabundant mercy, sometimes touch their hearts with a sense of their danger, yet these good dispositions which he gives them are soon entirely smothered by their attachment to, and solicitude about their worldly enjoyments, as Christ himself assures us in the parable of the sower, where he says, "That which fell among the thorns, are they who have heard, and going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit," Luke viii. 14. Indeed this is so generally the case, that a rich man, who preserves his innocence in the midst of riches, and keeps his heart upright to God without becoming a slave to his riches, is looked upon in the scripture as a most wonderful person, and a particular blessing is pronounced on him: "Blessed is the rich man that is found without blemish, and that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money nor in treasures; who is he, and we will praise him? for he hath done wonderful things in his life; who hath been tried thereby, and been made perfect; he shall have glory everlasting, who could have transgressed, and hath not transgressed; and could do evil things, and hath not done them. Therefore are his goods established in the Lord," Ecclus. xxxi. 8.

Besides these more general pernicious effects of worldly prosperity, there are several other sins to which it exposes souls, and with some or other of which it is seldom unaccompanied; such as idleness, which opens a door to all sins; anger and impatience under the smallest trials and contradictions; intemperance and drunkenness, as in the rich glutton in the gospel: and particularly lust and avarice; the first of which Almighty God thus declares by his prophet: "How can I be merciful to thee? thy children have forsaken me, and swear by them that are not gods; I fed them to the full, and they committed adultery, and rioted in the harlot's house. They are become like amorous horses and stallions: everyone neighed after his
neighbour's wife. Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord," Jer. v. 7. And indeed this fatal effect of riches and worldly prosperity is so natural, considering the corruption of the heart of man, that even Solomon with all his wisdom, was not proof against it; for thus the scripture addresses him upon this head, "Thou didst gather gold as copper, and didst multiply silver as lead, and thou didst bow thyself to woman, and by thy body thou wast brought under subjection, thou has stained thy glory and defiled thy seed, so as to bring wrath upon thy children," Ecclus. xlvii. 20.

But the most fatal effect that riches and worldly prosperity have upon the mind of man, is the unhappy attachment that it raises in the heart towards them, and the insatiable desire of always having more and more; and when once this love of money takes possession of the heart of those who have riches, or when the covetous desire of becoming rich gets the ascendant in the mind of those who have them not, it is incredible to what excess of wickedness it is capable of pushing them on. It opens the door at once to hardheartedness towards the poor, to all kinds of injustice, to rape and oppression, to lying, to perjury, and even to apostasy and murder itself. Hence the scripture declares that, "The love of money is the root of all evil, which some desiring have erred from the faith, and have entangled themselves in many sorrows," 1 Tim. vi. 10; and "There is not a more wicked thing than to love money; for such a one setteth even his own soul for sale," Ecclus. x. 10; and no wonder, for the Holy Ghost assures us by the mouth of St. Paul, that "They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition," 1 Tim. vi. 9.

David describing the fatal effects of worldly prosperity in those who seek their happiness in it, says, "They are not in the labour of men, neither shall they be scourged like other men; therefore pride hath held them fast; they are covered with their iniquity and their wickedness. Their iniquity hath come forth as it were from fatness, they have passed into the affection of the heart. They have thought and spoken wickedness: they have spoken iniquity on high. They have set their mouth against heaven: and their tongue hath passed through the earth," Ps. lxxii. 5. Here we see the holy prophet declares that their worldly prosperity, their not being in the labour of other men, nor having the same scourges to undergo, nor the same trials and sufferings, is the very source and origin
of all that impiety which he describes in their conduct; they have abundance of all good things; they have nothing to suffer, "therefore pride hath held them fast." From all which then it clearly appears how difficult it is for a person in the midst of riches and worldly prosperity to work out his salvation; and that our blessed Saviour has the greatest reason for affirming that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And indeed, though the word of God had been silent upon this point, experience itself must convince us of it. How easy is it for a poor labouring man to practise temperance and sobriety? How difficult for one who wallows in riches and abundance, not to run into intemperance and excess? A person who has a weak and tender state of health, and who is always ailing and sick, has not so much as a temptation to numbers of grievous crimes, which one in full health is daily exposed to. Humility, the darling virtue of Jesus Christ, is easily acquired in a low contemptible state of life, exposed to continual humiliations; but how difficult is it to learn that virtue in the midst of honours, glory, and applause? In a word, adversity serves to discount the debt we owe to the Divine justice for sins already committed: prosperity gives us the means, exposes us to the temptation, and excites in us the desire of committing new sins. Sufferings and afflictions compel us to call upon God and trust in him; pleasures and amusements induce us to forget him. The miseries of life convince us that this world is only a place of banishment, and make us turn our thoughts and affections wholly on heaven; the abundance of worldly enjoyments makes us entirely forget heaven, and cleave with all the powers of the soul to this earth. In troubles and crosses we have an inexhaustible mine of merit in the sight of God, by the continual exercise of humility, patience and conformity to his Divine will; in the possession of worldly happiness we find a violent incitement to vice, from the ability it affords of committing it, and the encouragement it gives to all our passions. How great advantage then has a state of worldly adversity to that of prosperity, with regard to the facility of working out our salvation, and securing our eternal happiness in the world to come?

Now our Divine Master was perfectly aware of all this. He well knew how impossible it is for any thing in this life fully to content the heart of man, and what a source of misery it is to our souls, to place our affections on riches and sensual enjoy-
ments, and to seek for happiness in them; he well knew that
the most ample possession of all that this world can afford,
instead of procuring that internal peace and content of mind,
in which alone true happiness consists, is entirely subversive
of it, and for the most part serves only to make us more
miserable; and he was perfectly sensible of the immense diffi-
culty of working out our eternal salvation, and of securing that
one thing necessary, in the midst of worldly prosperity. On
all these accounts, he lays it down as an essential and funda-
mental condition of our being his true disciples, that we take
off our affections from all inordinate love and attachment to
any creature; that we fly from all inordinate desire of riches,
and honours, and sensual pleasures; that we mortify and deny
our passions, instead of indulging them; in a word, that we
never seek for happiness in the enjoyments of this world, but in
him alone, in his holy love and in doing his will.

§ 2. We must not seek for Happiness in Worldly Things.

Q. 4. What is the doctrine of the word of God con-
cerning this so necessary a condition of our being true
Christians?

A. It is contained in the following particulars:—

(1.) Many dreadful woes are pronounced in scripture
against those who set their hearts on the things of this world,
and seek their happiness in them. Thus—"Wo to you that
are wealthy in Zion, and to you that have confidence in the
mountain of Samaria...you that are separated unto the evil day,
and that approach to the throne of iniquity. You that sleep
upon beds of ivory, and are wanton in your couches; and eat
the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the
herd; you that sing to the sound of the psaltery...you that
drink wine in bowls, and anoint yourselves with the best
ointments......The Lord God hath sworn by his own soul, saith
the Lord, the God of hosts, I detest the pride of Jacob, and I
hate his houses, and I will deliver up the city with the inhabit-
ants thereof. And if there remain ten men in one house, they
shall also die," Amos. vi. "He that loveth gold," saith the wise
man, "shall not be justified, and he that followeth after cor-
rupation shall be filled with it. Many have been brought to
fall for gold, and the beauty thereof hath been their ruin.
Gold is a stumbling block to them that sacrifice to it: Wo to
them that eagerly follow after it, and every fool shall perish by
it," Ecclus. xxxi. 5. Our blessed Saviour in the gospel is most
precise on this subject, "Wo to you that are rich," says he, "for you have your consolation. Wo to you that are filled; for you shall hunger. Wo to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Wo to you when men shall bless you; for according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets," Luke vi. 24. And St. James tells us, in a very affecting manner, in what this wo consists. "Go to now, ye rich men," says he, "weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh like fire. You have stored to yourselves wrath against the last days," James v. 1. Such are the woes pronounced against those who set their hearts on worldly enjoyments.

(2.) There are many and great blessings promised to those who seek not their happiness in the enjoyments of this life; but have cheerfully renounced their deceitful allurements. Thus we are told by the prophet Isaias, that the Messias should have for a principal part of his office, to comfort and relieve those who live in affliction, deprived of the vain enjoyment of worldly happiness; and that he would be sent "To heal the contrite of heart; and to preach a release to the captives, and deliverance to them that are shut up...to comfort all that mourn...and to give them a crown for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and a garment of praise for the spirit of grief," Is. lxvi. 1. God himself, speaking to those who seek their happiness in this life, and as the prophet expresses it, "who set a table for fortune, and offer libations upon it," thus declares their misery, and the happiness which he has laid up for his faithful servants: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold my servants shall eat, and you shall be hungry; behold my servants shall drink, and you shall be thirsty; behold my servants shall rejoice, and you shall be confounded; behold my servants shall praise for joyfulness of heart, and you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for grief of spirit," Is. lxv. 13. And in the gospel, our blessed Saviour begins his Divine sermon on the Mount with pronouncing a solemn blessing upon all such as take off their hearts from the objects of earthly happiness, and seek for their happiness only in God; "Blessed are the poor in spirit," says he, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed
are the clean of heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all that is evil against you for my sake: be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven," Matt. v. 1.

(3.) We are expressly commanded not to seek for happiness in earthly enjoyments, nor set our hearts upon them, but to consider ourselves only as pilgrims and strangers in this world, travelling towards our heavenly country, and to set our affections only upon that never-ending bliss which awaits us there. Thus our blessed Saviour gives this command to all his followers, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also," Matt. vi. 19. And St. Paul looks upon this holy disposition of soul, as a sign of our being risen with Christ to a newness of life, and as a necessary consequence of the same. "If you be risen with Christ," says he, "seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God; mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth," Col. iii. 1. "For here we have no lasting city; but we seek one to come," Heb. xiii. 14. And therefore "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this dwelling be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," 2 Cor. iv. ult. and v. 1. For which reason, "Dearly beloved, says St. Peter, "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires, which was against the soul," 1 Pet. ii. 11.

(4.) We are assured that it is impossible for us to set our hearts and affections upon the enjoyments of this world, and seek for happiness in them, and at the same time, to be in friendship with our God. "No man can serve two masters," says Jesus Christ. "For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," Matt. vi. 24. For this reason St. James calls all those adulterers, who divide their heart between God and the world, and declares to them, that by
so doing, they in effect renounce the friendship of God entirely:

"Adulterers," says he, "know ye not that the friendship of this
world is the enemy of God? Whosoever therefore will be a
friend to this world, becomes an enemy of God," James iv. 4.
And, therefore, St. John concludes in this affectionate manner:

"Love not the world nor the things that are in the world. It
any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him.
For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh,
the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life, which is
not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth
away, and the concupiscence thereof; but he that doth the will of
God abideth for ever," 1 John ii. 15. Here we see, that the
concupiscence of the flesh, which is the love of sensual pleasures,
the concupiscence of the eyes, which is the love of riches, and the
pride of life, which is the love of one's own supposed excellency,
and of the praise and esteem of others, are the three things
which, properly speaking, are meant by the world in scripture lan-
guage, and the wisdom of the world consists in procuring these
things; and we are assured, that if we set our affections on
these things, and seek for happiness by indulging our natural
inclinations towards them, the love of God is not in us, and
consequently we can have no part with him. And no wonder,
considering the great opposition there is between this unhappy
wisdom of the world, which seeks only after carnal and earthly
enjoyments, and the holy spirit of God. St. Paul describes
this opposition in strong terms: "They that are according to
the flesh, mind the things that are of the flesh; but they that
are according to the spirit, mind the things that are of the
spirit. For the wisdom of the flesh is death, but the wisdom
of the spirit is life and peace. Because the wisdom of the
flesh is an enemy to God...and they who are in the flesh cannot
please God," Rom. viii. 5. Again he tells us, that "The
sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of
God; for it is foolishness to him and he cannot understand,"
1 Cor. ii. 14. And this is what our Saviour himself declared
to his apostles, when, promising to send to them the Holy
Ghost, he said, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you...
the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it
seeth him not, nor knoweth him," John xiv. 17 Now, "if
any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom.
viii. 9. But nothing more clearly shows us the extreme
opposition there is betwixt this unhappy world, with all its en-
joyments, and Jesus Christ, than the way he expresses himself
in the prayer he made to his Father, the night before his
passion; for in the midst of that fervent prayer for his followers, he adds this dreadful expression, "I pray not for the world, but for them whom thou hast given me; because they are thine," John xvii. 9. Such then is the world with its happiness, with all its maxims and wisdom; an enemy to God, continually opposing him, and on that account so much abhorred by Jesus Christ that he refuses even to pray for it! It is with great reason then that St. Paul thus warmly exhorts us to have no connexion with it: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, your reasonable service: and be not conformed to this world, but be ye reformed in the newness of your mind," Rom. xii. 2. He even assures us that Jesus Christ "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present wicked world," Gal. i. 4. And St. James gives it as one of the essential parts of true religion "to keep one's self unspotted from the world," James i. 27.

(5.) In consequence of all this, we are not only forbidden to set our hearts upon the enjoyments of this world, or to seek our happiness in them, but we are expressly commanded, if we wish to belong to Jesus Christ, and to be his disciples, by self-denial and mortification, to break off and root out from our souls all those natural ties and inclinations which we have to these sensual enjoyments; to conceive a holy hatred against that corruption of our nature, which so strongly inclines us to seek after them, and to wage a continual war against the depravity of our-self love, which by its incredible attachment to all those sensual objects that gratify its lust, is the greatest and most dangerous enemy of our souls. Thus our blessed Saviour lays down this self-denial as the first step in his service; "If any man," says he, "will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me," Luke ix. 23. And to show how strictly he requires this from us he adds in another place, "Whosoever does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple...and every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my disciple," Luke xiv. 27, 33. And the reason why he so strictly requires this of his followers is, because while our self-love is alive in us, and all its worldly lusts, those enemies to God, continue to reign in our heart, it is impossible for us to obey the holy law of God and save our souls; the first step therefore which we must take, is to kill and destroy this self-love by mortification and self-denial; this our Saviour illustrates by the similitude of a grain of wheat; saying, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless
the grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit;” and then he immediately adds, “He that loveth his life shall lose it, but he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal,” John xii. 24. To show us that our self-love and all its corrupt inclinations must die by self-denial and mortification before we can bring forth the fruits of Christian perfection, and that we must be willing even to lose our life itself, rather than continue slaves to our self-love, if we would keep it to life eternal. St. Paul in like manner, after enjoining us to set our minds upon the joys of heaven, and not upon the perishable goods of this life, immediately adds, the mortification of our passions as the necessary means to accomplish this: “Mortify therefore your members,” says he, “which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is the service of idols; for which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of unbelief,” Col. iii. 5. He repeats the same thing in another place, by assuring us that the lust of the flesh are the source of all our sins, which excludes us from heaven, and therefore concludes thus: “I say then, walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; for the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to another...now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are, fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, &c., of which I foretell you as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God,” Eph. v. 16. Hence he declares to us, that, “If we live according to the flesh we shall die, but if by the spirit we mortify the deeds of the flesh, we shall live,” Rom. viii. 13. Where we see that this mortification of our corrupt flesh is declared to be a necessary condition of salvation. And on this account he gives the fulfilling of this condition as a distinguishing sign of our belonging to Christ. “They that are Christ’s have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences,” Gal. v. 24. Nay, he assures us that it was one of the principal ends for which Christ came into this world, to teach us this necessary virtue: “The grace of God our Saviour,” says he, “hath appeared to all men, instructing us, that denying all ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world,” Tit. ii. 21. It is true, indeed, that the practice of this self-denial and mortification is difficult to flesh and blood, but we must remember that salvation is at stake, that no one is “crowned, except he strive lawfully,” 2 Tim. ii. 5, that “we fight for an incorruptible crown,” 1 Cor. ix.
"a never fading crown of glory," 1 Pet. v. 4, for "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that cannot fade, preserved for us in heaven." 1 Pet. i. 4, for the possession of heaven itself; and our Saviour expressly declares, "That the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence; and the violent carry it away," Matt. xi. 12. Consequently there is no medium; either we must do violence to our corrupt nature denying ourselves, and mortifying our passions and lusts after the enjoyments of this world, as Christ so strictly requires of us, or there will be no heaven for us. And on this account it is that our blessed Saviour gives us all this warm and affectionate exhortation, "Enter ye in at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat; how narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life and few there are that find it!" Matt. vii. 13. Those who seek their happiness in the enjoyments of this world, walk indeed in a broad road, where self-love is under no restraint, where their passions and lusts have full scope, and where every liberty is taken to gratify all the desires of the flesh and blood; but, alas! they are so far from getting their aim, or finding that happiness which they seek, that they find nothing in all these things but vanity and vexation of spirit, and at last end in eternal misery and perdition. Whereas they who seek their happiness only in God, walk, it is true, in a narrow road, where self-love and all its lusts are crucified, and violence is done to all their corrupt inclinations; but they soon find to their happy experience, that this proves a source of real peace and content to the soul here, and leads them to eternal life and everlasting bliss hereafter. It is a narrow road, but it is a road, where all the difficulty is only in the first beginnings; for when these are courageously overcome, and men begin to "taste how sweet the Lord is," they find their "way beautiful, and all their paths the paths of peace," Prov. iii. 17. For as the Holy Ghost himself declares, "I will lead thee by the paths of equity, which when thou shalt have entered, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not find a stumbling block," Prov. iv. 11.

Q. 5. Nothing can be more plain and decisive, than all those testimonies of the eternal truth are, to show us the necessity of not seeking after the enjoyments of this world, but of mortifying our natural attachments towards them. But how can all this be reconciled with the maxims and practice of the great bulk of Christians, which are just the reverse of this heavenly doctrine of the Son of God?
A. Or rather how can the maxims and practice of the great bulk of Christians be reconciled with these Divine truths? It is indeed a source of melancholy reflection, to compare the conduct of Christians now-a-days with the rules of Christianity; and to see how much the spirit of the world with all its maxims, has intruded itself into the hearts of men, and usurped the sovereign power there, notwithstanding the above dreadful comminations denounced against the world and all its lovers, by the great God. To hear the way that many Christians speak, and to see how they behave, one would be apt to believe that the world is the only God they adore, whose favour the court, upon whose protection they depend, whose laws they revere, and whom alone they study to please. What the world will think, and what the world will say, seems to be the only ultimate motives that decide in their deliberations; and though Almighty God has expressly declared that "if any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God," 1 Cor. iii. 18. Yet how few true Christians are to be found who are willing to be thought fools for Christ's sake, and who are not ready upon every occasion to transgress the most sacred duties of a Christian, for fear of being laughed at by the world? Whatever lengths they go in all the extravagancies of the world, in luxury, in high living, in dress, in dangerous and sinful amusements, the common excuse is, "we must be neighbour-like, one cannot be singular to be pointed at; there is no living in the world without complying with its ways; we only do as others do: there are many who do much worse than we," and the like; and under such pretexts as these, they give way to all the inclinations of self-love, and to every impulse of curiosity, sensuality and vanity. Such a conduct as this, in those who pretend to be disciples of a crucified Saviour cannot indeed be reconciled with the belief of his gospel; but the truth is, they do not believe it, as delivered by its Divine Author; blinded by their passions and worldly attachments, they cannot understand it in the sense intended by him; immersed in sensual pleasures, slaves to the esteem and opinion of the world, and grasping at riches as their only good, their understandings are so darkened that they cannot see, and their hearts so hardened that they will not believe the plainest declarations of the Son of God: "The sensual man perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand," 1 Cor. ii. 14. When the Jews refused to believe in Christ he was not surprised, but
said, "How can you believe, who receive glory from another, and the glory which is from God alone, you do not seek?" John v. 44. And even those among their rulers who did believe him, yet durst not confess him, "for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God," John xii. 43. And when our Saviour had declared some very important doctrines to the people, "The Pharisees, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him," Luke xvi. 14. And such is the unhappy case with these worldly-minded Christians; they cannot bear the light of this heavenly doctrine, so contrary to the dispositions of their hearts, and therefore they fall upon a thousand shifts to interpret his words their own way, and by such limitations, reflections and exceptions as they are pleased to annex to them, they endeavour to modify them according to their own fancy; for being determined not to regulate their sentiments and conduct by the gospel, they flatter themselves they can reconcile the gospel to their worldly maxims and practice. Thus they not only strive to make friendship with the world themselves, but even to make friendship betwixt Jesus Christ and the world, notwithstanding the infinite and irreconcilable opposition which he himself has declared there is between them. But such nominal Christians would do well to remember, that to walk in the broad road with the many, is to walk in the "road that leads to destruction;" that "many are called, but few are chosen; and that those happy few are they who walk in "the narrow road that leads to life."

§ 3. True Happiness only to be found in God.

Q. 6. But if we must live in a continual self-denial, and in the daily mortification of our own evil inclinations, where is the happiness to be found in the service of God?

A. True happiness, as we have seen above, is only to be found in solid peace and content of mind, which the world with all its enjoyments cannot give, is the gift of God; and he has expressly promised to bestow it, as their portion, on his faithful servants, who sincerely love him and keep his holy commandments. "Peace I leave you," says our blessed Saviour to all such, "my peace I give you; not as the world giveth, do I give you; let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid," John xiv. 27. Here you see he distinguishes his Divine peace from the false delusive peace which the world giveth, and shows it to be of a very superior nature indeed; a peace which calms all trouble of mind, dispels all fears, and which is so far above any
sensual enjoyment, that St. Paul assures us “it surpasses all understanding,” Phil. iv. 7. And our blessed Saviour himself declares that the joy which he bestows on his servants is a joy which rejoices the heart, and of which no creature can deprive them: “I will see you again,” says he, “and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you,” John xvi. 22. This peace of God, then, is the portion of the just—it is the inheritance of the servants of God even in this life; this is the hundredfold of all they leave for God of their worldly enjoyments, which makes them immensely more happy and content in their own minds than all the possessions of this world can possibly do. If, therefore, Jesus Christ require of all his followers to take off their affections from the things of this world—if he lays it down as the first step in his service, “to deny ourselves, and take up our cross and follow him”—if he declares to his disciples that they shall be hated by the world—that they shall be persecuted—that in the world they shall have sorrow and pressure; all this is the effect of his sincere love to us, and his earnest desire of our real happiness; he well knows that no worldly enjoyments can make us happy; he knows, on the contrary, that if we set our hearts on worldly objects, they will effectually make us most unhappy; he knows that the sacred peace of mind in which alone true happiness consists, and which is his gift, cannot possibly have place in the soul if she be enslaved to the love of the world; he knows, in fine, that it is impossible for us to be his disciples, and faithfully obey his commandments, if we seek for our happiness in the enjoyments of the world; and therefore he tells us plainly, that we must renounce ourselves and all earthly things, and break off all our irregular attachments to the world, in order to be truly his disciples; but then in place of all the vain pleasures of the world, he promises us in the most solemn manner, that internal peace and content of mind which alone can make us truly happy even in this life, and which is a prelude of that eternal peace and celestial joy which shall be our happy portion forever in the life to come.

Q. 7. But is not some degree of the goods of this life necessary for our subsistence whilst we are in this world? And must we not have some concern about that?

A. Most undoubtedly; and our blessed Master is so far from imagining that his faithful servants should be deprived of corporal necessaries, that he even assures us, he himself will take care that nothing of this kind shall be wanting to them! He indeed forbids his followers to be solicitous, or to disturb their
mind with a vain anxiety about what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or wherewithal they shall be clothed, because he knows such solicitude would only destroy their internal happiness, and be an impediment to the good of their soul; but he exhorts us to rely on the providence of our heavenly Father, who knows that we have need of such things, and then passes his sacred promise that if we seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, all these things shall be added to us, Matt. iv. ult. Hence we see that God Almighty is engaged to provide the necessaries of this life for his faithful servants, by blessing the lawful works of their hands, and giving them the fruits of their labours, not indeed in such abundance as he foresees would flatter their passions, and endanger their hearts to be carried away after these things, so as to forget their God, but in such abundance as is most expedient for the good of their souls, and for securing their eternal salvation. And this is all which any Christian, who wishes to save his soul, should ever desire to have of earthly goods, as St. Paul beautifully expresses in these words, "Godliness with contentment is great gain; for we brought nothing into this world, and certainly we can carry nothing out; but having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content," 1 Tim. vi. 6. And even in the old law, the holy servants of God were so sensible of the danger of having more of the goods of this world than was necessary for their subsistence, that they earnestly prayed to God to deliver them not only from too great abundance, but even from the very desire of having it. Thus the wise man says to God: "Two things I have asked of thee, deny them not to me before I die. Remove far from me vanity and lying words. Give me neither beggary nor riches: give me only the necessaries of life; lest perhaps being filled, I should be tempted to deny and say, Who is the Lord? or being compelled by poverty I should steal, and forewear the name of my God," Prov. xxx. 7. And in another place, "O Lord, Father, and God of my life, give me not haughtiness of my eyes, and turn away from me all coveting: take away from me the greediness of the belly; and let not the lusts of the flesh take hold of me, and give me not over to a shameless and foolish mind," Ecclus. xxiii. 4. So also David thus begs of God, "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies and not to covetousness: turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity," Ps cxviii. 36.

Q. 8. Does the scripture give us any particular description of the happiness of the just in this life?

A. Most beautiful are the descriptions which the scripture
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gives us of their happiness, as to their having all sufficiency of the necessaries of this life, their being supported under all their sufferings, and the internal peace of mind which they enjoy; and most engaging are the promises made in these Divine writings for this purpose. "Blessed is the man whom God correcteth......In famine he shall deliver thee from death, and in battle from the hand of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourges of the tongue, and thou shalt not fear calamity when it cometh. In destruction and famine thou shalt laugh, and shalt not be afraid of the beasts of the earth......and thou shalt know that thy tabernacle is in peace, and visiting thy beauty thou shalt not sin," Job v. "If thou wilt put away from thee the iniquity that is in thy hand, and let not injustice remain in thy tabernacle......thou shalt have confidence, hope being set before thee, and being buried thou shalt sleep secure; thou shalt take rest, and there shall be none to make thee afraid; and many shall entreat thy face," Job xi. 14—18. "O taste and see that the Lord is sweet; blessed is the man that hopeth in him. Fear ye the Lord, all ye his saints, for there is no want to them that fear him. The rich have wanted and have suffered hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good. Come, children, hearken to me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Who is the man that desireth life, who loveth to see good days? Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile; turn away from evil and do good—seek after peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and his ears unto their prayers. But the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The just cried, and the Lord heard them, and delivered them out of their troubles......Many are the afflictions of the just; but out of them all will the Lord deliver them. The Lord keepeth all their bones, not one of them shall be broken," Ps. xxxiii. "Trust in the Lord and do good and dwell in the land, and thou shalt be fed with its riches. Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the requests of thy heart......The meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace......Better is a little to the just than the great riches of the wicked......they shall not be confounded in the evil time, and in the days of famine they shall be filled......with the Lord shall the steps of a man be directed, and he shall like well his way. When he shall fall he shall not be bruised; for the Lord putteth his hand under him. I have been young, and now I am old, and I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking
bread. He showeth mercy, and lendeth all the day long, and his seed shall be in blessing," Ps. xxxvi. "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasures without content," Prov. xv. 16. "When the ways of man shall please the Lord, he will convert even his enemies to peace. Better is a little with justice, than great revenues with iniquity," Prov. xvi. 7. "Happy is the man who findeth wisdom, and is rich in prudence. The purchasing thereof is better than the merchandise of silver, and her fruit than the choicest and purest gold: she is more precious than all riches: and all things that are desired are not to be compared with her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and glory. Her ways are beautiful and all her paths are peaceable. She is a tree of life to them that shall lay hold on her; and he that shall retain her is blessed," Prov. iii. 13. Now this Divine wisdom is thus described in scripture: "The word of God on high is the fountain of wisdom, and her ways are everlasting commandments......God created her in the Holy Ghost......And he poured her out upon all his works, and upon all flesh according to his gift, and hath given her to them that love him. The fear of the Lord is honour, and glory, and gladness, and a crown of joy. The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and shall give joy and gladness, and length of days. With him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed. The love of God is honourable wisdom......and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom......The fear of the Lord is religiousness of knowledge. Religiousness shall keep and satisfy the heart—it shall give joy and gladness. It shall go well with him that feareth the Lord, and in the days of his end he shall be blessed. To fear God is the fulness of wisdom, and fulness is from the fruits thereof. She shall fill all her house with her increase, and the storehouses with her treasures. The fear of the Lord is a crown of wisdom, filling up peace and the fruit of salvation," Ecclus. i.

See here, among many other such passages, in what an endearing manner the holy scriptures speak upon this subject; and as it is the spirit of God himself who dictated these sacred promises, there can be no doubt of their being fully accomplished on his side; and hence St. Paul, fully sensible of the happiness of serving God, says, "Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. 8. If therefore, we do not find the effects of these promises very frequent among us, the fault is entirely on our part; we serve God only by halves—we do not
give ourselves up to him with that unreserved confidence which would entitle us to such happiness; but if we consider the lives of the saints of God, there we shall see these sacred declarations of holy writ accomplished to their full extent. Call to mind the histories of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob—of Joseph, of Moses, of the whole people of Israel in the desert—of the prophets Elias and Eliseus—of David when persecuted by Saul—of Daniel and his companions, with thousands of others in the Christian church. In them we see how wonderfully their heavenly Father protects and defends those that fear him, and provides for his servants what is necessary for their support in this life; and though, for their greater advantage, he does not always give them the superfluities of temporal goods, yet he gives them more content and heartfelt satisfaction in the moderate sufficiency which he bestows upon them, than the rich ones of the world can procure from all their abundance; nay, their very prayers, fastings, tears, and labours, give them a far greater delight and satisfaction, than all the joys and pleasures of the world could ever have done, which shows to a demonstration by experience itself, that the promise of Christ is abundantly fulfilled in them, seeing what they received is a hundred, and a hundred times better than whatever they left for his sake; for instead of the false and apparent goods they forsook, he gives them such as are true and real; instead of the uncertain perishable riches which they abandon, he gives them such as are certain and permanent; “your joy,” says he, “no man shall take from you;” he gives them spiritual consolations instead of corporal; ease of mind instead of care; peace and tranquillity instead of anxiety and trouble; and a virtuous and delightful life instead of that which is vicious and tormenting. And though the perfection of the rewards of virtue, in this life, be only found in the perfect followers of Christ, yet such is his infinite goodness, that he bestows them in a proportional degree even upon beginners; and the more they advance in his service, in conquering their own passions, and in the observance of his holy commandments, the more abundantly he bestows these favours upon them, and the more they feel, to their own happy experience, “how sweet the Lord is, and how happy all those are who trust in him.”

§ 4. How Happy the Just are, even in their Sufferings.

Q. 9. But how can all this stand with what both scripture and experience teach us—that the good and virtuous are gene-
rally most afflicted in this world, whilst the wicked are prosperous and flourishing? This we daily see with our eyes, and the scripture declares, that "many are the afflictions of the just," Ps. xxxiii. 20; that "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution," 2 Tim. iii. 12; and, "through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God," Acts xiv. 21.

A. The truth of what is here asserted is most undoubted, but instead of being any objection to what the same scriptures declare of the happiness of the just, there is nothing wherein the greatness and sincerity of their happiness are more manifest, as will evidently appear from the following considerations:

(1.) Suffering, and tribulations of all kinds, are the appendage of human nature in its present corrupted state; from the king to the beggar none are exempted from them; pains, diseases, loss of friends, poverty, disgrace, calumny, and other such miseries, are incident to every mortal; and no one can always be free from some one or other of these scourges; thus the scripture declares, that "Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries," Job xiv. 1. "Great labour is created for all men, and a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam, from the day of their coming out of their mother's womb, until the day of their burial into that mother of all. Their thoughts and fears of the heart— their imagination of things to come, and the day of their end; from him that sitteth on a throne of glory, to him that is humbled in earth and ashes; from him that weareth the purple and beareth a crown, even to him that is covered with rough linen; wrath, envy, trouble, unquietness, and the fear of death, continual anger and strife: and in the time of rest upon his bed, the sleep of the night changeth his knowledge. A little and as nothing is his rest, and afterwards in sleep, as in the day of keeping watch, he is troubled in the vision of the heart, as if he had escaped in the day of battle," Ecclus. xl. 1. If, therefore, the servants of God have their share of these sufferings, we need not wonder; they are all sons of Adam, born of woman, and consequently must be subject to the common curse of their nature; but in this they are no worse than the wicked, who have their share of these things as well as the just. But,

(2.) The word of God assures us, that all these trials are much more weighty and severe upon the wicked than upon the just; for in the last cited text from Ecclesiasticus, immediately after that enumeration of evils, it is added, "Such things happen to all flesh, from man even to beast, and upon sinners are
sevenfold more. Moreover, death and bloodshed, strife and sword, oppressions, famine and affliction, and scourges, all these are created for the wicked," Ecclus. xl. 8. And in another place he says, "Fire, hail, famine, and death, all those were created for vengeance; the teeth of beasts, and scorpions, and serpents, and the sword taking vengeance upon the ungodly unto destruction," Ecclus. xxxiv. 35. From which it appears that though we sometimes see examples of good men who have many sufferings and tribulations in this world to struggle with; and also of wicked people who prosper in all their affairs, and are not scourged like other men; yet, in general, this is not so: for, on the whole, even the external miseries of life are sevenfold more upon sinners, than upon the just.

(3.) What renders all these common tribulations of life much more severe upon sinners, than upon the true servants of God, is this, that the former, setting their hearts upon the possession of earthly enjoyments, seek their happiness in them; and consequently, when deprived of them and exposed to their opposite evils, must suffer exceedingly in their interior, from grief, vexation, despair, and the like violent passions; so that in them the exterior misery of the body, seldom or never is unaccompanied with the internal misery of the mind, which makes them miserable indeed, beyond expression. But the true servants of God, whose daily exercise is to take off their affections more and more from all worldly enjoyments, who seek not for happiness in these things, but in the accomplishment of the will of God, and in serving him, when any of the common miseries of life come upon them, though their piety does not divest them of the feelings of human nature, and they are sensible of the impression their sufferings naturally make upon their senses or appetites, yet it generally rests there, it goes no farther, it does not penetrate to the mind, it does not disturb the quiet of the soul; or if it should begin to excite any small commotion there, as may be the case in those who are not as yet well advanced in the paths of virtue, yet even in them, such commotions are soon suppressed, and their wonted calm recovered: and the more they advance in solid piety, the more easily this is done, till at last the very external miseries of life become a subject of joy to them, and hence the scripture says, "Whatsoever shall befall the just man it shall not make him sad; but the wicked shall be filled with mischief," Prov. xii. 21. So that even in the midst of external suffering, the just man possesses internal happiness, and at the same time serves to alleviate the burden, and to blunt the sting of external affections.
(4.) All the tribulations which come upon any person in this life, of whatever kind they be, and from whatever immediate occasion they arise, all come originally from the hand of God, who disposes of all these things according to the views of his Divine providence. Now when God sends tribulations upon the wicked he is provoked to do so by their sins, and he sends them in quality of their judge in his wrath, as punishments and just judgments upon them; and as they from the malice of their hearts, receive them with impatience, and murmuring against providence, by so doing they provoke him to redouble his vengeance upon them; hence they are exceedingly tormented by their sufferings and become doubly miserable under them. But when he sends trials upon the just, he sends them in quality of a father in his mercy, as necessary chastisements for their good and for their correction; and therefore he always proportions them to their needs, and to the strength they have to bear them, and to make a proper use of them, and thus they become a source of great good to them, for "All things work together for good to them that love God," Rom. viii. 28. We see all this veriﬁed in the way God treated the Egyptians and his own people, of which the wise man says, "By what things their enemies were punished ......by the same things they in their need were benefited ......for when they were tried and chastised with mercy, they knew how the wicked were judged with wrath and tormented; for thou (O Lord,) didst admonish and try them as a father: but the others as a severe king, thou didst examine and condemn," Wisd. xi. 5, &c.; and a little after he adds, "With what circumspection hast thou judged thy own children, to whose parents thou hast sworn and made covenants of good promises? Therefore whereas thou chastisest us, thou scourgest our enemies many ways," Wis. xii. 21. On this account the sufferings of the just, not only lose their sting, but they become even a source of great comfort to them; they consider them as sent by their loving Father, not for their destruction, but for their edification, and therefore receive them as signs of love to them, who by means of these trials procure the greatest of benefits to their souls; for they well know, that "Whom the Lord loveth he chastiseth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," Heb. xii. 6; and therefore they say to themselves, with St. Paul, "We have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence, shall we not much more obey the Father of spirits and life? and they indeed for a few days chastised us for their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness; for though no chastise-
ment for the present seemeth to bring with it joy, but sorrow; yet afterwards it will yield to them that are exercised by it the most peaceable fruit of justice," Heb. xii. 9. Hence the scripture pronounceth those blessed whom God corrects, on account of the great advantages that flow from his correction: "Blessed is the man whom God correcteth; refuse not therefore the chastising of the Lord: for he woundeth and cureth; he striketh and his hand shall heal," Job v. 17. How light and easy does this consideration make the trials of the just whilst sinners in their tribulations have no such consolation, but either think nothing of God at all, and thus become a prey to the most distressing passions; or if any sense of religion awaken their conscience, it is only to torment them with the gnawing worm of bitter remorse, which tells them they richly deserve all that is come upon them. Happy would it be for them if this thought would turn them to repentance, and force them to have recourse to him for help who alone can help them; (5.) Another thing which contributes exceeding to alleviate and sweeten the afflictions of the just, is the special assistance that Almighty God gives them to support them in all their distresses. The scripture displays this to us in different points of view, (1.) That God is in company with them in their tribulations, to help them under them, and to deliver them. "He shall cry to me," says Almighty God, "and I will hear him: I am with him in his trouble, I will deliver him and I will glorify him," Ps. xc. 15. "When he shall fall he shall not be bruised, for the Lord putteth his hand under him," Ps. xxxvi. 24. "The Lord is nigh to them that are of a contrite heart, and he will save the humble of spirit. Many are the afflictions of the just, but out of them all will the Lord deliver them. The Lord keepest all their bones, not one of them shall be broken," Ps. xxxiii. 19. "Behold the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him, and on them that hope in his mercy; they deliver their souls from death, and feed them in famine," Ps. xxxii. 18. "Thus saith the high and the eminent that inhabiteth eternity, and his name is holy, who dwelleth in the high and holy place, and with a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite," Is. lvii. 15. (2.) That he is always ready to hear their prayers and grant them their petitions; thus, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the just; and his ears unto their prayers....the just cried and the Lord heard them, and delivered them out of all their troubles," Ps. xxxiii. 16. "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," Ps.
1. 15. "I sought the Lord and he heard me, and he delivered me from all my troubles. Come ye to him and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be confounded; this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear him; and shall deliver them," Ps. xxxiii. 5. (3.) That he turns their affliction into joy and gladness. "We have passed through fire and water," says David to God, "and thou hast brought us out into a refreshment," Ps. lxxv. 12. "How great troubles hast thou shown me, many and grievous? and turning thou hast brought me to life, and hast brought me back again from the depths of the earth. Thou hast multiplied thy magnificence, and turning to me thou hast comforted me," Ps. lxx. 20. Nay, "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul," Ps. cxiii. 19. "For thou art not delighted in our being lost; because after a storm thou makest a calm, and after tears and weeping thou pourest in joyfulness. Be thy name, O God of Israel, blessed for ever," Tob. iii. 22. Witness Job, Joseph, Daniel, the three children, Susannah, and others without number. How many grounds of comfort has the just man in the consideration of these truths, to support him under his troubles, and make them easy to him in the internal man, yea even to make him happy in his mind within, which is the only real happiness, though without, and in the eyes of the world, he labours under many tribulations? But as for wicked men in their tribulation, "The countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth," Ps. xxxiii. 17. To these God says, "Behold I will set my face upon you for evil and not for good," Jer. xlv. 11. "For evil doers shall be cut off......yet a little while and the wicked shall not be: and thou shalt seek his place and shalt not find it......because the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord, presently after they shall be honoured and exalted, shall come to nothing and vanish like smoke," Ps. xxxvi. 9. 20.

(6.) Lastly, what in a particular manner supports the just man, in the day of tribulation, and not only alleviates the weight of his afflictions, but even makes them matter of joy and gladness to him, is the knowledge he has of the many and great advantages which they bring to the soul, and that they are sent by the fatherly hand of his good God, on purpose to procure him these advantages.

Q. 10. What then are the ends which God has in sending afflictions and crosses upon his faithful servants in this life?
A. Some of the principal ends which God has in sending tribulation upon his own servants, and which in a particular manner contribute to alleviate their burden and comfort them under their afflictions, are these following:—

(1.) To try them; that is, to see whether or not they be sincere and earnest in his service; whether they serve him for any present interest of their self-love, or for his own sake, and because it is their duty and eternal interest to do so. Thus when God praised Job's virtue, Satan said, "Doth Job fear God in vain? Hast not thou made a fence for him and his house and all his substance round about; and blessed the works of his hands, and his possession hath increased on the earth? But stretch forth thy hand a little and touch all that he hath; and see if he curseth thee not to thy face," Job. i. 9. Upon this, leave was given to Satan to try Job; which was done by the most severe afflictions: under all which, Job gave proof of the sincerity of his virtue in the most convincing manner, for "In all these things Job sinned not with his lips, nor spoke he of any foolish thing against God," verse 22. Instead of that, he blessed and praised God for all his sufferings, nay, he carried his fidelity so far, that when his friends were insulting over him, he said, "Although he (God) should kill me, I will trust in him," Job. xiii. 15; and in another place he says, "He has me tried as gold that passeth through the fire: my foot hath followed his steps. I have kept his way, and have not declined from it," Job. xxiii. 10. So also when the angel Raphael discovered himself to the good old man Tobias, whose severe trials had been no less remarkable than his virtuous works and piety; he said to him, "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptations should prove thee," Tob. xii. 13; and his noble behaviour under these temptations is most remarkable, for when he was deprived of his sight the scripture says: "Now this trial the Lord therefore permitted to happen to him, that an example might be given to posterity of his patience, as also of holy Job. For whereas he had always feared God from his infancy, and kept his commandments, he repined not against God because the evil of blindness had befallen him; but continued immoveable in the fear of God, giving thanks to God all the days of his life; for as the kings insulted over Job, so his relations and kinsmen mocked at his life, saying "where is thy hope, for which thou gavest alms and buried the dead? But Tobias rebuked them, saying, Speak not so, for we are children of saints, and look for that life, which God will give to them that never change their faith from him," Tob. ii. 12. Hence the
scripture saith, "The furnace trieth the potter's vessels; and the trial of affliction, just men," Ecclus. xxvii. 6, for, "as silver is tried in the fire, and gold in the furnace, so the Lord trieth the hearts," Prov. xviii. 3. "Gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation," Ecclus. ii. 5. So Abraham was tempted, and being proved by many tribulations, was made the friend of God. So Isaac, so Jacob, so Moses, and all that have pleased God, passed through many tribulations, remaining faithful." Judith viii. 22. Now this consideration is a vast consolation to the servants of God amidst their severest affliction; for if even among men like ourselves, the love we have for a friend, or the desire we have of approving ourselves as attached to those whose praise or esteem we court, makes us even love to have an opportunity of showing the sincerity of our regard for them, though it be through sufferings and dangers, how much more must a sincere love of God, and the desire of showing our fidelity to him, sweeten every trial or affliction we have to undergo for his sake! especially when we know, that though our earthly friends may not be sensible of what we suffer for them, or not put a just value upon it, or not be able to reward it, our heavenly Father well knows every thing we undergo for him, is perfectly sensible of the real value of it, and will reward it not only to the full of what it deserves in his sight but superabundantly, yea infinitely above what we can conceive or imagine: "afflicted in a few things," says his holy word, "in many they shall be well rewarded, because God hath tried and found them worthy of himself; as gold in the furnace he hath proved them, and as a victim of the holocaust he hath received them, and in time there shall be respect had to them. The just shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among reeds, they shall judge nations and rule over people, and their Lord shall reign for ever," Wisd. iii. 6. For "blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him," James i. 12.

(2.) To give them an opportunity of discharging the debt of temporal punishment, which they owe to the Divine justice, before they leave this world, that so after their death they may the sooner be admitted into eternal rest. Few, very few indeed, are to be found who, being come to the years of discretion, have preserved their baptismal innocence; and who is there, even among the greatest saints, who have not in some things offended God? Alas, "In many things," says an apostle, "we offend all," James iii. 3; now our holy faith assures us, that every sin
deserves punishment, and will be punished by the Divine justice, either here or hereafter, for Christ himself declares "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it, at the day of judgment," Matt. xii. 36. For this reason our Saviour exhorts us by penitential works while we are in this life to satisfy our adversary, the Divine justice, for this debt; lest if it be not discharged when death comes, we be thrown into the dismal prison of purgatory, out of which, says he, "thou shalt not go till thou pay the last farthing," Matt. v. 25. But as our self-love is exceedingly averse to all sufferings, and too much draws us back from paying this debt by voluntary penitential works, therefore our good God, of his infinite mercy, desirous to bring his faithful servants, as soon as possible after death to the possession of his kingdom, sends many trials and afflictions upon them, which as they receive in a penitential spirit, and in full conformity to his blessed will, discharge, if not the whole, at least a great portion of that debt which stands against them. Thus the poor beggar Lazarus, after a life of great tribulation and affliction, having fully paid this debt, at his death, his blessed soul was received by angels and carried by them to Abraham's bosom, a place of rest and peace, where he waited with the other saints for the redemption of Israel. Now this also is a great comfort and support to the faithful servants of God under their afflictions, and encourages them to bear them with great peace of mind, yea even with joy, well knowing that all they can endure here is nothing to the torments of that prison out of which indeed they shall be saved at last, "yet so as by fire," 1 Cor iii. 15; and not till they have "paid the utmost farthing."

(3.) To purify their souls, by breaking those secret attachments they have to themselves and to creatures, and by that means perfecting more and more in the pure and holy love of God. Our good Lord has declared in his holy scripture that "his delight is to be with the children of men," Prov. viii. 31; and nothing hinders him from communicating himself to them in the most abundant manner, but the unhappy attachment they have to themselves and the creatures, which shuts the door of their heart to the Divine communications of the Spirit of God. Hence our blessed Saviour declares that we must deny ourselves and renounce all that we possess in order to be his true disciples and worthy of him, that is, of being united to him by holy love. Now even in the faithful servants of God, there are many secret ties and attachments which escape their own notice; yea, which even gild themselves over with the appearance of
virtue and sanctity. In which cases God who sees these ties as they are in themselves, and well knows how great a hinderance they are to the advancement of those chosen souls in Christian perfection, sends them such afflictions as he sees proper for breaking these attachments; he throws them into the fiery furnace of severe tribulation, but at the same time takes care that this fire have no other effect upon them than what the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar had upon the three holy children, who were thrown into it; namely, that it burn and consume all their bonds and let their souls at perfect liberty, but that it do them not the smallest hurt, nor leave as much as the smell of fire upon them: so that like gold in the crucible, it consumes all their rust, and renders them more bright, more pure, more holy than ever. Hence St. Paul assures us, that the corrections of our heavenly Father are "for our profit, that we may be made partakers of his holiness," Heb. xi. 10; and the wise man declares that, "The mercy of God is lovely in the time of affliction, and as a cloud of rain in the time of drought," Ecclus. xxxv. 26. A pious modern author writes on this subject as follows: By tribulation "The heart is cleansed, not only from sin, but also from all the other imperfections. What would gold itself be, were it not for the furnace and crucible, where it is refined and purified? Without this trial it might remain almost undistinguished from the common mass of vulgar earth. The fire of tribulation is our crucible, and produces the like effects in our soul, which is naturally subject to innumerable defects, and of itself incapable of rising to any sublime degree of perfection. Our passions, bad habits, and in particular, our self-love, that carries on an uninterrupted war within us, infects and poisons every action of our life, even the most holy, and, under a borrowed appearance of God's greater glory, works out its own ends and contrivances, can by no other means be kept in subjection and brought into reason. One would think that supernatural lights and spiritual consolations might subdue that innate propensity we have to the pleasures of the world, and disengage our affections from its vanity and allurements; and no doubt they may in some degree; but still they disengage us not from the attachments we have to ourselves. These our internal enemies are rather strengthened and more confirmed in the ascendant they have usurped over the soul, when they find in these extraordinary marks of the Divine favour, their own gain and advantage with more security and less remorse. A complete victory and absolute conquest over them requires still something farther... The hard season of affliction
and winter of tribulation must come to our assistance, and indeed are the only cure and remedy of the evil. Without the aid of this sovereign antidote, our passions, though they may occasionally change their objects, will still continue the same in effect, and in their native force and vigour. They divest themselves perhaps of what may appear gross and earthly, but, what is more to be dreaded, retain what is more abstract and spiritual; in other words, what is more dangerous and ruinous,"

Pinam. Cross in its true light.

(4.) To improve their souls in the most sublime virtues of meekness, humility, patience, and resignation to the will of God. Nothing renders a soul more like to Jesus Christ, or more agreeable in the eyes of God, than these holy virtues; but it is impossible to acquire any degree of perfection in them without trials and afflictions; and as God Almighty has decreed that all those who are saved must be "made conformable to the image of his Son," Rom. viii. 29, so he sends such tribulations upon them as may enable them effectually to acquire these holy virtues by which they most resemble him: "Learn of me," says Jesus Christ himself, "for I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls," Matt. xi. 29. Hence St. James exhorts us to rejoice in our sufferings on his account, "My brethren," says he, "count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations: knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience, and patience hath a perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing," James i. 2. So also St. Peter speaks on this subject: "We glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God: and not only so, but we glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, trial; and trial, hope; and hope confoundeth not," Rom. v. 2. St. Peter also gives a similar advice, saying, "Dearly beloved, think not strange the burning heat that is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you, but if you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice; that when his glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy," 1 Pet. iv. 12.

(5.) To increase their merits here and their crown of glory hereafter. The measure of our sufferings here is laid down in the holy scripture as the measure of our glory hereafter, provided we suffer with Christ; that is, after the manner in which he suffered, with meekness and humility, patience and resignation to the will of our heavenly Father. "We are the sons of God," says St. Paul, "and if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ: yet so, if we suffer with him, that
we may be also glorified with him," Rom. viii. 16. "A faith-
ful saying; for if we be dead with him, we shall live also with
him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him," 2 Tim. ii. 11.
"For he that hath brought evils upon you, shall bring you
everlasting joy again with your salvation," Bar. iv. 29. Now
this is a source of incredible joy to the just in all their tribu-
lations; for they well know, "that the sufferings of the present
time are not to be compared with the glory to come, that shall
be revealed in us," Rom. viii. 18. Yea, "That our present
tribulation which is momentary and light, worketh in us above
measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. iv. 17.
For "God has regenerated us...unto an inheritance incor-
ruptible and undefiled, that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for
you......wherein you shall greatly rejoice, if now you must be
for a little time made sorrowful in divers temptations: that the
trial of your faith, much more precious than gold, which is
tried by the fire, may be found unto praise and glory, and
honour, at the appearance of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. i. 4; and our
Lord himself exhorts us to rejoice in our tribulations on this
account, and pronounces a blessing on them that suffer for his
sake. "Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and per-
secute you, and shall say all that is evil against you, untruly,
for my sake; Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great,
in heaven," Matt. v. 11. For this reason the apostles, when
imprisoned and scourged, "went away rejoicing that they were
accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus,"
Acts v. 41. St. Paul also declares of himself, "I am filled
with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribu-
lation," 2 Cor. vii. 4.

(6.) To manifest the glory of God himself, in either supporting
his servants in the midst of their severe trials, or in wonder-
fully delivering them from them, to their great advantage even
in this world itself. Witness the holy martyrs; the three
children thrown into the fiery furnace; Daniel in the lion's
den; Job; Tobias; Susannah; the man born blind; the rais-
ing of Lazarus from the dead; the numbers of others in whom
the mighty power of God was manifested, and his fatherly care
of those that serve him, displayed in the most admirable manner,
so as to confound his enemies, encourage his friends, and in-
crease confidence in him. What Christ said to the man born
blind, and of Lazarus, is equally applicable to all those other
examples; for when "His disciples asked him, Rabbi, who
hath sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born
blind?" Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his
parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him,” John ix. 2. And when he was told of Lazarus’s sickness, he said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it,” John xi. 4. Now the faithful servants of God having a sincere and fervent love for him, nothing gives them greater pleasure than that his glory should be promoted among men, and his Divine perfections manifested to the world; and this consideration is a great comfort and support to them under all their afflictions; exciting them to use all their best endeavours to bear them in a truly Christian manner, for the honour and glory of his Divine majesty, perfectly resigned to his blessed will—to be delivered from them or sink under them, as shall seem to his Divine providence most conducive to that end.

Now these, and many other such great truths, have so powerful an effect upon the hearts of those that sincerely love God, that nothing is more common among his saints, than to see them not only joyful and happy under the cross, but even longing for more and greater trials; they know that the cross is the only sure way to the crown—that no one shall be crowned but he who has lawfully fought—that this was the road in which Christ himself walked to his eternal glory; nay, that it behoved him to suffer and so to enter into his glory; and that they can have no title to a share of his bliss unless they follow him, who “suffered, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps;” for that the disciple cannot expect to be above his Master, nor the servant above his lord. They know that “Whom the Lord loveth he chastiseth, and scourges every one whom he receiveth,” and therefore are afraid that “if they be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, they be as bastards and not as sons,” Heb. xii. 6; and therefore they rejoice when they are under the rod of correction, and are then only afraid when they want it.

Q. 11. What, then, is the result of all these truths?

A. From all these truths it manifestly appears, that such true and real happiness as we are capable of in this world, is only to be found in the service of God, and in keeping his commandments. For (1.) Those who serve God are no worse off as to the common miseries of this life, than those who serve him not; these miseries are common to all—none are exempted from their share of them. (2.) The miseries of life are sent upon the wicked by Almighty God in his anger as a punishment for their crimes: but they are inflicted on his servants in his mercy, as a fatherly correction for their real good. (3.) Wicked
people, setting their hearts upon the enjoyments of the world, and placing their happiness in them, are exceedingly miserable when deprived of them, and when afflicted by their contrary evils. The servants of God making it their daily endeavours to take off their affections from all worldly objects, and seeking their happiness only in God, feel the loss of these worldly objects with much less trouble, and very soon get their minds reconciled to the want of them. (4.) Wicked people have no resource to fly to for support under the evils that come upon them, but the vain helps of human philosophy, which can never bear up the soul under severe trials; good men have a never failing source of comfort in God, and in submission to his holy will, which preserves their peace of mind, and their internal content, under the most violent afflictions. (5.) Bad men have no grounds to expect any good from their sufferings, which might encourage them under them; good men have so many and so great advantages flowing from their afflictions, that the thought of them fills their heart even with joy amidst their crosses, and makes them love them and desire them, and find real happiness in them. What a vast odds is this between the latter and the former! And hence the word of God, which, as we have seen above, so beautifully describes the happiness of the good, paints out the misery of the wicked in these striking colours: "The wicked man is proud all his days, and the number of the years of his tyranny is uncertain; the sound of dread is always in his ears, and when there is peace, he always suspecteth treason. He believeth not that he may return from darkness to light, looking round about for the sword on every side. When he moveth himself to seek bread, he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand. Tribulation shall terrify him, and distress shall surround him, as a king that is prepared for a battle. For he hath stretched out his hand against God, and hath strengthened himself against the Almighty," Job xv. 20. "When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape," 1 Thess v. 3; "Shall not the light of the wicked be extinguished and the flame of his fire not shine? The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and the lamp that is over him shall be put out. The step of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down headlong. The soles of his feet shall be held in a snare, and thirst shall burn against him. A gin is hid for him in the earth, and his trap upon the path. Fears shall terrify him on every side, and shall entangle his feet,"
Job xviii. 5. And no wonder, for "Whoever resisted God and had peace?" Job ix. 4. "The wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest, and the waves thereof cast up dirt and mire. There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord God," Is. lvii. 20. "For whereas wickedness is fearful, it beareth witness of its condemnation; for a troubled conscience always foreseeth grievous things," Wisd. xvii. 10; and therefore "The wicked man fleeth when no man pursueth; but the just, bold as a lion, shall be without dread," Prov. xxviii. 1.

Q. 12. Are there any other sources of comfort to the just, in their tribulations, besides those above mentioned?

A. There are many others; such as (1.) reading the holy scriptures which are written for our consolation; "for what things soever were written, were written for our learning, that through patience, and the comfort of the scriptures, we might have hope," Rom. xv. 4. (2.) Meditating on the passion of Christ: according to that of St. Paul, "Let us run by patience to the fight that is before us; looking on Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God. For think diligently upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds," Heb. xii. 1. (3.) Reading the lives of the saints of God, from whose glorious examples the soul is greatly animated, and strengthened with great fervour to imitate them. (4.) The testimony of a good conscience, which is a continual feast, and a vast support to the soul in all her afflictions, especially in such as come upon her for God's sake: "For this is thanks-worthy, if for conscience' sake a man endures sorrows, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if committing sin, and being buffeted for it, you endure? But if doing well you suffer patiently, this is thanks-worthy before God; for unto this you are called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps; who did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," 1 Pet. ii. 19. Nay, "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be happy: for that which is of the honour, glory, and power of God, and that which is his Spirit, resteth upon you," 1 Pet. iv. 14. Hence St. Paul makes a good conscience a subject of glory, "For our glory is this," says he, "the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity of heart, and sincerity of God, and not in carnal wisdom, but in the grace of God, we have conversed in this world," 2 Cor. i. 12. A good conscience is a source of great confidence in God, that
he will hear our prayers, for "If our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God; and whatever we shall ask we shall receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." 1 John i. 21; and therefore St. Paul warmly exhorts us not to lose this ground of confidence: "Let us draw near with a true heart, in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with clean water; let us hold fast the confession of our hope, without wavering, for he is faithful that hath promised," Heb. x. 22. (5.) The consolation of the holy sacraments, where grace and strength is bestowed upon the soul, according to her capacity of receiving it, to sweeten her troubles, and make them light and easy to her. (6.) The advice and consolations of spiritual guides, which are of immense assistance to calm the soul, and put her upon the proper manner of behaving under the cross, so as to draw the intended benefit from it. With many more of the like efficacy; but especially (7.) The internal consolations of the Holy Ghost, which our good God never fails to bestow upon his faithful servants amidst their trials and crosses, which they endure in conformity to his holy will. David was very sensible of this when he said, "In the day of my trouble I sought God, with my hands lifted up to him in the night, and I was not deceived. My soul refused to be comforted; I remembered God and was delighted," Ps. lxxvi. 3. St. Paul also strongly declares this, saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we also may be able to comfort them who are in any distress... for as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation," 2 Cor. i. 3—7. This heavenly consolation God bestows with a liberal hand, and the more abundantly the more our sufferings are; for, "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also by Christ doth our comfort abound," 2 Cor. i. 5. Hence David acknowledges this from his own experience, saying, "We are filled, O Lord, in the morning with thy mercy; and we have rejoiced and are delighted all our days; we have rejoiced for the days in which thou hast humbled us; for the years in which we have seen evils," Ps. lxxxix. 14. St. Paul, in like manner, says, "I am filled with comfort—I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation," 2 Cor. vii. 4. And he assures us that it is a consolation which will last for ever. "Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God and our Father, hath loved us, and given us an everlasting consolation,
and good hope in grace," 2 Thess. ii. 15. See, then, in all these things what engaging happiness, what amazing advantages the true servants of God enjoy even in this life, and with how much reason our blessed Saviour invites us to his service from this very consideration, saying, "Come to me, all you that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you: Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is sweet, and my burden light," Matt. xi. 28. How much, then, is it our interest to serve our good God faithfully, and to keep his holy commandments, seeing our real happiness even in this life so essentially depends upon it; and much more when we reflect that there is no other possible way of attaining to eternal happiness in the life to come? Which we shall now consider.

CHAPTER V.

ETERNAL SALVATION, THE LAST END OF MAN.

Q. 1. What are we to consider about eternal salvation?
A. We have already seen in the introduction, that obedience to the commands of God is a condition absolutely necessary for obtaining eternal salvation; but as that would be but a weak motive to make us obey them, unless we are thoroughly persuaded of the importance of salvation, and how immensely it concerns us to obtain it, therefore we are now to consider our eternal salvation itself—its excellency and importance: and from that to learn how much it is our only true and real interest in the next life, to serve God here and to keep his commandments, since our eternal happiness, which is our last end, depends entirely upon our doing so.

Q. 2. How is eternal happiness, the last end of man?
A. We have seen above, that the end for which God created us, was, to glorify him by loving and serving him; this is the immediate end for which we have our being, and for which we are placed in this world. All the creatures around us are created for our use, and serve to display to us the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of our great Creator, with his other Divine perfections; and the wonderful things he has done for us, still more fully discover to us these his sublime excel-
lencies, and convince us in the most amiable and endearing manner, how lovely he is, and how much he deserves to be loved and praised, and glorified by us continually. But his design in creating us does not stop here; he made us not for this present life alone, but for eternity: when this transitory life ends, we begin another life which shall continue for ever; and such is his infinite goodness for us, that he has ordained, that if we faithfully comply with the end of our being in this life, by serving and glorifying him here, we shall be rewarded hereafter with eternal salvation, which is the possession of an incomprehensible happiness in the enjoyment of God himself for all eternity. Therefore this salvation of our souls is called our last end, as being the last end which God had in view with regard to us, in creating us; "You have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end everlasting life," Rom. vi. 22.

Q. 3. Why do you say, with regard to us?

A. Because the scripture says, "The Lord hath made all things for himself," Prov. xvi. 4; and "Every one that calleth upon my name," saith God, "I have created him for my glory," Is. xliii. 2. Which shows that the supreme and ultimate end which God had in creating us, was his own glory; so that not only in this life are we bound to glorify God as the immediate end of our being, but this also shall be the happy employment of the blessed in the life to come for all eternity. Now this glory of God in the next life, consists principally in manifesting to the blessed, to their unspeakable delight, the riches and treasures of his infinite goodness, which takes pleasure in making his faithful servants completely happy: so that the last end which God had in view in creating us, was in regard to himself, his own eternal glory, and in regard to us, our eternal happiness; and these two are so connected together, that our eternal happiness essentially consists in seeing God and in loving, enjoying, and glorifying him for ever!

§ 1. Our Happiness in seeing God, as our last end.

Q. 4. Why does our happiness consist in seeing God?

A. Upon account of his infinite beauty and numberless perfections. We find, from experience, that our nature is so framed by our great Creator, as to receive a particular pleasure and delight from looking on any object which is perfect in its kind and beautiful. And as the beauty of the human frame is the most excellent of any material beauty, especially when accompanied with elegance of person, and graceful dignity; so
we find, that when it is very great and singular in any one, it has a most incredible power of attracting to itself the hearts of those who behold it, even of the most wise and powerful; so as, in a manner, to bewitch them and enchant them, from the pleasure they receive in beholding and enjoying it: witness the examples of Samson and Solomon, of Holophernes and numberless others. Now if created bodily beauty, which is a mere nothing compared to the spiritual beauty of the soul, and still less to the supernatural beauty of a being in glory, has such attracting charms to please and delight the hearts of those who behold it; how much more must the infinite uncreated beauty of God, which shines forth in all his Divine perfections, totally beatify the souls of the blessed, and fill them with the most inconceivable rapture and delight? Our souls and hearts are made for God; no creature whatsoever is capable of satisfying their boundless capacity; nothing but an infinite good can fill them; nothing but the clear sight and possession of the beauty of God, which is this infinite good for which they were created, can give them entire content.

Q. 5. Can we form any just idea of what the beauty of God is in itself?

A. This is impossible; for how can a finite being form any just idea of what is infinite? How can the creature have any adequate idea of what essentially belongs to the Creator? Besides, we have no grounds to go upon, which can help us to form any proper idea of the beauty of God, more than a blind man has to form any just idea of light and colour. The beauty of God is of a kind totally different from all created beauty; and though all created beauty is from God, and therefore must be in him, yet it is in him after a manner so very different from what it is in creatures, and with such infinite perfection, that there is no possibility of forming any just idea of what the beauty of God is in itself, from what we see in the creatures. But there are not wanting several strong reasons which show us in the most convincing manner, how great, how amazing, how infinitely delightful the beauty of God must be; and these reasons are chiefly the following:

(1.) The scripture declares, that God is the first Author of beauty; and from thence draws this conclusion, if men be delighted with the beauty of the creatures, "Let them know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they; for the first Author of beauty made all those things," Wisd. xiii. 3. And a little after adds, "By the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the Creator of them may be seen, so as to be
known thereby," verse 5. This is a most just argument, for the Creator must have in himself what he communicates to his creatures, and in a degree as much more perfect and excellent than they, in as much as he is infinitely more perfect and excellent than they are; and hence, if all the numberless beauties which we see dispersed among all the creatures in the universe, the splendour of the sun, the brightness of the moon, the sparkling of the stars, the lively colours of the rainbow, the immense variety of beauties which we see in the flowers, and in all the productions of the earth, in birds and beasts, and all living creatures, were all collected in one, and to all this were added, all the beauty that ever existed in the human form; though nothing can be conceived so delightful and enchanting as this would be, yet all this, if compared to the uncreated beauty of God, would not bear such a proportion to it, as a small spark of fire bears to the sun, or a drop of water to the ocean. Nay, what is still more; Almighty God not only is the Author of all the beauty that is found in all creatures which actually do exist; but can, if he please, create numbers of other worlds and of other creatures much more amply exceeding the beauties of this universe, than this universe itself exceeds a grain of sand; and consequently, he must contain in himself all possible beauty without bounds or limitation, in presence of which all the beauties of this world, and of thousands of worlds more perfect than this, would totally disappear as a mere nothing; just as the stars disappear in the presence of the sun. Hence the scripture says, "The moon shall blush and the sun shall be ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Sion, and shall be glorified in the sight of his ancients," Is. xxiv. 23. What an amazing idea does this give us of the immensity of that Divine beauty, and of the charms and delights which the sight and enjoyment of it must communicate to the souls of those who behold it!

(2.) The second argument is taken from the properties of the Divine beauty, which give it another infinite advantage over all created beauty. Now these are, (1.) That it is altogether unchangeable, so that it is absolutely impossible it should ever fail, or even be in the smallest degree diminished. Oh how frail and fading is all created beauty! Take that of the human form which is the greatest and the most engaging beauty we know among the creatures! how soon does a fit of sickness change the most comely countenance into an object of horror! how does the short space of a few years deprive it of all its charms! Its colour fades, its lustre disappears, its liveliness
decays; and as old age approaches and disfigures it with wrinkles, it can scarce be known for what it was! Death at last puts the finishing stroke to its existence, and makes the most beautiful countenance even loathsome to behold! What then is the beauty of man? A falling star, a fleeting meteor, a theatre of constancy, the toy of time, the delusion of the eyes, a shining frailty! Not so the uncreated beauty of the great Creator; he is beauty itself, and his Divine beauty is essential, perpetual, invariable, unchangeable, eternal! No accident can lessen it, no length of time can diminish it; and the happy soul, that is once in possession of it, shall never, never be deprived of the inexpressible bliss she enjoys in contemplating it! (2.) The beauty of God is entire, perfect, pure without the smallest mixture of deformity or imperfection. Consider the most beautiful being that ever appeared in the world; how far is its beauty from being complete even in its own kind; with how many defects is it accompanied, either in the proportion of the parts, or in the propriety of the colour, or in the elegance and air of the person? and what innumerable other beauties are wanting to it? and after all it is only superficial, it is all external, and within that outward appearance, what a mass of corruption does it contain! But the beauty of God is an aggregate of all possible beauty, in an indefinite degree, without the smallest defect; every thing there is charming, every thing delightful, every thing enchanting, every thing lovely, so that it is no less impossible to add any thing to its perfection, than it is to diminish it! (3.) It is superabundant, and so amazingly so, that though it be communicated in different degrees to innumerable creatures, yet this is done without the smallest diminution of its own infinite perfection! Nay, it is so immensely communicative, that it transforms into its own likeness, those happy souls who are admitted to its presence, merely by being seen by them, for, "We all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face," says St. Paul, "are transformed into the same image," 2 Cor. iii. 18. And, "We know," cries the beloved disciple, "that when he shall appear, we shall be like to him, because we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. If, therefore, the fading, corruptible, imperfect beauty of the creature, has such a powerful effect upon our hearts, and gives us such pleasure in beholding it, conceive if you can what amazing effect it must produce, what infinite delight it must give, to see and possess this uncreated, immense, essential, eternal beauty of the great Creator?

(3.) The third reason to show how great this beauty of God
must be, is taken from the effects it produces on those who behold it; and these are two—inaexpressible pleasure, and unbounded love. Pleasure and love are indeed the constant and natural effects of beauty; it always gives a pleasure and delight to the heart of man to look upon a beautiful object; and it naturally draws our good-will and affection towards it, as constant experience shows; by which we also learn that the more beautiful the object is, the more powerfully does it produce these effects in our souls. Nothing therefore serves more to show us how immense the Divine beauty must be, than to consider how powerfully, and to what an amazing degree it delights the souls of those who behold it, and how vehemently it draws to itself all their love and affections.

Q. 6. How greatly does the clear vision of God delight the soul?

A: On this we must observe, (1.) That the pleasure and delight which the soul enjoys from the beatific vision of God, is beyond all explication; yea, beyond all conception: for, “From the beginning of the world they have not heard, nor perceived with the ears; the eye hath not seen, O God, besides thee, what things thou hast prepared for them that wait for thee,” Is. lxiv. 4; or, as St. Paul expresseth it, “The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him,” 1 Cor. ii. 9; And therefore the royal prophet cries out with astonishment, “O how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for those that fear thee! which thou hast wrought for them that hope in thee!” Ps. xxx. 20; and St. Paul also assures us, that “the peace of God surpasseth all understanding,” Phil. iv. 7. So that the supreme delight and joy which flows from contemplating the infinite beauty of God, not only exceeds all the pleasures and delights of this world, but by its ineffable and excessive sweetness, immensely surpasses all that we can possibly conceive or imagine.

(2.) We are told by St. Paul, that “he was caught up to the third heavens……that he was caught up into paradise, and heard secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter,” 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4. He does not say that he was admitted to the clear vision of God; he was still in his mortal state in which the scripture tells us, that “no man can see God and live;” and yet the beauties he saw and heard on that occasion were so astonishing and delightful, that he was quite enraptured with them, and declares, and repeats it a second time, that he did not know whether he was in the body or not, “Whether in the
body," says he, "I know not, or out of the body, I know not, God knoweth," verse 2. Now if the glimpse he there had of the Divine beauty was so delightful, as to deprive him of his very senses, what must it be to see God face to face, in all the effulgence of his glory? In like manner when our Saviour showed his three beloved disciples a glimpse of his body in glory, when he was transfigured before them, they were so confounded and amazed and out of themselves, that they knew not what they said: what must it be to see him at the right hand of his Father? and if the human nature of Christ in glory be so delightful an object, and so enraptures the soul, what must be the infinite, uncreated beauty of the Deity?

(3.) Our blessed Saviour says to the good servant, "well done, thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Matt. xxv. 21. On which words a pious writer says as follows: He first honours the faithful servant, commending him for his fidelity: then he enriches him delivering many things into his hand, and so admits him into the joy and pleasure of his Lord; signifying by his manner of expression, the greatness of his joy; for he does not say that this joy should enter into him, but that he should enter into joy. So great is this joy, that it wholly fills and embraces the blessed souls that enter into heaven, as into an immense ocean of pleasure and delight. The joys of the earth enter into the hearts of those who possess them, but fill them not, because the capacity of man's heart is greater than they can satisfy. But the joys of heaven receive the blessed into themselves and fill and overflow them on all parts. Their joy is like an ocean of delights, into which the saints enter as a sponge into the sea, which fills its whole capacity, while the water surrounds and encompasses it all about. Hence joy shall be within, and joy without, joy above, and joy below, joy round about on every side, and all parts full of joy." Differ. between Temp. and Etern. B. iv. ch. 4. On this account the royal prophet compares this immensity of joy to a torrent which quite inebriates the soul, "O how hast thou multiplied thy mercy, O Lord....they shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house, thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure, for in thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light shall we see light," Ps xxxv. 8, and he declares again and again that this joy is so great that it perfectly fills and satiates the boundless capacity of the soul. "Thou hast made known to me the ways of life, thou shalt fill me with joy with thy coun-
tenance, at thy right hand are delights even to the end," Ps. xv. 11. "I will appear before thy sight in justice, I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear," Ps. xvi. 15. "Blessed is he whom thou hast chosen and taken to thee; he shall dwell in thy courts; he shall be filled with the good things of thy house," Ps. lxiv. 5. And no wonder, for,

(4.) The joy which flows from the sight of God, is no other than the joy of God himself; "enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," says our Saviour. That joy which God is, and by which he is essentially and eternally happy, is the joy which he communicates to his saints, by showing to them his infinite beauty. "I am thy reward," says he to Abraham, "exceeding great," Gen. xv. 1. "I am thy salvation," Ps. xlv. 3. God is a Being infinitely great—infinite in all possible perfections, and the enjoyment of his infinite beauty, which shines forth in all his Divine perfections, is so exquisitely delightful, as to render God himself completely and infinitely happy for ever. Now this infinite happiness—this exquisite joy which God possesses in himself, is what he communicates to his saints when they are admitted to his Divine presence: for he does not say simply, enter into joy, but, to show the immensity of that joy, he says, "enter into the joy of thy Lord,"—into that joy which God himself possesses, and which renders him infinitely happy. Consequently, the joy of the saints from the beatific vision of the Divine beauty, must needs be infinite and unutterable, and all the pleasures of this world in comparison of it, are nothing but bitterness, like gall or wormwood. Yea, so immense and incomprehensible is their joy, that thousands of years pass away like a day, and each day gives them the joy of thousands of years; and this St. Peter desires us particularly to observe, as what gives us one of the most sublime ideas of the greatness of their bliss: "Be not ignorant, my beloved," says he, "that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," 2 Pet. iii. 8. David also assures us that "a thousand years in the sight of God are but as yesterday, which is past and gone," Ps. lxxxix. 4: and therefore says, that "Better is one day in his courts above thousands," Ps. lxxxiii. 11. What a wonderful idea does this give us of the amazing delight which flows from the enjoyment of God!

(5.) What serves still more to show the greatness of this bliss, is, that though all the powers of the soul shall be perfectly satisfied in the possession of it, although the whole man shall be satiated with the most exquisite delight, and
although this delight shall continue without a moment's interruption for all eternity, yet the soul shall never be weary of it—never become tired in the enjoyment of it—never can loathe it, or be cloyed with it. But as she finds in the Divine beauty an inexhaustible treasure of perfections, of wonders, of truths, of graces, she is so totally overwhelmed with the ineffable joy she perceives in beholding it, that for all eternity she shall never be able to turn her thoughts, no, not for a single moment, from contemplating the lovely object which causes it; and her delight shall continue to be as full, as entire, as intense, through all eternity itself, as it was the first moment she entered into the possession of it. Oh, how immensely different is this from the beggarly pleasures of this world, the most exquisite of which cannot be enjoyed but for a short time, without creating the most sensible disgust and loathing.

(6.) Lastly, this heavenly delight which flows from the vision of God, is so strong and powerful, as utterly to exclude all possible evil, all pain, all grief; nay, it is able to convert even hell itself into a paradise; for as the pain of loss, or the being deprived of the enjoyment of God is properly what makes hell to be hell; so should God be pleased to show himself in his beauty to the devils and damned souls, that delightful sight would, in an instant, extinguish all their other torments, and fill them with joy inexpressible. Oh how potent a joy must that be which, cast into an abyss of miseries, converts them all into consolations! Even in the small communication with God, which a soul in her mortal state is capable of receiving, we see what wonderful effects of this kind it can produce—how many of the martyrs, in the midst of the most exquisite torments which the rage of hell, and the malice of men could invent against them, were insensible of what they suffered in the body; nay, were even “filled with comfort,” like St. Paul, “and exceedingly abounded with joy in their tribulations,” 2 Cor. vii. 4, from that internal communication which God gave them of himself? How much more, then, must all pain, grief, and evil, be for ever excluded from that happy place where God reveals himself, face to face, to his saints, and shows them in the clear vision of himself, the incomprehensible beauty of all his Divine perfections? Hence the scripture gives us a beautiful description of this singular effect of the Divine presence: “They shall see his face, and his name shall be on their forehead, and night shall be no more; and they shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of
the sun, for the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign for ever and ever," Rev. xxii. 4. "They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall lead them to the living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," Rev. vii. 16. "They shall be his people, and God himself with them shall be their God, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away," Rev. xxi. 3. "The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come to Sion with praise; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and mourning shall fly away," Is. xxxv. 9. "O great, O bounteous God, who can conceive the riches of thy glory, which thou shalt communicate to thy holy servants in thy kingdom! When all clouds shall be dispelled—when the curtain shall be drawn—when we shall see thee as thou art, what infinite joy shall fill our happy souls! What torrents of pleasure shall we then enjoy, when thou shalt display to us all thy treasures!—when all thy beauties shall appear to us in their brightest colours—when our eyes shall be struck with the splendour of all thy Divine perfections! What heartfelt pleasure will it be to contemplate thy immense, eternal, incomprehensible being—the source and fountain of all being, and from which all creatures flow! What inexpressible joy, to see in thee all manner of truths, and all the wondrous ways of thy Divine Providence! What inconceivable delight to penetrate into the secrets of thy heart, and there discover the endearing love and tender regard thou hast had for us, from all eternity! O how does the soul melt away in amazement at the thought of these joys! O how poor and worthless does all this world appear when compared with them! Such, then, is the excellency of eternal salvation! Such the great end for which we were created.

Q. 7. How does the beauty of God excite the love, and draw to himself the affection of those who behold him?

A. As the sight of the infinite beauty of God gives an inconceivable delight to those who are admitted to it, so it must necessarily excite in their hearts a love and affection towards him, proportionable to that excessive joy which they receive from beholding it; and consequently in a degree and manner altogether above anything we can conceive, or have any idea of, from the experience of what we feel in ourselves towards
any created beauty: (1.) Because it deprives the will entirely of its liberty; the moment the soul beholds the beauty of the Divine presence that instant she is forcibly drawn towards it with the most violent affections. Such are the excessive charms she perceives in it, that it is no more in her power to restrain her affection from it: for as it is impossible for a thread of dry flax when put into the fire, not to catch the flame, and be immediately set on fire itself, so it is much more impossible for the heart of man, when admitted to the presence of God, not to be immediately set on fire with the most ardent love and affection for him; and as it is impossible for a stone when let fall from a height, not to be drawn down with great violence towards the earth, so it is much more impossible for the soul of man in sight of the Divine beauty of God, not to be drawn towards him with the most delightful, but irresistible violence of holy love. Happy necessity indeed, which inseparably joins us to the source of all happiness! Happy union of love which endless eternities shall never be able to disjoin! (2.) The Divine beauty not only draws the soul to itself with such irresistible charms of love, but also occupies the whole affections of the heart; so that the happy soul is not only necessitated to love God, but it is impossible for her to love anything else but God, or with relation to God; and therefore she can no more love either herself or any creature, but only in God and for God, with perfect subordination to her love for him; whatever beauty or excellency she perceives in any creature, she sees the same excellency, but infinitely more perfect, in God; whatever pleasure she can receive from them, she receives an infinitely greater pleasure in him; her whole delight then is in God—her whole affections are fixed in him—her joy is to please him—her most sublime happiness is to do his will—her delightful employment to contemplate his infinite beauty and all his Divine perfections, and to praise and magnify and adore him for ever, singing with ineffable consolation. "Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour and power, and strength to our God for ever and ever, Amen," Rev. vii. 9.

§ 2. The Excellency of our last End.

Q. 8. How great is the excellency or value of our last end?
A. What we have already seen serves to give us the most sublime idea of the excellency of this glorious end for which we are created. For what can we conceive more exalted, more
honourable, more glorious than to be united with the great God by holy love, to be ever in his presence,—to be enraptured with infinite delight in possessing him,—to be honoured as his intimate friends, and dear children,—to be transformed into the image of his glory, and to be unchangeably fixed in the possession of that supreme good for ever and ever? However, as there are several other considerations which serve to convince us still more and more of the invaluable excellency of our salvation, we shall here briefly take a view of them, and,

(1.) From the exalted light in which the scripture everywhere represents it to us. Thus (1.) our Saviour says "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, which when a man hath found he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls; who when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way and sold all that he had and bought it," Matt. xii. 44.

In both these similitudes Jesus Christ himself shows us of what infinite value our salvation is, and how richly it deserves to be purchased even though we should part with every thing else to procure it; for indeed it is above all value—nothing in this world can be comparable to. (2.) It is everywhere proposed to us in scripture as a kingdom, which is an object of the highest excellency of any thing that men esteem upon earth; but it is a kingdom infinitely preferable to the whole world, in the immense riches it contains—in the exalted glory and honour that accompanies the possession of it, and in the ineffable pleasures, which it affords to those who obtain it. The royal prophet thus describes the excellencies of this heavenly kingdom: "In thy strength, O Lord, the king shall joy, and in thy salvation shall rejoice exceedingly; thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden from him the will of his lips; for thou hast prevented him with blessings of sweetness; thou hast set on his head a crown of precious stones; he asked life of thee, and thou hast given him length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great in thy salvation; glory and great beauty shalt thou lay upon him; for thou shalt give him to be a blessing for ever and ever: thou shalt make him joyful in gladness with thy countenance," Ps. xx. 1, (3.) "Blessed are those servants," says Jesus Christ, "whom the Lord, when he cometh shall find watching; Amen, I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing will minister to them," Luke xii. 37. What an inconceivable idea
does this expression of the Son of God give us of the great dignity and honour which he will bestow on his faithful servants in his kingdom! That he himself will become, in a manner, their servant—he will make them sit down to feast at the delicious banquet of his table, and he himself will serve them! (4.) "He that shall overcome and keep my words unto the end, I will give him power over the nations...as I also have received of my Father: and I will give him the morning star," Rev. ii. 29. "He that shall overcome, shall be clothed in white garments...and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.....He that shall overcome, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go out no more, and I will write upon him the name of my God...and my new name...To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me on my throne, as I also have overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne," Rev. iii. 5, 12, 21. Consider each of these expressions, and see what an exalted idea they give us of the great dignity and excellency of our eternal salvation.

(2.) This is further shown from the extraordinary means which God has used, and daily uses for procuring the salvation of his elect. For who could ever imagine that he would so wonderfully exert his Almighty power, and employ the sovereign dominion he has over all the creation to procure it, if it were not an object of the highest excellency in his eyes and worthy of all that he does to obtain it? On this, then, we must observe:—(1.) That the creation of this world, and all the wondrous ways the Divine Providence takes in preserving and governing it, are all intended for the salvation of souls, as the great end the Creator has in view in its existence. All the inferior creatures are intended for the use and benefit of man, to display to him the wisdom, power, goodness, and other perfections of the Creator, and thus serve as motives, means, or instruments, by which he may be excited and enabled to know, love, and glorify his God, and by so doing save his own soul. (2.) In consequence of this, all the inferior creatures must end with time, and at the last day when "the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works that are in it shall be burnt up," 2 Pet. iii. 10. When all these creatures which have their being on the earth for the use of man, shall be no more, because man shall be no more upon the earth to use them...man himself shall still subsist in another life, which shall last for all eternity. And as the duration of the world shall continue only till the
number of the elect be fulfilled, consequently the salvation of the elect is the great end which God has in view in the creation, preservation, and government of the world. Hence (3.) Though the general conduct of Providence in what passes here below, is, in a great measure, concealed from our eyes under the veil of second causes, yet it is most certain that nothing happens upon the face of the earth but what has a relation to the salvation of the elect. The economy of nature is of an inferior order to that of grace, and is created to be subservient to it, and it is just that all temporal things should be subservient to those that are eternal; this visible world is made only for one that is invisible, and the sovereign Lord of all disposes of, and regulates all that passes in the one, only to serve as a foundation on which to establish the other; that continual chain of events which happen in life; those innumerable incidents that fall out in the world, are all regulated by the hidden springs of the Divine Providence, according to the sacred relation they bear to the salvation of souls—"for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, unto heavenly glory," 2 Tim. ii. 10. As St. Paul expresses it on another occasion—"for all things," says the same apostle, "are for your sakes, that the grace abounding through many, may abound in thanksgiving to the glory of God," 2 Cor. iv. 15. Nay, our Saviour himself assures us, that towards the latter end, for their sake, he will shorten the duration of time, and put a more speedy stop to the existence of the world: "unless the Lord had shortened the days no flesh should be saved; but for the sake of the elect which he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days," Mark xiii. 20. What wonderful things did God do in all parts of the creation—in the heavens—in the earth—in the seas and rivers, in order to bring his chosen people out of Egypt, and place them in the earthly Canaan, the land of promise; all these things as St. Paul assures us, 1 Cor. x. 6, were done in a figure of us, to show the economy of the Divine Providence in what he does to bring his elect from the Egypt of sin, and from the bondage of Satan, and place them in the heavenly Canaan, the true land of promise. But how exalted an idea does all this give us of the great value and excellency of the salvation of souls, when we see the Almighty using such wonderful means to procure it, and making all the rest of the creation subservient to it! Nothing is of any value in the sight of God, but the affair of salvation; every thing else in comparison of it, is with him an object of contempt. The rise or desolation of empires—the establish.
ment or destruction of kingdoms—the humiliation of the powers of the earth, and all temporal events whatsoever, are of no real value before God—are a matter of mere indifference to him, but as far as they are connected with, or have a relation to the salvation of souls. How great, then, must the value of souls be in his sight! How precious before him their eternal salvation! (4.) But it is a small matter in the judgment of God, to make the material creation subservient to the salvation of souls; it is of itself so insignificant, that it would have little or no value, but from its relation to that great end. He goes further, he employs even those sublime spirits, his holy angels, who always see his face in glory, and are the most perfect of all his creatures, in order to procure our salvation; “They are all ministering spirits,” as St. Paul assures us, “sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation,” Heb. i. 14; to minister, that is, to serve them, to have the charge of them, to encamp round about them and defend them, and to assist them in securing that great and important end of their being, their eternal salvation. Can we imagine that God would employ these sublime beings on such a service, or that they would undertake it with such cheerfulness, and execute it with such care and fidelity as they do, if it were not in his and their esteem an object worthy of so much attention? (5.) But after all what are all those means used by God to procure the salvation of souls, in comparison with what Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has done and suffered for that purpose? When we reflect, that God is a being of infinite perfections, and wholly independent of any other; that he possesses in himself alone such a plentitude of essential happiness, such an infinite bliss, that it is absolutely impossible for it ever to receive either the smallest increase even from the salvation of all the posterity of Adam, or the smallest diminution from the eternal perdition of the whole; that if he please he can create innumerable worlds of other creatures, to serve him and obey him in whatever he chooses to command; in a word, that he has not the smallest need of us in one way or the other, that we can be of no real use to him, and when we have done all that we are commanded, we must acknowledge that we are unprofitable servants; when we consider this, and then behold this great Being, when we had ruined ourselves by our own fault, humbling himself, taking upon him the form of man, in the likeness of sinful flesh, Rom. viii., and after suffering the most cruel and ignominious torments, at last dying in a disgraceful manner upon the cross, for no other end but to save our poor souls and
bring them to eternal salvation; we are confounded; we are lost in amazement; think what we please, we shall never be able to fathom this incomprehensible mystery, but will be forced to conclude that the salvation of souls must be a valuable object indeed, since the eternal wisdom of the Father thought it worth his while to use such extraordinary means to procure it.

(3.) Another thing which shows, beyond reply the immense value and excellency of salvation, is, that it is eternal; in which respect the greatest and most esteemed things of this world, disappear in its presence as smoke before the wind. And indeed what weight or value can any human affair have in the heart of a thinking man, when he reflects that it must all soon come to an end? how vain and ridiculous do all the toils and labour of men appear, even in those affairs which seem to them of the highest importance, when we reflect how soon their greatest achievements and most renowned performances are brought to nothing; what labours, what toils, what dangers, what expense of blood and treasure did it not cost an Alexander, a Cæsar, and other such worldly heroes, who conquered kingdoms and established empires? and yet, how short was the time that they enjoyed the fruits of their labours! how soon after their death were the conquests lost, and their very countries themselves sunk in obscurity! Nothing appears more reasonable, or of greater consequence in the eyes of worldly people, than to spend their time and labour in bettering their fortunes, raising their family, and laying up treasure for their children. But how often are they disappointed in their views, notwithstanding all their endeavours; and if they do succeed, how long does it last? scarce a generation passes, when their posterity, either by their own folly, or unforeseen accidents, are reduced to poverty, to misery, and obscurity. How beautifully does Solomon describe this vanity of all temporal things throughout the whole book of Ecclesiastes! "Vanity of vanities," says he, "and all is vanity. What hath a man more of all his labour that he taketh under the sun?...the eye is not filled with seeing, neither is the ear filled with hearing...There is no remembrance of former things; nor indeed of those things which hereafter are to come, shall there be any remembrance with them that shall be in the latter end...I have seen all things that are under the sun, and behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit," ch. 1. "I said in my heart: I will go and abound with delights, and enjoy good things...and when I turned myself to all the works which my hand had wrought, and
to the labours, wherein I had laboured in vain, I saw in all things vanity and vexation of spirit, and that nothing was lasting under the sun... again, I hated all application wherewith I had earnestly laboured under the sun, being like to have an heir after me, whom I know not whether he shall be a wise man, or a fool, and he shall have rule over all my labours, with which I have laboured and been solicitous; and is there any thing so vain?...For what profit shall a man have of all his labour and vexation of spirit, with which he hath been tormented under the sun? all his days are full of sorrow and miseries even in the night he doth not rest in mind: and is not this vanity?......to the sinner God hath given vexation and superfluous care to keep up and to gather together, and to give it to him that hath pleased God, but this also is vanity and a fruitless solicitude of the mind,” ch. ii. “The death of man and the death of beasts is one, and the condition of them both is equal; as man dieth so they also die; all things breathe alike, and man hath nothing more than beast, (as to the life of the body) all things are subject to eternity. And all things go to one place. of earth they were made, and unto earth they return together,” ch. iii. “Again I considered all the labours of men, and I remarked that their industries are exposed to the envy of their neighbours; so in this also there is vanity and fruitless care......There is but one, and he hath not a second, no child, no brother, and yet he ceaseth not to labour, neither are his eyes satisfied with riches, neither doeth he reflect, saying, ‘For whom do I labour and defraud my soul of good things? in this also is vanity and a grievous vexation,” ch. iv. “Where there are great riches, there are also many to eat them; And what doth it profit the owner, but that he seeth the riches with his eyes?......There is also another grievous evil, which I have seen under the sun; riches kept to the hurt of the owner: for they are lost with very great affliction; he hath begotten a son who shall be in the extremity of want. As he came forth naked from his mother’s womb, so shall he return, and shall take nothing away with him of his labour. A most deplorable evil! as he came, so shall he return. What then doth it profit him that he hath laboured for the wind? All the days of his life he eateth in darkness, and in many cares, and in misery and in sorrow,” ch. v. “There is no man that liveth always, or that hopeth for this......for the living know that they shall die, but the dead know nothing more (to wit, of the transactions of this world) neither have they a reward any more, for the memory of them is forgotten. Their love also, and their hatred, and
their envy are all perished; neither have they any part in this world, and in the work that is done under the sun....Man knoweth not his own end; but as fishes are taken with the nook, and as birds are caught with the snare, so men are taken in the evil time; when it shall suddenly come upon them," ch. ix. "If a man live many years, and hath rejoiced in them all, he must remember the darksome time and the many days, which when they shall come, the things past shall be accused of vanity," ch. xi. See here in the words of God himself, pronounced by the wisest of men, a striking picture of the vanity and emptiness of all temporal things, and how little value or esteem they deserve to be set upon them; and therefore he justly concludes, as the result of all that he had said, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come, and the years draw nigh, of which thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them......because man shall go into the house of eternity......the dust shall return into its earth, and the spirit to the God who gave it......Let us hear together the conclusion of the discourse; Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is all man: and all things that are done, God will bring into judgment, for every secret thing whether it be good or evil," ch. xii. In which just conclusion he shows us that eternity is the only thing that deserves our esteem and attention, and our whole solicitude should be by walking in the presence of God, by fearing him and keeping his commandments, to secure a favourable sentence in judgment at his tribunal, and attain eternal salvation.

(4.) Lastly, what above every thing else shows us the immense value of our salvation, is, that it is the greatest and most excellent gift that God himself has to bestow upon us. The power of Almighty God is above all conception, and without all bounds; his riches are beyond all measure, his liberality equal to both, and his love to man excessive; for what but the most excessive love could make him die upon a cross for us? and yet this God, so powerful, so rich, so liberal, so loving and good to men, after having done and suffered so much for us, has not in the immensity of his treasures a gift to bestow upon us more excellent and valuable in itself, more worthy and becoming him to give, and more advantageous for us to receive, than to admit us to his Divine presence, to see and enjoy his infinite beauty, and in that blessed enjoyment to be eternally happy with him in glory: Oh how vain then, how empty, how unworthy of our regard are all temporal things, when compared to those eternal joys which await us in heaven?
What signifies it what we have to suffer here, in our short and momentary pilgrimage through this life, if we can only arrive safely at the blissful enjoyment of our God hereafter? especially when we consider, that "Our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; whilst we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal!" 2 Cor. iv. 17.

§ 3. Of the Importance of our last End.

Q. 9. Is it a matter of great importance for us to secure our salvation?
A. It is a matter, of all others without exception, of the greatest importance to us; nay, properly speaking, it is the only affair of importance we have to think of; as will evidently appear from several convincing arguments; and (1.) from its own excellency, which we have already seen, and on which we may here observe, that there is nothing wherein the goodness of God towards us appears in more amiable colours than in the glorious end for which he has created us. All the other creatures that are about us on the face of the earth, have their being only for this world, and must end with time, but man is made to live when time shall be no more, and all shall be swallowed up in eternity. The hour will come when the sun, though at present so beautiful and glorious, "shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved," Matt. xxiv. 29; when "the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works that are in it shall be burnt up," 2 Pet. iii. 10; when the plants and trees and herbs of the field and all their beauteous flowers shall be utterly destroyed; when the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and all other creatures made for the use of man, shall cease to be, and shall all perish for ever; while man himself, if he be so happy as to attain to the great end of his being, and secure his eternal salvation, shall be for ever employed in praising his great Creator, and enjoying unutterable bliss and happiness beyond conception, from beholding his Divine beauty. The happiness of which all other creatures are capable in this life, consists only in the gratification of their senses, in the sensual pleasure of eating and drinking and sleep-
ing and the like; they cannot contemplate the works of God, nor perceive his Divine perfections which shine forth in all his works; they cannot adore the hand that made them, nor enjoy the sublime happiness of loving and conversing with him; but man even in this life is capable of knowing and loving his great Creator, and knows that if he be faithful in his service here he shall enjoy his blissful company for all eternity hereafter.

"You have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end everlasting life," Rom. vi. 22. We must not then imagine that we are created by God for no other end than to eat and drink and sleep, and enjoy the vain pleasures, the perishing riches, the transitory glory of this world. It would be thinking too meanly of the Supreme Being to suppose he would create such creatures as we are, capable of knowing him and loving him, of contemplating his Divine perfections, of adoring him and glorifying him, and endowed with such a violent propensity to happiness as we have, which no created object can satisfy, for no other end than that for which he has created the brute beasts that perish. No, no, that is not the end for which we were created; but it is, to know God, to love him and to serve him whilst we are in this world, this school of probation; that by so doing we may come at last to enjoy him in his kingdom, to be seated on a throne of glory with Jesus Christ, to be filled with the plenty of his house, to be inebriated with that torrent of delight which is only to be found in the possession of the God that made us, and in the enjoyment of his Divine perfections. Now what can be more important, what can be of such consequence to us as to secure to ourselves such immense happiness, which if we once attain, we shall possess for ever and ever? O how does every thing else disappear as a mere nothing, when put in competition with this? how do all temporal things become vile and worthless, yea, even nauseous and distasteful in presence of this eternal bliss? "What things were gain to me," says St. Paul, "those I have counted loss for Christ. Farthermore I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung that I may gain Christ," Phil. iii. 7. So ought every Christian to do who knows the sublime end of his creation; he ought to look upon all temporal things as loss, and to despise and contend them as dung, that he may secure his eternal salvation. Now as we are placed in this world for no other end but to work out our salvation, and our time here in which we can do it, will be but for a few years at most,
consequently we are here in this life only as in a place of banishment, where we are kept at a distance from our heavenly country, which is the place of our eternal habitation; and therefore we ought to look upon ourselves here only as pilgrims and strangers left in this world as in a place of probation, where our great business is to fit and prepare ourselves for eternal bliss; to labour in this vineyard that we may obtain the promised reward; to run in the race which is set before us that we may gain the prize, to fight against all the enemies of our soul, that we may secure to ourselves the incorruptible crown. This is our business here, this the great affair we have to manage; and the great importance of the business will still further appear, if we consider the following truths.

(2.) The business of securing our salvation is properly our own business; whatever else we do in the affairs of this world, is more doing the business of others than our own. Take a view of all the worldly employments of mankind, we shall find this to be universally true, that whatever toil and labour, whatever care and solicitude it may cost them, all they can reap from their labours for themselves is only food and raiment, and, if you will, some sensual amusement; but the greatest part of the fruits of their labours goes to other people. It is true, some may have more delicate food, and more costly raiment than others, but this does not necessarily make them more happy; the beggar with his rags and coarse fare often enjoys more real content, more solid happiness than the king. What hardships, what poor living, what dangers does not the sailor undergo in the course of his long voyages? At last he returns home, with his ship full of riches, and the productions of foreign countries. But what fruit does he reap of all his labours? Some scanty wages, scarce sufficient to keep him in food and raiment till he go to sea again; whilst all the valuable things he has with so much toil and risk brought home, go to enrich the merchant who employed him. What toil, what fatigue, does not the soldier endure in the time of war? What dangers of losing his health, his members, his life itself, is he not exposed to? How does he renounce his very will itself, and becomes slave to the will of his commanders? What fruit does he reap for all this? Sixpence a day, and a new coat in the year; and when the war is ended, he is left to pine away his days in misery from the loss of his health, or his limbs, with perhaps some small pension, scarce sufficient to afford him the plainest food, and the coarsest raiment; while the glory of his victories goes to his king and officers, and the
conquests he has made are distributed to others whom he does not know. Who can enumerate the labours and toils of the husbandman? His whole life is a continual circle of fatigue from one year's end to the other; and for whom does he labour? All the profits of his toil go to enrich his landlord, while what he receives himself is very often scarce sufficient to maintain himself and family in food and raiment. And the same we find is universally the case in all the different states and employments of life; in all which we are doing for others much more than for ourselves. It is true indeed in many cases, besides food and raiment, people gain great store of riches from their labours; but this does not in the least alter the matter; for either they spend these riches in riotous living, or they hoard them up in their coffers. If they spend them in riotous living, they will indeed have richer clothes and more delicious food than the poor, but still food and raiment of one sort or other include all their portion of riches, and whilst they throw them away extravagantly upon these things, and upon other vain amusements, what are they doing but benefiting the merchants, and innkeepers, and others such, by throwing their money into their hands? If on the other hand they hoard up their treasures in their coffers, for whom is all their labour? For those who come after them, who will seldom or never think more of them, who will perhaps be as lavish in spending, as they were anxious in gathering, and who will be enjoying the fruits of their labours and living upon them in mirth and jollity, while their own poor souls shall perhaps be tormented in hell's devouring flames! So that in whatever light we consider it, still it remains a certain truth, that whatever worldly affair one is engaged in, he labours much more for others than he does for himself; it is the business of others he is doing more than his own. But with the important business of our salvation it is not so; whatever pains we take there, the profit is all our own; all the fruit of our labours comes to ourselves, we reap the whole benefit of the toils we undergo to secure it. If we fast, and with St. Paul, chastise our body and bring it into subjection, by so doing we pay off the debt we owe to the Divine justice, and hasten the time of our admission to eternal bliss if we pray, our prayers draw down innumerable graces on our souls and more effectually secure our salvation; if we give plenteous alms to the poor, this "purges away sin and delivers from death, and makes a man find mercy and life everlasting," Tob. xii. Even a cup of cold water given for Christ's sake shall not want a reward; nothing is lost here, but every thing
returns with immense profit to our own bosom. "Blessed are all they that fear the Lord," says the holy scripture, "that walk in his ways: for thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands: blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee," Ps. cxxvii. 1: This being the case, how vastly more important is it for us, to labour strenuously for our salvation, which is our own business, than for any worldly affair whatsoever, which is always the business of other people more than our own? And how great is the folly of those who give up themselves so wholly to their worldly as to neglect the most important affair of their own salvation? What should we think of the master of a family, who should employ himself all the day long in managing the affairs of other people, and let his own family starve at home? What should we think of a farmer, who should employ his cattle and servants in improving his neighbour's land, and leave his own farm uncultivated? Such is our folly, or rather an emblem of our folly, when we neglect our own affair, the affair of our salvation, and mind only the concerns of this world which are the affairs of others more than of ourselves. It is true indeed, that even our worldly affairs, such as belong to the state of life in which Providence has placed us may all be so managed as to contribute to our eternal salvation, and this is the only end to which they ought always to be referred, and made subservient; but this is what evidently shows of how much greater importance our salvation is than they: they are but as the means to acquire our salvation, have no merit in themselves but as far as they conduce to that great end, and are good for nothing and lost if not referred to it. But alas! how seldom are they used for this purpose? and here lies our great misfortune. Miserable will the poor wretch be at the hour of death, when casting back his thoughts upon his past conduct, he shall find that he has been exceedingly busy all his days in doing for others, but has done nothing in his own great business, the securing his salvation. He may have been of great service to his country, in gaining victories over its enemies, or in managing its public affairs; he may have been of great service to his friends, in getting them posts and places; or to his children in giving them a good education, and laying up a fortune for them; but if with all this he has neglected his own soul, what is it all, but labouring for other people, and neglecting himself? And to him will be said at that tremendous moment on which eternity depends, "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Luke xii. 20.
(3.) Our salvation is not only our own business, the affair that properly belongs to ourselves, but it is in fact our only necessary business; the only thing for which we were sent into this world. Our blessed Saviour declares this in his answer to Martha, when she seemed displeased to see her sister Mary so taken up with hearing him, that she left her to toil alone, “Martha, Martha,” said he, “thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary; Mary hath chosen the best part,” Luke xii. 41. Our salvation is the one thing necessary; every thing is but accidental and trifling in comparison to this, and of no manner of importance, whether it be done or not, if we can only secure our salvation. This is the necessary business of all mankind, of the king and the beggar, the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the wise man and the fool. It is nowise necessary for a man to be rich and learned, or great in the world, to be of this or that employment, to be in one state of life or another, but it is absolutely necessary for all to work out their salvation; for this, and for this alone we are in being, and better for us not to be at all than to lose it; as our Saviour himself said of Judas, foreseeing his reprobation, “It were better for that man if he had not been born,” Matt. xxvi. 24. All the creatures about us were made only for this purpose, to serve us in this great business of our salvation; all our faculties, powers, and members, were given us only for this end; our eyes were not given us to look at unlawful objects, and unjustly covet what belongs to others, but to behold the glorious works of God, in order to fill our hearts with gratitude and love to him, and enable us to go about those duties of life which he requires of us, as the means to save our souls; our ears were not given us to be open to detractions and calumnies and sinful conversation, but to hear and learn the sacred laws of God, and enable us to discharge those duties of Christian charity which are necessary for acquiring salvation; our tongue was not given us to profane the adorable name of God, or imprecate evil upon ourselves or others, but to be employed in praying to God and praising him, and in performing those duties to our fellow-creatures, which the law of God requires of us in order to be saved: our time itself, our whole life, is given us for no other end but to save our souls; and all the wondrous things that God has done for us, whether in the order of nature or of grace, whether for our souls or bodies, are all intended only for the same purpose. Whatever other business we are engaged in, however important it may seem in the eyes of the deluded world, unless it conduce to our salvation,
is of no manner of value or worth, because it is all lost for eternity! Our salvation is our only necessary affair, and to which every thing ought to yield.

(4.) But the vast importance and necessity of our salvation is principally shown from the dreadful consequences of losing it. "What will it profit a man," says Jesus Christ himself, "if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mark xiii. 36. Oh! here it is indeed, above all other considerations, that we see of what immense importance it is to us, and how absolutely necessary to save our souls. Exalt the importance of all worldly affairs as much as you please; look upon riches and pleasures, and honours, as things of the highest value; put all the esteem on them that ever entered the heart of man; and suppose yourself master of the whole universe, yet how soon must your enjoyment of all this end! and when you die, what will it all profit you, if you be buried in hell-fire, and condemned for ever in those eternal flames, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished; where there shall be nothing but weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; where fire and brimstone and snares shall be the portion of their cup: where the Lord Almighty shall give fire and worms into their flesh, that they may burn and feel for ever; where tribulation and anguish shall be their eternal inheritance; where they shall fall without honour, and be a reproach among the dead for ever; where shame shall cover them, and fear shall be upon every face; where they shall be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of grief and sadness, and be made to drink it up even to the dregs; where they shall be salted with fire, and where the Lord shall make them as an oven of fire in the time of his anger; where they shall be made a desolation and an astonishment, and a hissing, and a curse; where they shall have no rest night or day, no comfort, no peace, no ease; no, not so much as a single drop of water to cool their parched tongues; where they shall seek death and shall not find it, they shall desire to die and death shall fly from them; where they shall gnaw their tongues for pain, and blaspheme the God of heaven because of their pains and wounds; where, in fine, they shall be for ever banished from the presence of God, excluded from the kingdom of heaven, and eternally cut off from the joys of his saints, for which they were created! Gracious God! what a complication of miseries is this? yet this is what, the word of God assures us, will be the eternal portion of those who lose their salvation. What madness and folly then must it be to neglect that great,
that important affair, or to expose it to the smallest danger of being lost, for any consideration this world can afford! or what is there in this world that can bear the smallest proportion, in worth, or merit or importance, to the salvation of our souls! What madness to deliver up our poor souls into the hands of their enemies, to ruin ourselves and make ourselves for ever miserable, for the momentary and trifling enjoyments of this place of banishment? If we miscarry in any worldly affair, it may be repaired some other way; and though it be entirely lost, we may have many other advantages to comfort us, and salvation will superabundantly make up for all: but if we lose our salvation, it is lost for ever; the loss is irreparable, nor is it possible to find any comfort under it, for "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" If that be lost, all good is lost, and misery and wo must be our portion for ever. Oh! let us then remember, that we have but one soul, which if we lose, we ourselves are lost for ever; we can die but one death, upon which eternity depends, and if we die ill, there is no salvation for us; there is but one Judge, upon whose sentence our final doom depends, and if he give sentence against us, there is no appeal from his tribunal; one only sentence will be passed upon us, and if it be not the happy sentence of "Come ye blessed of my Father;" it must of necessity be that other, "Go ye cursed into everlasting fire!" there is but one heaven, where the blessed shall be happy for ever, from which if we be excluded, our portion must necessarily be in the torments of hell; there is but one eternity, which if 't be not for us an eternity of bliss, must infallibly be an eternity of misery and wo; there is but one God, whom if we do not enjoy in heaven, we shall for ever be slaves to the devil in hell: there is but one Jesus Christ the Saviour of mankind, whose holy law if we do not obey here, we shall be for ever excluded from his salvation hereafter. What an important affair then is our salvation! "Oh that men would be wise and understand and would provide for their last end!" Deut. xxxii. 29.

§ 4. Of the Difficulty of acquiring our last End.

Q. 10. Is it an easy matter to save our souls and acquire our last end?

A. Nothing is more unreasonable than the conduct of worldly people with regard to this point. If you exhort them to amend their lives and embrace a life of Christian virtue and piety, they immediately oppose the great difficulties of such a
life, and how hard a matter it is to work out their salvation, the thought of which astonishes and discourages them, and sometimes even throws them into despair. If, on the other hand, you represent to them the danger of delay in a matter of so great importance, and especially the danger of a death-bed repentance, they immediately reply, that God is merciful, that he wills not the death of a sinner, and that one act of repentance at their last moments, will be sure to find acceptance, and make up their peace with God. Thus they are persuaded that the way of salvation is extremely difficult; and they act as if nothing were more easy than to work out their salvation. The truth is, the road to salvation is both difficult and easy; and they abuse their different senses in which it is so, to their own perdition. To acquire salvation is a most difficult matter to those who are slaves to their passions, attached to the enjoyments of this world, and immersed in sensuality and carnal pleasures; but it is easy to those who know its value, and place their affections on God and eternal goods. It is difficult to flesh and blood, and to all the perverse dispositions of our corrupt nature; but it is easy to a man who by Christian vigilance and repeated victories over nature, has rectified the disorders of the heart, and brought the body into proper subjection. In a word, it is difficult at the beginning to those, who, like young Samuel, "do not yet, experimentally, know the Lord, and to whom the interior word of the Lord has not yet been revealed," 1 Kings iii. 7. But it is easy, yea delightful, to those who, with David, "taste and know how good the Lord is, and what a multitude of sweetness he has hidden for those that fear him." Now these last stand in little or no need of exhortations to encourage them to a virtuous life; carried on by the wings of holy love, and knowing from their own blessed experience what happiness is found in the service of God, they are ready to sacrifice all that is near or dear to them in this world rather than abandon it; nay, the more they have to suffer for God's sake, the more their joy and consolation abounds. But worldly-minded people, who live in sin, and lukewarm Christians who live in a kind of indifference about their souls, have great need indeed to be roused out of their insensibility, and encouraged as much as possible, by every consideration which can make any impression upon them. At the same time, it would be a dangerous encouragement and fatal delusion, to make them imagine that the securing their salvation is a matter of no difficulty, and that they can set about it at any time they please; this would only confirm them in their folly, and
encourage them either to put off that important business from
day to day, till they be caught in their sins and lost for ever;
or else to set about it with so much coldness and tepidity, as
never to take any effectual step to secure it. To them the
great work of salvation is a work of great difficulty, and
requires the strongest resolution and their utmost efforts to
do anything to the purpose in it. And the longer they
delay setting about it in earnest, the greater the difficulty
always becomes; for by delay their bad habits are strengthened,
their passions become more violent, their attachments to sinful
objects are more confirmed, the power the devil gets over them
is greater, and they themselves become more and more unworthy
of the assistance of God’s grace, from their more frequent
abuses of his mercy. But however great the difficulty may be
at present, it ought by no means to discourage them; on the
contrary, it ought the more effectually to incite them to set
about that great work without delay, and to set about it in
earnest; their all is at stake; the delay of a day may prove their
eternal ruin! at any rate it will make their labour the more
difficult! At present God offers them mercy and all necessary
assistance, but if they reject his offer now, who knows if it
will afterwards be made them? The work is difficult, and they
are weak; but God is strong, and “we can do all things
through him that strengtheneth us!” His grace will never be
wanting to us, if we be not wanting to it; but if we reject it
when he offers, we render ourselves unworthy of it! The work
is difficult! but it is not impossible; for “God is faithful, who
will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear,
but with the temptation will make issue, that we may come
off with victory,” 1 Cor. x. The work is difficult! but it is of
the utmost importance, and of absolute necessity: therefore we
ought to set about it with the greater vigour, and the most
determined resolution to sacrifice every thing else to accomplish
it. Finally, the work is difficult! but its difficulty is only in
the first beginnings, and when these are courageously overcome,
and we are fairly “entered into the paths of righteousness,
our steps shall no longer be straitened,” as the Holy Ghost
himself assures us, Prov. iv. 11. It is a yoke, but it is the
yoke of Christ; he will bear it along with us, and assures us
that in his company, it is sweet and easy. These are the proper
sentiments with which the difficulties of a virtuous life ought
to inspire us, if we apprehend as we ought the importance of
our salvation, and how much it behoves us to take every
necessary means to secure it.
Q. 11. What idea does the scripture give of the difficulty of attaining our salvation?

A. Our blessed Master thought it highly necessary to instruct us fully on this point, in order to animate us to be the more earnest about it; and he forewarns us of the difficulties, that we may not be disheartened when we meet them; but at the same time he assures us of all necessary assistance both to enable us to overcome them, and to sweeten the bitterness of them. The last we have seen at large, Chap. IV. We shall now see how he describes the difficulties. And (1.) from his similitudes and parables; he proposes our salvation to us as a glorious kingdom, but a kingdom which "suffereth violence and the violent bear it away," Matt. xi. 12. He compares it to a noble edifice, but tells us we must "renounce all we possess," to defray the charges of the building, otherwise we cannot be his disciples, Luke xiv. 33. He likens it to a delicious supper, prepared by a great man to entertain his friends, but assures us that no worldly concern must hinder us from accepting the invitation, neither farm, nor merchandise, nor marriage; declaring "none of those who are invited, and are detained by such excuses, shall taste of his supper," Luke xiv. 24. He tells us that our salvation is like to a pearl of great price, a treasure hid in a field, but assures us that we must sell all we have to purchase it, and even rejoice in doing so, Matt. xiii. 44.

(2.) From his express declarations, and the strict command he lays upon all his followers to deny themselves, to mortify their passions, to bear their cross, and the like, as we have seen above at large, Chap. IV. Q. 4. through the whole. From all which it is evident, that the road to salvation is most difficult to our corrupt nature, and hard to flesh and blood, and therefore our blessed Saviour himself cries, with a kind of astonishment, "How narrow is the gate and strait the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it!" Matt. vii. 14.

Q. 12. What consequences does the scripture draw from this difficulty of securing our salvation?

A. Not that we should be disheartened by it or hindered from undertaking this great and important business; but on the contrary, that we should be excited to apply to it with greater fervour, resolution, and perseverance. Thus (1.) "A certain man said to Jesus, Lord, are they few that are saved? but he said to them, Strive to enter by the narrow gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able," Luke xiii. 23. Here we see that from the very difficulty he exhorts them to set about it in good earnest; "Strive," says he, that is,
contend, use all your endeavour, strain every nerve; it is not enough “to seek,” in a work of such difficulty; “many shall seek,” but that will not do; because they do not “strive.” They shall not be able to enter. He then goes on to animate them in their good endeavours, from the vast importance of the business, setting before their eyes the dreadful consequences of miscarrying in it. (2.) St. Paul reasons in the same manner; he shows us the difficulty, by proposing our salvation as a prize for which we must run, and as a crown for which we must fight, but for that very reason concludes, how diligent we should be to run well and fight bravely, and confirms his conclusion by his own example; “Know you not,” says he, “that they that run in a race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize; So run that you may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things: and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one! I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty; I so fight, not as one beating the air: but I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away,” 1 Cor. ix. 24.

(3.) Whatever progress this holy apostle made, he never relaxed in his fervour, but went on daily striving and daily advancing, and he exhorts all to follow his example; “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do; forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore as many as are perfect be thus minded......Be followers of me, brethren.” Phil. iii. 13. (4.) He exhorts us pressingly to this perseverance from the example of Christ and the greatness of the prize, saying, “Laying aside every weight, and the sin that surroundeth us, let us run by patience to the fight that is set before us; looking on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith, who having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God: for think diligently upon him that endureth such opposition from sinners against himself, that you be not wearied fainting in your minds,” Heb. xii. 1. (5.) Our blessed Saviour conjures us in the most pressing manner, not only to strive in this great business, and persevere in striving, but to be always ready, always upon the watch, never to relax our fervour, never to be found sleeping, nor give way to the allurements of flesh and blood, lest we be caught unprepared and be lost for ever. This he sets forth to us in the most affecting manner in different similitudes and
parables; as that of the master coming home upon his servants at an unexpected hour, Matt. xxiv. 22; that of the foolish virgins waiting for the bridegroom, Matt. xxv. 1; also of the man going to a far country, on which he says, "Watch ye therefore, for you know not when the Lord of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming on a sudden he find you sleeping. And what I say to you I say to all, Watch," Mark xiii. 35. And particularly, from the uncertainty of the day of our death, where he speaks thus: "Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly; for as a snare shall it come upon all that sit upon the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come, and to stand before the Son of man," Luke xxi. 34. (6.) Finally, St. Peter thus presses upon us to be diligent in this great work, from the hopes of the reward: "Wherefore, brethren, labour the more, that by good works you may make your calling and election sure; for so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. i. 10. And St. Paul exhorts us to do this with fear and trembling, considering the danger of misgiving, but putting our whole confidence in the goodness of Almighty God, with whose assistance all will be easy for us: "With fear and trembling work out your salvation; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish according to his good will," Phil. ii. 12. And no wonder that the utmost diligence in this duty is so earnestly recommended to us; "for if the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Pet. iv. 18.

§ 5. The Consequences which follow from the Excellency and Importance of our last End.

Q. 13. What are the consequences that necessarily flow from the excellency and vast importance of our salvation.

A. Whoever reflects seriously on what we have seen above—on the immense value of our salvation—on the endless duration of eternity, and on what it is to be eternally happy or eternally miserable, cannot fail to see, in their strongest light, the most important consequences which flow from these truths. Indeed the most sublime rules of Christian morality, both for regulating the judgment we ought to form of things, and direct-
ing our practice, are founded in them. We shall here consider some of the most necessary:—

(1.) Seeing that our salvation is a good infinitely more excellent than all the goods this world can afford; yea, the greatest good that God himself, though a Being of infinite power, infinite riches, and infinite liberality, can bestow upon us; and seeing it is of such immense importance to us, that if we lose it we must, of necessity, be eternally miserable, who does not see at once that it is our bounden duty to esteem and prefer our salvation before every thing else without exception? Nay, that we must be void of reason, void of judgment, void of common sense, to prefer any thing else whatsoever before it? Is it not the constant rule we follow in all earthly concerns, to esteem and prefer that most which is in itself most valuable and most useful to us? Does not common sense, and the very feelings of our heart, impel us to do so? Seeing, therefore, our salvation surpasses every thing else, without all comparison, both in its own great excellency and in its importance to us, certainly we ought to esteem and prefer it to every thing without exception. What the wise man says of his esteem for that heavenly wisdom, which is but the means to attain salvation, shows us what we ought, with much greater reason, to be able to say with truth of our esteem for salvation itself, which is the great end to which that wisdom conducts us: “I preferred wisdom,” says he, “before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison to her. Neither did I compare her to any precious stone; for all gold, in comparison of her, is a little sand; and silver, in respect to her, shall be counted as clay: I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light, for her light cannot be put out......for she is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become friends of God,” Wisd. vii. 8. Now if wisdom was so much esteemed and preferred before every thing valuable in this life, because it makes us here, in time, to be friends of God, how much more ought we to esteem and prefer our salvation, by which we are put in possession of God, transformed into the image of his glory, and inseparably united with him, in unspeakable happiness, for all eternity! St Paul was perfectly sensible of this, and declares, that “he counted all things to be but loss; yea, that he counted them all as dung, that he might gain Christ,” Phil. iii. 8. From which two passages of holy writ, we see that we ought not only to prefer our salvation to every thing else, but that we ought to esteem it as the only object worthy of our regard, and look upon all
other things as a little sand or clay, as dung, as a mere nothing in comparison of it; as being things so far below it in real worth and importance to us, that there can be no comparison between them.

(2.) It follows with no less evidence, that this high esteem and preference which we give to our salvation, as the only object worthy of our regard, ought to be the supreme rule and standard, by which we are to form our judgment of every thing else. For it is self-evident that if our salvation be an affair of such inconceivable excellency and importance, that in comparison of it no earthly object has any intrinsic value at all, nothing ought to be esteemed a real good but what conduces to our salvation; and nothing ought to be deemed a real evil but what deprives us of it, or puts us in danger of losing it; and the more any thing conduces to our salvation, the greater good we ought to esteem it, as on the contrary, the more any thing leads us away from or endangers our salvation, we ought undoubtly, to consider it as the greater evil. Hence it follows, (1.) that as we have seen above, Chap. IV. Q. 3, No. 5, how much worldly prosperity is an enemy to our salvation, and that wealth and abundance of earthly pleasures are always most dangerous, and for the most part pernicious to the soul; therefore, we ought by no means, to set our affections upon these things, nor look upon them as real goods, but rather as most dangerous evils, and consequently laying aside all “solicitude about what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed,” as Jesus Christ so warmly enjoins us, Matt. vi.; we should labour according to the will of God in that state of life in which he has placed us to procure such food and raiment as his blessed providence shall be pleased to afford us, and therewith be contented. (2.) As we have also seen above, Chap. IV. Q. 9, how much the tribulations and afflictions of this life contribute both to our spiritual happiness here, and to our salvation hereafter, that therefore we ought to look upon them as real goods, and to embrace them as such, instead of flying from them. And though the weakness of our nature should not have courage to seek after them, yet we should cheerfully receive them when God sends them. (3.) That as sin is the only thing which effectually ruins our salvation, we ought to have the utmost abhorrence and detestation of it, and cheerfully undergo all temporal evil whatsoever, rather than be so unhappy as to be guilty of it. The saints of God were so much convinced of this, that many of them not only suffered the loss of all that was near or dear to them in this world, yea, laid down
their lives in the midst of the greatest torments, rather than offend God by sin; but some have even declared, and left it in their writings on record, that in the supposition that they were to be under the necessity of either committing a mortal sin, or of being thrown headlong into hell, they would, without all hesitation, rather be plunged headlong into the flames of hell in their innocence, than commit a mortal sin to avoid it. And indeed, if no man in his senses would drink a cup of deadly poison even for a kingdom, because he knows his doing so would kill his body, and then what would his kingdom avail him, how much more ought we to reject, with horror, the committing a mortal sin, though to gain the whole world? for mortal sin kills the soul, and "what will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Mark viii. 36. (4.) That we ought not only to fly from and abhor sin itself as the greatest of all evils, but also to avoid, with horror, all occasions of sin, all dangers of being exposed to sin. What man in his senses would wantonly expose any earthly treasure to the danger of being lost? Who, for any worldly advantage, would venture to walk for a mile, among loose stones, upon the brink of a dreadful precipice, where, if he slipt a foot, he must fall down and be crushed to pieces, how much more ought we to abhor and fly from the danger of sin, when God himself declares to us, that "he that loves the danger shall perish in it?" Ecclus. iii. 27. (5.) From the same principle we learn what judgment we ought to form of the books we read—of the company we frequent—of the recreations and amusements we use—of the employments and state of life we embrace, and, in short, of every thing we engage in this life; all which are then only to be esteemed as good and laudable when they contribute to promote our salvation, and tend to the good of the soul; but if they have a contrary tendency, and expose us to the danger of hurting our souls, we ought to abhor them as real evils, whatever pleasure or advantage our self-love may otherwise receive from them.

(3.) From the excellency and importance of salvation it follows, in the third place, that we ought to have a great and ardent desire of obtaining it. Nature itself dictates to us, or rather impels us, to desire any great good which we highly esteem, especially if it depend upon ourselves to acquire it. If, therefore, we have that just sense and esteem of our salvation which it deserves, it must naturally excite in our hearts, the most sincere and fervent desires of securing it; if, like all the saints of God, we are persuaded that our salvation is our
supreme and sovereign good, like them we would desire it above all things else whatever; if with them we firmly believed that our salvation is our only real good, our only perfect happiness, and last end, with them we would also desire it with the whole bent of our soul, as the only object worthy of our desires and affections; the goods of this life would become insipid to us—the world would be a place of banishment for us, and our hearts and affections being fixed on things above, our wishes and sighs would only be for heaven, our true country. David was full of these holy sentiments! "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after thee, my God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God, when shall I come and appear before the face of God?" Ps. xli. 1. "O my God, to thee do I watch at break of day. For thee my soul hath thirsted, for thee my flesh, O how many ways!" Ps. lxii. 1. "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God," Ps. lxxxiii. 1. In like manner St. Paul, longing after the happiness of seeing God, and at the same time desirous of doing good to souls by his apostolical labours among them, suffers a strong conflict in his own mind. "I am straitened," says he, "between two; having a desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better; but to abide still in the flesh is needful for you," Phil. i. 23. Now this ardent desire of salvation, which our Saviour compares to that of hunger and thirst, is of the greatest advantage to us, because it is one of the principal means of obtaining it from God: for, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled," Matt. v.; and God " filleth the hungry with good things," Luke i. 53; and the scripture assures us, that such ardent desires are the most effectual means of procuring that heavenly wisdom which brings us to God, and puts us in possession of salvation. "Wisdom is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them that seek her; she preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself to them......the beginning of her is the most true desire of discipline......the desire of wisdom bringeth to the everlasting kingdom," Wisd. vi. 13. Hence we may see how careful we should be to excite and nourish in our souls the most ardent desires of our salvation, by often meditating on the vanity and nothingness of all temporal things, that we may the more heartily despise them; and on the excellency, the dignity, and importance of things eternal, that we may love, esteem, and desire them.
(4.) This earnest desire of salvation must not be confined to the heart alone; it must be an efficacious desire, a desire that proceeds to action, and must impel us to do, with great diligence, everything that God requires of us, in order to obtain our salvation. It is a natural and necessary consequence of our having a great esteem for, and an earnest desire of any good object, to be active and diligent in using the means to acquire it; what do not the slaves of the world both do and suffer to get possession of those earthly goods which they esteem and desire? How much more ought we cheerfully to do and suffer for salvation? Mere desires alone, if they can be called desires, will never bring us to that happiness, but with "the wicked and slothful servant, will end in utter darkness," and eternal misery, Matt. xxv. 26; for "desires kill the slothful; his hands refuse to work at all; he longeth and desireth all the day," Prov. xxi. 25. "The sluggard willeth and willeth not; but the soul of them that work shall be made fat," Prov. xiii. 4. Hence the scripture, showing us in what manner the desire of wisdom brings us to the everlasting kingdom, makes this beautiful gradation of the active steps to be taken for this purpose: "The beginning of wisdom is the most true desire of discipline; and the care of discipline is love; and love is the keeping of her laws; and the keeping of her laws is the firm foundation of incorruption; and incorruption bringeth near to God; therefore, the desire of wisdom bringeth to an everlasting kingdom," Wisd. vi. 18. And to show how diligent we should be in this great work, and how much depends upon our being so, the wise man says, "If thou shalt call for wisdom, and incline thy ear to prudence; if thou shalt seek her as money, and shall dig for her as a treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and shall find the knowledge of God," Prov. ii. 3. Empty desires of such an immense good, as is found in the possession of God, are rather a mocking of God than honouring him; they show rather that we despise than esteem him. In all our worldly affairs, the means we use either to acquire, or augment, or preserve the good things we love, are always proportioned to the love and esteem we have for them; if we esteem them little, we take little pains about them, but if we esteem them much, we use the greater diligence; and if we have a very great esteem for them, and an ardent desire of acquiring them, we never fail to use the most efficacious means we can think of, and spare neither pains nor labour to procure them: witness the behaviour of a man who has a passion for riches; witness all those who are slaves to lust and ambition, or any other
violent passion. What they do and suffer to obtain what they wish, shows the greatness of their esteem, and the violence of their desires to obtain it. If, therefore, we pretend to esteem our salvation as it deserves, and to desire above all thing to see and enjoy God, but yet take no pains to acquire this happiness, what judgment will God form of such esteem? What value will he put upon such desires? We must, therefore, call to mind the words of St. Paul, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting. And in doing good, let us not fail. For in due time we shall reap not fainting," Gal. vi. 7.

(5.) But if we go a step further, and reflect that our salvation is not only an affair of the greatest value and excellency in itself, not only a business of the greatest importance to us; but that it is the ONE THING NECESSARY, the only business for which we have our being, the only end why God has placed us in this world; and that all our senses, powers and faculties are only given us as helps to secure it; that all the other creatures around us are made for no other end, but only to serve as means to enable us to secure it; and that our time itself, our whole life is bestowed upon us for this only purpose of working out our salvation; if, I say, we have a just sense and full conviction of these truths; and add to all this, that it is an affair of great difficulty to flesh and blood, that it requires all our pains and all our endeavours, and that God Almighty himself judges our whole life-time necessary to complete this great work; we cannot fail to see it, clear as noon-day, that we ought not only to labour diligently to save our souls, but that this great work ought to have the preference to every thing else; yea, that it ought to be our only employment, and engross our whole attention, and that every thing else ought to be referred to this, and made subservient to it. In fact, if this be the only affair of absolute necessity, if all the other affairs of life have no real merit or value, and are all lost for eternity, unless they be of service to our salvation, is it not evident that this alone ought to engross all our attention, and that every thing else ought to be done in such manner as to be subservient to this? This surely was the judgment made by Jesus Christ on this matter, when, after exhorting us to lay aside all solicitude for even the necessaries of life, he says, "Seek ye therefore, first the kingdom of God and his justice," Matt. vi. 33. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, says he; the
kingdom of God is the salvation of our souls; this he commands us to seek first, that is, in the first place, above all earthly things; but he says nothing of what we are to seek next; nay, he assures us, if we seek first our salvation, that all the necessities of life for food and raiment, shall be added to us, without our being solicitous in seeking after them; and therefore it is plain, that by seeking first the kingdom of God, he means, that we ought to seek it only: that every thing else should be sought only with reference to it, as the great and ultimate end of all we do. Our Saviour adds, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice; the justice of God is the accomplishment of his will, by obedience to his commandments. To seek the justice of God, then, is to love, serve, and obey him as the necessary and only means to secure our salvation. He commands us then to seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, to show us that, our chief, our only employment ought to be with all diligence and attention to love, serve, and obey God here, that is, to glorify him in this life, that we may enjoy him in his kingdom in the life to come. To glorify God, and to save our souls, are two things essentially united together; it is impossible to glorify God in the way he requires of us here, but we must infallibly save our souls hereafter; and it is impossible for us to save souls hereafter, but by glorifying God according to his will, while we remain in this mortal life; and therefore our Saviour joins them both together in the above text, as the only great employment which ought to occupy our whole attention. St. Peter was very sensible of this obligation, and therefore exhorts us earnestly in whatever we speak or do, to refer all to this great end. "If any man speak," says he, "let him speak as the words of God, if any man minister, let him do it, as of the power which God administereth, that in all things God may be honoured, through Jesus Christ," 1 Pet. iv. 11. St. Paul also shows us in what light we ought to view all the goods or evils of this world, and in what manner we ought to use them, in these words, "This therefore I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that they also who have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as they that rejoice not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as though they used it not; for the fashion of this world passeth away," 1 Cor. vii. 29. See how he begins by putting us in mind that "the time is short," that the whole of our life, especially of what may yet remain of it, is short for the great work of our salvation, and therefore that we ought
by no means to take up our heads with the trifling things of this life, so as to neglect that great work; but use them with as much indifference as if we used them not, always remembering how vain and transitory they are, and that the fashion of this world and of all it contains, soon passeth away. But a little after in the same epistle, he shows us what ought to occupy all our attention in every thing we do, saying, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God,” 1 Cor. x. 31; and in another place he says, “All whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father by him,” Col. iii. 17. Behold how forcibly he shows us our great obligation of referring every thing we do to God, and consequently to our salvation! and is not this the very thing that God himself declares by his prophet Moses, in these awful words: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength; and those words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them, sitting in thy house, and walking in thy journey, sleeping and rising; and thou shalt bind them as a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be, and shall move between thy eyes, and thou shalt write them in the entry and on the doors of thy house,” Deut. vi. 4. See here in what strong expressions the great God requires that we should continually be employed in the great work of our salvation, and how it ought to enter into every thing we do, and that every thing else should be made subservient to it! Hear also how the wise man exhorts us, not to occupy our thoughts with things that do not concern us, but to employ them continually on the great and important affair of our salvation, “Seek not the things that are too high for thee, and search not into things above thy ability; but the things that God hath commanded thee, think on them always, and in many of his works be not curious: for it is not necessary for thee to see with thy eyes the things that are hid. In unnecessary things be not over-curious, and in many of his works thou shalt not be inquisitive; for many things are shown to thee above the understanding of men, and the suspicion of them hath deceived many, and hath detained their minds in vanity,”......Ecclus. iii. 22. Wherefore, “in all thy ways think upon God, and he will direct thy steps,” Prov. iii. 6. For the same reason Almighty God himself declares, that we ought to glory in no earthly thing whatever, however it may abound
with us, but that all our joy and glory ought to be in him alone. "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and let not the strong man glory in his strength, and let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me; for I am the Lord," Jer. ix. 23. Seeing then that these things are so, and that every Christian is bound to believe these Divine truths, or renounce his religion; what shall we think of such numbers of Christians, who throw away those precious moments, given them to work out their salvation, in idle, useless, dangerous, and often sinful employments and amusements? Oh how cutting will their regret one day be, when they shall see with their eyes what they now say they believe, and compare what they have been with what they ought to have been?

(6.) There remains yet another consequence, of no less importance than those we have seen; which is, that we not only ought to make all the things of this life subservient to our salvation, and perform all we do in our worldly affairs, with reference to this great end, but that we ought to be ready, if ever the case should happen, to sacrifice every thing in life, goods, friends, honour, ease, health, yea, life itself, for the sake of our souls, and to secure our salvation. Does this seem too great a sacrifice? the world itself will condemn us, if we think so. What does not the world require of its votaries, to gain and preserve the goods it proposes to them; what do not the slaves of the world sacrifice to gain them? Does not the covetous man sacrifice his ease, his repose, his reputation, the very enjoyment of the necessaries of life, to fill his coffers? Does not the gamester and the drunkard sacrifice their time, their money, their peace of mind, their honour, their children, their wives, their health, and very often their life itself, for the unworthy pleasures of handling a pack of cards, or drinking a glass of liquor? Does not the ambitious military man sacrifice his ease, his health, his members, yea, his life too, for the vain fumes of a little worldly glory. What is more deplorable still, do not all these worldlings, in numberless cases, sacrifice their religion, their conscience, their soul itself, to gain these their worldly views? And shall a Christian think it too hard to sacrifice all temporal things for his salvation? Will not the world itself condemn us before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, if we do so? But let us hear what Jesus Christ has decided upon this matter. "Every one," says he, "that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple," Luke xiv. 33. "He
that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. He that taketh not up his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me," Matt. x. 37. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple," Luke xiv. 26; that is, who is not willing to renounce them, when they come in competition with his salvation, and would keep us from God: "If thy right eye cause thee to offend (that is, if it be a stumbling block, or occasion of sin to thee), pluck it out and cast it from thee: for it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish than that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand cause thee to offend, cut it off and cast it from thee, for it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish, than that thy whole body should go into hell," Matt. v. 29. See here the doctrine of Jesus Christ on this important subject. Could he express in stronger terms our strict obligation of sacrificing every thing in this world, however near or dear it be to us, possessions, friends, relations, members, yea, life itself, rather than offend him and lose our salvation? St. Paul, who well knew the force of what his blessed Master here says, shows us his own dispositions, and those of all true Christians on this head, in the most expressive manner: "Who shall separate us," says he, "from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? shall distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?......but in all these things we overcome, because of him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 35. These are the noble sentiments of a true Christian, of one who knows what salvation is, and what immense incomparable happiness and bliss are to be found in Christ Jesus. Neither is it in words only that this great apostle teaches us this duty: he confirms it by his own example. "What things," says he, "were gain to me those I have counted loss for Christ. Furthermore I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as dung that I may gain Christ," Phil. iii. 7. In the eleventh chapter of his second epistle to the Corinthians, he gives a long catalogue of the many sufferings he had endured for Christ's sake, and at last he laid down his
life with pleasure by the hands of the heathen persecutors, that he might go and enjoy his beloved Master. How many thousands and thousands of others have done the same thing in the church of Christ, in all ages, for the sake of God, and to secure their salvation? How many kings and princes have sacrificed their crowns? How many rich people have renounced their treasures? How many glorious martyrs have cheerfully sacrificed their lives in the midst of torments rather than offend God, by sin, and endanger their salvation? All these had a lively faith of the great value of eternal happiness; they had a just sense of the vast importance of their salvation, they knew that nothing in this world was to be compared to it; and therefore cheerfully sacrificed all that was near or dear to them in this life, in order to secure it. Nor was it only since our Saviour’s time that such examples have been seen in the world; numbers of God’s holy servants even from the beginning, have behaved in the same manner, whenever the question was about securing their salvation. St. Paul gives us a long catalogue of them in his epistle to the Hebrews, and shows how the lively faith they had of the truths of eternity enabled them to undergo the severest trials, rather than hurt their souls. “Some,” says he, “were racked, not accepting deliverance......others had trials of mockeries and stripes, moreover also of bonds and prisons; they were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword; they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being in want, distressed, afflicted; of whom the world was not worthy; wandering in deserts, in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth,” Heb. xi. And all this, for what end? he tells us, “That they might find a better resurrection,” verse 35; that they might secure their salvation! How glorious among these examples is that of the venerable old Eleazar! He was a man of fourscore and ten years, and was commanded by a heathen prince to eat meats forbidden by the law, and was threatened with a cruel death if he refused; but “he,” says the scriptures, “choosing rather a most glorious death than a hateful life, went forward of his own accord to the torment: and determined not to do any unlawful thing for the love of life,” 2 Mach. vi. 19. And when some of his friends out of compassion proposed to him privately to bring some meat that he could lawfully eat to appear as if he had eaten the forbidden meat, and so to save his life; he rejected such dissimulation with disdain and said, “he would rather be sent into the other world;” giving this noble reason for his refusal: “For though, for the present time I should be delivered from
the punishments of men, yet should I not escape the hand of the Almighty neither alive nor dead," verse 26. "And he was forthwith led to the execution......and when he was now ready to die with the stripes, he groaned and said, O Lord, who hast the holy knowledge, thou knowest manifestly, that where as I might be delivered from death, I suffer grievous pains in body: but in the soul am well content to suffer these things, because I fear thee," verse 30. What a noble example of the effects of a lively sense of the great value of salvation! Glorious also is the example of the seven brothers with their mother, who along with Eleazar suffered the most cruel torments, and encountered death with the most heroic constancy, rather than comply with the impious command of the king and lose their souls; animating themselves in all their torments with the firm hope of a happy resurrection. "But the King of the world will raise us up, who die for his laws," said one of them, "in the resurrection of eternal life," 2 Mach. vii. 9. And when another was ordered to put out his tongue and hands to be cut off, he did it courageously, "and said with confidence, These I have from heaven, but for the laws of God I now despise them, because I hope to receive them again from him," verse 11. The mother was particularly to be admired, who exhorts them all in these words: "I know not how you were formed in my womb, for I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life, neither did I frame the limbs of every one of you. But the Creator of the world, that formed the nativity of man, and that found out the origin of all, he will restore to you again in his mercy both breath and life, as now you despise yourselves for the sake of his laws," v. 22. And when the youngest was at last brought to torture, the king finding that neither threats nor promises could move him, called the mother, and counselled her to persuade her son to comply with his orders, and save his life. But she going to the young man, said to her son, in her own language, "My son, have pity upon me that bare thee nine months in my womb, and gave thee suck three years, and nourished thee and brought thee up unto this age. I beseech thee, my son, look upon heaven and earth and all that is in them, and consider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also; so thou shalt not fear this tormentor, but being made a worthy partner with thy brethren, receive death, that in that mercy I may receive thee again with thy brethren," verse 27. See here the esteem these saints had of their salvation! See with what cheerfulness they sacrificed all for its sake! Yet these lived some hundreds of years before
Christ came into this world; they had not learned his heavenly doctrine, nor seen his Divine example, and yet to secure to themselves a glorious resurrection, and attain salvation, they renounced their all in this world, and sacrificed their life in the midst of cruel torments! What a shame must it be then, before God and his holy angels, and all these blessed martyrs, if we Christians should think any thing in this life too great a sacrifice for eternal happiness.

(7.) Lastly, we must observe one thing more on this subject, as the conclusion of the whole. We have seen the immense value of our salvation; we have seen of what unspeakable importance it is for us to secure it; and we have seen at large in the Introduction, that obedience to the commands of God is a condition absolutely necessary for obtaining it: what a powerful motive ought this to be, to make us diligent and solicitous to obey them? Our eternal happiness depends upon it, there is no salvation without it. How immensely then is our own greatest interest concerned in complying with this duty? How strongly does our strictest duty and our highest interest combine to exhort obedience from us? We are obliged in the strictest justice to obey the law of God, because he is a God of infinite power, and has the most unlimited dominion and the most absolute authority over us, as our Creator, our Preserver, and our last end; we are obliged to obey him from the strongest ties of gratitude, because he is our greatest and only benefactor, and out of the ardent love he bears us, has done infinitely more to make us happy, than it could ever have entered into our heart to ask of him. We are obliged to obey him for our own interest, as we have evidently seen that our real happiness in this world, and our eternal happiness in the world to come depends entirely upon our doing so! and is it possible we can believe these truths, and yet offend our God, or ever dare to transgress his commandments?

Q. 14. Indeed one should think it impossible that a Christian who believes these truths could ever offend God! but how comes it then that Christians are so unhappy as to offend him?

A. This is owing to the power and malice of the enemies of our salvation, and to the great negligence of the greater part of Christians in not fortifying themselves against the snares which these our spiritual enemies spread every where for our souls, by serious meditation on the truths of eternity and other holy exercises. For want of this, their faith of the above truths becomes languid and dead; and thus they become an easy
prey to these enemies, and are dragged away by their delusions, 
like sheep to the slaughter, to the eternal ruin of their souls, 
These enemies are, the devil, the world, and the flesh; on each 
of which we shall make some few useful observations in the 
following chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ENEMIES OF OUR SALVATION.

Q. 1. Which of these three enemies is the most dangerous 
for our souls?

A. Our own flesh is certainly the most dangerous of the three, 
both because it is a domestic enemy, which we always carry 
about us, and can never fly from; and also because it is by 
means of it principally, that the other two get so easily any 
advantage over us. Now on this we must observe—

(1.) By the flesh is meant our corrupt nature, our self-love 
and all its passions; that bent and propensity our nature has 
to every thing which gratifies our sensuality and pride, in a 
word our love and attachment to the enjoyments of this life. 
To understand which we must remember that, as we have seen 
above, Chap. II., it is the great and essential duty of all man-
kind, arising from the very being itself, and from the end for 
which they were created, to love, serve and obey God con-
tinually, to study in every thing to please him, and "whether 
they eat or drink, or whatever else they do, to do all to his 
glory," and to fulfil the will of him that made them. In the 
state of innocence man had no difficulty in complying with this 
duty; his heart was upright with God, he had him before his 
eyes in all he did, and it was his joy and delight to please him 
continually. But by sin we lost that happy union with God, 
and our hearts were turned away from him, so as to cleave 
with the most violent bent of our will to ourselves; naturally 
seeking only our own pleasure, our own interest, and our own 
glory, instead of the interest, pleasure and glory of God. Hence 
arises that strong attachment we have to riches, to sensual 
delights, to the liberty of acting according to our own pleasure, 
to the esteem and praise of the world, to curiosity, to ease, 
and to every thing else that is pleasing and agreeable to our 
nature; and this is what is meant by the flesh, or self-love. 
Now as the whole tendency of the law of God is to recover our
lost union with God, and to bring back our love and affection to him, and the doing this is diametrically opposite to the bent of self-love, hence arises that immense difficulty we find in complying with the law of God; hence those violent combats when we set ourselves in earnest to obey him; our love of liberty can brook no restraint; our pride, our avarice, our love of ease and pleasure, strongly incline us to seek only such objects as are pleasing to these depraved affections; and these affections being deeply interwoven with our very frame, blind our reason, or engage it to favour themselves, and hurry us on to action for their own satisfaction, forgetful or regardless of God, and of what we owe to him. The scripture reduces all these depraved affections to three general heads, which contain all the others under them, and names them; the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, which are the three great branches of self-love.

(2.) These effects which this self-love and its lusts produce in the soul are many and exceedingly dangerous, for (1.) They darken the understanding, and pervert the judgment, so as to persuade us that all those things are real goods which flatter self-love and gratify its lusts, and that all those things are real evils which are contrary and disagreeable to it; they call light darkness, and darkness light; they call sweet bitter, and bitter sweet; as the scripture expresses it. By this means, (2.) They engage our reason itself to favour self-love and all its pretensions, and make us obstinate in defending them, by numberless plausible arguments which reason so perverted invents in their favour. (3.) They fill the imagination with innumerable ideas of vain, idle, dangerous, and sinful objects, and fix them there with the most inveterate obstinacy; so as to make it exceedingly difficult and painful for us to apply our thoughts with any attention to serious and spiritual things. (4.) The free will itself, which naturally follows the light presented to it by the understanding, being thus beset by a darkened understanding, a depraved reason, and a sensual imagination, is in a manner dragged away by the torrent, and cleaves to all those objects which gratify self-love with the most violent attachment. (5.) Hence all the passions of the soul are set to work to favour self-love, and defend its usurped authority; hope, fear, joy, sorrow, anger, hatred, and despair, and the whole train of their attendants, are employed by turns, as occasion may require in its service, and hurry on the soul to commit numberless sins against the law of God, and in contempt of all we owe to him. (6.) The more the soul acts from these impulses of self-love, the
more all the above evils are increased, the understanding becomes more blind, the reason more perverted, and the will more enslaved to the gratifications of self-love and its lusts; for by this means a habit is contracted in all the powers of the soul towards evil, and the opposition this makes to salvation is inconceivable; the sinner even sports with iniquity, loves his delusion, and despises whatever could tend to undeceive him.

(3.) The holy scriptures describe this unhappy corruption of our nature by sin in very strong terms:—"This I have found," says Solomon, "that God made man right, and he hath entangled himself with an infinity of questions," Eccles. vii. 30. "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life," 1 John ii. 16. The wickedness of man is great upon the earth, and all the thought of their heart is bent upon evil at all times," Gen. vi. 5. "For the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from their youth," Gen. viii. 21. "They were deceived; for their own malice blinded them, and they knew not the secrets of God, nor hoped for the wages of justice, nor esteemed the honour of holy souls," Wisd. ii. 21. "For the betwixtwitching of vanity obscureth good things, and the wandering of concupiscence overturneth the innocent mind," Wisd. iv. 12. "When they knew God, they have not glorified him as God, or given thanks; but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened," Rom. i. 21. "They walk in the vanity of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their hearts. Who despairing have given themselves up to lasciviousness, to the working of all uncleanness unto covetousness," Eph. iv. 17; but "Wo to you that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter," Is. v. 20. "Men love darkness rather than light, for their works are evil; for every one that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved," John iii. 19. "A fool worketh mischief as it were for sport," Prov. x. 23. "They leave the right way, and walk by dark ways; who are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice when they have done most wicked things," Prov. ii. 13. "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots; you also may do well when you have learned evil," Jer. xiii. 23. "The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth; but ignominy and reproach follow him," Prov. xviii. 3; for "The man that with
a stiff neck despiseth him that reproveth him, shall suddenly be destroyed, and health shall not follow him," Prov. xxix. 1.

(4.) To avoid all these evils, and overcome all the snares that our self-love and its concupiscence lay for our poor souls, two things are absolutely necessary, and these are the arms by which alone we can defend ourselves against all its attacks. The one is by frequent meditation upon the doctrine of Jesus Christ on this subject, which we have seen above, Chap. IV. § 1 & 2, to stir up in our souls a strong and lively faith of the vanity and worthlessness of all earthly enjoyments, and the misery they bring upon us, both here and hereafter, if we set our hearts upon them, and seek for happiness in them. But this alone will not suffice; for though we be ever so much persuaded of these truths, yet so long as our heart is tied to the bewitching pleasures of the senses, this will drag us after it to sin, in spite of all we know: now this attachment will never be broken as long as we continue to gratify self-love by indulging its lusts in what is agreeable to them; nay, this will always make the tie the stronger, and it is impossible to break it but by main force. Therefore, the second thing required is a continual self-denial and mortification; depriving our self-love of those things which are agreeable and flattering to sensuality, pride, or curiosity, and forcing it to undergo those things which are unpleasant and humbling to it, according to the repeated injunctions laid upon us by the word of God, as we have seen, Chap. IV. above cited. And hence we see how great love our blessed Saviour has shown us, and how much we are obliged to him for requiring so strictly of all his followers to deny themselves—to renounce all they possess—to take up their cross and crucify their flesh, as a necessary condition of being his disciples. However disagreeable these things are to nature, yet they are absolutely necessary for obtaining eternal happiness. Jesus Christ perfectly well knows this and therefore out of real love for our souls, and zeal for our eternal happiness, he lays these commands upon us, knowing, that if left entirely to our own choice, we would never have resolution to practise such necessary duties.

Q. 2. What is to be observed of the second enemy of our salvation?

A. The second enemy of our salvation is the world, on which we must observe, (1.) That by the world is understood the great bulk of mankind, who live in the captivity and bondage of self-love, blind by its delusions, and slaves to its passions and concupiscences; and who not only follow all its sugges-
tions, each by himself, but join as it were in a body, and make open profession of doing so; propagating the false maxims of self-love; praising the enjoyments of sensuality as the only real goods; crying up riches and honours, and all the pleasures and conveniencies of life, as the only things worthy of our notice; esteeming and honouring those who have the greatest abundance of them; despising and undervaluing those who want them; and turning everything into a subject of mockery and ridicule which is contrary to these their wretched opinions. And no wonder, for as the beloved disciple tells us, "They are of the world: therefore of the world they speak, and the world heareth them," 1 John iv. 5. The world then, is a tumultuous multitude of people, of various characters and different tastes, who, rejecting all the maxims of the gospel of Jesus Christ, have no object in view but their own interest; no rule for their conduct but their passions; nothing that gives them any concern, but what touches the riches, the pleasures, or the honours of this life. People who are commonly of a vain turbulent temper, and a corrupt heart, and unbounded ambition; who feed on chimeras, and are busied about trifles; people whose greatest merit, for the most part, lies in the art of deceiving; among whom those who are esteemed the wisest, who know how to make most for themselves of the misfortunes of others; and those the happiest who can conceal, with most art, their own misery: a multitude, the individuals of which most commonly do not know each other; but the more they are acquainted the more they are mutually despised. They all agree in openly professing themselves enemies of piety and devotion, and under this covert think themselves at full liberty to deride virtue—to ridicule the most venerable practices of piety—to glory in their dissolute conduct, and boast of having no religion but for convenience, and through custom. Among this confused multitude, there reigns an universal dissimulation, and upon this ground they rear up all that deceptive show of outward pomp and splendour, by which they impose on one another. They are lavish in bestowing their praises on their neighbour, while they despise in their heart the simplicity of him who gives ear to what they say. A thousand offers of services, and protestations of friendship are made among them, even when in their heart they are the mortal enemies of the one to whom they make them. The most public rejoicings are generally the most superficial; for though the heart be withering with affliction, one must laugh among them through artifice; for not to know how to dissemble is an unpardonable crime in
the world. Sincerity, Christian simplicity, docility, and piety,
are banished from among them, and all the maxims and opinions
that reign in this society, are quite the reverse of the
maxims of Jesus and his gospel, and utterly subversive of
salvation.

(2.) The word of God gives us a most dreadful description
of this great enemy of souls: "God looked down from heaven
on the children of men, to see if there were any that did under-
stand, or did seek God. All of them have gone aside—they
are become unprofitable together—there is none that doth good
—no, not one," Ps. lli. 3. "I have seen iniquity and contra-
diction in the city. Day and night shall iniquity surround it
upon its walls, and in the midst thereof are labour and injustice;
and usury and deceit have not departed from its streets......
their words are smoother than oil, and the same are darts," Ps.
liv. 10, 22. "The sons of men, whose teeth are weapons and
arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword," Ps. lvi. 5. "Vain
are the sons of men ; the sons of men are liars in the balances,
that by vanity they may together deceive," Ps. lxii. 10. "All
that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the con-
cupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life; which is not of
the Father, but is of the world," 1 John ii. 16. "We know
that we are of God, and the whole world is seated in wicked-
ness," 1 John v. 19. Jesus Christ "the true light which en-
lighteneth every man that cometh into this world ; he was in
the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew
him not," John i. 9. "Neither does it know God the Father,"
John xviii. 25. "The world cannot receive the Holy Ghost,
the spirit of truth, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him."
John xiv. 17. It hates Jesus Christ and his faithful followers.
"If the world hate you," says he, "know that it hath hated
me before you. If you had been of the world, the world
would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but
I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth
you," John xv. 18. There is a generation," says Solomon,
"that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from
their filthiness; a generation whose eyes are lofty and their
eyelids lifted up on high. A generation, that for teeth hath
swords, and grinded with their jaw teeth, to devour the needy
from off the earth, and the poor from among men," Prov. xxx.
12. And David thanking God for having been protected from
them, thus describes them: "Thou hast protected me from the
assembly of the malignant—from the multitude of the workers
of iniquity. For they have whetted their tongues like a sword
—they have bent their bow, a bitter thing, to shoot in secret the undefiled. They shall shoot at him on a sudden, and will not fear; they are resolute in wickedness. They have talked of hiding snares; they have said, who shall see them? Ps. lxiii. 3. "They are enemies," says St. Paul, "of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction; whose god is their belly; whose glory is in their shame; who mind earthly things," Phil. iii. 18. "Adulterers," says St. James, "know you not that the friendship of this world is the enmity of God! Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world becometh an enemy of God," James iv. 4.

(3.) Though this unhappy world, this declared enemy of Jesus Christ and of his cross, usurps a most unlimited authority, and exercises a cruel tyranny over the heart of man, yet it is most amazing to see how much it is loved and followed, its favour courted, and its frowns dreaded, even by good people—even by those who, in their serious reflections despise it, and are ashamed in their own hearts at their base subjection to it. It promises, indeed, to its votaries all earthly happiness, riches, and pleasures, and honours in abundance—praise, esteem, and favour of men, and every thing else that can flatter and gratify self-love; all its maxims tend to what pleases our senses, and humour our vanity and pride; and as our natural attachment to these things is so strong and violent, we eagerly adopt its maxims and grasp at its offers, and come into all its measures in order to attain them. On the other hand, it threatens the greatest misery to those who stand out against it, and holds them out as objects of the utmost contempt—as fools and idiots deserving nothing but to be ridiculed and laughed at; and as there is no kind of misery so tormenting to us as contempt and derision, which strike directly at our pride, the deepest wound our nature has received from sin; so there is nothing which more effectually undermines our virtue, and shakes our best resolutions, than this unhappy engine which the world employs to destroy us. Hence the powerful efficacy which these common expressions have upon the heart even of the best of people, "What will the world say? What will men think of us? We must be neighbour-like while we are in the world; one would not wish to be singular, and pointed at," and the like. Hence the immense opposition we meet with to a life of virtue and piety from our own heart; hence our ready compliance with all the ways of the world; and the many excuses which our reason, engaged on the side of self-love, invents and urges to sanctify this compliance in our own eyes; from decency, from
charity, from the desire of doing good, and other such specious pretexts, which, however justifiable to a certain degree, for the most part, serve only to palliate any length our self-love inclines us to go in complying with the world; and hence, in fine, our solicitude to enter into all its follies—to take part in all its amusements—to adopt its maxims—to walk in its paths, and to turn our back upon Jesus Christ and his holy law, and at last to ruin our own souls.

(4.) The scripture describes these deluding arts of the world in these strong colours, and first tells us how great its hatred is against the virtuous servants of God: "The wicked loathe them that are in the right way," Prov. xxxix. 27. "He that walketh in the right way and feareth God, is despised by him that goeth an infamous way," Prov. xiv. 2. "The simplicity of the just man is laughed at to scorn," Job. xii. 4. Then it shows us what arts it uses to corrupt the good, and the cause of its hatred against them: "They have said, reasoning with themselves, but not right, the time of our life is short and tedious, and in the end of a man there is no remedy; and no man hath been known to return from hell. For we are all born of nothing, and after this we shall be as if we had never been; for the breath of our nostrils is smoke, and speech a spark to move our heart, which being put out, our body shall be ashes, and our spirit shall be poured abroad as soft air; and our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud, and shall be dispersed as a mist, which is driven away by the beams of the sun, and overpowered with the heat thereof; and our name in time shall be forgotten, and no man shall have any remembrance of our works. For our time is as the passing of a shadow, and there is no going back of our end; for it is fast sealed, and no man returneth. Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures, as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments, and let not the flower of the time pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with roses before they be withered; let no meadow escape our riot. Let none of us go without his part in luxury; let us every where leave tokens of joy, for this is our portion, and this our lot," Wisd. ii. 1. Would you not think the Holy Ghost intended, in this passage, to describe not only the substance of what the world says to entice poor souls to its service, but even the very words of the present generation? And Oh! how many are deluded to their eternal ruin by such enticing allurements! for, "evil communication corrupt good manners," 1 Cor. xv. 33. But if the just stand firm
to their duty, and are proof against this battery, see how the world shifts its ground, and attacks them with other weapons, without respect of person. “Let us oppress the poor just man, and not spare the widow, nor honour the ancient grey hairs of the aged. Let our strength be the law of justice, for that which is feeble is found to be nothing worth. Let us, therefore, lie in wait for the just, because he is not for our turn, and he is contrary to our doings, and upbraideth us with transgressions of the law, and divulgeth against us the sins of our way of life. He boasteth that he hath the knowledge of God, and calleth himself the Son of God. He is become a censurer of our thoughts. He is grievous unto us even to behold; for his life is not like other men’s and his ways are very different. We are esteemed by him as triflers, and he abstaineth from our ways as from filthiness. Let us see, then, if his words be true, and let us prove what shall happen to him, and we shall know what his end shall be...Let us examine him by outrages and tortures, that we may know his meekness and try his patience......These things they thought, and were deceived, for their malice blinded them,” Wisd. ii. 10. David also describes this conduct of the worldly man, and the fatal success he too often has against good people, in these words, “His mouth is full of cursing and of bitterness, and of deceit; under his tongue are labour and sorrow. He sitteth in ambush with the rich in private places, that he may kill the innocent. His eyes are upon the poor man: he lieth in wait in secret, like a lion in his den. He lieth in ambush that he may catch the poor man, to catch the poor whilst he draweth him to him. In his set he will bring him down—he will crouch and fall, when he shall have power over the poor,” Ps. ix. x. 7.

(5.) It is manifest that the whole force of these engines which the world uses to draw us from our duty and the service of God, is owing entirely to our own self-love, and the slavish attachment we have to worldly enjoyments; for if we had no attachment to the riches and pleasure of life, if we were truly humble of heart like our Lord and Master, if we were lovers of the cross of Christ, as all his servants ought to be, the world, with all its engines, could make no impression on us; we would laugh at its deluding promises, and despise its empty threats. Hence the most effectual remedy against all its snares, is to nourish in our hearts a lively faith of the truths of eternity; for “This is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith,” 1 John v. 4; and by the constant exercise of self-denial and mortification, to “take off our affections from things
below, and set them on the things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," Col. iii. 1. And in this again we see with how much reason our blessed Saviour so strictly requires the practice of self-denial from all his followers. Besides which the scripture gives us several very important injunctions in this matter: (1.) To fly from the world, as far as our circumstances can allow, and never take part in its alluring amusements; thus, "My son, if sinners shall entice thee, consent not to them. If they say, Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood—let us lay snares for the innocent without cause—let us swallow him up alive like hell, and whole as one that goeth down to the pit; we shall find all precious substance—we shall fill our houses with spoils. Cast in thy lot with us—let us all have one purse. My son walk not thou with them—restrain thy foot from their paths for their feet run to evils," Prov. i. 10. "Be not delighted in the paths of the wicked, neither let the way of evil men please thee; flee from it, pass not by it, go aside and forsake it," Prov. iv. 14. (2.) Never to court the favour of the world, nor to do the least thing contrary to our duty, or that may ever endanger our soul, in order to please it. "Do I speak to please men?" says the apostle St. Paul, "if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ," Gal. i. 10. "They have not called upon God; there have they trembled for fear, where there was no fear: for God hath scattered the bones of them that please men: they have been confounded, because God hath despised them," Ps. lli. 6. "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15. "Whosoever will be a friend of this world, becomes an enemy of God," James ii. 4. (3.) Never to fear the world, nor any of its evils, but to oppose to the base fear of the world, the wholesome fear of the great God. "I say to you, my friends, (these are the words of Jesus Christ to his faithful followers) Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you shall fear: fear ye him, who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say to you fear him," Luke xii. 4. And God himself, by his prophet, "Hearken to me," says he, "you that know what is just; my people, who have my law in your heart, fear ye not the reproach of men, and be not afraid of their blasphemies; for the worm shall eat them up as a garment, and the moth shall consume them as wool; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my justice from generation to generation," Is. li. 7. "And thou, O son of man,
fear not, neither be thou afraid of their words, for thou art among unbelievers and destroyers, and thou dwellest among scorpions. Fear not their words, neither be thou dismayed at their looks; for they are a provoking house,” Ezch. ii. 6. (4.) To despise the opinion of the world, and whatever they may think or say about us, but to study only to be agreeable to God. “I am not troubled,” says Jeremias to God, “following thee, my Pastor, and I have not desired the day of man; thou knowest it; that which went out of my lips hath been right in thy sight,” Jer. xvii. 16. “With me,” says St. Paul, “it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by man’s day......but he that judgeth me is the Lord,” 1 Cor. iv. 3. “Woe to you, when men shall bless you, for according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets,” Luke vi. 26. “And the Lord said, Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation, and to what are they like? They are like to children sitting in the marketplace, and speaking one to another, and saying, We have piped to you, and you have not danced; we have mourned, and you have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and you say, He hath a devil. The son of man is come eating and drinking; and you say, Behold a man that is a glutton and a drunkard of wine, a friend of publicans and sinners. And wisdom is justified by all her children,” Luke vii. 31. So malicious is the world, that it will censure and blame whatever one does; and therefore its judgments deserve no regard, as being founded in caprice, and not in justice. They are also variable and inconstant, and never to be depended upon; the same world that received Jesus Christ into Jerusalem as a a great prophet, with hosannas and acclamations, a few days after cried out, Crucify him, Crucify him, as an infamous malefactor. How unworthy then of our regard and the judgments of the world! (5.) By no means imitate the world, nor conform ourselves to its customs and ways. See above Chap. IV. § 2. (6.) To glory in standing up for the cause of God, and even rejoice in having any thing to suffer from the world on that account. “And if also you suffer any thing for justice’s sake, blessed are ye. And be not afraid of their terror, and be not troubled; but sanctify the Lord Christ in your hearts, being ready always to sanctify every one that asketh you a reason of that hope that is in you,” 1 Pet. iii. 14. “Arise,” says God to his prophet, “arise and speak to them all that I command thee. Be not afraid of their presence, for I will make thee not to be afraid of their countenance,” Jer. i. 17.
Q. 3. What is to be observed of the third enemy of our salvation?

A. The third enemy of our salvation is the devil, concerning whom the following particulars are to be known. (1.) The account which the scripture gives of him, his character and dispositions. "Our wrestling," says St Paul, "is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers; against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places," Eph. vi. 12. And in other places of scripture the devil, who is the chief of these spirits of darkness, is called the prince of this world, and of him it is said, "There is no power upon earth that can be compared with him, who was made to fear no one. He beholdeth every high thing, and is king over all the children of pride," Job xli. 24. "By the envy of the devil, death came into the world," Wisd. ii. 24. For "He was a murderer from the beginning, and he abode not in the truth, because the truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father of lies," John viii. 44. He has an implacable hatred to man, and is continually seeking to ruin them; "Behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat," Luke xxii. 31; for "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour," 1 Pet. v. 8. And thence arise innumerable woes to man: "Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil is come down to you, having a great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time," Rev. xii. 12. And when he gets any souls into his power, he keeps them captive, and drags them on at his will to all sin," 2 Tim. ii. 26. "You were dead in your offences and sins, wherein, in time past, you walked according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of this air, of the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief," Eph. ii. 1.

(2.) Concerning the nature of his temptations we are told, (1.) That he blinds the understanding, and makes us forget or not advert to the great truths of eternity: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them," 2 Cor. iv. To effectuate this, he gives them an aversion at hearing the word of God, according to what our Saviour says to the Jews, "You are of your father the devil, and the desire of your father you will do......He that is of God, heareth the words of God; therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God," John viii. 44, 47. And when at any time they do hear them, "The devil cometh and
taketh the word out of their heart lest believing they should be saved,” Luke viii. 12. (2.) As he is a liar from the beginning he chiefly makes use of lies and falsehoods to deceive and ensnare us; sometimes by himself, and sometimes by means of wicked men, whom he uses as his apostles; for this purpose, “False apostles,” says St Paul, “are deceitful workmen, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ; and no wonder, for Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light,” 2 Cor. xi. 13. Sometimes he makes use of the word of God himself, to gild over its snares with an appearance of piety, as he did to Jesus Christ himself, when he tempted him in the wilderness. See Luke iv. 5. Sometimes he deceives by lying signs and wonders, as will chiefly be the case towards the end of the world, when his delusions this way will be “so great as to deceive, if possible, even the elect,” Matt. xxiv. 24, 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10. But we are told, (3.) That the main source of the strength of his temptations and of the fatal advantage he too, too often gets over us, is our own self-love, our passions and attachments to the things of this world; and hence his attacks are always pointed at this quarter, by proposing some worldly good to engage our self-love on his side, or threatening some temporal evil to deter us. Thus he attacked our first parents in Paradise, by what was flattering to pride: “you shall be as gods,” said he, Gen. iii. 5. He induced David to number his people by vanity. “And Satan rose up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel,” 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Through the love of money, “The devil put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ,” John xiii. 2. Through the same means, “Satan tempted the heart of Ananias and Saphira, to lie to the Holy Ghost, and by fraud to keep part of the price of their lands,” Acts v. 3. When he tempted Christ himself, he attacked him by the same allurements, first of pleasure, then of vain glory, and lastly of avarice. And indeed it is evident, that were it not for our self-love, he could have no handle to attack us, nor would any of his temptations be able to make any impression upon us: for if we neither desired those things which are flattering to self-love, nor feared what is contrary to it, it is plain that neither promises of the one nor threats of the other could ever be able to move us from our duty. And therefore we see that the principal defence against all his temptations, and what could at once enervate them entirely, is to conquer our self-love in all its branches by a lively faith and continual mortification. But,

(3.) As we are so very deficient in applying this radical cure,
the scripture points out several others, which indeed contain in a great measure the two just mentioned, and are a great help to our weakness and deficiency in them. And (1.) *Sobriety*, or *Temperance*, by which if we have not resolution to mortify our self-love entirely, we keep it at least within the bounds of moderation, and never allow it to drag us to any excess. (2.) *Watching*, by a continual guard, over our heart to observe the first motion of any temptation, and reject it entirely, never dallying with it, nor allowing our thought to dwell upon it, but doing with it as we would do with a spark of fire that should fall upon our clothes, shake it off immediately. “Blessed is the man that shall take these little ones (these beginnings of temptations) and dash them against the rock,” Ps. cxxxvi. 9; by a speedy recourse to the rock which is Christ, that is, by flying to him with (3.) *A strong faith and confidence in God*, distrusting ourselves as unable to do any good without him and imploring his assistance by humble and fervent prayer, for “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble,” James iv. 6. (4.) *A firm and unwearied resistance* against the enemy, though his attack should continue ever so long; never yielding, no not in the smallest degree, to his suggestions, not even in the most trifling matters.

(4.) Of all these remedies the scripture speaks as follows; “Take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of Justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the wicked one; and take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God, by all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the spirit and in the same watching with all instance,” Ephes. vi. 13. “Be subject to God, but resist the devil, and he will fly from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you,” James iv. 9. “Be you humble therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in the time of visitation, casting all your care upon him, for he hath care of you. Be sober and watch, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour, whom resist ye, strong in faith,” 1 Pet. v. 6. “Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,” Matt. xxvi. 41. “He that feareth God, neglecteth nothing,” Ecclus. vii. 19; for “He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little,” Ecclus. xix. 1.
Q. 4. Is there any thing else to be observed, in order to fortify us against the assaults of our spiritual enemies?

A. There is yet another caution to be observed with the utmost attention; because it is of such necessity that all the rest will be of very little service without it; and that is, carefully to fly from, and avoid all the dangerous occasions of sin. On this most important subject the following things are to be considered:—

(1.) By the occasions of sin, are meant those circumstances, in which, when a man is placed, he is easily led away by them to commit sin, so that if he had not been exposed to that danger he would not have committed it. Thus, for example, keeping an inn or public house, is an occasion of sin to a drunkard; in so much that it will be morally impossible for him to reclaim himself from that vice, while he continues in that business. So also gaming besides its own intrinsical evil, exposes a man to the danger of anger, and cursing, and swearing; immodest discourses, to impure thoughts and desires; the company and conversation of unbelievers, to doubts concerning some point of our holy faith; reading bad books, to take pleasure in or consent to, the evil they contain; the company and familiarity of those who curse and swear, to speak in the same diabolical dialect; and so on of such other circumstances, examples of which are without number. Hence these dangerous occasions are called in scripture language, the evil way, the road to sin, the way of iniquity; for as the road, or way to any place, leads those who walk in it to that place, so those dangerous occasions lead those who walk in them to wickedness and sin. Thus David says, “Remove from me the way of iniquity,” Ps. cxviii. 29. “I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep thy words,” verse 101. “I have hated every way of iniquity,” verse 104, and the wise man, “Go not,” says he, in the way of ruin, and thou shalt not stumble against the stones,” Ecclus. xxxii. 25.

(2.) How difficult it is, or rather how morally impossible, to expose one’s self to these dangerous occasions, and not to be led away by them to sin, is manifest from experience itself. For, when any thing agreeable or disagreeable to our nature is actually present with us, it has a much greater force to excite our passions for, or against it, than when it is absent; and we find it infinitely more difficult to restrain these passions in presence of the object that excites them, than when it is at a distance from us. A person who is moderately hungry feels the craving of his appetite, but he can easily bear with it; but set some
pleasant and savoury meat before him, the sight and smell of it will raise his appetite to such a degree, that it will scarce be in his power to refrain from it. Just so, when one is in the dangerous occasion of sin by its presence, it acts so strongly upon the senses and imagination, and raises such a commotion in the sensual appetite, as easily drags away the will to consent to those sins which it proposes. Suppose a person loses his money at cards: he is vexed at his misfortune, he abhors his folly, he renounces that delusive amusement, and determines never to touch a card more. If he avoid the occasion, he will keep his resolution; but let him frequent the company of those who play, though at first only as a spectator, yet he will soon find his resolution to fail: his imagination will flatter him with the hopes of better success, the enticements of his companions to try his fortune again will bend him to a compliance, or their derision and jeers will completely unman him. How many instances are there of drunkards, who, if kept entirely from liquor, will scarce ever think about it; but let them go into company and take a glass or two, and they will not have resolution enough to restrain themselves from excess. A person may be very honest, and have even an abhorrence to all injustice; but let him be in some straits, and have an opportunity of committing fraud with impunity, and who will answer for his honesty? hence the common proverb, that occasion makes the thief. How many are to be found who never think of speaking obscene words when out of bad company; yet if in company with those who talk in that strain, are dragged away with the torrent, and speak as bad as they. From these and numbers of such cases it plainly appears, that the outward occasions of sin are the strongest means which the devil has of tempting us; his internal suggestions are in most cases too weak, or of no effect at all without the other; and this he well knowing, procures all he can to lead people into dangerous occasions, and to bring the objects that excite to sin before their eyes, as the most effectual way to ruin them. Thus even with our blessed Saviour himself, after Satan had in vain tried to deceive him by other means, “He took him up into a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and said, all these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and adore me,” Matt. iv. 8. He could easily have told him in the desert that he had all these kingdoms in his power, and would give them to him; but he knew that showing them before his eyes would make a much deeper impression upon him, and raise a keener desire of getting them, than any thing he could
say in words only. What he did then to Jesus Christ, he continues daily to do to men; and sad experience shows with how fatal success.

(2.) Sacred scripture declares to us the same truth, and assures us how impossible it is for one to expose himself to these occasions, and not be overcome by them. "Can a man hide fire in his bosom," says Solomon, "and his garments not burn? or can he walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt," Prov. vi. 27. "He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled with it; and he that hath fellowship with the proud shall put on pride," Ecclus. xiii. 1. Nay, the same Divine oracles declare, that "He that loveth danger shall perish in it," Ecclus. iii. 27. How strongly is this confirmed by the most striking examples! Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, passing through the country of Sichem, from a womanish curiosity "went out to see the women of that country," Gen. xxxiv., and she met with dangerous company, lost her honour, and was ravished. David by looking at a beautiful woman, though at a little distance from him, such a violent temptation was excited in his mind, that it hurried him on to two grievous sins, adultery and murder. Solomon with all his wisdom was not proof against the seduction of dangerous company; "He loved many strange women .......and his heart was turned away by them to follow strange gods......and he worshipped idols," 3 Kings xi. 1, 4. Samson with all his strength fell by the same means, and lost both his liberty and life. Eve in her innocency, by entertaining a dangerous conversation, was seduced from her duty to commit a grievous sin, which brought ruin and misery on all her posterity: and St. Peter by exposing himself to dangerous company, was induced to deny his Master, and by oaths and imprecations to protest he did not know him! How dangerous then is it to expose one's self to the occasion of sin! "Evil communications corrupt good manners," 1 Cor. xv. 33.

(4.) Hence we are commanded in the strongest manner to avoid all such occasions, and to fly from them, both by the law of nature, which strictly obliges every one to avoid exposing himself to the danger of offending God, and of ruining his own soul, and also by the express law of God, both in the Old and New Testaments. Thus when God forbade our first parents to eat of the fruit of the three of knowledge, he at the same time forbade them so much as to touch it, Gen. iii. 3, lest their touching it should prove an incitement to their eating of it.

So also when he instituted the days of unleavened bread he
not only forbade his people to eat leavened bread during those days under pain of death, but he would not allow them so much as to have it in their houses, lest it should prove an occasion to their eating it: "Seven days," says he, "there shall not be found any leaven in your houses; he that shall eat leavened bread, his soul shall perish out of the assembly of Israel," Ex. xii. 19. In like manner Almighty God, well knowing that the wicked inhabitants of the land of Canaan, if left among his people, would by their bad example prove their ruin, prohibited them in the strictest manner to have any kind of fellowship or communication with them, or even to allow them to dwell in the land with them, and thus he speaks: "I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hands, and will drive them out before you; thou shalt not enter into league with them, nor with their gods; let them not dwell in thy land, lest perhaps they make thee sin against me, if thou serve their gods, which undoubtedly will be a scandal to thee," Ex. xxiii. 31. "Beware thou never join in friendship with the inhabitants of that land, which may be thy ruin; but destroy their altars, break their statutes, and cut down their groves...Make no covenant with the men of these countries; lest when they have committed fornication with their gods, and have adored their idols, some one call thee to eat of the things sacrificed," Ex. xxxiv. 12. "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them. Thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son, nor take his daughter for thy son, for she will turn away thy son from following me.... Their graven things thou shalt burn with fire, thou shalt not covet the silver and gold of which they are made, neither shalt thou take to thee any thing thereof, lest thou offend, because it is an abomination to the Lord thy God, Neither shalt thou bring any thing of the idol into thy house, lest thou become an anathema like it—Thou shalt detest it as dung, and shalt utterly abhor it as uncleanness and filth, because it is an anathema," Deut. vii. 3, 25. "Be not delighted," says Solomon, "in the paths of the wicked; neither let the way of evil men please thee. Flee from it; pass not by it; go aside and forsake it," Prov. iv. 14. In the gospel our blessed Saviour is particularly strong on this subject: "If thy right eye," says he, "cause thee to offend, pluck it out, and cast it from thee, for it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish, than that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand cause thee to offend, cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish, than that thy whole body should go to hell," Matt. v. 29.
Where observe, that he does not say, if thy eye or thy hand be an occasion of sin to you, shut your eye, bind your hand; but pluck out thy eye, cut off thy hand; there is no dallying with these dangerous occasions, nothing but an entire separation can save from perishing in hell fire; for “He that loves the danger, shall perish in it,” Ecclus. iii. 27. See more below, Chap. VII. Q. 25, on avoiding the dangerous occasions of hurting our faith.

(5.) No man must here trust to the strength of his own resolution, or expose himself to the dangerous occasions, from the persuasion that he is firmly determined never to be led astray by them. However strong his resolution may be at present, when out of the occasion, what security can he have that he will not be unmanned by its presence? Is he stronger than Samson, more pious than David, wiser than Solomon, or more faithful than Peter? They fell by being exposed to the occasions; what can he expect? It is but the argument of a fool to say, “At present when I am in no danger, I am fully resolved not to commit the sin; therefore, when in the danger, and when the imagination is warmed, and the passions are raised by its presence, my resolution will persevere in its full strength and vigour.” “A wise man,” says the scripture, “feareth and declineth from evil; the fool leapeth over and is confident,” Prov. xiv. 16. This self-confidence was the principal cause of St. Peter’s fall. “Though all should be scandalized at thee,” said he to his blessed Master, “yet will not I.” And “Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.” He was not then in the occasion; but a little after when exposed to it, how shamefully did his courage fail him! how basely did he deny his Master! Neither let any one say, that he trusts in the assistance of God who will preserve him; for though we may confidently trust in God, and he will never fail to protect us in those dangers to which we are necessarily exposed in the course of the doing of our duty, or which his Divine providence permits to come upon us, yet we have no reason to expect such protection, when we voluntarily expose ourselves to the danger without a cause; nay, such pretended confidence in God is nothing but presumption and a tempting of God; it is therefore highly criminal; it is transgressing his express command, which orders us to fly from the danger, to separate ourselves from it, though as dear to us as a hand or an eye, and is a provoking of him to leave us to ourselves, in punishment, of our folly; yea, so far is he from promising any assistance to us in such cases, that he expressly declares, “He that loves danger shall perish in it;” he is not content with saying shall
fall in it, but positively assures us, he shall perish in it. Where then are the grounds for hoping for assistance, when by exposing ourselves to the dangers, we provoke his indignation, and insult him?

These then are the principal remedies against all the enemies of our souls; and it is by a faithful use of them we may confidently expect that the Divine assistance will never be wanting to us; and the more diligent we are in doing our part, the more firmly may we hope for God's protection, and such an abundant supply of his grace as will enable us effectually to keep his holy commandments, and attain our eternal salvation. What those duties are which his holy law lays upon us, we shall now proceed to explain.

Q. 5. Is there any other general observation to be made on the commands, before we begin the explication of each in particular.

A. Any controversial point about the commands in general, as the possibility of keeping them, the manner of dividing them into two tables, or the like, has been fully examined in the Sincere Christian. It remains here only to remember, that each command contains two classes of duties; one, of those things which we are commanded to practise, the other of those from which we are commanded to abstain; the former are called positive duties, the other negative; the former contains things commanded, the other things forbidden; the things commanded are acts of various virtues; the things forbidden are the opposite vices. Positive duties, or the acts of virtue, oblige us to their observance only in those times and circumstances where the law requires them to be performed; negative commands, which enjoin us to abstain from evil, oblige us at all times and in all circumstances: as it can never be lawful to do any thing which the law of God forbids. Thus, though the law commands us to honour our parents, yet this does not require us to be continually employed in actually showing them respect, and honouring them; but the same law forbids us to dishonour them, and this obliges us, never in any time, or on any occasion, to show them disrespect or disregard. The same is to be observed in all the other commandments.
CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

Q. 1. **What is the first commandment?**

A. "Thou shalt have no strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth: thou shalt not adore them nor serve them: I am the Lord thy God, mighty and jealous," Ex. xx. 3.

Q. 2. What is the general end or purport of this first command?

A. It is to direct us in that supreme worship and adoration which we owe to God, as a Being of infinite perfection, our first beginning, our last end, and our sovereign Lord. This worship consists in believing God to be what he is; and in adhering to him with all the powers of our souls: and this is done by the virtues of faith, hope, charity, and religion. To honour, adore, or worship God as he deserves, we must (1.) Conceive a just idea of his excellency; for to think of him below what he deserves, is to dishonour him. (2.) We must put a confidence in him, proportionable to his abilities and will to help us; for to distrust him, implies a want of esteem for him. (3.) We must have an affection and love for him suitable to his merits; for indifference, and much more aversion, are signs of contempt; and (4.) We must give proof of our esteem and attachment to him by every suitable external demonstration of it, and by serving him. Now as God is a Being of infinite excellency and infinite perfection, we must believe him to be such, and esteem him above all things; and this we do by faith. As he is infinitely powerful and able to help us in all our needs, has an infinite love for us, and is most desirous of our real good, and at the same time has engaged his fidelity by repeated promises to befriend us; we ought therefore to have an unbounded confidence in him; and this is the virtue of hope. As he is infinitely beautiful and lovely in himself, and infinitely good to us, being our first beginning, our last end, our only happiness, on whom we have a total dependence for our very being itself, and for all we have or need, we ought therefore to love him above all things; and this is Divine charity: Finally, as he is our sovereign Lord, and has the most absolute and unlimited power and dominion over us, we ought therefore to render him every possible homage, obedience, and service, both
of soul and body, and this we do by the virtue of religion. When these holy virtues are seated in our soul, and produce the suitable dispositions there, we worship and adore God in spirit; and when our whole outward behaviour flows from, and corresponds with these inward dispositions of the soul, then we adore God in truth.

Q. 3. What then is properly commanded by this first commandment?

A. To worship and adore God alone, by faith, hope, charity and religion. The three first of these virtues, to wit, faith, hope, and charity, or love of God, are called Divine virtues, because they tend to unite the soul immediately with God; and of them the scripture says, "Ye that fear the Lord, believe him, and your reward shall not be made void. Ye that fear the Lord, hope in him, and mercy shall come to you for your delight. Ye that fear the Lord, love him, and your hearts shall be enlightened," Ecclus. ii. 8.

Q. 4. What is forbidden by the first command?

A. All those vices which are contrary to these virtues.

§ 1. Divine Faith.

Q. 5. What is Divine Faith?

A. Faith is a virtue by which we firmly believe God to be what he is, and by which we also believe all those sacred truths which he has revealed to mankind, precisely upon the authority of his word, and because he has revealed them.

Q. 6. How do we know what those truths are which God has revealed?

A. By the testimony of his holy church; which he has appointed to be the depository of these truths, and the infallible guardian and preserver of them, so long as the world shall endure; as we have seen and proved at large in The Sincere Christian Instructed, Chap. XI.

Q. 7. How do we honour and worship God by faith?

A. Because when we firmly believe all those sacred truths, which God has revealed, and taught us by his holy church, even though we neither see nor comprehend them, but merely because he has revealed them; by this we do homage to his infinite wisdom and veracity, and prefer his word before our own proud judgment, our senses, our reason, and every other consideration; all which we most humbly subject to his Divine authority.

Q. 8. Are we strictly obliged to believe whatever God has revealed?
A. Most undoubtedly; both because it would be the highest insult to his infinite wisdom and veracity to refuse to believe what he says, and because he expressly requires this homage from us, and makes our believing in him by faith a necessary condition of salvation; as we have also seen in the *Sincere Christian*, Chap. X. from repeated testimonies of his holy scripture.

Q. 9. But how can we believe what we neither see nor understand?

A. Properly speaking, it is only in things which we neither see nor understand, that we do believe; for if we see anything with our eyes, and examine it by our other senses, the knowledge we acquire of it by this means, is not faith, but experience. If we come to the knowledge of any thing by a train of arguments drawn from known principles, or by comparing the known properties, relations, and connexions of things together, the knowledge we acquire by this means is not faith, but reason and demonstration. But faith or belief, strictly speaking, embraces only the knowledge we acquire of things from the testimony of others, even though we never saw them with our eyes, or even cannot comprehend how or why they should be, for want of a sufficient information about them. And if those who give the testimony are persons of knowledge and veracity, we can have no well grounded difficulty in believing what they affirm, though we neither see nor comprehend what they tell us.

Q. 10. Can this be shown by any examples?

A. Examples of this are every day before our eyes. An ignorant peasant looks up to the heavens, and his senses represent to him the moon about three feet broad, and the stars a great deal less than the moon. He speaks of this to a learned man, who tells him, that these things are quite different from what he thinks them to be—that the moon is a very large body, many hundred miles broad, and that the stars are a great many times larger than the moon; and assures him that this can be demonstrated by the strictest reasoning, and that the small appearance they make to his eyes, is owing only to the great distance they are from us. In the authority of this learned man the peasant acquiesces, and believes what the other says, even though contrary to what he sees; because he knows him to be a learned and honest man, who, having studied these things, must know them better than he, and who can have no motive to deceive him. So also learners of all arts and sciences must take many things at first upon their master's word, and believe many things which they neither see nor understand,
and yet have no difficulty in doing so, on the authority of their master who declares them. If this be the case, in daily instances, about the things of this world, where the testimonies are only of men; how much more ought it to take place concerning the things of the other world, and where it is God himself who declares them? For as the scripture says, "Hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon the earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us. But the things that are in heaven, who shall search?" Wisd. ix. 16. It is plain we can never discover the things that are in heaven, either by reason or experience, and that except God Almighty should condescend to reveal them to us, we must eternally remain ignorant of them. "No man," says Jesus Christ, "knoweth who the Son is but the Father: and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him," Luke x. 22. If, therefore, God has been pleased to discover any of these heavenly truths to mankind, who can refuse to believe them upon his word, even though we do not understand them? For, "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater," 1 John v. 9. Can we be surprised that we should not understand spiritual things, when there are thousands of bodily things before our eyes every day, which we cannot comprehend? Is it a matter of wonder that our finite understandings should not be able to see what belongs to an infinite God; or penetrate into the views and reasons of an all-wise Being? Or shall we poor weak creatures presume to decide what is possible for our Almighty Creator to do, or not to do? Or what is becoming and fitting his infinite wisdom to do? Hear how the scripture confounds our pride, if we do so: "I have seen," says Solomon, "the trouble which God hath given the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made all things good in their time, and hath delivered the world to their consideration, so that man cannot find out the work which God hath made from the beginning to the end," Eccles. iii. 10. "And I applied my heart to know wisdom......and I understood that man can find no reason of all those works of God that are done under the sun: and the more he shall labour to seek, so much the less shall he find; yea, though the wise man shall say that he knoweth it, he shall not be able to find it," Eccles. viii. 16, 17.

But to understand this matter to the bottom, we must observe, that there are three things which may be considered in any object of our knowledge; its existence itself, the manner how it exists, and the reason why it exists. Now it is plain, that
we may know some one or other of these three things, without knowing them all. We know that wheat sown in the earth grows up to a new crop with great increase; this fact we know for certain; the reason why this is so we also know, to wit, to supply food for man; but the manner how it is so, of this we are wholly ignorant. If one takes any medicine, it produces certain effects in his body; that the medicine he takes has the virtue of producing these effects, is a fact we know from experience; why it has this effect is also manifest, namely, to contribute to the health of man; but the manner how it comes to have this effect, all the physicians of the world can never explain. From time to time comets are seen in the heavens, and by the observations of the learned it appears, that they run in a course quite different from the other heavenly bodies, and with an immense velocity. That comets exist we know for certain: but in what manner they run such a singular course, or why they do so, or to what purpose they serve at all, who can pretend to say? If, therefore, even in things before our eyes, though we be certain of their existence, yet we are very often ignorant both of the why and of the how; is it to be wondered that we are ignorant of this in things belonging to heaven and to eternity? It is manifest that as we can never know the existence of the things of God, but by revelation from him, much less can we know either the reason why, or the manner how they are so, unless he discover both to us. If, therefore, he is pleased to reveal to us that such and such things are so and so, without telling us the why or the how, shall we have any difficulty to believe the great God’s word when he tells us a part, because forsooth he does not think fit to tell us the whole? He has revealed to us, that in the Divine nature, which is individually one, there are three persons really distinct. The manner how this should be so, we cannot understand, as we do not understand how a dose of opium, for example, makes a person sleep; and God has not thought fit to explain the manner of this mystery to us: shall we, therefore, refuse to believe the fact which he has revealed, because he judges proper not to tell us the manner? This, it is evident, would be the height of extravagance! Now the existence of any thing revealed, without knowledge of the manner of its existence, is, properly speaking, the object of faith; for if we knew the manner of its existence, and saw its intrinsical evidence, it would be demonstration and reason, but no more faith. And therefore, the whole virtue and merit of faith consists in our believing that revealed truths are really so as revelation teaches,
though we cannot see the manner how they are so; yea, though in appearance they should seem contrary to our ideas of things, or to our reason; which being conversant only about created and natural objects, must have all its ideas exceedingly different from what belongs to such as are uncreated and supernatural.

Q. 11. What idea does the scripture give of the nature of divine faith?

A. (1.) It tells us plainly, that at present we know heavenly things but darkly and in part, and therefore must believe many things upon the word of Jesus Christ, who is our Master, and not expect to see them clearly till we be in another world. "We know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away......We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known," 1 Cor. xiii. 9. We have also the more firm prophetic word, whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts," 2 Pet. i. 19. And therefore in this life "we walk by faith, and not by sight," 2 Cor. v. 7.

(2.) That "faith is the substance of things to be hoped for—the evidence of things that are not seen," Heb. xi. "The evidence," he says, "of things that are not seen:" because though it be impossible for us to see with our eyes, or comprehend with our reason, the great truths of eternity, so that we can never come to know them but by revelation; yet the evidence we have of their existence from revelation, by means of faith, is so great, that it gives us the most absolute certainty of them; as much and more than the evidence either from our senses or reason can do, in what properly belongs to their examination; so that according to St Paul, "things not seen" are only the proper objects of our faith.

(3.) That all the merit of faith arises from this—that we believe upon the authority of God's word alone, what we neither see nor understand. That faith is a virtue most acceptable to God, and will be amply rewarded by him, is a fundamental article of the Christian religion. "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting," John iii. 16. "My sheep," says Jesus Christ, "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall not perish, for ever," John x. 27. Now what makes it thus acceptable to God, is precisely this, that we do supreme
homage to his infinite veracity, by believing what he says, merely because he says it, though we neither see nor understand it; thus, when St. Thomas professed his faith in Christ upon seeing the marks of the nails in his hands and feet, and the wound on his side, our Saviour replied, "Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and have believed," John xx. 29. "You shall greatly rejoice," says St. Peter, "if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful, that the trial of our faith, much more precious than gold, which is tried by the fire, may be found unto praise, and glory, and honour, at the appearing of Jesus Christ; whom having not seen, you love; in whom also now, though you see him not, you believe, and believing you shall rejoice with joy unspeakable, and glorified; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls," 1 Pet. i. 6. Hence we see that Divine faith is not an act of the understanding alone, which is necessitated to believe any truth which is demonstrated to it by its own internal evidence, but it is an act of the free-will as well as of the understanding, which makes it free and voluntary, and on that account it is meritorious before God, through the grace of Christ.

(4.) That Divine faith is a gift of God which we can never attain by our own natural strength alone, without the assistance of God's grace. This our Saviour declares in these words: "No man can come to me except the Father who hath sent me, draw him;" to wit, not by compulsion, nor by laying the free will under any necessity, but by the strong and sweet motions of his heavenly grace; and therefore he adds a little after,—"No man can come to me, unless it be given him by my Father," John vi. 44, 66. And he pronounces St. Peter blessed, when he made profession of his faith in Christ, as being the Son of God, because he had received this grace from God. "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven," Matt. xvi. 17. St. Paul also declares this truth, saying, "By grace you are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. And again, "To you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake," Phil. i. 29. The reason of this is, because the most part of the truths of faith surpass the natural lights of our understanding, and many of them appear even contrary to our reason; and although the motives of credibility render them highly credible, yet they are not, in themselves, evident, but obscure; on this account the understanding finds great difficulty
to believe them; it being a pain to our proud judgment to believe what it cannot comprehend, because it contains a tacit acknowledgment of our own weakness; and therefore it requires a free act of the will to determine the understanding to do it. Besides, the will itself is very often averted from believing the truths of faith, by her passions, by prejudices of education, by the spirit of party, by worldly interest, by human respects, and other such obstacles; which perverting the will, make the difficulties of the understanding appear still more and more insuperable. For it must be remembered, that though the understanding cannot refuse its assent to truths which are evident in themselves, or evidently demonstrated by reason, yet in those truths which are obscure in themselves, and especially if they be above reason, and in appearance against reason, as supernatural truths generally are, and the proof of their existence be drawn only from authority, the will has a great sway with the understanding, and very much influences it either to believe or reject them. It is by means of the above difficulties, both on the part of the understanding and of the will, “That the God of this world,” as St Paul expresses it, “blinds the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them,” 2 Cor. iv. 4. These difficulties are like so many strong holds, on which the pride of the heart of man is fortified, and refuses to submit the idol of its own judgment to the Divine authority; and if left to itself, would be more inclined to call in question the revelation itself, on account of the incomprehensibility of the mysteries it proposes, than believe such incomprehensible mysteries: The grace of God, therefore, is necessary to enlighten the understanding, and enable it to pay due attention to those motives, and to show it that there is no real contradiction in the truths proposed by faith, but only an appearance of it, and that they are not contrary to reason, but above it: this grace is also necessary for the will to fortify it against all its prejudices, and gently incline it to embrace the truths proposed, and to determine the understanding to adhere to them. This St. Paul expresses in these words,—“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God unto the pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels, and every height that extolleth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every understanding to the obedience of Christ,” 2 Cor. x. 4. Finally, it is by this grace of God, infused into our souls, that our faith becomes a supernatural virtue, and partakes of the merits of Christ, and our free will co-operating with this grace, and
adorned by it, makes our acts of faith agreeable to God, and meritorious in his sight.

(5.) That our faith, in order to be agreeable to God, must have these two qualities, (1.) It must be firm, that is, without any doubt of the truth of what it teaches, but with an entire assurance and full persuasion that it is infallibly true; and the reason is, because our belief of revealed truths is not grounded upon our senses, nor upon any natural knowledge, nor upon the testimony of men; but upon the infallible authority of God, who cannot possibly either be deceived himself, nor deceive us; and our understanding, reposing upon this infallible authority of God, receives every thing his holy church proposes as revealed by him, with the most undoubted assurance, as being the word of God himself, according to that of the apostle, "When you received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is indeed the word of God, who worketh in you that have believed," 1 Thess. ii. 23. (2.) It must be entire, comprehending all revealed truths; for if we refuse to believe any one thing which God has revealed and his church teaches, we destroy the very foundation of all faith; all the truths of faith stand upon the same bottom, the testimony of God, who reveals them; and if we suppose this testimony to be false in any one point, we ruin its authority in all; hence the scripture says, "He that believeth not the Son, maketh him a liar, because he believeth not in the testimony which God had testified of his Son," 1 John v. 10. We are therefore obliged to believe the whole doctrine of Jesus Christ without exception; as we have clearly seen in the Sincere Christian, Chap. X. from the repeated testimonies of holy scripture.

Q. 12. How can we believe every article which God has revealed, since it is impossible for the great bulk of mankind to know them all?

A. Our blessed Saviour has fully provided against this difficulty; for having committed the whole body of revealed truths to his church, and given us the most infallible assurance, that "his words put into her mouth shall not depart from her from henceforth and for ever," Is. lix. 21, but that "his holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, shall abide with her for ever, and teach her all truth," John xiv. 16, and xvi. 13; therefore whoever actually believes in general, whatever the church of Christ believes, and is ready to receive each article in particular, whenever it is proposed to him by her, does in fact believe implicitly every thing that Christ has revealed, even though he does not explicitly know each particular article. And though
there are several articles which every one is obliged to know and believe explicitly, this being the necessary means of salvation; yet the general implicit belief of whatever the church believes and teaches, is sufficient for all the rest.

Q. 13. What are those articles of faith, which each one is obliged to know and believe explicitly, as necessary means of salvation?

A. Some things are so essentially necessary for salvation, that if they be wanting, even though without any fault on our part, salvation cannot be attained: others are necessary indeed for salvation, insomuch, that if through our own fault they be wanting, we commit a mortal sin, which, without repentance, must deprive us of salvation, yet if they be wanting without any fault on our part, we may be saved without them. The former are necessary, as the essential means of salvation by God's appointment, the second kind are necessary only because commanded. Now of the truths revealed by God, which all are obliged to know and believe expressly, some are necessary to be known as the essential means of salvation, insomuch, that without knowing them, according to each one's capacity, and believing them, none come to the years of discretion can be saved; others are necessary to be known, because we are commanded to know them, so that it would be a great sin through one's own fault to be ignorant of them; though if our ignorance was not from our own fault, we may be saved without expressly knowing them. Of the first kind are these following: (1.) That there is a God who made and rules this world, and that he will reward the good, and punish the wicked. Thus the scripture expressly says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is a rewarer of them that seek him," Heb. xi. 6; and the reason is manifest, because if we do not know God, we can neither fear him, nor hope in him, nor love him, nor obey him; without which we can never please him; and hence St. Paul declares, that at the last day, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of his power, in a flame of fire, yielding vengeance to them who know not God...who shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 2 Thess. i. 7. (2) That God the Son was made Man, born of the Virgin Mary, died on a cross, for our sins, and rose again for our justification. That is, we must explicitly know Jesus Christ our Saviour, and what he did to save us. For as himself says, speaking to God the Father, "This is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true
God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 5. Hence, "man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ," Gal. ii. 16. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved," Acts iv. 12. "Now he that believeth not, is already judged, because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God," John iii. 18; and "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," John iii. 36. And Christ himself declares, "If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins: they said therefore to him, Who art thou? Jesus said to them, The beginning, who also spake to you," John viii. 24. The reason is, because without knowing Jesus Christ, we can neither love him nor follow him as his disciples, nor obey him; and the scripture declares, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema," that is accursed, 1 Cor. xvi. 22; and that Christ, "being consummated, became the cause of eternal salvation to all that obey him," Heb. v. 9. And Christ himself says, "I am the good shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know me...my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I gave them eternal life; and they shall not perish for ever," John x. 14, 27. (3.) It is also most probable that we are obliged to know distinctly, as a necessary means of salvation, the mystery of the blessed Trinity; because this is the principal mystery of our faith, and the great object of our adoration, in the name of which we are all baptized, by the express command of Christ, and in which we are ordered to be instructed before baptism; "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," Matt. xxviii. 19. Besides, how can we know that Jesus Christ is God the Son and was conceived by the Holy Ghost, except we know that in God there is the Son, and of course the Father and the Holy Ghost?

Q. 14. What articles are necessary to be known and believed explicitly, because commanded to be known by all.

A. Our blessed Saviour commissioned his apostles to teach all nations, the truths of the gospel, and the observance of all those things which he had commanded them, Matt. xxviii. And St. Paul declares that "those who obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, shall suffer eternal punishment," 2 Thess. i. 8. Now it is manifest that one cannot obey the gospel without knowing it; from whence it follows of course, that every one is obliged by this command to know the gospel of
Christ, at least as much of it as is requisite to enable him to live a good Christian life in the state of life in which providence has placed him. Every Christian therefore is obliged to know, (1.) The sense and substance of what is contained in The Apostles' Creed; the principal articles of it are indeed concerning God, and the incarnation, the knowledge of which are of absolute necessity; the other articles he ought to know in obedience to the above command of Christ, as they are necessary to the being a good Christian. (2.) The Lord's Prayer; because we are obliged to pray, this being one principal duty of a Christian, and Christ himself commands us when we pray to say the Lord's prayer, which he himself taught us in order to be used by us; but it is manifest we cannot obey this command of saying it, unless we know it. (3.) The Commands of God and of the Church, and the duties of one's state of life; because, as obedience to these commands, and the performance of these duties, are necessary conditions of salvation, according to that, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;” it is plain this condition could never be performed without knowing what our duty is. (4.) The Sacraments; at least such of them as one is going to receive; their effects, and the dispositions required on our part for receiving them worthily. Because the sacraments are the great means ordained by God to confer his grace on our soul; several of which, all are obliged to receive at some time or other, and some of them we are obliged to receive often; and the receiving them worthily, so as to reap benefit by them, and not condemnation, depends upon the dispositions with which we receive them; all which therefore we ought to know, otherwise we cannot put ourselves in the proper dispositions for receiving them with fruit to our souls. (5.) By the command and custom of the church, all her children are obliged to know by heart the words of the Creed, the Lord's prayer, the Hail Mary, the Ten Commands, the commands of the church, and how to make the sign of the cross, in the name of the ever blessed Trinity.

Q. 15. What practical consequences flow from these truths?

A. Several very important ones for different classes of people, and (1.) Those who through their own fault are ignorant of any of these truths of salvation, which they are obliged to know, and through negligence live in an habitual ignorance of them, are living in a state of sin, and in the continual danger of committing sin through the culpable ignorance of their duty, and of abusing the sacraments, if they receive any of them. (2.) Those are still more guilty, who put themselves in such a state of life as deprives them of the opportunity of being instructed in
what they ought to know, and who by so doing, show a positive will not to know it: to these may justly be applied that of Job, "They say to God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." But they should remember what is added of all such: "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell." Job xxi. 13, 14. (3.) Parents who neglect to teach their children in time, by themselves if they are able, and if not, by sending them to the public instructions of their pastors; and much more if they hinder them from this, on account of their worldly affairs, are guilty of a very great sin. (4.) God-fathers and god-mothers, who neglect to get their spiritual children instructed, when their own natural parents either neglect it, or cannot do it, are also guilty in the sight of God. (5.) Masters and mistresses, who do not cause their servants to attend the public instructions in the church, and much more if they hinder them from it, will find to their sad cost, that the ignorance of their servants in the duties of their religion, will be imputed to them before the tribunal of Christ, in proportion to the share they have had in occasioning it. (6.) Pastors of souls, who are strictly obliged to know the great truths of religion, much more amply and perfectly than their people, not only for themselves, but for instructing others, and who neglect the daily study of these things, spending their time in vain and idle amusements or useless studies, will have a dreadful account to give for such conduct; for that God who says, "The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth, because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts," Mal. ii. 7, says also, "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will reject thee, that thou shalt not do the office of priesthood to me; and thou hast forgotten the law of the Lord thy God, I also will forget thy children," Osee iv. 6; and "Because you have departed out of the way, and have caused many to stumble at the law......Therefore have I made you contemptible and base before all people," Mal. ii. 8. To the same purpose is that of our Saviour to the pastors of his church, "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more, but to be cast out and to be trodden on by men," Matt. v. 13. (7.) Those who are so gross and dull in their understanding, that it is morally impossible for them to learn and retain those truths, which we are obliged to know, because commanded, are exempted from that obligation, because their natural stupidity makes them incapable of satisfying it. But they are obliged to know those other truths concerning God and our Saviour, which
are necessary means of salvation, because, without knowing these, they cannot be saved. However, it is sufficient for them, in order to satisfy this obligation, that they adhere to them by faith, when they are explained to them, though they are not capable to retain them. And it is the duty of their pastors to renew this explication to them, and assist them to make acts of faith upon them, as often as their circumstances may require it, particularly when they are going to receive any sacrament, or are in danger of death.

§ 2. Of Worshipping God by Faith.

Q. 16. How do we actually honour God and worship him by the virtue of faith?
A. This we do every time that we make acts of faith, whether internally and in private by ourselves alone; or outwardly confessing him and his Divine truths before men.

Q. 17. What do you mean by an internal act of faith?
A. It is a profession or protestation made to God, that we do actually believe in him, and all the sacred truths which he has revealed, and his church teaches, precisely because he has revealed them. Now concerning the exercise or practice of this, several things are to be observed. (1.) That we make these acts of faith, either internally in our heart alone, keeping our attention fixed upon God, and addressing them to him, as present with us; or we may also express them in words with our tongue, keeping our heart attentive to what we are saying. (2.) That these acts may be made either as embracing all revealed truths in general, or may be restrained to some or more in particular. Thus a general act of faith may be conceived in these or such like terms. "O my God, I firmly believe all those sacred truths which thou hast revealed, and thy holy church teaches, because thou, who art the Eternal Truth, hast revealed them to her." An act of faith on any particular truth, for example on the blessed Trinity, may be thus expressed: "O my God, I firmly believe that thou art one God in three distinct persons, because thou thyself hast revealed it." (3.) Hence it appears that when we repeat the creed with suitable devotion and attention, we make a most excellent act of faith upon the principal mysteries of our religion. (4.) That when we do make these acts of faith, whether in general or particular, we honour and worship God, because we make an actual confession and acknowledgment of his supreme veracity; we submit our proud judgments to him; and prefer his Divine autho-
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RITY to ourselves and to every thing else. (5.) That these acts of faith when frequently repeated with suitable attention and devotion, are of great service to our souls, because they serve greatly to enliven our faith of Divine truths; they give us a feeling sense of the importance of these truths; and when by constant and daily practice they become habitual to the soul, they give her a wonderful strength in time of temptation, and enable her easily "to quench all the fiery darts of the enemy," Eph. vi. 16, and on this account are a most excellent preparation for a happy death.

Q. 16. How often ought we to worship God by acts of faith?

A. There are some circumstances wherein it is very necessary to do this; for example, when we come to a sufficient use of reason to know God, and the duty we owe him as our sovereign Lord, we ought then, in a particular manner, to pay him this homage of our understanding by acts of faith; so also when one is in any temptation, especially if it be against faith, these acts of faith are the proper arms to fight against it. In like manner when one is going to receive the sacraments, they are a most proper preparation for disposing the soul to receive an ample share of the graces they confer; and when one is in danger of death, it is then most necessary to unite the soul as much as possible with God by acts of faith and other holy virtues. But besides these particular times, it is certainly most advisable to make acts of faith a part of our daily devotion, and of the daily homage we are bound to pay to God, especially when we assist at the public service of the church: and indeed the oftener we make them the better, considering how much we honour God by them, and how profitable they are to our souls.

Q. 19. Are we obliged to make outward profession of our faith before men?

A. We certainly are, as often as the honour of God or the good of our neighbour’s soul requires it. On this important duty, we have the following truths laid down to us in scripture: (1.) That the outward confession of faith is necessary for salvation:—“This is the word of faith,” says St. Paul, “which we preach: That if thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God hath raised him up from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth confession is made to salvation,” Rom. x. 8. And Christ himself says, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my
Father who is in heaven," Matt. x. 32; Luke xii. 8. (2.) That to deny Christ before men, is a mortal sin, which will ruin the soul; thus Christ declares, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father, who is in heaven," Matt. x. 33; Luke xii. 9. "A faithful saying," says St. Paul, "if we be dead with him, we shall live also with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; these things admonish and testify in the Lord," 2 Tim. ii. 11. (3.) And to show us that, in all these places, the doctrine of Christ is included, as well as his person, we are assured, that not only if we deny his gospel or doctrine, but even if we be ashamed of it, he will be ashamed of us at the great day. "Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and for the gospel, shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, in this sinful and adulterous generation, the Son of man shall also be ashamed of him, when he shall come in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels," Mark viii. 35; Luke ix. 24.

Q. 20. What practical consequences flow from these scripture principles?

A. From these truths it follows, (1.) That when a person is called upon before a judge, or any one in public authority, and questioned about his religion, he is bound in conscience openly to declare it, whatever his doing so may cost him, though the loss of all he has or even of his life itself: silence or dissimulation in such cases would be a mortal sin; the honour of God, the respect due to religion, the good of his own soul, and the edification of his neighbour, and confirmation of weak brethren, all conspire to require an open confession from him. (2.) That it never can be lawful in any case whatsoever to deny our faith even exteriorly only, or before men, either by words or signs, or actions; for our blessed Lord declares to all without exception, that whosoever denies him before men, he will deny him before his Father; and no wonder, for such external denial is in itself a grievous lie in a matter of the greatest moment, professing eternally to reject as a falsehood, what one really believes in his heart to be Divine truth; it is most dishonourable to God, giving the lie to his words, and professing outwardly that his holy faith is a falsehood; it is also most offensive and scandalous to our neighbour, and must naturally make him think lightly of our holy faith, or deny it. Hence the church
of Christ has in all ages looked upon it as a most grievous crime; condemned as hereties those who thought it was lawful on any consideration to deny their faith, and inflicted the most severe punishments on those who, even in times of persecution, to save their lives, had been guilty of it. Hence all the holy martyrs chose rather, as St. Paul expresses it, “To endure great fight of afflictions, and on the one hand, indeed, by reproaches and tribulations to be made a gazing stock, and on the other, to become companions of them that were used in such sort; they had compassion on them that were in bands, and took with joy the being stripped of their own goods,” Heb. x. 32. Yea, they suffered death itself in the midst of the most cruel torments, rather than do the smallest thing contrary to their holy faith; yea, rather than even do any thing, though lawful in itself, but which could have the appearance of being so. Witness the glorious Eleazar, of whom we have spoken above, Chap. V. § 5, No. 6. (3.) That to be ashamed of our holy faith, or of any part of our Saviour’s doctrine, and unwilling to show or defend it, for fear of the contempt of men, or of being laughed at by the world, is a grievous affront to Jesus Christ, a betraying of our duty to him, a preferring of the vain opinion of men to his approbation, and is to be more afraid of man than of God, contrary to his express command: for all which he has declared that he will be ashamed of all such at the great day. [See all this matter fully treated in the Sincere Christian, in the Appendix to the Inquiry, at the end of the volume.]

§ 3. The Vices opposite to Faith.

Q. 21. What are the vices opposite to faith, which are forbidden by the first command?

A. Besides those mentioned above, there are chiefly three others, which it is necessary to consider here, to wit, heresy, voluntary doubts of any revealed truths, and exposing one’s self to the danger of losing the faith.

Q. 22. What is understood by heresy?

A. To understand this we must observe, that Jesus Christ, having revealed to his apostles all those Divine truths of eternity, which he thought proper to make known to the world, gave them and their successors, the pastors of his church, commission and authority to teach them to all mankind, even to the end of time; and as he absolutely requires all men in all ages to believe these truths, under pain of damnation, for “He that believeth not,” says he, “shall be condemned,” Mark xvi.
16: so he strictly commands all to receive them from his church, and submit to her decisions concerning them, as the only rule by which they can know them; and to take away all difficulty in obeying this command, he has engaged his sacred promise in the most solemn manner, so to assist and direct his church by his holy Spirit, that she shall never alter nor corrupt his Divine truths, but shall infallibly continue to teach them to her children, pure and undefiled as long as the world shall endure. All which we have seen at large in the Sincere Christian, Chap. XI. and XII. Hence the church of Christ is the only means by which we can know what are the truths revealed by Jesus Christ, which we are obliged to believe, and what are not. She is the rule of our faith by which alone we can know what are the true scriptures which contain the written word of God, and what is the true sense and interpretation of them; she, therefore, is that sacred and infallible testimony which God has established in this world of himself and of his Divine truths. Consequently, it is the duty of every Christian to receive the truths of faith from the testimony of the church, with an entire submission of his judgment, and a firm persuasion that her decisions concerning these truths are the dictates of the Holy Ghost, and infallibly true. When, therefore, a person refuses to believe any truth which he knows is declared by the church of Christ to be a revealed truth, and prefers his own private judgment to her testimony, choosing for himself what to believe and what not to believe, in opposition to her, this person is a heretic, and the sin he is guilty of by doing so, is the sin of heresy, for this word, in the original language from which it comes, signifies one that chooses for himself what he thinks fit to believe, in opposition to the sacred rule of faith left to us by Jesus Christ.

Q. 23. Is heresy a grievous sin?
A. It certainly is; and this will easily appear, both from what has been just said of the nature of it, and still more from the following considerations:—(1.) It is a great affront put upon Almighty God; for as he has given us his church as an infallible rule by which to know his Divine truths, and has commanded us to receive them from her; whoever refuses to do so, must either suppose God to be false to his promises, or that he commands us to receive a falsehood; he rejects the testimony which God has established of himself, and makes God a liar; according to that of St. John, “He that believeth not the Son, makes God a liar; because he believeth not in the testimony which God hath testified of his Son,” 1 John v. 10. (2.) It destroys the
very foundation of the Christian religion; for as the church is the only rule by which we can possibly know for certain what those truths are which God has revealed, if a man supposes her to have taught false doctrine in one point, as every one does who rejects what she teaches, there can be no certainty of her teaching truth in any other, and consequently we can never know for certain any revealed truth at all, and of course all Divine faith must be lost. In fact experience itself shows this, from the example of all those who have, in any age, rejected the infallible authority of the church of Christ; for however violent and fanatical they have been for a while, sooner or later they have all dwindled away into irreligion and deism, rejecting the Christian revelation entirely. And no wonder, for (3.) Heresy destroys all union, yea, the very bond of union among Christians, spreading dissension and discord wherever it goes; for as there is no other possible way of knowing for certain what those truths are which Jesus Christ has revealed, but by the authority of the church, when this is once thrown aside, and every one left to his own fancy, which is as various among men as their faces, there can be no possibility of keeping them united together in the belief of any one thing; every one has as good a title to follow his own opinion as his neighbour has to follow his; and all is necessarily reduced to mere fancy and opinion. Hence, (4.) The sin of heresy is condemned in the word of God in the strongest terms, thus—"A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, avoid; knowing that he that is such an one is subverted and sinneth, being condemned by his own judgment," Tit. iii. 10. "Now I beseech you, brethren, to mark them who cause dissensions and offences, contrary to the doctrines which you have learned, and to avoid them; for they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly," Rom. xvi. 17. "Though we," says St. Paul, "or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you, besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema," that is accursed; and he repeats it a second time that it may make the deeper impression, Gal. i. 8, 9. "In the last times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy," 1 Tim. iv. 1. "There shall be among you lying teachers, who shall bring in sects of perdition, (or, as the Protestant translation hath it, dastable heresies,) and deny the Lord who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction," 2 Pet. ii. 1. St. Paul also classes sects or heresies among the works of the flesh, of which he declares, "that they who do such things shall not obtain the
kingdom of God,” Gal. v. 29. Our Saviour himself condemns those that will not hear his church, as heathens and publicans, Matt. xviii. 17. And St. John gives our submission to the pastors of the church as the distinguishing sign of our belonging to God, and by which to know the spirit of truth from the spirit of error. “He that knoweth God,” says he, “heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us; by this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error,” 1 John iv. 6.

Q. 24. What is to be said of doubts concerning any article of faith?

A. Several things are to be observed concerning them; and (1.) These doubts are sometimes only wandering thoughts that present themselves to the mind, without alleging any reason for doubting, but which discompose the mind in some degree. These are either the effects of a warm imagination, or the suggestions of the devil, and we ought to reject them with contempt; making an act of faith on that very article about which the doubt arises, and begging God’s assistance against them, if they continue. (2.) Sometimes these doubts are accompanied with false, but apparent reasons, which make an impression on the mind. In this case the person must be very careful not to enter into any discussion of these reasons; otherwise he will run himself into difficulties which may embroil his understanding entirely; the reason is, because the truths of faith are above all human reason; we know from the revelation of God that they are true; but we are too ignorant of all particulars about them, to be able to comprehend how they are so; and if we begin to examine them in themselves, and pretend to satisfy our difficulties by reason, we shall never be able to come to any conclusion. And therefore, as it is by the testimony of the church that we know they are revealed by God, and therefore most infallibly true; the only certain remedy against these suggestions, is to despise them entirely, and make an act of faith against them, protesting that we believe the truth they oppose, and every thing else which the church teaches, without diving farther into them. (3.) Sometimes difficulties of this kind arise in the mind, because the persons are not sufficiently instructed in what our holy faith teaches concerning any mystery: the proper remedy in this case is, to apply to one’s pastor, and learn from him what is the doctrine of the church concerning it, and to adhere to that precisely, without going to the right hand or to the left; and generally speaking, the full knowledge of that will take away all the difficulty. (4.) Sometimes these doubts take their rise from one’s being in company with the
enemies of religion, hearing their impious conversation, or reading their books. This, as we shall see by and by, is a sin in those who voluntarily or presumptuously expose themselves to such occasions, for which they ought heartily to repent and crave God's pardon; otherwise they may provoke him to withdraw his grace from them in punishment of their presumption and deprive them of the gift of faith, of which they render themselves unworthy. (5.) In all these cases their great care must be, never to consent to these doubts; for one who knowingly consents to doubt of any revealed truth, is guilty of a great sin; as he supposes, by doubting of it, that the article he doubts of is uncertain, and therefore that it may be false, consequently, that God who has revealed it, may have told a lie, or that his holy church may have taught a falsehood; which is certainly a great injury to God's infinite veracity; for "heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away."

(6.) However, for the comfort of all those who are troubled with temptations of this kind, it must be remembered, that however obstinate those thoughts are, and though they continue for a considerable time to afflict them, yet whilst they detest and abhor them, have a horror at all false doctrine, and a love and attachment to the truth, and use their endeavours to reject these diabolical suggestions, and all apparent delusive reasons, instead of being a hurt to their souls, they will be of great advantage; and the repeated victories they gain over the temptation, will serve to confirm them more and more in their holy faith; and God will at last crown their fidelity with many blessings. (7.) Lastly, we may observe, that the general remedies for all these temptations of doubt against faith are, humble prayers, acts of faith, and discovering the temptation to our pastor, to get comfort, advice, and instruction from him. First, humble prayer; because, as the devil is the father of lies, so God is truth itself; as the devil is the spirit of darkness, so Jesus Christ is "the light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world," John i. 9. If therefore, we want the light of heaven, and wisdom from above, to dispel the darkness of these diabolical temptations, we must ask it of God by fervent humble prayer, according to that, "If any of you want wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all abundantly, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him," James i. 5. Secondly, acts of faith; namely, upon that very mystery about which the doubts arise, with a generous magnanimity protesting one's firm belief of it, because revealed by God, and taught by his holy church, and despising all the suggestions of the devil
to the contrary: because every act of this kind confirms the soul in her duty, and is a direct resisting of the attacks of the enemy; and the scripture commands us to resist him in this manner,—"whom resist ye," says St Peter, "strong in faith." 1 Pet. v. 9. And St James assures us, that by this means we shall overcome him; "Be subject, therefore, to God, but resist the devil, and he will fly from you," James iv. 7. Thirdly, discovering the temptation to our pastor; for there is nothing the devil is more afraid of than this, he knows that as long as a person conceals any temptation in his own mind, the confusion and trouble which it causes there, makes him incapable of discovering the delusion of his suggestions, and makes him fall an easy prey into his hands; but if the person open his mind candidly to his pastor, the devil is aware that all his delusions will be brought to light and the person get such instructions and advice as will disappoint his diabolical views; and therefore he hates this discovery, and strives to prevent it by putting fear and shame, and a number of other false reasons, in the person's mind, to hinder him from doing it; which should make those who are in such temptations the more diligent to fly to it, as the sure remedy to set their minds at ease.

Q. 25. What is to be observed concerning the exposing one's self to the danger of losing his faith?

A. If Jesus Christ has taken the greatest care to give us the utmost security for our faith, and has established the truths which he requires us to believe, upon the most solid foundation; the devil, on the other hand, who "goes about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour us," 1 Pet. v., is no less solicitous, wherever he can find an opportunity, to ruin and destroy our faith, or at least to corrupt and weaken it, if he cannot entirely destroy it; for this reason, where he knows that his internal temptations of doubts about any revealed truth will not succeed, he attacks us by external instruments, which are—the conversation, and books of unbelievers, or those of a false religion. Of these the scripture gives us the following descriptions: (1.) "Know also this, that in the last days shall come on dangerous times; men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemous; lovers of pleasure more than of God; having an appearance of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Now these avoid; for of this sort are they that creep into houses, and lead captive silly women......now as Jannes and Mambres resisted Moses, so these also resist the truth, men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith," 2 Tim. iii. 1. Here the apostle describes one kind of those instruments
whom the devil makes use of to undermine the faith of good Christians, especially those who either from want of time, or abilities, or education, are not so fully instructed in the grounds of their religion, as to be able to withstand their attacks; and he tells us they are people of a proud, forward, overbearing disposition, who, being full of themselves, and of their own pretended learning, take every opportunity of railing at the true religion, misrepresenting and calumniating its tenets, and turning the sacred truth it teaches to a subject of laughter and ridicule; sometimes making great pretences to piety and godliness, but having nothing of the substance of it, and sometimes, like Satan when he tempted our Saviour, having recourse even to scripture, but which they wrest and misapply as they think most for their purpose. By such a conduct a person, who is not thoroughly instructed in the grounds of his religion, is apt to be confused in his judgment—he is at a stand—doubts arise in his mind, which, if he be not very careful to resist, may expose him to very great danger of being led away captive by them. (2.) Another kind of instruments the apostle describes as follows: “Now I beseech you, brethren, to mark them who cause dissensions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learnt, and to avoid them, for they that are such serve not Christ our Lord, but their own belly, and by pleasing speeches and good words, seduce the hearts of the innocent,” Rom. xvi. 17. These are quite opposite to the former; people of a calm, winning, flattering behaviour, who point their attacks at the heart and passions, and by smooth speeches and fine promises, endeavour to gain the affections of the hearers, and by this means the more effectually seduce them. Learning itself is not proof against this battery, and many examples might be brought of the most learned men, who have been seduced by this means. (3.) A third kind of Satan’s instruments the same apostle tells us, is the very doctrine of false teachers itself, which is generally calculated to flatter the pride and passions of the heart, extolling one’s own judgment, and appealing to it; as if the truths of revelation could be examined in themselves by human reason, calling the sublime and supernatural mysteries of religion to the bar of our limited and imperfect reason—teaching doctrines which are agreeable to flesh and blood, under pretence of gospel liberty, and rejecting those sacred duties which are a restraint on self-love and the passions. By this means their doctrine becomes pleasant to our corrupted nature—those who learn it, whether from conversation or books, begin to be pleased with it, and wish it were
true, and then, self-love by degrees prevailing, the step is easy to believe it is true. Of this snare the apostle says, “Shun profane and vain babbings, for they grow much towards ungodliness, and their speech spreadeth like a canker, of whom are Hymeneus and Philetus, who have erred from the truth,” 2 Tim. ii. 16. Now as the law of nature itself obliges every one to fly from all dangerous occasions of hurting his soul; and the Holy Ghost declares, that “He that loveth danger shall perish in it,” Ecclus. iii. 27; consequently every one is obliged in conscience to avoid all those dangers above-mentioned; and this obligation is confirmed by the express command of the apostle, in each of the three texts we have cited: avoid them, says he, and shun them; and whosoever shall presumptuously expose himself to these dangers, either by frequenting the company of those above described or by reading their books, without a just cause or necessity, are guilty of a sin in the sight of God, and expose themselves to the danger of being deprived of the inestimable gift of their holy faith, which they so much undervalue. From the same reason it is, along with others of equal strength, that all communication in religious duties with those of a false religion, is strictly and repeatedly forbidden in the holy scripture, and by the church of Christ; as we have seen at large in the appendix to the inquiry, at the end of the Sincere Christian. If, however, either through necessity, or for some just cause, a person has been exposed to any of the above dangers, or even through his own fault, and has, by that means, given occasion to temptations against faith to arise in his mind, he ought immediately to fly to those three remedies mentioned above, Q. 24, No. 7. See also Chap. VI. Q. 4, on the dangerous occasions of sin.

CHAPTER VIII.
DIVINE HOPE.

§ 1. The Nature and Grounds of Hope.

Q. 1. What is Divine hope?
A. It is an ardent desire of salvation, accompanied with a firm confidence and expectation of acquiring it, through the help and assistance of God. Consider each part of this explanation: (1.) It is an ardent desire of salvation; because hope
is founded on desire, and presupposes that the one who hopes has a desire of the thing he hopes for: this desire ought, in all reason, to be proportionable to the excellency of the good which is desired; and as our salvation, which is the possession of God himself, is an infinite good, and infinitely superior to every other good, therefore, our desire of it ought to be ardent and strong, and far exceeding our desire of every other thing without exception. This desire must (2.) Be accompanied with a firm confidence of acquiring it; because desire alone is not hope; a man may ardently desire a thing, and yet despair of obtaining it; as the poor man desires riches, the sick man desires health, and a person condemned to die, desires life, though none of them have any hope of obtaining what they wish for. Hence, therefore, the desire of any good must be accompanied with a confidence of acquiring it, in order to be hope; so that though the good be exceeding great, and not easy to be acquired, yet we expect, by using the proper means and helps, at last to obtain it. Thus the merchant desires and hopes to obtain riches, by his diligence and industry—the soldier to gain conquest and glory by his courage and bravery—the husbandman to get a plentiful crop by his labour and toil, and thus the Christian hopes to acquire eternal salvation, by (3.) The help and assistance of God, enabling him to use the means for this purpose; for our holy faith teaches us, that the obtaining of salvation is far above our own abilities; that by our own natural strength we cannot take the least step towards it, and that our whole dependence must be upon God, by whose assistance alone, through the merits of Christ, we can be enabled to acquire it; so that it is from him we are to expect both our salvation itself, and the necessary helps for obtaining it.

Q. 2. Are we obliged to desire eternal happiness?

A. We are obliged to desire it above all things, which appears (1.) from the express command—"Seek first the kingdom of God, and his justice," Matt. vi. 33. "If you be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; mind the things that are above, not the things that are on earth," Col. iii. 1. (2.) From the reward promised: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill," Matt. v. 6. "To him that thirsteth I will give of the fountain of water of life, free cost," Rev. xxi. 6. (3.) From its being the one thing necessary; for "What will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Mark viii. 36. (4.) From the example of all the saints, which see above, Chap. V. 9, 13, No. 3. (5.) From
reason itself, which teaches us that we ought to love and desire that most which is most valuable, and most deserves to be loved and desired; this is what we do in our worldly affairs; now eternal happiness is infinitely more valuable than any thing else, and therefore deserves to be loved and desired above all things; on which account our Saviour compares it to a pearl of great price, and to a treasure hid in a field, to obtain which a man sells all he has and buys it.

Q. 3. Are we obliged to hope and trust in God?

A. To hope in God is the essential duty of a Christian, and a principal part of the homage and adoration which we owe to him; as appears (1.) from the command repeatedly expressed in the holy scriptures thus:—“Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and do not lean upon thy own prudence,” Prov. iii. 5. “Offer up the sacrifice of justice, and hope in the Lord,” Ps. iv. 6. “Trust in the Lord and do good......commit thy way to the Lord, and trust in him, and he will do it,” Ps. xxxvi. 3, 5. “Trust in him, all ye congregation of people—pour out your hearts before him; God is our helper for ever,” Ps. lxi. 9. “Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth, now, and for ever.” Ps. cxxx. 3. “Turn thou to thy God;......and hope in thy God always,” Osee xii. 6. “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering,” Heb. x. 23. “Having the loins of your mind girt up, being sober, trust perfectly in the grace which is offered you at the revelation of Jesus Christ,” 1 Pet. i. 13. (2.) From the reward annexed to this duty: “Do not, therefore, lose your confidence,” says St. Paul, “which hath a great reward,” Heb. x. 35. And that reward is the very salvation we hope for; for “We are saved by hope,” Rom. viii. 24; and “He that putteth his trust in me, shall inherit the land, and shall possess my holy mount,” Is. lvii. 13. Hence, “Blessed are all they that trust in him,” Ps. ii. 13. “Blessed is the man whose trust is in the name of the Lord,” Ps. xxxix. 5. “He that feareth man shall quickly fall; he that trusteth in the Lord shall be set on high,” Prov. xxix. 25. “My children, behold the generations of men; and know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded,” Eccles. ii. 11. “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence; and he shall be as a tree that is planted by the waters; that spreadeth out its roots towards moisture, and it shall not fear when the heat cometh; and the leaves thereof shall be green, and in the time of drought it shall not be solicitous, neither shall it cease at any time to bring forth fruit,” Jer. xvii. 7. (3.) From the threats against
those who do not hope in God. "Cursed be the man that
trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart
departeth from the Lord......He shall not see when good shall
come, but he shall dwell in dryness in the desert; in a salt land,
and not inhabited," Jer. xvii. 5. "The Lord heard and was
angry, and a fire was kindled against Jacob, and wrath came
up against Israel; because they believed not in God, and trusted
not in his salvation," Ps. lxxxvii. 21. (4.) From the examples of
the saints: "For thee," says David, "my flesh and my heart
hath fainted away: thou art the God of my heart, and the God
that is my portion for ever; for behold they that go far from
thee shall perish,—thou hast destroyed all them that are dis-
loyal to thee. But it is good for me to stick close to my God
—to put my hope in the Lord God," Ps. lxxii. 26. "Although
he should kill me," says Job, "I will trust in him," Job xiii.
15. Abraham, "against hope believed in hope, that he might
be the father of many nations," Prov. iv. 18. And of good king
Ezechias it is said, "He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel;
so that after him there was none like him among all the kings
of Judah; nor any of them that were before him. And he
stuck to the Lord......wherefore the Lord also was with him,
4 Kings xviii. 5.

Q. 4. Is it lawful to put any trust in ourselves, or to expect
eternal happiness through our own strength, and natural
abilities?

A. By no means; this would be a great sin, and a high injury
to God and to the merits of Jesus Christ, and the utter
destruction of Divine hope in the soul; for of ourselves, with-
out the help of God's grace, we not only can take no step
towards our salvation, but we should rush headlong into all
vice and wickedness. The scripture is strong and clear upon
this point; for (1.) "We are not sufficient to think any thing
as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God," 2 Cor. iii. 5;
and therefore, "If any man think himself something, whereas
he is nothing, he deceiveth himself," Gal. vi. 3; for as the
branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine,
so neither can you," says Jesus Christ, "unless you abide in
me...for without me you can do nothing," John xv. 4. Nay,
we cannot make the least advance towards Jesus Christ, unless
by God's assistance. "No man," says he, "can come to me,
except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him," John vi. 44.
Much less can we make any progress in his service without
him, for "Neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that
watereth; but God that giveth the increase," 1 Cor. iii. 7. (2.)
Instead of being able to do any good of ourselves, if left to ourselves, we should run headlong into every kind of wickedness, because "the wickedness of man is great upon earth, and all the thought of their heart is bent upon evil at all times," Gen. vi. 5; and "The imagination and thought of man’s heart are prone to evil from their youth," Gen. vii. 21; for the heart is perverse above all things, and unsearchable," Jer. xviii. 9; and "out of it proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies," Matt. xv. 19. See here what man is capable of, when left to himself! Which is further described by St. Paul, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, from examples. (3.) Our strength and ability to do any good is only from God, by the assistance of his grace bestowed on us through the merits of Christ; for "our sufficiency is from God," 2 Cor. iii. 6; and every best gift, and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights," James i. 17. Hence, "it is God who worketh in us both to will and to accomplish, according to his good will," Phil. ii. 13; and our confidence must always be in him, "that he who hath begun the good work in us, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus," Phil. i. 6. But (4.) of ourselves we are altogether unworthy of receiving any help or grace from God, both upon account of our manifold sins, by which we deserve nothing but the severity of justice in punishment of them, and on account of the many times we have abused those graces he hath given us, which makes us positively unworthy of them; and also because all we can possibly do, even with the help of his greatest grace, is of no real use to God; but "When we shall have done things that are commanded us, we must confess that we are unprofitable servants," Luke xvii. 10. He has no need of us, he is infinitely happy in himself, nothing that we do can add the least jot to his essential happiness. Hence whatever grace or help we need from him, we must expect it, not from any deservings of ours, but from his infinite mercy alone, who is free Master to show it on whom he pleases, and therefore says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy," Rom. ix. 15. (5.) Hence we see how detestable it must be in the eyes of God, proudly to presume upon our own abilities or deserts, and how justly he sets himself against all such as do so, declaring by his apostle, that "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble," John iv. 6; and "The ancient giants did not obtain pardon of their sins, who were destroyed, trusting to their own strength," Ecclus. xvi. 8
Q. 5. What then are the grounds on which our hope is
founded?

A. Sure and solid are the grounds of the hope of a Christian,
being no other than some of the most essential perfections of
God himself, through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ; to
wit, the infinite power, the unbounded goodness, and the fidelity
of God, which can never deceive. (1.) By his Almighty power
we know that he is able to help and save us. Whatever dif-
ficulties we may have to encounter, however strong or numerous
our enemies may be; yet all this is nothing to the Almighty
power of God. But of this see at large above, Chap. II. through
the whole, and particularly § 1, and there Q. 4, No. 4. (2.)
By his infinite goodness we are assured that he is not only
willing, but most desirous to help us, and to exert his Almighty
power in our favour; that he wills our salvation, and is ready
to give us all the necessary helps to enable us to acquire it.
For all which see above, Chap. III. through the whole.
(3.) By his fidelity to his word we are assured, that he never
will fail on his part to bestow every good thing upon us, and
bring us to eternal happiness, he having repeatedly engaged his
sacred word and promise to do so, if we be not wanting on our
side to fulfil those conditions to which his promises are annexed.
See what glorious promises he makes to us: “And now, thus
saith the Lord that created thee and formed thee, Fear not, for
I have redeemed thee and called thee by thy name: thou art
mine. When thou shalt pass through the waters, I will be
with thee, and the rivers shall not cover thee: when thou shalt
walk in the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, and the flame shall
not burn in thee. For I am the Lord thy God the Holy One of
Israel, thy Saviour,” Is. xliii. 1. He promiseth pardon of our
sins if we repent and turn to him: “Thou hast prostituted
thyself to many lovers; nevertheless, return to me, saith the
Lord, and I will receive thee,” Jer. iii. 1. “Let the wicked
forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him
return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our
God, for he is bountiful to forgive,” Is. lv. 7. “Turn ye, turn
ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”
Ezech. xxxiii. 11. He promiseth peace and rest to our souls,
if we have recourse to him: “Come to me, all ye that labour
and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke
and learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you
shall find rest to your souls,” Matt. xi. 28. He promiseth
strength to overcome temptations, and victory if we do our
part in resisting them: for “God is faithful, who will not suffer
you to be tempted above what you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it, 1 Cor. x. 13; and therefore “Resist the devil, and he will fly from you,” James iv. 7. He promiseth all the necessaries of this life, if we prefer his service to every thing else: “Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added to you,” Matt. vi. 33. He promiseth all good things, whatever may be necessary for us, if we only ask them from him in a proper manner: “Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be open unto you,” Matt. vii. 7. In fine, he promiseth eternal salvation, if we continue faithful to him to the end, and overcome the enemies of our souls: “To him that shall overcome I will give to sit with me on my throne, as I also have overcome, and am set down with my Father on his throne,” Rev. iii. 21. “Fear not,” says Almighty God to Abraham, “I am thy protector, and thy reward exceeding great,” Gen. xv. 1.

Now, although the above truths are more than enough to settle our hearts in a firm hope and confidence in God; yet when we consider our own unworthiness and manifold sins, and our ingratitude for past favours, we are ready to be discouraged and to lose that trust we ought to have in God, esteeming ourselves entirely unworthy of his favour. And indeed this is the very case; we are certainly of ourselves altogether unworthy of his favour, and if we had no other merits to depend upon but our own, we could expect nothing but the utmost rigour of justice. But thanks be to God, we have in Jesus Christ and in what he has done for us, a perfect satisfaction to the justice of God for all our sins, and an inexhaustible treasure of infinite merits to make up for all our deficiencies, and to obtain for us all good; concerning which we must consider, (1.) The greatness of the love of God the Father in giving his Son for us; “God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but have everlasting life,” John iii. 16. Consider here who gives what is given; for whom, and for what end; “By this hath the charity of God appeared towards us, because God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we may live by him. In this is charity; not as though we had loved God, but because he first loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins,” 1 John iv. 9. (2.) The greatness of the love of Jesus Christ, in what he did and suffered for us; compared to that of the good shepherd who having a hundred sheep, “left the ninty-nine in the wilderness, and went after the one which was lost, till he
found it,” Luke xv. 4; but with what cost and pains did he seek it? even so, as to lay down his life for it. “I am the good shepherd,” says he, “the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep,” John x. 11; which was the greatest proof he could give of his love, for “Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends,” John xi. 13. (3.) For whom did Jesus Christ do all this? For sinners: “the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost,” Luke xix. 10. “They that are in health,” says he, “need not a physician, but they that are ill...for I am not come to call the just, but sinners,” Matt. ix. 12. “A faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners,” 1 Tim. i. 15. Now what an immense source of consolation is this to us! St. Paul speaks of it with admiration, and draws from it an unexceptionable ground of hope and confidence in God; “God commendeth his charity towards us; because when as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us; much more therefore now being justified by his blood, shall we be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled shall we be saved by his life,” Rom. v. 8; and “He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also with him given us all things?” Rom. viii. 32. (4.) For what end did he come? To be all in all to us; to be our Mediator of redemption, for “He is the mediator of the New Testament, that by means of his death for the redemption of those transgressions that were under the former Testament, they that are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance,” Heb. ix. 13. To reconcile us with our offended Creator; for “Christ is our peace, and died both for Jews and Gentiles, that he might reconcile both to God, in one body by the cross,” Eph. ii. 14, 16. To be a propitiation for our sins; for “God hath set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,” Rom. iii. 25. And, “Jesus Christ the just, he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world,” 1 John ii. 2. For “In him we have redemption, through his blood, the remission of sins,” Eph. i. 7. And he hath “blotted out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, and hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross,” Col. ii. 14. To obtain all good things for us; for God “hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ,” Eph. i. 3. And “all things of his Divine power, which appertain to life and godli-

ness, are given us through the knowledge of him, who hath
called us by his own proper glory and virtue, by whom he hath given us most great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the Divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 3. To be our high Priest; which, as St. Paul justly observes, ought to be a great source of hope and confidence to us; "seeing then," says he, "that we have a high priest that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God; let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest, who cannot have compassion on our infirmities; but one tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin; let us therefore go with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid," Heb. iv. 14. "For that he continueth for ever he hath an everlasting priesthood, whereby he is able also to save for ever them that come to God by him: always living to make intercession for us," Heb. vii. 24. "In fine, Christ came into this world, as our Master to teach and enlighten us; as our guide to conduct us; as our guardian to defend us; for he is 'the way, the truth, and the life.'" He came to supply all our wants; to relieve all our necessities; to be the source and fountain of all grace, blessing, and glory to our souls.

Q. 6. What effects ought these truths to produce in our souls?

A. Chiefly these four: (1.) These firm and solid grounds on which our hope is founded, ought to excite in our souls a firm, unshaken, and unreserved trust and confidence in God, proof against all difficulties and dangers; being thoroughly persuaded that God will never fail on his part to help and assist us in all our necessities, and bring us at last to eternal happiness. This St Paul beautifully declares in these words: "We desire that every one of you should show forth the same carefulness to the accomplishing of hope to the end: that you become not slothful......for when God made promise to Abraham, because he had no one greater to swear by, he swore by himself...... wherein God, meaning more abundantly to show to the heirs of the promise, the immutability of his counsel, interposed an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge, to hold fast the hope set before us; which we have as an anchor to the soul sure and firm, and which entereth in even within the veil," Heb. vi. 11. (2.) That the coming of Jesus Christ into this world, and the ends for which he came, should totally dispel from our hearts all pusillanimity and inordinate fear upon account of our own weakness and unworthiness; for if we be weak, his grace is strong, for "I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me," Phil. iv. 13. If our
prayers be unworthy, when joined with his, and put up in his
name, we are sure of acceptance, for "whatsoever you shall
ask the Father in my name," says he, "that will I do: that
the Father may be glorified in the Son," John xiv. 13. If our
sins be many and grievous, the blood of Jesus is of infinite
value, and is "a propitiation not for our sins only, but for
the whole world," 1 John ii. 2; yea, is sufficient for those of
ten thousand worlds. If we be undeserving of any favour, yet
there is no favour which God can give but what Jesus Christ
deserves for us. In a word, whatever our miseries be, we have
in Jesus a perfect and most effectual remedy, for he, "is made
to us from God wisdom and justice, and sanctification, and
redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. For this reason St Paul is so far
from being cast down and dejected on account of his own weak-
ness, that he rejoices in it, and thinks himself then strongest
when he feels it most, as it is then he confides most in God.
"Gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of
Christ may dwell in me; therefore I take pleasure in my in-
firmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions in dis-
tresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am
powerful," 2 Cor. xii. 9. (3.) That therefore the sight and
feeling sense we may have of our own miseries ought the more
to increase our confidence and trust in God; for the more we
see our own miseries, the more feelingly we must be convinced
that we have nothing in ourselves to trust to, and this should
naturally oblige us to fly with greater confidence to God, who
alone can help us, and make us wholly distrust ourselves as in-
capable of any good; by this means, implanting in our hearts,
a most essential branch of true humility. And Almighty God
so strictly requires this feeling sense of our own weakness and
miseries from us, as a most necessary branch of our confidence
in him, that he sometimes permits his most favourite servants
to be overwhelmed and oppressed with tribulations of various
kinds, and deprives them, at the same time, of all human helps
or comforts, on purpose totally to expel from their hearts, all
vain confidence in themselves, or in any other creature, that
they may turn their hearts wholly to him. Thus, St Paul says
of himself, "We are pressed out of measure above our
strength, so that we were weary, even of life. But we had it
ourselves, the answer of death, that we should not trust in our
selves, but in God, who raiseth the dead, who hath delivered,
and doth deliver us, out of so great dangers; in whom we trust,
that he will yet also deliver us," 2 Cor. i. 8. Now it is to a
confidence in God of this kind, founded in, and accompanied
with this humble sense of our own weakness and unworthiness
that the most endearing promises are made. "I am a beggar
and poor," says David, "the Lord is careful of me; thou art
my helper and protector," Ps. xxxix. 18. "Let the poor see
and rejoice: Seek ye the Lord, and your soul shall live; for
the Lord hath heard the poor, and hath not despised his
prisoners," Ps. lxviii. 33. "He shall deliver the poor from the
mighty, and the needy that hath no helper; he shall spare the
poor and the needy, and he shall save the souls of the poor; he
shall redeem their souls from usuries and iniquities; and their
name shall be honorable in his sight," Ps. lxxi. 12. And the
reason is, because the more one sees his own misery, and throws
himself into the arms of God, the more he pleases and honours
God by so doing, and the more God is glorified by delivering
him; for, "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him,
and them that hope in his mercy," Ps. cxlvii. 11.......But, (4.)
This firm and steady confidence in God, ought to be accompanied
with a wholesome fear on the part of ourselves; considering
the perversity of our nature, and the corruption of our heart,
which inclines us so strongly to sin. For though we know for
certain, that God will not refuse us the necessary graces to help
us to perform the conditions to which his infallible promises
are annexed, and that he will undoubtedly bring us to eternal
happiness, if we co-operate with his graces, and perform these
conditions, persevering in his service to the end; yet we do not
know, if we will always do so, but have always reason to fear
lest our perverse heart should fail in this, and being deluded
by the deceits of the enemy, should abuse the mercy of God,
and put a stop to the accomplishment of his promises. Yet
this very fear, ought by no means to disquiet us, but, on the
contrary, should make us fly to God with great fervour, and be
more assiduous in imploring his assistance, to prevent such a
misfortune, and in faithfully complying with every branch of
our duty in his service. St Paul, was afraid of his dear Cor-
inthians, on this account: "I fear," says he, "lest, as the ser-
pent seduced Eve by subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted,
and fall from the simplicity that is in Christ," 2 Cor. xi. 3.
"Wherefore let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed
lest he fall," 1 Cor. x. 12. And let us always strive "with
fear and trembling, to work out our salvation," Phil. i. 12.
"Labouring the more by good works, to make our calling and
election sure; for doing these things we shall not sin at any
time," 2 Pet. i. 10. And it is upon the testimony of a good
conscience, that our confidence must be grounded on our side,
according to this, "Dearly beloved, if our heart do not repre-
bend us, we have confidence towards God," 1 John iii. 21.

§ 2. Of the Advantages we receive from Divine Hope.

Q. 7. Do we reap any particular advantage from hoping in
God?

A. Great are the advantages we reap from this virtue: nay, we may justly say, it is one principal source on our part, of all kind of blessings from God, and obtains every good thing from him. True Christian hope contains two parts; a great distrust in ourselves, and a great trust in God; an entire diffidence in our own abilities or endeavours, and a perfect confidence in the power, goodness, and mercy of God, and in the merits of Christ; an humble sense of our own misery, weakness, and unworthiness, which makes us have no expectation of any good from ourselves, and a high sense and esteem of the infinite power, goodness, and mercy of God, which makes us hope every thing from him. Now when a soul is thus disposed, and has this true Christian hope in both its parts, there is no favour, grace, or benediction, but what this will obtain from God: which his holy word declares to us in the following manner:—

(1.) "The Lord shall not delight in the strength of the horse, nor take pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy," Ps. cxliv. 10. No, the Lord pays no regard to those who trust in themselves, in their own address, or parts, or abilities, or any creature; but his delight is in those who trust in his mercy; these he favours, and these he protects. The promise he makes to all such, are exceedingly endearing, and deserve a particular attention. "Because he hath hoped in me, I will deliver him, I will protect him, because he hath known my name. He shall cry to me and I will hear him, I am with him in his trouble. I will deliver him, and I will glorify him," Ps. xc. 14. Where observe, that the reason why God promises so many favours, is, "because he hath hoped in me." The same promises are repeated, and the same only reason assigned, in several other places of scripture. Thus "The salvation of the just is from the Lord, and he is their protector in the time of trouble. And the Lord will help them and deliver them; and he will rescue them from the wicked, and save them, because they have hoped in him," Ps. xxxvi. 39. "When my heart was in anguish, thou hast exalted me on a rock; thou hast conducted me, for thou hast been my hope," Ps. lx. 3. "Have
mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me, for my soul trusteth in thee, and in the shadow of thy wings will I hope;" Ps. lvi. 1. And thus Almighty God himself comforts Abdemelech, when he foretells him, that he would see the evil to be brought upon Jerusalem; "And I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord, and thou shalt not be given into the hands of the men whom thou fearest; but for a certainty I will deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be saved for thee, because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord," Jer. xxxix. 17. From all which it appears that our confidence in God is the price he requires from us for the protection and deliverance we need from him.

(2.) This is beautifully confirmed by the examples recorded in scripture, of all those who had recourse to Jesus Christ, for help in their miseries; for we always find, that whatever other pious dispositions they had, their hope and confidence in him was that to which he attributed the granting what they wanted: "Your faith," said he to them, "hath made you whole," where by faith is properly meant the belief they had of his Almighty power, goodness, and mercy, and the confidence which this produced in their hearts. By this our Saviour shows us, how acceptable it is to him that we put our whole trust in him, and how powerfully it inclines him to show us mercy. Thus to the man sick of the palsy, Jesus said, "Son, be of good heart, (that is, have confidence,) thy sins are forgiven thee," Matt. ix. 2. Indeed in the case of St. Mary Magdalen he extols at first her great love, saying to the master of the house, "Many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much;" but afterwards he told herself, "Thy faith hath made thee safe; go in peace," Luke vii. 47, 50. What merit do we find in the good thief, but the confidence he showed in Jesus Christ, by having recourse to him, as his King, even in the depressed condition in which he then was? and see how it is rewarded! He asked only to be remembered by him; and Jesus Christ not only assures him of this, but also that he should be that day with him in paradise.

(3.) The measure of our confidence is even declared to be the measure of the graces we receive; according to what Christ said to the good centurion, "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee," Matt. viii. 13, to show us, that if we have a strong faith and great confidence, we shall receive much; if our faith and confidence be weak we shall receive little. "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive," Matt. xxi. 22. Therefore St. James declares, that
when we pray to God, we must "ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is driven and tossed about with the wind; therefore let not that man think he shall receive any thing of the Lord," James i. 6. And hence Holy David says, "Let thy mercy be upon us, O Lord, as we have hoped in thee," Ps. xxxii. 22.

(4.) None who put their trust in God are ever confounded, but sooner or later are sure to receive the effects of his mercy. "We glory in our tribulation," says St. Paul, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, trial; and trial, hope; and hope confirmeth not," Rom. v. 3. "My children behold the generations of men, and know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded. For who hath continued in his commandment and hath been forsaken? Or who hath called upon him, and he despised him? for God is compassionate and merciful......he is a protector to all who seek him in truth," Ecclus. ii. 11. "And thou shalt know that I am the Lord; for they shall not be confounded that wait for him," Is. xlix. 23. "And they shall say in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord, we have patiently waited for him, we shall rejoice and be joyful in his salvation," Is. xxv. 9. "In thee, O God, I put my trust, let me not be ashamed; neither let my enemies laugh at me, for none of them that wait on thee shall be confounded," Ps. xxiv. 2. "In thee have our fathers hoped; they have hoped and thou hast delivered them; they cried to thee, and they were saved; they trusted in thee and were not confounded," Ps. xxi. 5. Thus, when a vast multitude of enemies came suddenly upon Josaphat with a great army, he had recourse to God, and said, "As for us, we have not strength enough to resist this multitude, but as we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to thee," 2 Chron. xx. 12; and in reward of his confidence he gained an entire victory. When Judith undertook the deliverance of her people, she expressed the most entire confidence in God alone, saying in her prayer to him, "Thy power, O Lord, is not in a multitude, nor is thy pleasure in the strength of horses, nor from the beginning have the proud been acceptable to thee, but the prayer of the humble and the meek hath always pleased thee. O God of the heavens, Creator of the waters, and Lord of the whole creation, hear me a poor wretch, making supplication to thee, and presuming of thy mercy," Jud. ix. 16; and the event showed that her hope was not confounded. So also Esther, before she went in to the king to plead for her nation. "prayed to the Lord, the God of
Israel, saying, O my Lord, who alone art our King, help me, a desolate woman, who have no other helper but thee," Esth. xiv. 3; and in reward of this her confidence in God, she succeeded to her utmost wishes. When Nabuchodonosor in fury threatened the three holy children to throw them into the fiery furnace, and said: "And who is the God that shall deliver you out of my hand?" they replied with the utmost confidence in their God, "Behold, our God whom we worship is able to save us from the furnace of burning fire, and deliver us out of thy hands, O king," Dan. iii. 15, 17; and their confidence was most wonderfully rewarded. So also, the chaste Susannah, in the midst of all her false accusers, "weeping looked up to heaven, for her heart had confidence in the Lord," Dan. xiii. 35; and he delivered her accordingly.

Q. 8. What is the reason why our hope in God is so amply rewarded?

A. Because by hoping in God, as a Christian ought to do, we greatly sanctify and honour him; and show the strong faith and lively sense we have of his infinite power, goodness, and fidelity, and of the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, and how much we esteem and prefer them to every other consideration; and the greater our difficulties are, and the less human means we have to depend on, the more we honour God, by trusting wholly in him. Hence the scripture says, "Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid: sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread, and he shall be a sanctification to you." Is. viii. 12. And again, "call upon me in the day of trouble," says God, "I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," Ps. xlix. 15. For this reason the hope of Abraham is so greatly commended in scripture, for Abraham, "Against hope believed in hope, that he might be made the father of many nations... and he was not weak in faith; neither did he consider his own body now dead, whereas he was almost a hundred years old, nor the dead womb of Sarah. In the promise also of God he staggered not, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, most fully knowing, that whatsoever he has promised, he is able also to perform," Rom. iv. 18.

Q. 9. What other advantages in particular flow from our hope in God?

A. Chiefly these following: (1.) It gives us great strength to walk with courage in his service; because we know that with his assistance nothing can be difficult or impossible for us. If God be for us, who is against us?" Rom. viii. 31: for "I can
do all things in him who strengthened me,” Phil. iv. 13. “The eyes of the Lord behold all the earth, and give strength to them that with a perfect heart trust in them,” 2 Paral. xvi. 9. Hence “none that trust in him, fail in strength,” 1 Mach. ii. 61; for “thus saith the Lord God, the holy One of Israel...... in silence and in hope shall your strength be,” Is. xxx. 15. And therefore “Expect the Lord, do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord,” Ps. xxvi. 14. The reason is, because God himself does for those who hope in him, and grants them whatever they ask of him; thus, “Commit thy way to the Lord and trust in him, and he will do it,” Ps. xxxvi. 5. “Have the faith of God...and I say unto you, all things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you,” Mark xi. 22, 24. What the prophet Isaiah says on this, is particularly beautiful: “It is God that giveth strength to the weary, and increaseth force and might to them that are not; youths shall faint and labour, and young men shall fall by infirmity; but they that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint,” Is. xl. 29. Wherefore the scripture says, “Do manfully, and be of good heart, fear not, nor be ye dismayed......for the Lord thy God, he himself is thy leader, and will not leave thee, nor forsake thee,” Deut. xxx. 8. “The Lord is good, and giveth strength in the day of trouble; and knoweth them that hope in him,” Nah. i. 7.

(2.) It gives us the victory over all temptations: “Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me,” Ps. xxi. 4. “The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? whilst the wicked draw near against me to eat my flesh; my enemies that troubled me, have themselves been weakened, and have fallen,” Ps. xxvi. 1. “For by thee I shall be delivered from temptation, and through my God I shall go over a wall,” Ps. xvii. 30. “O Lord, Lord, the strength of my salvation; thou hast overshadowed my head in the day of battle,” Ps. cxxxix. 8. And indeed the whole Psalms are full of this truth. So when St. Paul prayed to be delivered from the temptation of the angel of Satan, the Lord bid him be of good courage: “My grace,” said he, “is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity;” that is, the strength and power of God more perfectly shine forth in our weakness and infirmity; because, the more weak we are of our-
selves, the more illustrious is his grace in supporting us, and giving us victory under all trials, conflicts and temptations. On this account, the apostle immediately adds, "Gladly therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me......for when I am weak, then I am powerful," 2 Cor. xii. 9. Hence, whatever temptations we may fall into whatever rude assaults our spiritual enemies make against us, we must never lose courage, but trust in our God, as he commands us by his holy prophet Moses, in these words, "Hear, O Israel, you join in battle this day against your enemies; let not your heart be dismayed, be not afraid, do not give back, fear ye them not, because the Lord God is in the midst of you, and will fight for you against your enemies, to deliver you from danger." Deut. xx. 3.

(3.) It makes the most difficult exercises of a virtuous life easy and agreeable to us. Two things in the gospel seem very contrary to one another. The way to life, we are there told, is narrow, and the gate strait; the practice of virtue is quite contrary to our inclinations, and declared to be a mortification and denial of ourselves, and the like; on the other hand, Christ himself says in plain terms, "My yoke is easy, and my burden light; and in other places of scripture we are assured that the service of God is easy—that its ways are pleasant, and all its paths peaceful. In the state of innocence, the ways of virtue were all easy and agreeable, because there was no desire nor inclination in man to oppose them—the thoughts and inclinations of his heart were all towards God, and to whatever was agreeable to him. Whence, then, arises the difficulty we now find? Not from virtue itself, which is still the same, but from the corruption of the heart of man by sin. For by sin the dispositions of the heart of man are entirely changed, and turned away from God; his thoughts and inclinations are bent upon evil, and upon those things which are displeasing to God. Hence the difficulty we find in the exercise of virtue, because it is contrary to these our natural, but corrupted desires and inclinations; hence the way to life becomes narrow, the gate strait, and the opposition to walk in it strong; and hence, though we have the good will, we find it difficult to accomplish, for "though the spirit be willing we find the flesh is weak." To assist the good will in this rude battle, and render all these difficulties easy, nothing is more efficacious than a firm confidence in the help of God, and a lively faith and hope of the glorious reward which he has promised to those that overcome; for where this once takes firm root in the heart, it entirely
HOPE.

changes the face of things,—it makes the road easy, and even renders pleasant and agreeable, the pain and trouble we meet with in the way. This the saints well knew from their happy experience; for "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, denied himself to be the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer persecution with the people of God, than to have the pleasure of sin for a time; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyptians; for he looked into the reward," Heb. xi. 24. So David says to God—"I have inclined my heart to do thy justifications for ever, for the reward," Ps. cxviii. 102. So also St. Paul suffered the loss of all things with pleasure, "and counted them as dung, that he might gain Christ, pressing on with ardour to the prize of the high calling," Phil. iii. And no wonder, for we see even in worldly things, how much the hope of obtaining what we wish for, makes us despise all the troubles and difficulties we meet with in pursuit of it. Witness the husbandman, the soldier, the courtier, and numberless others. What all these have to undergo in their different pursuits, is painful and difficult to flesh and blood, and contrary to their natural inclinations; yet they become not only easy, but pleasant to them, and a subject of their glorifying, from the hope of what they expect from them. If, therefore, earthly hope has such a powerful effect in them, how much more must Christian hope animate the soul, and sweeten all difficulties in the service of God; especially as those others labour for a corruptible crown, we for an incorruptible one; their hopes are uncertain, ours most assured—their prize though obtained, can last with them but for a short time, ours for all eternity!

(4.) It sweetens all the afflictions and tribulations to which we are daily exposed in this valley of tears. In the midst of all these miseries with which we are daily surrounded, whether of soul or body, the hope of a Christian—the lively sense of that eternal bliss which awaits us in the next life, as the never-ending reward of all our sufferings, supports the soul with a most heroic patience, and fills her with joy and consolation. Our Saviour, after forewarning his followers of the many sufferings they would meet with in this life, adds, "In your patience you shall possess your souls," Luke xxi. 19. And St. Paul tells us that this patience is founded on hope: "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation," Rom. xii. 12. Our Saviour even exhorts us to rejoice and be glad amidst our sufferings from the hopes of the reward that awaits us: "Rejoice and be glad," says he, "for your reward is very great in heaven,"
Matt. v. 12. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us," says St. Paul, "so also by Christ doth our comfort abound. That our hope for you may be steadfast; knowing that if you are partakers of the suffering, so shall you be also of the consolation," 2 Cor. i. 5, 7. Nay, he makes this hope a subject of glorifying in his tribulations: "We glory," says he, "in the hope of the glory of the Son of God; and not only so, but we glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience trial; and trial hope; and hope confoundeth not," Rom. v. 2. And no wonder, for this Divine hope, founded in faith, and enlightened by it, assures us, (1.) That the sufferings of this life will soon be at an end, and turned into a joy that shall remain for ever: "Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep; but the world shall rejoice, and you shall be sorrowful; but your sorrow shall be turned into joy......you now, indeed, have sorrow, but I shall see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you," John xvi. 20, 22. (2.) That the more we suffer here, the more our consolations in Christ shall abound hereafter. (3.) That all the sufferings of this life are a mere nothing to the eternal weight of the glory which shall be revealed in us. See above, Chap. IV. Q. 10.

§ 4. Of the Duties which Divine Hope demands from us.

Q. 10. What are the duties which hope demands from us?

A. They are chiefly these following: 1. Frequently to worship God by acts of hope. On which we must observe, (1.) That an act of hope is a profession or protestation made to God, that we do actually put our trust and confidence in him for all good things in time and for eternity, and particularly for mercy, grace, and salvation, which are the principal things we stand in need of for our souls. (2.) That an act of hope, like that of faith, may be made either internally to God present within our hearts, or may be expressed in words to this purpose—"O Almighty and most merciful God, I put my whole trust in thee, and firmly hope for mercy, grace, and salvation from thee, my good God, through Jesus Christ, my Saviour." (3.) That by acts of hope we worship and honour God, because by them we make an actual acknowledgment of our total dependence upon him and of the high esteem we have of his power, goodness, and mercy, and of the merits of our blessed Saviour. (4.) That if frequently practised, they are of great benefit to our own souls,
as they serve to enliven our hope in God, and to root that holy virtue deeply in our hearts; producing a strong habit of it in the soul, which is of the utmost advantage to us in all our trials, difficulties, and dangers, and a most necessary preparation for a happy death. (5.) That therefore we ought frequently to honour God by acts of hope, and make them part of our daily homage to him; in the same way as we have seen above with regard to acts of faith. See Chap. VII. Q. 18.

II. The next duty which hope requires from us, is the fear of God. We are commanded to fear God, by Jesus Christ himself, upon account of his Almighty power, and the supreme dominion he has over us, by which he can cast both body and soul into hell fire if we offend him. But this is not the precise light in which we are to consider the fear of God, which the hope of a Christian requires from us; for Christian hope being founded in an ardent desire of possessing God as our true and only happiness, requires of us to be afraid of losing this object of our hope, and consequently of doing any thing that is offensive to him, by which we would be in danger of so great an evil. It also makes us careful to do all we can to please him, the more effectually to secure the happiness of enjoying him. This wholesome fear arises from a deep sense of our own weakness, of the strength of our passions and temptations, and of the malice of our spiritual enemies, and makes us fly with greater solicitude to the arms of our heavenly Father for help against these dangers; and thus the fear of God both arises from hope, and strengthens our hope itself from which it arises; and on this account it is the source of many blessings to the soul in which it resides. Thus, “He that feareth the Lord shall tremble at nothing, and shall not be afraid, for he is his hope. The soul of him that feareth the Lord is blessed. To whom doth he look? And who is his strength? The eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear him; he is their powerful Protector, and strong stay—a defence from the heat, and a cover from the sun at noon; a preservation from stumbling, and a help from falling; he raiseth up the soul, and enlighteneth the eyes, and giveth health, and life, and blessing,” Ecclus. xxxiv. 16. “The fear of the Lord is honour, and glory, and gladness, and a crown of joy. The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and shall give joy and gladness, and length of days. With him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed,” Ecclus. i. 11. “The fear of the Lord driveth out sin; for he that is without fear cannot be justified,” Ibid. v. 27. See that whole
chapter. "He that feareth God neglecteth nothing," Ecclus. viii. 19. And therefore, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is all man," Eccles. xii. 15.

III. To avoid sin and keep the commandments of God. The hope we have in God is founded upon his power and goodness, and the effects of these Divine attributes in our behalf, is secured to us by his sacred and repeated promises; but we have seen above, Q. 5, that these promises are all made with the express condition of our obedience; consequently, our hope will be only a delusion, if we live in sin and disgrace with God. Hence the scripture says, "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh, and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 1. God, indeed, "hath given us great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the Divine nature; flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world......Wherefore, brethren, labour the more, that by good works you may make your calling and election sure; for doing those things, you shall not sin at any time; for so an entrance will be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. i. 4, 10. Where it is evident, that the promises of God, and consequently our hope, which is founded upon these promises, necessarily require upon our part a life of innocence and holiness, spent in obedience to the commandments of God; if we perform this duty, our confidence and hope in God will be solid, according to that of the apostle, "Dearly beloved, if our hearts do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God," 1 John iii. 21. But if we live wicked lives, and take no care to turn from our evil ways, our hope will be only a pretended hope, a mere presumption, an offence of God, instead of honouring him; for "the expectation of the just is joy, but the hope of the wicked shall perish," Prov. x. 28. "Their hope is vain, and their labour without fruit, and their works unprofitable," Wisd. iii. 11. "For the hope of the wicked is as dust, which is blown away with the wind, and as a thin froth which is dispersed by the storm, and as a smoke that is scattered abroad by the wind; and as the remembrance of a guest of one day that passeth by," Wisd. v. 15. "The hope of the hypocrite shall perish, his folly shall not please him, and his trust shall be like the spider's web," Job viii. 13. "The eyes of the wicked shall decay, and the way to escape shall fail them, and their hope the abomination of the soul," Job xi. 20.

IV To be fervent and constant in the practice of prayer.
Prayer is, properly speaking, the exercise of hope, and it is to prayer and a good conscience that those glorious promises are made upon which our hope is founded; for “this is the confidence which we have towards God, that whatsoever we shall ask of him, according to his will, he heareth us. And we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask; we know that we have the petitions which we request of him,” 1 John v. 14. “And if our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God, and whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight,” 1 John iii. 21. Hence we see the necessity of prayer: and therefore if we neglect this duty, we need not be surprised if we want those good things we stand in need of. We neglect the condition required on our part! What can we expect? and therefore the scripture expressly says, “You have not, because you ask not,” James iv. 2. And as prayer is the child of hope, so the more it is accompanied with a firm hope and confidence of being heard, founded in an humble sense of our own weakness and unworthiness, and relying solely on God, the more efficacious it will be in obtaining all good for us; “for the prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds; and till it come nigh it will not be comforted; and it will not depart till the Most High behold,” Ecclus. xxxv. 21. Which Christ himself declares thus, “I say unto you, all things whatsoever you ask, when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you,” Mark xi. 24.

§ 4. Of the Exercise of Hope in our Temporal Affairs.

Q. 11. Is it lawful to hope for the goods of this life, and to ask them of God?

A. Most undoubtedly; because the goods of this life are intended by Almighty God to be helps to our salvation, as far as by making a proper use of them according to his will, we obey him and serve him in them. But then, as, through the corruption of our nature, we are but too apt to abuse them, contrary to his will, and ruin our souls; and at the same time as we do not know how far this would be the case if we had great abundance of them, therefore we ought never to wish for them nor ask them of God, but as far as he knows would be conducive to our eternal happiness; and we ought to have a firm and perfect confidence in God, that he will not fail to bestow them upon us in that measure and degree, which he sees
is most proper for this end; (1.) Because for this he has passed his sacred promise, on condition of our laying aside all solicitude about the necessaries of life, and seeking first the salvation of our souls; "Be not solicitous," says he, "for your life, what you shall eat; nor for your body, what you shall put on ......for your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore solicitous for to-morrow; for the morrow will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," Matt. vi. 25, 32; and (2.) Because in the prayer which he taught us, he orders us to pray for the necessaries of life, "Give us this day our daily bread." Now by the goods of this life are understood, not only food and raiment, but also all other necessaries of life, success in our temporal affairs, the necessary supply to our wants, support under our crosses, relief from our afflictions, and the like.

Q. 12. Is it our duty to confide and trust in God in all these matters?

A. Most certainly it is our strict duty to do so; although it is much to be lamented, and is an immense loss to ourselves, that we seldom comply with this duty as we ought; for if we examine the conduct of the world, we shall find that, in all our temporal affairs, we commonly depend much more upon our own prudence, or talents, or riches, on our own endeavours, on our health, on the credit of friends, and other such helps, than upon God; nay that men generally think no more of him in these matters than if there was no such Being, or that he had no manner of concern in human affairs.

Q. 13. In what manner then ought a Christian to confide in God for all these temporal goods?

A. With an unlimited dependence upon and submission to the Divine providence: firmly persuaded that God Almighty will bless his lawful endeavours in sending him such a measure and proportion of these goods as his Divine wisdom knows to be best for him; and perfectly resigned to the will of God when he is pleased to deprive him of any of them.

Q. 14. What is understood here by the Divine providence?

A. By the providence of God is meant his eternal will, by which he regulates and governs all his creatures, according to his own wise ends and purposes. It includes (1.) His infinite wisdom by which he knows from all eternity every thing that ever was, is, or will be in this creation, all things
and all creatures, all their actions, all their thoughts, and every thing concerning them; for "The works of all flesh are before him, and there is no thing hid from his eyes; he sees from eternity to eternity, and there is nothing wonderful before him," Ecclus. xxxix. 24. "The eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most secret parts; for all things were known to the Lord God before they were created; so also after they were perfected he behoaffeth all things," Ecclus. xxiii. 28. Hence nothing can possibly come to pass but what God knew from all eternity, nothing can happen but what is perfectly foreknown to him. (2.) His Almighty power which nothing can resist or withstand, and against which nothing can possibly be done. Nay, whatever ability any creature has to act, it is all from God, nor could any creature exist or exert any ability it has without God's conservation and concurrence: "All things are in his power, and there is none that can resist his will," Esth. xiii. 9. "In his hand are both we and our words, and all wisdom and the knowledge and skill of works," Wisd. vii. 16. "No evil can overcome his wisdom," Wisd. vii. 30. "She reacheth therefore from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly," Wisd. viii. 1. Consequently every thing that happens is not only foreknown to him, but enters in his plan, and is disposed of by his Divine providence, according to his eternal purposes and views: he disposes the success of all affairs: he raises up one, and puts down another; he makes rich and makes poor; he gives health, and sends sickness. (3.) His absolute dominion over all creatures by which he rules and governs them, and disposes of every thing that comes to pass, as sole Lord and Master, perfectly independent of any other, and on whom all creatures wholly depend. Nothing is excepted from his dominion, from the greatest to the least; a sparrow does not fall to the ground but by the disposition of his providence; our very hairs are all numbered before him. Hence "there is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no council against the Lord," Prov. xxii. 30. "He bringeth to nought the designs of the malignant, so that their hands cannot accomplish what they had begun. He catcheth the wise in their craftiness, and disappointeth the counsel of the wicked," Job v. 12. (4.) His unbounded goodness towards men, by which he sincerely wills their real happiness with an ardour above any thing we can conceive or imagine. For "The Lord is sweet to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works," Ps. cxliv. 9. And "as
a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him: for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust,” Ps. cii. 13. Now from this over-ruling providence of God three grand principles flow, which point out to us in the clearest light what ought to be the tenor of our conduct towards him, and in what manner we ought to practise an unlimited dependence upon him, and perfect subjection to every disposition of his providence concerning us, in all our affairs. These principles are:

(1.) That nothing we undertake can succeed, or turn out to our real advantage, without the blessing of God, or against his will. This truth is repeatedly declared to us in the holy scriptures. Thus, (1.) “There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no council against the Lord,” Prov. xxi. 30. What was all the worldly wisdom of Herod, in his attempt to destroy our new-born Saviour. Or the political steps which Saul took to destroy David: Nay the Divine providence often turns the endeavours of worldly wisdom to defeat his views, into the very means of promoting them: thus what Joseph’s brethren did, as the most effectual means to prevent him from becoming their master, was, in the hands of God, the very thing which raised him to all his power and grandeur. (2.) “He catcheth the wise in their craftiness, and disappointeth the council of the wicked,” Job v. 12; nay, turns even their politics to their own destruction. Witness the accusers of Daniel, and of Susannah, Dan. vi. and xiii. (3.) “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it,” Ps. cxxvi. 1. “Witness the families of Ahab, 4 Kings x., and of Jereboam,” 3 Kings xiv. (4.) “Except the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it,” Ps. cxxvi. 1. Balthassar thought himself secure in his city of Babylon against the Medes and Persians; but he had provoked God to leave him by his sacrilegious banquet, and “the same night he was slain, and Darius the Mede succeeded to the kingdom,” Dan. v. (5.) “Neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase,” 1 Cor. iii. 7. How many times did God punish his people by famine, notwithstanding all their usual industry and labour in cultivating their fields? (6.) “All healing is from God,” Ecclus. xxxviii. 2; and therefore “It was neither herb nor mollifying plaster, that healed them, but thy word, O Lord, which healeth all things,” Wisd. xvi. 12. If therefore God says No, “In vain dost thou multiply medicines, there shall be no cure for thee,” Jer. xlvi. 11. Witness the woman with the issue of blood in the gospel. (7.) “The blessing of
the Lord maketh men rich," Prov. x. 22; for "Who is as the Lord our God......lifting up the poor out of the dung-hill, that he may place him with princes," Ps. cxii. 5, 7: and therefore as Lord and Master he says to sinners, "Thy riches and thy treasures I will give to the spoil for nothing," Jer. xv. 13; as in fact he did to Ezekias, Is. xxxix. (8.) Nothing can save us from dangers without the aid of God; for "the king is not saved by a great army; nor shall the giant be saved by his own great strength; vain is the horse for safety," Ps. xxxii. 16. Saul in the midst of his army fell twice into the hands of David; Goliath the giant was killed by a stripling whom he despised; and Absalom’s mule could not carry him off from destruction, for "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the learned, nor favour to the skilful," Eccles. ix. 11; but all these things are disposed according to the pleasure of the Divine providence. (9.) Finally, "Every plant," says our blessed Saviour, "which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up," Matt. xv. 13. So that it is not only certain that nothing can succeed against the will of God, but even that whatever is not according to his will, whatever does not arise from him, is not his work, must sooner or later come to destruction, "for he that is not with me," says Jesus Christ, "is against me, and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth," Matt. xii. 30.

(2.) That all the malice of men, all the rage of hell, though combined together, against the servants of God, can never touch the hair of their head, nor do them the smallest hurt against the will of God, nor go one hair breadth farther in afflicting them, than what God commissions them to do. This is an evident consequence of the idea we have given of the providence of God, and of the preceding principle, and is confirmed by what happened to Job; for Satan durst not touch any thing that belonged to him, till he was authorized by God to do it: and when he got leave to destroy his goods, but not to touch his person, his goods he destroyed indeed, but could not hurt a hair of his head till he got a new commission to do so. Nay, when our Saviour was dispossessing one in whom there was a legion of evil spirits, they being cast out of the poor man, durst not go even into the herd of swine, till they got leave from Jesus Christ," Mark v. And as for men, who could have a greater desire to hurt any one, than the Pharisees had to destroy our blessed Saviour? and how many snares did they lay to get him into their hands? but all to no purpose, till his own time came, in which he gave himself up to their hands; for
though "they sought to apprehend him, yet no man laid hands upon him, because his hour was not yet come," John viii. 30. See also the example of Herod and Saul, mentioned in the preceding number. And no wonder; for "If God be for us, who is against us?" Rom. viii. 31. Hence the many exhortations to the servants of God in holy writ, to have courage and not to be afraid in difficulties and dangers, because God is with them.

(3.) That God will never refuse his servants any thing they ask, unless he see that the granting it would be a hurt to them, or a hinderance of some greater good; nor will he ever permit any cross or affliction to come upon them, but what he knows and designs to be for their real benefit and advantage. The repeated promises he has made to hear our prayers, and particularly what we have seen above, Q. 10. No. IV, assure us of the first part of what is here said; and the second part in a natural consequence of his infinite goodness and mercy towards his servants; for he certainly has their real good infinitely more at heart, than they can have themselves, and only he knows what is really good for them; he takes no pleasure in their sufferings as such; for "God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living, for he created all things that they might be, and he made the nations of the earth for health," Wisd. i. 13. Nay, he is touched with pity and compassion at the sufferings of his faithful servants, and sends afflictions upon them only because he knows it is necessary for their good; for this only end he sends them, and by his all-ruling providence he so tempers and disposes all their trials, that they never fail of producing this effect; for "We know," says St Paul, "that to them that love God, all things work together unto good, to such as according to his purpose are called to be saints," Rom. viii. 28.

Q. 15. What are the practical consequences that flow from the first of these principles?

A. The first of these principles is, that nothing can succeed without a blessing, or against the will of God. On this sacred truth, the hope and confidence which we ought to have in God teaches us, (1.) That in all our affairs whatsoever, we ought never to undertake them, nor enter upon them, without first having recourse to God by fervent and humble prayer to beg light, direction, and help from him. For if nothing can succeed without God, and we expect the necessary help only from him, surely we ought to use the means for procuring it; and this the whole scripture assures us is humble and confidential
prayer. "Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and
do not lean upon thy own prudence; in all thy ways think on
him, and he will direct thy steps; be not wise in thy own con-
ceit, fear God," Prov. iii. 5. "Above all things pray to the
Most High that he may direct thy way in truth," Ecclus. xxxvii.
19. "Bless God at all times, and desire him to direct thy
ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in him," Tob. iv. 20.
This was the constant practice of all the saints of God, sensible
that nothing could go well with them, if it wanted the blessing
of heaven, and trusting not in any endeavours of their own,
but in the Divine protection, they had continual recourse to
God for his assistance; this we see in Abraham and Moses, and
David; and the neglect of this is particularly taken notice of
in the scripture as the cause why Joshua was deceived by the
Gabaonites; he was deceived by appearances, and "consulted
not the mouth of the Lord," Jós. ix. 14. Does not the
universal neglect of this in the world show us the radical cause
of so many misfortunes as happen in human affairs, and how
much more men trust in their own prudence, and in their own
endeavours, and in the help of human means, than in the great
God?

(2.) That in prosecuting our affairs, we must never use any
means that are sinful and disagreeable to God, whatever pros-
spect of success they may give us, but only such as are innocent
and lawful. This is a necessary consequence of the same
principle; for if nothing can possibly succeed without the help
of God, how can we expect his help by doing what is offensive
and provoking to him? On the contrary, "Wó to them that
are faint-hearted who believe not God, and therefore shall not
be protected by him; wó to them that have lost patience, and
that have forsaken the right ways, and have gone aside into
crooked ways. And what will they do when the Lord shall
begin to examine?" Ecclus. ii. 15. Consider the examples of
the saints. Joseph was ordained by God to be raised to the
highest dignity in Egypt, next the king; and that even his own
brethren should be subject to him. This Joseph knew; God
had foretold it by his dreams. In the meantime Joseph is sold
and carried as a slave into Egypt. There his master's wife
falls in love with him, and entices him to accept of her favour.
What would worldly wisdom have thought of this? Surely it
would have considered it as an occasion for Joseph to make his
fortune; his master was a great man at court; by complying
with the desires of his mistress, he secured her friendship; and
by means of her interest with her husband, what might he not
expect. But Joseph rejected with horror her wicked proposal and said, "How can I do this wicked thing and sin against my God?" Gen. xxxix. 2. Susannah was threatened with the greatest human evils, infamy, disgrace, and a cruel death, and the only human means she had to avoid this, was by consenting to the unlawful desires of the two elders; but she rejected the criminal proposal, and chose rather to expose herself to all these evils, trusting in her God, than to use such unlawful means to avoid them: "It is better for me," said she to them, "to fall into your hands without doing it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord," Dan. xiii. 23. When David was pursued by Saul, who sought to kill him, two different times Saul fell into David's hands, so that he could have killed him and made way for himself to the crown; yea, he was even exhorted by some of his officers, according to the views of human prudence, to do so. But though David knew he was to succeed Saul in the kingdom, as God had foretold him, yet he would on no account do an unlawful action to bring about that event, but left all to the Divine providence to accomplish his design as he pleased. See 1 Sam. xxiv. and xxvi. Do we act in this manner? What shall we say of those, who cheat, and lie, and swear falsely, in order to make riches? who spread about calumnies and falsehoods against their rivals to depress them? who commit impurities before marriage to secure a husband? who consult fortune-tellers, or use charms and other superstitions for some worldly views? Have such as these any trust in God?

(3.) That if success attend our endeavours, we ought immediately, and from the heart, to give all the praise to God, and render him our sincerest thanks. This naturally follows from the same principle; for if all the success be owing to the blessing of God, it is doubtless most just, that all praise and thanks should be given him for it; and that is what he expects and demands. "In all things give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all," 1 Thess. v. 18. And, "all whatsoever you do in word or work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him," Col. iii. 17. This also was the practice of all the saints, and many of the Psalms of David were composed for this purpose. Is this the practice of the world? When anything goes according to our wishes, do we immediately give thanks and praise to God? Alas! we applaud ourselves; we are pleased with our own conduct; we speak of what we think our own prudent behaviour to others; we show them how we acted, and set it off in the most favourable light we can; but
as for attributing our success to God, or giving due praise and glory to him, who ever seriously thinks about it? and what is this, but to show that we had no confidence in him, and trusted only to ourselves, and to our own prudence?

Q. 16. What practical consequences flow from the second principle?

A. The second principle is, That neither the malice of men, nor rage of devils, can do the smallest hurt to those who serve God, against his will, or beyond what he commissions them to do. From this it follows, (1.) That whatever dangers we have to encounter in doing our duty, whatever difficulties, whatever opposition we may meet with, we ought never to lose courage, nor be cast down, or afflicted; but ought rather the more to increase our hope, and confidence in God, and have recourse to him with the greater fervour, well knowing that he is able to assist us against all opposition, and that he will never abandon those that trust in him. See above, Q. 9, No. 1. David well saw the danger and difficulty he had to meet with in fighting Goliath; he was even deterred by the king from attempting it; but his trust was in God, and he saith to Goliath: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, which thou hast defied this day and the Lord will deliver thee into my hands," 1 Sam. xvii. 45. Josaphat saw well the great danger he was in from the multitude of enemies that came suddenly against him, and threatened him and his people with immediate destruction; and "he betook himself wholly to pray to the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast to all Juda," 2 Chron. xx. 3. In his prayer he expressed his total confidence in God, saying, "As we know not what to do, we can only turn our eyes to thee," verse 12. And immediately the Spirit of the Lord came upon one of the prophets, and he said, "Fear ye not, and be not dismayed at this multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's......It shall not be you that shall fight, but only stand with confidence, and you shall see the help of the Lord over you," verses 15, 17. And accordingly, God gave his people a most miraculous victory over all that multitude. The courage of Judas Machabeus seemed to increase with the numbers of his enemies that came against him; indeed, he and all his people took the most effectual method to secure the Divine protection; they had recourse to God with the greatest fervour; "They fasted that day, and put on hair-cloth, and put ashes on their heads, and they rent their garments," 1 Mach. iii. 47, and prayed to God with greater
ardour. And when his little armies came in sight of their enemies, and saw their numbers and their strength, "Judas said to the men that were with him, Fear ye not their multitude, neither be afraid of their assault. Remember in what manner our fathers were saved in the Red Sea.....And now let us cry to heaven, and the Lord will have mercy on us.....and will destroy this army before our face this day," 1 Mach. iv. 8

And accordingly he gained a most complete victory. Upon another similar occasion Judas encouraged his people in this manner: "They trust in their weapons and in their boldness; but we trust in the Almighty Lord, who at a beck can utterly destroy both them that come against us and the whole world," 2 Mach. viii. 18. Tobias also gave this noble advice to his son: "Fear not, my son; we lead indeed a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God and depart from all sin, and do that which is good," Tob. iv. 23; and the event fully justified his expectation.

(2.) That in all such cases we ought never to do the smallest thing that can displease God, in order to avoid any danger, or extricate ourselves out of any difficulties; but with an entire confidence in God, continue to do our duty, firmly trusting in him, that he will order all for the best. Thus Daniel would not omit his prayers three times a day to God, though he knew that by praying he would be thrown into the den of lions, Dan. vi. The three holy children would on no account worship the golden statue of Nabuchodonosor, though they knew that for refusing to do it, they would be thrown into the fiery furnace, Dan. iii. And Tobias in his blindness and poverty would not have any thing to do with stolen goods, though to keep him from starving. "Take heed," says he to his wife, "lest perhaps it be stolen; restore ye to its owner, for it is not lawful for us either to eat or touch any thing that cometh by theft," Tob. ii. 21. In all these examples, God rewarded their confidence most abundantly.

(3.) That we ought to receive all the trials that come upon us, as sent us from God himself, whoever be the immediate causes or occasions of them; for as no creature can touch a hair of your head against the will of God, nor do the smallest hurt to us, farther than he commissions them to do: so whatever they do to us, it is his will we should suffer it; so, though he wills no man to sin, and only permits the sin of those who hurt his servants unjustly, yet he expressly wills the effects of their sin, and the sufferings it occasions to his servants. Thus Job referred all his afflictions to God, and
blessed him for them: thus Eli, thus David, thus Christ himself, considered all their severe trials as sent them by God, as the cup presented them to drink by their heavenly Father; and receiving them from his holy providence, considered those who occasioned them in no other light, but as instruments in his hand of executing his will on them; and by this means bore them with peace, patience, and resignation, confiding in his fatherly compassion, that all was for their real benefit and advantage.

Q. 17. What practical consequences flow from the third principle?

A. The third principle is, That God will never refuse his servants what they ask, unless he knows it would prove hurtful to them; nor allow any trial to come upon them, but what he intends for their greater good. The full conviction of this truth is a source of infinite joy and happiness to a truly pious soul that sincerely confides in God; for from this it follows, (1.) That such a soul is never in trouble of mind, nor solicitous about the event of his temporal affairs; he does his duty; he uses the lawful means which providence puts in his hands, because he knows it is the will of God he should do so; but having done this, he commits the event to the fatherly protection of God, in whose hands he knows all events are; he relies with confidence on the words of Jesus Christ: "Be not solicitous what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, or wherewithal you shall be clothed; your Father knows that you have need of these things;" and he is firmly persuaded that the event will be such as God sees best for him. Thus Elias, persecuted by an impious queen, and obliged to fly into the wilderness, where he had neither meat, nor drink, nor house to dwell in, laid himself down to sleep under a juniper tree, with as much composure as if he had been in an apartment in the king's palace, 1 Kings xix. 5.

(2.) If things turn out to his wishes, the true servant of God is not puffed up with vain joy and self-complacency as if the success were owing to his own industry, but referring all to the will of God, gives thanks and praise to him alone; rejoicing more in the accomplishment of his holy will, than in any pleasure the success of his affairs may give him.

(3.) If things go contrary to his worldly advantage; if trials and affictions come upon him, if he is reduced to poverty, if distressed with sickness, if loaded with calumny, if abandoned by friends, or whatever other trouble afflicts him, the faithful servant of God, who has a true hope and confidence in him, is
unmoved in the midst of all trials; he refers all to God, he receives all from his hand, he is firmly persuaded all is for his greater good, and he says with holy Job, "Although he should kill me, I will trust in him," Job. xiii. 15. Oh, this is to have true confidence in God! But where shall we find this among men?

§ 5. Of the Sins against Hope.

Q. 19. What is despair?

A. Despair is a distrust of obtaining eternal happiness, or the helps which are necessary for procuring it. It is a very dangerous vice, as it shuts the door to all remedy, anticipates one's condemnation, and opens a door to all sin. For if a person once despairs of his salvation, and looks upon it as a thing impossible, he will naturally give over all endeavours to acquire it, and thus, either lose his judgment with the horrors of the thoughts of being lost, and perhaps put himself to death to be free of that torment as was the case with Judas and many others; or he will give himself up to all manner of sensual vices to divert his mind from that thought, and to live pleasantly at least for the present, as those did of whom St. Paul says, that "despairing they have given themselves up to lasciviousness, to the working of all uncleanness, unto covetousness," Eph. iv. 19. It is therefore of its own nature a most grievous sin, because it directly attacks all these Divine perfections, and the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, upon which our hope is founded; and shows how poor and mean an idea one has of the power, goodness, and fidelity of God, which is highly injurious to God, and must greatly provoke his indignation. When the people of Israel in the wilderness despaired of obtaining a supply of their temporal wants, see how it excited his fury against them. "They spoke ill of God; they said can God furnish a table in the wilderness?....Therefore the Lord heard, and was angry; and a fire was kindled against Jacob, and wrath came up against Israel; because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation...as yet their meat was in their mouth, and the wrath of God came upon them, and he slew the fat ones among them, and brought down the chosen men of Israel," Ps. lxxvii. 19, 30. Now if this was the case with those who despaired of temporal favours from God; how much more offensive must it be to him when one despairs of his salvation? What greatly adds to the injury done to God by despair is, that it shows one to have no sense nor gratitude for past favours; and this is what God particularly complains of in his people on the above occasion in the wilderness, that
notwithstanding all the wondrous things he had done for them, they still distrusted him in their necessities: "How often did they provoke him in the desert?......and they turned their back and tempted God, and grieved the Holy One of Israel; they remembered not his hand in the day that he redeemed them from the hand of him that afflicted them; how he wrought his signs in Egypt," &c., Ps. lxxvii. 40. "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt, they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies, and they provoked to wrath," Ps. cv. 7. How much more offensive must it be to God when a Christian despairs of his salvation, considering the great and wonderful things he has already done to save him, and bring him to eternal happiness. See above, Q. 5, Chap. V.

Q. 20. Who are those who are guilty of despair?

A. (1.) Those who give up all hopes of salvation, and look upon themselves to be of the number of the reprobate. (2.) Those who despair of getting pardon of their sins, on account of their numbers and grievousness. Such as do this are most injurious to the mercy of God, and to the merits of Christ; they imitate Cain, who said, "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon," Gen. iv. 13. Yea, they imitate Judas, whose perdition was not so much owing to his crime in betraying his Master, of which he might have got pardon had he repented, as to his despair, which shut the door to all mercy, and plunged him into the gulf of final impenitence. (3.) Those who despair of being able to correct their faults and amend their lives, from the experience they have of their own weakness, evil inclinations, and bad habits, which makes them give over using their endeavours, and give loose to their passions. Thus when God exhorted the Jews to return from their evil ways, "They said, we have no hopes; for we will go after our own thoughts, and we will do every one according to the perverseness of his evil heart," Jer. xviii. 12. These are highly injurious to the power of God, and to the grace of Jesus Christ, and his sacred promises. (4.) Those who in time of sickness or adversity, despair of relief or support from God, and therefore wish for death, or do any thing to procure it, or have recourse to unlawful means for relief, such as charms or superstitions; which is having recourse to the devil for aid, as Saul did, when despairing of help from God, he applied to the witch of Endor. (5.) Those, who being in straits as to their worldly affairs, distrust the providence of God, and give themselves up with solicitude and anxiety to such human means as they think may conduct to relieve them, and neglect
the care of their souls on that account; contrary to the express orders of our Saviour, who says, "Be not solicitous for the body......but seek first the kingdom of heaven." (6.) Those who, if what they ask in prayer be not granted immediately, despair of obtaining it, even though it be for the good of their soul; and therefore cease praying for it: not adverting that perseverance is one of the principal conditions of good prayer, and that God often defers granting what we ask, on purpose that by our perseverance we may obtain it at a more proper time, and with more advantage.

Q. 21. What are the remedies against despair?
A. (1.) To imprint in our souls a high idea of the power goodness, and fidelity of God, and of the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, by frequent and attentive meditation on them, and on the great advantages of hope in God, and the many encouragements we have in scripture to trust in him. (2.) To have recourse to God by fervent prayer, that he may strengthen us in hope, whose gift it is, "Our Lord Jesus Christ himself," says St. Paul, "and God and our Father who hath loved us, hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope in grace," 2 Thess. ii. 15. And therefore he prays, "that the God of hope may fill you with all joy and peace, in believing that you may abound in hope, and in the power of the Holy Ghost," Rom. xv. 13. (3.) To accustom ourselves to make frequent acts of hope and confidence in God; by which that virtue with God's help, will be daily more and more rooted in our souls.

Q. 22. What is presumption?
A. It is a vain and rash expectation of eternal happiness, and of the means necessary to obtain it, without performing on our part the conditions which God requires; either as if we had a title to it in ourselves, or as if we had it always in our own power to use the necessary means of acquiring it when we pleased. This also is a very grievous sin of its own nature: it is reckoned one of those sins which are against the Holy Ghost, because it abuses his goodness, as an encouragement to sin against him with the greater boldness, and generally leads to despair at the hour of death.

Q. 23. Who are those who are guilty of presumption?
A. (1.) Those who continue to live in their sins, in the vain hope that they will repent before they die, that they will have time enough afterwards, that God is merciful, and will not suffer them to be lost, and in other such diabolical delusions. Against all which, see Sincere Christian, Chap. XXIV. Q. 28. To which
add this advice of the wise man, "Say not, I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me? for the Most High is a patient rewarde...say not, The mercy of the Lord is great, he will have mercy on the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath quickly come from him, and his wrath looketh upon sinners. Delay not to be converted to the Lord; and defer it not from day to day. For his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee," Eccles. v. 4. See also above, Q. 10, No. III. (2.) Those who flatter themselves that because they exercise some good works, say some prayers, give alms, or the like, they will obtain salvation, though they do not repent and do penance for some sin: they have got the habit of committing, nor take the necessary care to amend them; not reflecting that to such as these in a particular manner the scripture says, "Despiseth thou the riches of his goodness, and patience, and long-suffering? Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance? But according to the hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God," Rom. ii. 4. 'For he that offends in one point becomes guilty of all," James ii. 10. (3.) Those who presume upon their own strength and endeavours and resolutions, to get the victory over their passions, overcome temptations, and acquire any virtue, and do not put their dependence entirely on God nor pray to him for help. This was the fault of St. Peter, when he said to Christ, "Though all men should be scandalised at thee, I will never be scandalised......Though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee," Matt. xxvi. 33. This presumption is very often punished by our being abandoned by God to ourselves, and left to fall into some humiliating sin to convince us of our folly, and to teach us our own weakness and misery; as was St. Peter's case. (4.) Those who, living in the dangerous occasions of sin, will not leave them, from the vain hope that they are now so firmly resolved, that they will never more be overcome by them: this case is near akin to the former, and generally ends in the same disgrace. See above, Chap. VI. Q. 4. (5.) Those who in their worldly affairs trust more to their own prudence, their judgment, their riches, their friends, and other human means, than in God. "Put not your trust in princes," says the royal prophet, "in the children of men, in whom there is no salvation; his spirit shall go forth, and he shall return into his earth; in that day all their thoughts shall perish. Blessed is he who hath the God of Jacob for his helper, whose hope is in
the Lord his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all things that are in them,” Ps. cxxiv. 2. “Woe to them who go down to Egypt for help, trusting in horses, and putting their confidence in chariots, because they are many, and in horsemen because they are strong, and have not trusted in the Holy One of Israel, and have not sought after the Lord,” Is. xxx. 1. And therefore, “charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded, nor to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy,” 1 Tim. vi. 17. See above, Q. 3, No. III. Of king Asa it is observed, as the height of that folly into which he run, after he had sought help from the Syrians, and was reproved for it, that when he fell ill of “a most violent pain in his feet (of which he died), yet in his illness he did not seek the Lord, but rather trusted in the skill of physicians,” 2 Par. xxvi. 12. “Remember Moses, the servant of the Lord, who overcame Amalek that trusted in his own strength, and in his own power, and in his army, and in his shields, and in his chariots, and in his horsemen, not by fighting with the sword, but by holy prayers,” Judith iv. 13.

Q. 24. What are the remedies against presumption?

A. (1.) It is evident that presumption is a child of pride, and therefore the great remedy against it is true humility, and a just sense of our own great weakness and misery, of the vanity of all earthly things, of the supreme power and dominion of God above all creatures, and of his holy providence; all which can only be acquired by frequent and serious meditation. (2.) Serious reflection on the danger of putting off one’s conversion, and of exposing one’s self to the occasion of sin; and on the examples of those who have lost themselves by these means. (3.) Continual prayer to God for true humility and hope in him. See above, Q. 4, and particularly Q. 10, No. 3.

CHAPTER IX.

CHARITY, OR THE LOVE OF GOD.

§ 1. The Nature and Grounds of Charity.

Q. 1. What is charity?

A. Charity is a Divine virtue infused into our souls, by which we love God above all things, and our neighbours as ourselves, for God’s sake. It is a Divine virtue, for “charity is of God... ...and God is charity, and he that abideth in charity, abideth
in God, and God in him,” 1 John iv. 7, 16. So that charity unites us immediately with God. It is infused into our souls; “because the charity of God is poured abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us,” Rom. v. 5. By it we love God above all things; for “if any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him,” 1 John ii. 16. By it we love our neighbour for God’s sake; for “if God had so loved us, we also ought to love one another......if we love one another, God abideth in us, and his charity is perfected in us......and this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother,” 1 John iv. 11, 12, 21. By this it also appears, that charity is a love of friendship between God and the soul, by which they are united together, and abide in one another; St Peter calls it a being “made partaker of the Divine nature,” 2 Pet. i. 4. And our Saviour says, “If any one love me, my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him,” John xiv. 23. The friendship with our soul, Jesus Christ is most desirous of, and says, “Behold, I stand at the gate and knock: if any man shall hear my voice and open to me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me,” Rev. iii. 20.

Q. 2. Are we obliged to love God with this love of charity?

A. We are most strictly obliged to this; because charity is so absolutely necessary a means of salvation, that it is impossible for us either to get our sins pardoned, or enter into heaven without it. The pardon of our sins is nothing else but the pouring down this holy charity into our souls, by which the guilt of sin is washed away, and we are restored to the friendship of God; and it is the marriage garment which adorns the soul, and without which it is impossible to get admittance into the marriage chamber, Matt. xxii. 12. Hence St Paul assures us, that without this nothing can be of any avail to us. “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,” says he, “and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge; and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing,” 1 Cor. xiii. 1. And no wonder, “for he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is charity,” 1 John iv. 8; and, “if any man loveth not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema,” 1 Cor. xvi. 22, that is accursed.
Q. 3. What are the motives or grounds upon which our obligation to love God is founded?

A. The first and principal motive to the love of God, is the infinite excellency of his own nature, his infinite beauty, his infinite perfections; all which render him infinitely amiable, infinitely lovely, infinitely worthy of all possible love from us, and from all creatures. He has, therefore, a supreme and unalienable right and title in himself to all our love, because he is what he is; the most beautiful, the most excellent of all beings, in comparison of whom all creatures, yea, all possible creatures, are a mere nothing. Faith and hope are grounded upon some particular perfections of God; but charity embraces the whole, considers God as infinitely lovely in all Divine perfections, and says to him with the spouse in the Canticles, "Thou art all lovely, O my beloved." See what we have said at large upon this subject, Chap. V. throughout the whole. And as this is the most excellent motive for loving God, so a love of God, founded on this motive, is the perfection of Divine charity, and what every one who wishes well to his own soul, should endeavour all he can to procure.

The second motive to the love of God is, because he is infinitely good to us, and gives us the most endearing proofs of the greatness of his love for us, in the numberless benefits he has bestowed, and is daily bestowing upon us, and in what he has prepared for us in his kingdom. On this subject see Chap. III. throughout the whole. All which lays us under the strictest obligation of making him a return of gratitude and love proportionable, as far as our weakness can allow, to his love for us.

The third motive to the love of God is, because to love him is the very end of our being; as he is our first beginning, so he is our last end; we are created for no other purpose but to love and serve him, and our essential happiness depends on our doing so; insomuch that if we do not comply with this duty, we shall be for ever separated from him, and of course be eternally miserable.

The fourth motive to the love of God is founded on his supreme dominion over us, and over all creatures, of which above, Chap. II. Now, as this gives him the most absolute right and authority to lay what commands he pleases upon us, so with the whole weight of his Divine authority, he lays the strongest command upon us to love him, as the first and greatest of all our duties, and the root from which all our other duties must take their rise.
Q. 4. How is the command of loving God expressed?
A. It is expressed in these terms; "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising: and thou shalt bind them as a sign in thy hand, and they shall be and move between thy eyes; and thou shalt write them in the entry, and on the doors of thy house," Deut. vi. 4. Our Saviour confirms this command in the gospel, adding also, that we ought to love God with our whole mind, and declares that "This is the greatest and first commandment," Mat. xxii. 37. Now in these words of the command, the universality and plenitude of that love which we owe to God, is laid down in the strongest terms; and it is evident from them that God requires the whole man to be employed in his love and service; for he not only commands us to love him with all our different powers, but with the whole of each power; he will be the only object of our whole love, so that we can love no creature for itself along with God, without depriving him of what is his; for that whole which he claims to himself, admits of no division; so that we are allowed neither to love ourselves, nor any creature, but only in God, and for God, and with subordination to our love for him. And though the actual perfection of the Divine love will only be in heaven, yet it is our bounden duty here to use our endeavours to acquire that perfection, and to come as near it as we can, as will appear more fully by considering the duties which the love of God necessarily requires from us.

§ 2. Of the Duties which the Love of God demands from us.

Q. 5. What are the duties which charity, or the love of God, demands from us?
A. They are principally these following: (1.) That as God is infinitely more excellent and lovely than all creatures whatever, we should prefer him in our mind and heart, in our esteem and love, before every thing else without exception; that is to say, we must not only judge and believe that God is infinitely preferable to every thing else, but we must actually give him this preference in our affections upon all occasions; we must place our supreme happiness in him, so as to be willing and ready actually to part with every thing, and as St. Paul expresses it, to "suffer the loss of all things," rather than to
LOSE HIM BY SIN; AND OUR ATTACHMENT TO HIM IN THIS VIEW MUST BE SO FIRM, THAT NO CREATURE, NOR ANY TEMPORAL CONSIDERATION WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM HIM. WE NATURALLY PREFER OUR HEALTH AND LIFE BEFORE ANY THING ELSE THAT WE POSsess IN THIS WORLD, AND IN CONSEQUENCE OF THIS PREFERENCE, WE WILLINGLY PART WITH OUR CASE, WITH OUR RICHES, YEA, WITH ANY OF OUR MEMBERS, IF AT ANY TIME THE LOSING OF ANY OF THEM BE NECESSARY, FOR PRESERVING HEALTH AND LIFE. IN LIKE MANNER WE MUST SO PREFER GOD TO EVERY THING ELSE, AS WILLINGLY TO PART WITH ALL, WHEN THE DOING SO IS NECESSARY ON ANY OCCASION FOR PRESERVING HIS LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP. "LOVE IS STRONG AS DEATH," SAYS THE SPOUSE IN THE CANTICLE. "MANY WATERS CANNOT QUENCH CHARITY, NEITHER CAN THE FLOODS DROWN IT; IF A MAN SHOULD GIVE ALL THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS HOUSE FOR LOVE, HE SHALL DESPISE IT AS NOTHING," SONG OF SOLOMON VIII. 6. NOW THIS LOVE OF PREFERENCE IS WHAT ALL ARE OBLIGED TO HAVE FOR GOD, AS BEING ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY FOR SALVATION; FOR IF THERE BE ANY CREATURE WHICH WE LOVE MORE THAN GOD, SO AS TO BE WILLING IN THE DISPOSITION OF OUR HEART TO COMMIT A MORTAL SIN RATHER THAN PART WITH IT, OR IN FACT DO ACTUALLY COMMIT SUCH A SIN ON ITS ACCOUNT, WE CAN NEVER, WHILE WE ARE SO DISPOSED, SEE THE FACE OF GOD IN MERCY. OUR SAVIOUR IS PLAIN AND CLEAR ON THIS POINT: "HE THAT LOVETH FATHER OR MOTHER MORE THAN ME, IS NOT WORTHY OF ME; AND HE THAT LOVETH SON OR DAUGHTER MORE THAN ME, IS NOT WORTHY OF ME," MATT. X. 37. "EVERY ONE OF YOU THAT DOETH NOT RENOUNCE ALL THAT HE POSSESSETH CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE," LUKE XIV. 33. EXAMPLES OF THIS LOVE OF PREFERENCE FOR GOD WE FIND IN ALL THE SAINTS OF GOD. SUCH WAS THE LOVE OF ABRAHAM, WHO FOR LOVE OF GOD NOT ONLY LEFT "HIS COUNTRY AND HIS KINDRED AND HIS FATHER'S HOUSE," GEN. XII. 1; BUT WAS READY TO SACRIFICE HIS SON, HIS ONLY, HIS BELOVED SON ISAAC, IN ORDER TO PLEASE GOD, GEN. XXII. SUCH WAS THE LOVE OF ST PAUL, WHO "SUFFERED THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS, AND COUNTED THEM AS DUNG THAT HE MIGHT GAIN CHRIST," PHIL. III. 8. SUCH WAS THE LOVE OF THE APOSTLES, WHO "LEFT ALL AND FOLLOWED CHRIST." AND SO STRONG WAS THEIR LOVE OF GOD, THAT THEY COULD ALL SAY WITH ST PAUL, "WHO THEN SHALL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST? SHALL TROUBULATION? OR DISTRESS? OR FAMINE? OR NAKEDNESS? OR DANGER? OR PERSECUTION? OR THE SWORD?.....FOR I AM SURE THAT NEITHER LIFE NOR DEATH, NOR ANGELS NOR PRINCIPALITIES, NOR POWERS, NOR THINGS PRESENT, NOR THINGS TO COME, NOR MIGHT, NOR HEIGHT, NOR DEPTH, NOR ANY OTHER CREATURE SHALL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD, WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD," ROM. VIII. 35. SUCH ALSO OUGHT THE DISPOSITIONS OF EVERY CHRISTIAN TO BE. AND IN REQUIRING THIS FROM US, GOD REQUIRES
nothing but what is most just and right; for does not reason itself demand that we should love and esteem and give preference to every thing according to its real worth and value? Seeing therefore that God is infinitely more excellent in himself and more beneficent to us than all creatures whatsoever, it is certainly most just and right that we should love and prefer him before them. Besides, as he is our Creator, our Lord, and our God, he has a perfect right to demand what belongs to him as such. Do not kings demand and expect to be honoured by their subjects as kings? Do not parents and masters of families demand as their due to be honoured as such by their children and servants? And is it not most just that God should demand to be honoured as God? Now, what is it to honour him as God but to love and prefer him before every thing else? Nay, he could not consistent with his own sanctity, do otherwise; for as among men, if a king should allow any other to be honoured as a king, this would be to make that other king; so if God should allow us to love and esteem any creature as we do him, this would be supposing that creature to be as worthy as he is; which is contrary to truth, and would be allowing us to honour a creature as God, which is idolatry; both which God is infinitely incapable of doing. This love of preference is properly what is meant by loving God "with our whole heart and with our whole mind;" for when we have just sentiments of the infinite excellency of God, and esteem him above all things, we love him with our whole mind; and when we in our heart do actually prefer him above all creatures, and are ready to part with every thing rather than to lose him, we love him with our whole heart as the law commands.

(2.) The second duty which charity demands from us is, that we make it our continual endeavour to obey the commandments of God, and to do his will to the utmost of our power. This is a natural consequence of the former duty: for if we prefer God and his friendship to every thing else whatsoever, as we know that obedience to his commands is the condition required of us in order to preserve his friendship, this must of course make us exceedingly attentive to comply with this condition, and study in every thing to do his holy will. Besides love, when it is sincere, naturally raises in the heart a great fear of displeasing, and desire of pleasing, the one we love; as we see in two friends, or in the children who have a real love and affection for their parents; and this fear of displeasing, and desire of pleasing the objects of our love, makes us exceedingly attentive to do whatever we know to be agreeable to their will.
and inclination; is so much that the smallest indication of what they wish to do, even a look or a nod, is sufficient to engage our attention, and make us obey them. If therefore our love to God be real and sincere, it cannot fail to make us diligent in doing what we know to be agreeable to him, and in obeying his holy commandments; so that in demanding this obedience from us, as a proof and effect of our love, God asks no more than what is a natural consequence of true love wherever it is found. And this is what is meant by loving God with "our whole soul;" that is, with all the powers and faculties of our soul, when they are all employed in serving and obeying him. Hence we find that our love and obedience is joined together in scripture as inseparable from one another, and both equally demanded from us: "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways, and serve and love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with all thy soul, and keep the commandments of the Lord?” Deut. x. 12. With our whole heart we properly love him, and with the powers and faculties of our souls we serve him and keep his commandments. Hence our Saviour requires this obedience as the substantial proof of our love: "If you love me," says he, "keep my commandments.....He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me," John xiv. 15. 21. "If any one love me, he will keep my word.....He that loveth me not, keepeth not my word," Ibid. verses 23. 24. And the beloved disciple adds, "He that keepeth his word, in him in very deed the charity of God is perfected," 1 John ii. 5. "For this is charity, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not heavy," 1 John v. 3. They are not heavy indeed to one that truly loves God, for love makes them not only easy but delightful. None surely ever had such a love for God, as Jesus Christ had for his eternal Father; and how did he show it? "I came down from heaven," says he, "not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me," John vii. 36. "I seek not my own will, but the will of him that sent me," John v. 30. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and that I may perfect his work," John iv. 34. "I do always the things that please him," John viii. 29. And hence he says to his disciples, "If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, as I also have kept my Father's commandments, and do abide in his love," John xv. 10. This therefore is an essential quality of our love to God, and a most convincing proof of its being sincere; without this, little regard is to be had to warm affec-
tions of the heart, or to tears of sensible devotion, when we think about God and holy things, for these may rise from other causes than a real love for God, but though one has none of these sensible affections, if he be steady and firm in keeping the commands of God, and doing his will, this is the solid proof that he sincerely loves him. But that this obedience may have its full perfection, we must not be content with barely doing the things that God commands us, but we must add to this another duty which his love requires, and that is,

(3.) That we refer every thing we do to his honour and glory; that is, not only our obedience to his express commands, but that every thing we do, be done with a view to please him: that we reject all desire of pleasing ourselves, or of gaining the esteem or favour of men, and that our daily aim and intention be to please God and glorify him; that this be our rule in all our deliberations to know what is most agreeable to him, and that this be the motive which excites us to do it, to please him. God has a full right to every thing we do; for as we are by nature his servants and bond slaves, we are obliged to act for him continually; as he is our Creator and Preserver, he has a full title that every thing we do, be done for him; as he is our last end, we ought to tend towards him by every thing we do, and refer all to him. Has not the gardener a full right to every thing that grows in his garden, and the husbandman to all the produce of his field? All we have and are, our soul and body, our senses, powers, faculties, and members, belong essentially to God; they are all his indisputable property, he has the most absolute dominion over them; consequently he has an indisputable right to every thing we do by them. Hence this duty is strongly enjoined us in scripture. St. Paul prays for the Ephesians, “that they may be rooted and founded in charity,” Eph. iii. 17; that is, that charity or the love of God may be the root or foundation of every thing we do, as he expresses it in another place, saying, “Let all your things be done in charity,” 1 Cor. xvi. 14. And still more clearly in the following words: “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God,” 1 Cor. x. 31; again, “All whatsoever you do, in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him,” Col. iii. 17. And our Lord Jesus who, as we have seen, was so assiduous in doing his Father’s will, was no less attentive in doing all he did with a pure intention for his Father’s glory: “I seek not my own glory,” says he, “if I glorify myself, my glory is nothing,” John viii. 50, 54. This
pure intention of doing all we do for the glory of God, and to please him, is so necessary, that our best actions, if done for any other motive, and not for this, will be of no avail before God; Christ himself assures us, that if we give alms, or fast, or pray, to be seen by men, we need expect no reward from God for them, Matt. vi. 1; but that the least good thing we do, were it only to give a cup of cold water, if done for his sake, shall not fail to be rewarded, Matt. x. 4.

(4.) Another duty which charity demands from us is, that we cheerfully submit to the will of God in suffering as well as acting, and be ready to undergo, with pleasure, all the crosses and difficulties we may meet with in his service, and to suffer every kind of affliction, every torment, yea, even death itself for his sake, rather than offend him by sin. This is a natural consequence of the former duties of charity, for as in obeying his commands and serving him, many crosses and difficulties will be met with, because “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,” 2 Tim. iii. 12; and “through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God,” Acts xiv. 21. If we prefer God to every thing, and are ready to lose all the good things of this life rather than lose him by sin; consequently we must be ready to lose our own ease and satisfaction for the same reason, and therefore to suffer all the evils of life as well as to lose its goods, rather than to lose God. Hence our Saviour makes this an essential condition of being his disciple: “If any man will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and daily follow me;” and “whoever does not take up his cross, and daily follow me, is not worthy of me.” To suffer cheerfully in the service of one we love, or for his sake, is a natural consequence of sincere love. What toils and sufferings do not parents undergo for their beloved children, soldiers for their prince, a loving wife for her husband in sickness, &c.? Nay, love makes all such sufferings even pleasant and agreeable; and if this be the case in natural love, no wonder it be much more so in Divine charity; hence the apostles rejoiced to be counted worthy of suffering ignominy for Christ’s sake. St. Paul superabounded with joy in all his tribulations, and gloried in nothing but in the cross of Christ; all the holy martyrs received death in all its terrors with joy, for the love of their heavenly Master; and indeed this is the greatest proof of the sincerity of our love to God, if we lay down our life for his sake; for “Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends,” John xvi. 13. And this is to love God “with all our strength,” when all our
strength is exerted in bearing the afflictions of this life, and carrying our cross for his sake.

(5.) Lastly, Divine charity requires that we should actually honour and worship God by acts of his holy love; on which we must observe, (1.) That an act of the love of God, is a declaration or protestation made to God, that we actually do love him above all things, because he is what he is; and it may be done in the following or similar terms, either mentally addressed to God in the heart, or pronounced also with the tongue: "O gracious and good God, I love thee above all things, because thou art infinitely good in thyself, and infinitely good to me. I desire to love thee with all my heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; and for love of thee I am ready to part with every thing rather than to lose thee, my God, by sin." (2.) That in many acts of this kind we be careful that the heart and will accompany the words we pronounce, otherwise we shall be like those of whom the scripture says, "They loved him with their mouth, and with their tongue lied unto him; but their heart was not right with him," Ps. lxxvii. 36. And again, "This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me, and in vain do they worship me," Matt. xv. 8. (3.) That the practice of these holy acts of love, when done from the heart, is most agreeable to God, as being a worship proper to him, an actual discharge of that duty which he demands from us, as the first and greatest of all his commandments, and an exercise of the most excellent of all virtues. The heart is what God chiefly requires of us. "My son, says he, give me thy heart;" and it is by fervent acts of holy love that we give our hearts to him. (4.) They are also most beneficial to our souls, because they depress and weaken the motions of our self-love; they fortify the soul against temptations; they increase the habit of Divine love in the soul, and they are the best preservatives against all the snares of the enemy at the hour of death. Hence, (5.) Whoever wishes well to his own soul, will not be content with barely practising these holy acts of Divine love on those occasions only when he is strictly obliged to make them; but he will upon all occasions, at all times, in his daily devotions, frequently through the day, make it his great study to advance his soul in this Divine virtue, by the frequent exercise of its holy acts.

§ 3. Of the Effects which Charity produces in the Soul.

Q. 6. What are the effects which charity produces in the soul?
A. Many and admirable are the blessed effects which this holy virtue of charity produces in the soul; but we shall here take notice only of some of the most practical ones, and,

(1.) Zeal for the honour of God. Let us examine our own hearts in order to understand this. When we have a sincere love for another, we wish him well and happy; whatever pleases him gives us pleasure, and every thing that injures him gives us pain and affliction; we are ready to do him all the service in our power, and to defend him from any evil. In fact, to love one is nothing else but to wish him well and to do good. See how ready one is to defend the honour of his prince whom he loves, and what a pain it gives him to see or hear him vilified or dishonoured by others; see with what ardour a loving son defends the character of his absent father, how much he endeavours to make others think well of him, and how much he is distressed and thinks himself affronted if any one speaks ill of his father in his presence; see the same effects of love in wives to their husbands, in husbands to their wives, and in sincere friends to one another. This effect, which is a necessary attendant on all love, when real and sincere, is conspicuous in the love of God above all others. The infinite excellency of God, who is the object of charity, the infinite merit he has to be loved, honoured, and served by all creatures, the incredible joy and delight that is found in his holy love above what can be found in the love of any creature, makes a soul, whose affections are fixed upon him, insatiable in her ardent desires of seeing him honoured and served by all, and pierces her with the most sensible affliction, when she sees him dishonoured and offended. And these desires do not lie idle in such a soul, but excite her most violently to do and suffer great things, in order to promote the honour of her beloved object. The book of Psalms is full of expressions of these ardent desires of the glory of God, frequently inviting heaven and earth, men and angels, and all creatures, to praise, and bless, and magnify his holy name; and the examples of the apostles, and other apostolical men in all ages, show what great things this zeal for God's glory is capable of inspiring those to do and suffer, whose hearts are inflamed with his holy love; and as for their distress, when they see God offended, who can conceive how it pierces their hearts, and fills their soul with anguish? "Moses was a man exceeding meek above all men that dwelt upon the earth," Numb. xii. 3, and therefore never would be displeased, nor resent any injury done to himself; but when coming down from the mountain he saw the grievous injury done to God by
his people, in worshipping the golden calf, he "being very angry, threw the tables out of his hand, and broke them at the foot of the mount," Ex. xxxii. 19. The high priest of God, Eli, now an old man, heard the loss of the battle, and the defeat of his people by the Philistines with tranquillity, he heard that his two sons had been slain in the battle, with dry eyes, but when the messenger told him at last, that the ark of God was taken, he was so oppressed with grief and affliction, "that he fell from his stool backwards by the door, and brake his neck and died," 1 Sam. iv. 18. David expresses his zeal for the glory of God in these strong terms: "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up, and the reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me," Ps. lxviii. 10. "My zeal hath made me pine away, because my enemies forget thy word......I beheld the transgressors, and I pined away, because they kept not thy word," Ps. cxviii. 139, 158. When God appeared to Elias in the desert, and asked him, "What dost thou here, Elias?" He answered, "With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, they have thrown down thy altars, they have slain thy prophets with the sword," 1 Kings xix. 10, 14. And when Esdras was told the sins his people had been guilty of in his absence. "When I heard this word," says he, "I rent my mantle and my coat, and plucked off the hairs of my head and my beard, and I sat down mourning......and at the evening sacrifice I rose up from my affliction, and having rent my mantle and my garment, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands to the Lord my God, and said, My God, I am confounded, and ashamed to lift up my face before thee," &c., 1 Esd. ix. 3, 5. Nay, the holy Mathathias, upon his deathbed, exhorted his sons "to be zealous for the law, and give their lives, for the covenant of their fathers," 1 Mach. ii. 50. And his valiant son Judas exhorted his little army to fight manfully against those nations, "that are assembled," said he, "against us, to destroy us and our sanctuary; for it is better for us to die in battle, than to see the evils of our nation and of the holies," 1 Mach. iii. 58. Here then we have a rule by which to know what kind of love we have for God; for if we can hear his holy name profaned and blasphemed by oaths and curses, his infinite sanctity affronted by obscene words, his majesty contemned by numberless other sins without feeling the least concern, without showing the least displeasure, without saying a single word of disapprobation: can we say we have any grain of his holy love in our hearts? We are so zealous for our own honour, and the
honour of our parents or friends, that if we hear the least word against it, we are all on fire; and yet we are dumb stocks when the honour of God is concerned? But what shall we say if, instead of being displeased on such occasions, we take part in them and make them a subject of mirth and laughter?

(2.) A sincere sorrow and contrition for one's own sins; if the love we bear to our parents or friends make us sorrowful and afflicted when an evil comes upon them; much greater and more grievous would our sorrow be, if we ourselves should be the cause of their sufferings; so also, and much more so, does the true and sincere love of God fill a soul with sorrow and contrition, on account of the sins she has committed against him. His infinite excellency, which deserves all possible honour and veneration, his infinite beauty, which deserves all possible love, his infinite goodness to us, which loudly demands all possible gratitude on our part, and all his other Divine perfections presenting themselves to a soul which is filled with his holy love, pierces her with the most feeling grief to think she has ever been so unhappy as to offend and injure by her sins, so amiable, so lovely a being. "My eyes," says David, "have sent forth springs of water, because they have not kept thy law," Ps. cxviii. 136. "I have laboured in my groanings; every night I will wash my bed; I will water my couch with my tears," Ps. vi. 7. No sooner was St. Peter sensible of his crime in denying his beloved Master, than "going forth he wept bitterly," Matt. xxvi. 75. And the great love that Mary Magdalen had for Jesus Christ, for which "many sins were forgiven her," raised such a grief in her soul for her former crimes, that she washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. See here then another rule by which to judge of our love to God; for the same reason the love of God excites in the soul a horror and detestation of sin, as the only real evil, because it is an evil done to God, the great object of its love; hence the exhortation of the prophet: "You that love the Lord, hate evil," Ps. xcvi. 10; and therefore he says, "Lord, have I not hated them that hate thee? and pined away because of thine enemies? I have hated them with a perfect hatred, and they have become enemies to me," Ps. cxxxviii. 21. The only enemies of God are sins; and the prophet declares he hates them with a perfect hatred; that is, with an irreconcilable hatred, and above every thing else that is horrible. He considers sin as his own greatest enemy, because an enemy to God, and declares that he who loves sin becomes an enemy to himself; he that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul," Ps. x. 6
Thus all the saints of God who loved him, hated sin to such a degree as to be ready to suffer all evils; and the worst of deaths rather than consent to it.

(3.) Another effect which the love of God produces in the soul is, to make us put a high value and esteem on all the graces and benefits he bestows upon us, and be grateful and thankful to him for them. Nothing is little in our eyes that comes from the hand of those we love. We measure the value of the favour, not from the worth it has in itself, but from the affection from which it comes; every testimony of affection from those we love is delightful to us, and every favour received from them is received as a new proof of their affection; hence it fills the heart with pleasure, and excites the most grateful sentiments in the soul, which naturally show themselves by every thankful testimony we can give of the sense we have of the obligation. Consequently, if we have a sincere love for God, this must make us set the highest value upon every favour we receive from him, especially considering, that they are all of inestimable value in themselves, of the utmost advantage to our souls, proceeding from, and are proofs of his most pure and ardent love for us, and that we are of ourselves most undeserving of them. What sentiments of gratitude must these considerations excite in a loving soul? how must they spur her on to continual acts of thanksgiving, praise, and love to God! and so much the more, when we reflect that this return of thanksgiving and praise is the only one we can make for his favours, and what he expressly requires from us. Thus, "In all things give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all," 1 Thess. v. 18. "All whatsoever ye do, in word, or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God, and the Father by him," Col. iii. 17. "Be instant in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving," Col. iv. 2. Nay, this is laid down as what ought to be the continual employment of a Christian. "Be ye filled with the Holy Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father," Eph. v. 18. Nothing is more agreeable to God than our faithful compliance with this duty, and nothing makes him more ready to bestow new favours upon us, than our being grateful for those we have already received; and on the contrary, nothing provokes him more to deprive us of his graces than our undervaluing them, and being ungrateful for them; and nothing is more apt to
make him at last abandon us entirely, as was the case with those of whom the apostle says, "Because that, when they knew God, they have not glorified him as God, nor given thanks, but became vain in their own thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened; for professing themselves to be wise they became fools....therefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart," Rom. i. 21. Hence we find that giving thanks to God, and praising him, was the continual employment of the holy servants of God. Of Tobias we are told that even when struck with blindness, "he repined not against God, because the evil of blindness had befallen him, but continued immovable in the fear of God, giving thanks to God all the days of his life," Tob. ii. 13. Job also, when all his misfortunes came upon him, "fell down upon the ground and worshipped, and said.....the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord," Job i. 20. David was exceeding diligent in this holy exercise, and the whole Psalms are full of the warmest expressions of gratitude and praise to God. And in all St. Paul's epistles, how frequently does he give thanks to God, for the favours bestowed upon his dear children, to whom he writes, and for the grace he had received himself? Our blessed Saviour also who came to be our model in all perfection, gives us frequent examples in the gospel of this holy exercise. We ought therefore often to meditate on the many favours we receive from God, and on the love and affection with which he gives them, that we may conceive a just sense of them, and excite our souls to gratitude and thanksgiving for them. And as every thing that comes from the hand of God is designed for our good, and a favour done us, whether it be agreeable to the views of our self-love or not, therefore we ought in all things and always to give thanks to God, as his holy word expressly requires, even in our tribulations and afflictions, as Job and Tobias did. Happy those who from their heart comply with this sacred duty!

(4.) Charity also produces in the heart a love, respect, and veneration for every thing that belongs to God, or is particularly connected with him; and this is always the stronger—the stronger that connexion is. This is also a natural effect of all love; for when we have a strong and tender affection for any one, our love is not confined to his person alone, it extends itself to every thing that belongs to him; our regard for himself makes every thing that is his, dear to us. If our friend die, or be at a distance from us, how do we value and regard every
little present we get from him, and every thing in our possession that belongs to him? What regard do not parents pay to any memorandum they have of their beloved child that is dead? how do they put a little of his hair in a seal or a ring, and value it above measure? How do men esteem the picture of their friend merely because it is his? Hence the love of God, when it takes place in the soul, never fails to give proof of its presence, by a great respect and veneration for all holy things and holy persons, on account of their particular connexion with God; hence the reverence paid to the sacred scriptures, to churches, to altars, to sacred vessels, to pictures of Christ and his saints, and hence our love and veneration for the saints of Christ themselves, and their holy relics. And hence in a particular manner arises the love we are commanded to have for our neighbours, because they are so intimately connected with God, as we shall consider more fully below, Chap. XIII.

Q. 7. What are the means by which we may acquire this holy love of God?

A. (1.) Fervent prayer. “The charity of God is poured abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost,” Rom. v. 5, and “the fruit of the Spirit is charity,” Gal. v. 22. It is therefore a gift of God, by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Now prayer is declared by Jesus Christ to be a most powerful means to move God to bestow his holy Spirit upon us with all his graces; “If you, being evil,” says he, “know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven, give the good Spirit to them that ask him?” Luke xi. 13.

(2.) Self-denial and the mortification of self-love: By self-love our hearts and affections are placed upon the creatures, and the love of the creatures is wholly opposite to and destructive of the love of the Creator, so that it is impossible they can both reign in the same heart, at the same time. “No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other; you cannot serve God and mammon,” Matt. vi. 24. And St. John expressly declares that, “If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him,” 1 John ii. 15. Hence again we see how much we are indebted to Jesus Christ for obliging all his followers to deny themselves and take off their affections from creatures, and how much he had our real good at heart in doing so; and consequently how careful we should be to break all the unhappy ties of affection, that attach us to the creatures and to ourselves, if we wish the holy love of God should reign in our hearts. See above, Chapter IV. § 2. (3.) Frequent meditation
on the infinite love of God to us. Love naturally begets love, and the more we know how much any one loves us, the more forcibly we are drawn to love him. Now it is by frequent meditation on the love of God to us, and the most wonderful effects of his love towards us, that we come to a proper knowledge of the greatness of his love, and to see in the most endearing manner, how much he loves us! See above, Chapter III. through the whole. (4.) Frequent meditation on the infinite beauty and perfections of God; for by this we shall come to see and feel how infinitely lovely and amiable he is, how much he deserves all the love of our souls, and how unworthy any creature is to possess any place in our heart in comparison of him. Now it is chiefly by contemplating attentively any beauteous object, that our heart contracts an affection for it. See above, Chapter V. (5.) Constant exercise of those duties which his holy love requires from us; studying in all things to please him, avoiding every thing that can displease him, endeavouring continually to do his holy will; and frequently exercising ourselves in making from our hearts fervent acts of love to love him.

CHAPTER X.

RELIGION.

Q. 1. What is meant by religion?
A. Religion is that virtue by which we give to God the honour and worship which is due to him, as the first beginning, the sovereign Lord, and the last end of all things; acknowledging, by the proper act of religion, his supreme excellency and sovereign dominion over us, and subjection to and entire dependence upon him......Hence it appears, that the virtue of religion, taken in its full extent, embraces all the duties we owe to God as contained in the three first commandments, because by each of them we give sovereign worship to God: But those duties which more immediately and properly belong to religion, are devotion, prayer, and adoration; and the acts of other virtues become also acts of religion, only when they are done with a view of honouring God. It is in this sense that St. James says, "This is clean religion and undefiled before God and the Father, to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unspotted from this world," James i. 27.
Devotion, properly speaking, is a general virtue, and signifies an affectionate readiness of the will to do in all things what we know, or in the simplicity of our heart believe, to be agreeable to the will of God, with a view to please him. In this sense we have already considered it as a branch of the love of God. See Chapter IX. Nos. 2 and 3. So that there remain to be explained here, the duties of prayer and adoration.

§ 1. Prayer.

Q. 2. What is prayer?

A. Prayer is the raising up our hearts to God, to beg his grace and all good things. It is therefore a conversing with God, laying before him all our miseries, and necessities, and calling upon him for mercy and relief. It is founded upon faith and hope; for, as the apostle says, "How then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed?" Rom. x. 14. And St. James tells us that when we ask any thing of God, we must ask "in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavers need not expect to receive any thing of the Lord," James i. 6. In fact, we pray to God, because we believe he is able and willing to help us, and because we hope in his sacred promises, that through the merits of Christ, he will help us. Prayer is therefore an act of religion, because by it we acknowledge our own weakness, misery, and unworthiness, our dependence upon God, and our subjection to him; and also, because by it we confess him to be our sovereign Lord, and the Giver of all good, and we honour his infinite goodness, for which we hope to obtain what we stand in need of. It is also, like all other good things, a gift of God, for of ourselves we are not "sufficient to think a good thought," nor can we say, "Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Spirit;" and therefore, God Almighty says, "I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace, and of prayers," Zach. xii. 10. "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings," Rom. viii. 26; that is, inspireth the saints, and teacheth them to pray with great fervour.

Prayer may be either internal or external. Internal or mental prayer is that which we make in the heart, addressing our wishes and desires to God internally, without expressing them in words. Of Anna the mother of Samuel it is said, "As Anna had her heart full of grief, she prayed to the Lord, shedding many tears......Now Anna spoke in heart, and only
her lips moved, but her voice was not heard at all.” 1 Sam. 1:10, and 13. David also says, “The meditation of my heart shall be always in thy sight, O Lord, my helper and my redeemer,” Ps. xvi. 15. And again, “Delight in the Lord,” says he, “and he will give thee the requests of thy heart,” Ps. xxxvi. 4. External or vocal prayer, is that which is made with the mouth and expressed in words. Of this St. Paul says, “Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of lips, giving glory to his name,” Heb. xiii. 15. David also says to God, “Let my soul be filled as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips,” Ps. lxii. 5. And of the wise man it is said, “He will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him, and he will pray in the sight of the Most High. He will open his mouth in prayer, and he will make supplication for his sins,” Ecclus. xxxix. 6.

Q. 3. Is the duty of prayer necessary for obtaining salvation?

A. Prayer is one of the most necessary duties of a Christian, both for obtaining salvation, and for obtaining every other good thing we need, whether as the means of salvation, or as contributing to our present happiness, and this will appear from the following most convincing reasons:—

(1.) This necessity of prayer arises from two important truths, which our holy faith teaches; the first is that of ourselves, and by our own natural strength, without the special help of God’s grace, we cannot do the least thing towards our salvation; nay, that considering the natural proneness of our hearts to evil, the violence of our passions, the many allurements to sin, to which we are continually exposed from the objects about us, and the constant attacks and snares of our spiritual enemies, who are always going about as roaring lions seeking to devour us, without a particular assistance of the grace of God, we cannot live for any space of time, without falling into mortal sin. See above, Chap. VIII. Q. 4. And much less, when fallen into that misery, can we ourselves rise out of it again by a sincere repentance. The second truth is, that the ordinary means which God has appointed, by which that so necessary grace is bestowed upon us, is prayer: “Ask,” says he, “and it shall be given unto you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth,” Matt. vii. 7. We are not only incapable of doing any thing towards our salvation without the grace of God, but of ourselves, “who are by nature children of wrath,”
we are altogether unworthy of receiving any grace from him. After the fall of man, it was the pure effect of the goodness and mercy of God to be willing to save us, or to show us any mercy at all; he might, if he had been pleased to do so, have treated us with the same rigorous justice, with which he treated the fallen angels; but he was pleased to show us mercy; and not only to be willing to save us, but also to provide for us all the means necessary for our salvation. Our salvation, then, and all the means to obtain it, are the free gifts of God, through the merits of Jesus Christ; and as he is absolute Master of his own gifts, he can demand whatever conditions he pleases from us, in order to receive them from him. Now, the first and universal condition which he requires, is, that we humble ourselves before him, acknowledge our want of grace, and our unworthiness of his help, and ask it of his mercy. But whereas we cannot even do this without his assistance, and whereas to pray is itself a gift of God, as we have seen above, and consequently whereas the first step to our salvation must come from him, according to what he says in the gospel, “No man can come to me unless it be given him of my Father,” John vi. 66; and, “No man cometh to the Father but by me,” John xvi. 6; therefore, as “he will have all men to be saved,” 1 Tim. ii. 4, out of his infinite mercy he freely and generously bestows the grace of prayer upon all men, as the first step towards their salvation, moving them to have recourse to him, and enabling them to do so; but he expressly wills that they should cooperate with this grace, and ask of him whatsoever else we stand in need of, as the condition required on our part for obtaining it. In fact, we find that the first step taken by converted sinners—the first effect which is produced in them by that first grace which moves them to repentance, is, to have recourse to God by prayer, thus St. Paul upon his conversion, immediately cries to God, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” The humble publican beats his breast and cries, “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.” Cornelius “gave much alms to the people, and prayed always.” And all those who wanted any help from Jesus Christ in the gospel, had recourse to him by prayer. Hence it appears, that prayer is the universal efficacious means of obtaining from God all necessary helps for our salvation; it is the key which opens to us all the treasures of heaven; it is the canal through which all graces come to our soul; it is the first grace given us, and the last taken away and therefore the church of Christ, in one of her general counsels, says, “God does not command impossibilities, but by com
manding us (to do any thing), he admonishes us to do what we can, to pray for what help we need, and then he helps us to make us able," Council of Trent, Sess. vi. Chap. 11. What still more fully shows the necessity of prayer is, that the want of it cannot be supplied by any thing else; and in this it differs from all other means of salvation, and is shown to be the most necessary of any. The want of actual baptism may be supplied by martyrdom; the want of the sacrament of penance by perfect contrition; fasting and penitential works, by alms-deeds; alms-deeds themselves by patient suffering; and so of others; but the want of prayer can be supplied of nothing else; and therefore the scripture expressly says, "You have not, because you ask not," James iv. 2. To ask, is appointed by Almighty God to be the assured means of obtaining the graces you stand in need of; and if you neglect to use the means, the graces annexed to that means will not be bestowed, for this plain reason, "because you ask not." Nor need we be surprised; for when we consider the excellency of those graces, the need we stand in of them, our misery without them, and the easy and certain way by prayer of acquiring them; it shows a most unpardonable contempt and disregard for them, and for the glorious end to be obtained by them, if we neglect to pray for them.

(2.) The necessity of prayer, and our obligation to practise it, arises also from the repeated commands laid down in the holy scriptures: "And Jesus spoke also a parable to them, that we ought always to pray, and not to faint," Luke xviii. 1; where the word ought clearly implies a strict obligation. Again, after describing the danger of being called out of this world unprepared, the only means he proposes for avoiding so great a misery, is watching in prayer; "Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times," Luke xxi. 36. "Take ye heed, watch and pray; for you know not when the time is," Mark xiii. 33. The same duty he inculcates as the means for strengthening us to overcome the many temptations to which we are daily disposed; "Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not in temptation," Matt. xxvi. 41. St. Paul again and again inculcates the same duty: "Pray without ceasing," says he, "in all things give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus, concerning you all," 1 Thess. v. 17. "And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God; by all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the spirit," Eph. vi. 17. "Be instant in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving," Col. iv. 2. "Be nothing solicitous; but in every
thing by prayer with supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God," Phil. iv. 6. St. Peter is no less pressing on this subject. "The end of all," says he, "is at hand, be prudent, therefore, and watch in prayer," 1 Pet. iv. 7. "If any of you want wisdom," says St. James, "let him ask of God, who giveth to all abundantly, and it shall be given him," James i. 5. And again, "Is any of you sad? let him pray," James v. 13. Add to all these, what the Holy Ghost commands by the mouth of the wise man, "Let nothing hinder thee from praying always, and be not afraid to be justified even to death, for the reward of God continueth for ever," Ecles. xviii. 22; and he tells us that the truly wise man "will open his mouth in prayer, and make supplication for his sins," Ecles. xxxix. 7. And by David, "Call upon me," says God, "in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee," Ps. xlix. 15. "And he shall cry to me, and I will hear him; I am with him in his trouble, and I will deliver him," Ps. xc. 15. In Job also it is said, "Thou shalt pray to him, and he will hear thee," Job xxii. 27. Tobias too gives this advice to his son: "Bless God at all times, and desire of him to direct thy ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in him," Tob. iv. 20. Upon these repeated testimonies of holy scripture, three things are to be observed. (1.) We see how frequently throughout the scripture, this duty is inculcated and urged in the most express terms, which shows beyond contradiction, how strong our obligation is to practise it. (2.) We see prayer commanded in several of these texts, as being the means appointed for obtaining some of the most important graces which we stand in need of, such as, a happy death, final perseverance, strength to resist temptations, pardon of sins, heavenly wisdom to direct us, consolation in sadness, preservation in the state of justice or grace, even to death, and deliverance from our tribulations. (3.) All this shows that the grace of prayer itself is never wanting to us; the frequent command of practising it presupposes we have the grace to do so, and we nowhere find any means proposed for obtaining this grace itself; consequently if we do not use it, the fault is entirely our own, and the fatal consequences of such neglect will all be justly laid to our own charge.

(3.) This obligation is further confirmed, by the example of Christ himself and all his saints. Of Christ we are told, that "When he had dismissed the multitude, he went up into a mountain alone to pray," Matt. xiv. 23. "And rising very early in the morning, going out he went into a desert place, and there prayed," Mark i. 35. "And he retired into the desert
and prayed," Luke v. 16. So also when he had any business of importance on hand, he began it by prayer. Thus before he chose his twelve apostles, "He went out into a mountain to pray, and he passed the whole night in the prayer of God. And when it was day, he called to him his disciples, and he chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles," Luke vi. 12. In like manner before he entered upon his passion, he passed three hours in the garden in most fervent prayer. Now why all this? He surely had no need of praying on his own account; but he did it for our instruction and example, to show us the necessity of prayer, and how diligent we ought to be in the exercise of so important a duty. "For the same reason he also taught us how to pray, and gave us most necessary instruction about the intention which we ought to have in praying," Matt. vi. 5. His apostles, and indeed all his holy servants, those under the law as well as those under the gospel, were no less assiduous in the exercise of this duty, both as to their general practice, and particularly when they had any business of importance on hand, or were in any particular difficulties. Thus the apostles gave the charge of the temporals of the church to the seven deacons, that they might "give themselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the word," Acts vi. 4. When they were preparing themselves for the coming of the Holy Ghost, "they all continued with one accord in prayer," Acts i. 14. When they were to choose one to make up their number in place of Judas, two of good repute were presented to them, "and praying they said, Thou Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen," Acts i. 24. When they chose the seven deacons, "praying they imposed their hands upon them," Acts vi. 6. When they were to send Paul and Barnabas on their mission, "They fasting and praying, and imposing their hands upon them, sent them away," Acts xiii. 3. When St. Peter was thrown into prison, in order to be put to death, "Prayer was made without ceasing by the church to God for him," Acts xii. 5. When Paul and Silas "were put in prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks: at midnight praying they praised God......and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and all the doors were opened, and every one's bonds were loosed." Acts xvi. 24. Anna the prophetess is commended in the gospel, because "she departed not from the temple, by fastings and prayers, serving night and day," Acts ii. 27. Daniel the prophet chose rather to be "thrown into a den of lions, than to neglect this duty, three stated times every day," Dan.
vi. David rose at midnight to pray to God, and seven times a-day, at stated hours, performed this duty. But it would be endless to mention all the instances of this, which are found throughout the whole scripture, and in all the saints and servants of God. Now why such assiduity, why such continual attention and diligence in these holy souls in performing this duty? For no other reason, surely, but because sensible of their own infirmities, and the great need they had of help from God, and of the necessity of recurring to him by prayer for his help, they were thoroughly convinced how great their duty was to do so. And is not our obligation to perform this duty equally strong?

Q. 4. Since the obligation of this duty of prayer is so very great, and our necessity for doing it so very urgent, what excuses can those bring who neglect it?

A. There can be no excuse for the neglect of so important a duty; and the only cause of omitting it is our want of good will, and our carelessness about the great affair of salvation. Indeed, those who are guilty of neglecting prayer, bring some frivolous pretexts for this neglect; but these pretexts only show to their own shame, how little of the spirit of religion is in them. They pretend (1.) The want of time, on account of the multitude and importance of their worldly affairs. But what can be so important as their salvation? What so necessary as prayer, the principal means to secure it? What will all their endeavours avail to get success, even in their worldly affairs, without the blessing of God? See above, Chap. VIII. Q. 14. And how can they obtain this if they neglect to ask it? Is not prayer the principal means to make their affairs prosperous? Where is their faith? What would they think of a person who, wanting to build a house, should prepare stone, and lime, and wood, and every thing else to build with, but never think of seeking a mason to build it? Besides, how much time do they throw away every day in idleness? in vain amusements? in sin? (2.) Want of a proper place and convenience; but Ezechias, when sick, prayed in his bed; Jeremias in his dungeon; Daniel in the den of lions; Jonas in the whale’s belly; the three children in the furnace; Manasses in prison; our Saviour in the garden; the penitent thief upon the cross; Paul and Silas in the stocks; Stephen amidst the showers of stones; and they were all heard, and their petitions granted. Wherever we are, God is present with us. He resides in our heart, as in his temple, and there is always ready to hear our prayers. (3.) I am so great a sinner, I am not worthy to pray; but
alas! the more unworthy we are, the more need we have of prayer; it is the only resource; and it is chiefly for such that Christ came into the world to make up for their unworthiness by his infinite merits. See above, Chap. VIII, Q. 5. Such unworthy sinners are like Job, when he said of himself, "My flesh being consumed, my bone hath cleaved to my skin, and nothing but lips are left about my mouth," Job xix. 20. Lost to all other means of salvation, their only remedy is to use their lips in fervent prayer to God. (4.) But I cannot pray, I am ignorant and do not know how to do it. Strange! that we who are so eloquent in asking help of men in our bodily needs, should be at a loss how to ask help of God for those of our soul! But who is there that cannot say the Lord's prayer? It is the best of all others, it contains all that is necessary; say it, but say it from the heart, say it frequently, say it attentively, and it will suffice. But if we be sensible of our spiritual miseries, and have a sincere desire of their remedy, words will never be wanting, sufficient to obtain mercy. David, by one word, "I have sinned," said with an humble and contrite heart, obtained pardon of two grievous sins of adultery and murder. The humble publican was justified by this short prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner," repeated with the same penitential dispositions. "Lord, remember me when thou comest to thy kingdom," found mercy to the penitent thief upon the cross. Besides "When you pray," says our blessed Saviour, "speak not much as the heathens do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." Matt. vi. 7. God requires the desire of the heart more than a multitude of words. Be sensible of your wants, have a sincere desire of God's assistance, trust in his mercy for relief, and you will never be at a loss to find words sufficient to pray with profit.

Q. 5. Is prayer a certain means of obtaining mercy and help from God?

A. St. James says, "You ask, and you receive not, because you ask amiss," James iv. 3. Which shows, that if we pray improperly, either as to the thing we ask, or as to the manner of asking, we need not expect to be heard. But on the other hand, if we ask for the proper object, and in a proper manner, prayer is not only a certain, but it is an infallible means of obtaining what we ask. Nay, God himself speaks in his holy scriptures on this subject in such a way, as shows that prayer does violence in a manner to his heart, and constrains him to grant our requests. Thus, when Moses prayed to God for the people, who had fallen into the crime of idolatry by worshipping
the golden calf, God said to him, "Let me alone, that my wrath may be kindled against them, and that I may destroy them," Ex. xxxii. 10. But Moses, who well knew the force and efficacy of prayer, would not desist, but prayed with the greater ardour for forgiveness, and at last God yielded to Moses, and "was appeased from doing the evil which he had spoken against his people," verse 14. Here we see that God was resolved to destroy the people, and would certainly have done it, had not the prayers of Moses opposed his resolution, and constrained him to forgive them. In like manner, when provoked by the sins of the Jews, and resolved to cast them away from before his face, he said to Jeremias: "Therefore do not thou pray for this people, nor take to thee praise and supplication for them, and do not withstand me," Jer. vii. 16. Which last words, do not withstand me, like those above said to Moses, let me alone, manifestly show, that such is the force and efficacy of prayer, that it can withstand the wrath of God, and in a manner constrain him to peace and pardon. This is further manifested by what the wise man says of the prayer of the humble man, that it "shall pierce the clouds, and till it come nigh it will not be comforted, and it will not depart till the Most High behold," Ecclus. xxxv. 21. Where we see that prayer, when properly performed, is obstinate before God, importunes him, and will take no denial, nor turn away till its request be granted.

Q. 6. These are surely most amazing truths, and being declared by God himself, are no less certain than wonderful; but whence comes it that prayer has such a surprising influence with Almighty God?

A. This arises from two reasons: (1.) The repeated promises of God, by which he has engaged his sacred word, his truth, and his fidelity, to grant our requests, when we pray as we ought to him. "I say unto you," says Jesus Christ, "ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened," Luke xi. 9. Is it possible to make a more clear and express promise than this is? And he confirms it with his usual asseveration: "I say unto you," I who am truth itself, and who am infinitely powerful, able to make good whatever I say, "I say unto you, ask and it shall be given you," In the same manner he says on another occasion: "Therefore I say to you, whatsoever you ask, when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you," Mark xi. 24. Could
Christ himself engage his word in more universal terms? "I go to the Father," says he again, "and whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask me any thing in my name, that I will do," John xiv. 13. So also, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you," John xv. 7. But whereas the apostles had not made the proper use of these repeated promises, he afterwards renews them with a more solemn asseveration, and exhorts them to ask, that their hearts may rejoice: "Amen, amen, I say unto you, if you ask the Father any thing in my name he will give it to you. Hitherto you have not asked any thing in my name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full," John xvi. 23. (2.) The efficacy of prayer arises also from the infinite goodness, liberality, and mercy of God, by which he is most powerfully inclined to communicate himself and all good things to his beloved creatures, whom he has made on purpose to be happy in the enjoyment of himself for ever; and nothing puts a stop to this inconceivable propensity which he has to bestow all good things upon us, but the want of the proper dispositions in our soul for receiving them. When therefore we pray in the proper manner, and with the proper dispositions, this impediment to the effects of his goodness is taken away, and a door is opened in our soul, by which every good thing we ask for gets admittance. On this subject our Saviour himself speaks as follows: "What man is there among you, of whom if his son ask bread, will he reach him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he reach him a serpent? If then you being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more will your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?" Matt. vii. 9. A most convincing argument indeed; for if men, though evil and imperfect, cannot resist the just requests of their children, how much less will God, who is infinitely good, infinitely merciful, infinitely liberal, infinitely beneficent, infinitely propense to do us good, be able to resist the humble prayers of his servants, or refuse to bestow those good things upon them, which they ask of him? Now, can Jesus Christ lie? Can he break his word? Can he fail in his promises? No, no, this is impossible; "God is not as a man, that he should lie, nor as the son of man, that he should be changed. Hath he said then, and will he not do? Hath he spoken, and will he not fulfil?" Num. xxiii. 19. Hence, therefore, it is infallibly certain, that when we pray to God for his good things, and do so in the
proper manner, our prayer shall be heard, and these good things shall be granted us; yea, this is as certain as it is certain that Jesus Christ cannot break his word, and that God cannot go back of his promise.

Q. 7. Are there any examples in scripture of this powerful efficacy of prayer?

A. The scripture is full of such examples. Thus (1.) Rebecca, the wife of Isaac, was barren, "And Isaac besought the Lord for his wife, because she was barren and he heard him, and made Rebecca to conceive," Gen. xxv. 21. So also Anna, the mother of Samuel had been long barren, and suffered many reproaches on that account, and she prayed to God, as we have seen above, and he heard her; and when she presented her son in the temple, she said to the high priest Eli, "For this child did I pray, and the Lord hath granted my petition, which I asked of him," 1 Sam. i. 27. (2.) When king Ezechias was sick to death, the prophet Isaias went to him and said, "Thus saith the Lord God, give charge concerning thy house, for thou shalt die and not live. And he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord......And before Isaias was gone out of the middle of the court, the word of the Lord came to him saying, go back and tell Ezechias, the captain of my people, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, and I have seen thy tears, and behold I have healed thee; on the third day thou shalt go up to the temple of the Lord, and I will add to thy days fifteen years," 4 Kings xx. 1. (3.) "Elias was a man passable, like unto us," says St. James "and with prayer he prayed that it might not rain upon the earth, and it rained not for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit," James v. 17. (4.) King Herod, "when he had apprehended St. Peter, cast him into prison, delivering him to four files of soldiers to be kept, intending after the Pasch to bring him forth to the people. 'But prayer was made without ceasing by the church to God for him. And Herod would have brought him forth the same night......The Lord sent his angel, who took him out of prison in a most miraculous manner and delivered him out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews," Acts xii. 4, 11. (5.) The example of Moses, related above, Q. 4, is most amazing; but it were endless to relate all that are found in scripture of this kind, every book almost being full of them.

Q. 8. What are the conditions required to make our prayers
agreeable to God, and efficacious in obtaining what we ask of him?

A. Oh, this, indeed, is a most important subject, as it is for want of some one or another of these conditions that our prayers are rendered fruitless, and hindered from having the effect which we desire. There are several conditions required on our part, which therefore must be carefully attended to. They are:

(1.) To be in friendship with God, and free from the guilt of sin. When a person lives in the guilt of known sin, and in disgrace with God, his soul is utterly incapable of receiving his heavenly gifts, and he is positively unworthy of receiving any favour from him; and the holy scripture assures us, that nothing is a greater hinderance to our prayer being heard, than to live in such a state of enmity with God; David tells us that “The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and his ears open unto his prayers; but the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth,” Ps. xxxiii. 17. And God himself says to all such, “When you stretch forth your hands, I will turn away my eye from you; and when you multiply prayer I will not hear, for your hands are full of blood,” Is. i. 15; that is, your souls are defiled with the guilt of your sins, which render you hateful to me, like a person whose hands are reeking with the blood of his neighbour whom he has murdered. So also Isaias says to sinners, “Your iniquities have divided between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he should not hear,” Is. lix. 2. Hence, Jeremias laments the sins of his people in these words: “We have done wickedly and provoked thee to wrath; therefore thou art inexorable....thou hast set a cloud before thee, that our prayer may not pass through,” Lam. iii. 42, 44. Nay, the wise man declares, that “He that turneth away his ears from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination,” Prov. xxviii. 9. It is true indeed that though a person has been ever so great a sinner, yet if he return to God with a sincere repentance, and cry for mercy, his prayer will be heard, and the scripture is full of the most encouraging assurances to all such: thus, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he is bountiful to forgive,” Is. lv. 6. And the examples of the humble publican, and the prodigal son with other such, show clearly how ready Almighty God is to
hear the prayers of the greatest sinners when they return to him, and cry for mercy. But to be entitled to all the glorious effects of prayer, and to the sacred promises which Jesus Christ makes to hear our prayers, we must leave off our evil ways, and be in friendship with him; and this condition is expressly made to these promises. Thus, "If you abide in me," says Jesus Christ, "and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you," John xv. 7. "He that loveth God shall obtain pardon for his sins by prayer, and shall refrain himself from them, and shall be heard in the prayer of days," Ecclus. iii. 4. "Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the request of thy heart," Ps. xxxvi. 4. "Dearly beloved," says St John, "if our heart do not reprehend us, we have confidence towards God, and whatsoever we shall ask we shall receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight," 1 John iii. 21. And therefore St. James assures us that, "The continual prayer of a just man availeth much," John v. 16.

(2.) That the things we pray for, be conducive to our salvation, and according to the will of God. We have seen above, Chap. V. Q. 8. No. 2., that the great end which God had in view in creating this universe, and in all he has done in it, whether in the order of nature or in the order of grace, is the salvation souls; and that all the good things he has bestowed on us in this life, are intended only as helps or means to enable us to secure this great end of our being. Hence the riches and enjoyments of this world, if they be so used as to promote our salvation, are real goods to us, but if we abuse them to the hurt of our souls they become real evils. On the contrary, if the miseries and sufferings of this life are so used as to be of service to our souls, however afflicting they be in the mean time to our nature, they are in fact real goods; but if we abuse them to the loss of our souls, they are real evils. We have also seen above that the salvation of our soul is the only important affair we have to think of; that it is of no manner of consequence, what way we may be in, while in this valley of tears, whether in wealth or poverty, in sickness or health, in ease or pain, provided we can only save our souls; but that if we lose our souls, all is lost for ever. Finally, we have further seen, Chap. IV. Q. 3. No. 5, that considering the corruption of our nature by sin, it is much more difficult to save our souls amidst the plenty and abundance of worldly enjoyments, than with a moderate sufficiency of the necessaries of life, or even amidst sufferings and afflictions. From these undoubted prin-
ciples it follows, that the great and continual object of our de-
sires, and consequently of our prayers, ought to be our eternal
salvation, and all those goods which are necessary for procuring
it; such as victory over our passions, grace to resist temptations,
the living free from sin, our advancement in virtue, patience
in our sufferings, union with the will of God, final perseverance
by a happy death, and the like. We are absolutely certain
that all these things are according to the will of God, and what
he is most ready to grant us, because "He wills all men to be
saved," 1 Tim. ii. 4. But as for the good things of this world,
or the being delivered from its evils, a Christian ought never
desire them for himself, nor pray for them, but only as far
as God sees they may be of use to his soul. We have seen,
Chap. IV. Q. 4., how strongly Jesus Christ forbids his followers
to set their hearts upon these things, or seek their happiness in
them; how strictly he enjoins them, by mortification and self-
denial, to take off their affections from them; while at the same
time he passes his sacred promise to them that, if they do so,
he will take care to supply them with such a sufficiency of the
goods of this life, as will be necessary for their support, and of
no hurt, but of service to their souls, See Chap. IV. Q. 7. From
all which it is manifest that, (1.) When we pray for the salva-
tion of our souls and those graces which are conducive to, or
necessary for obtaining it, we may depend upon being heard,
when, in what manner, and in what proportion God sees best
for us; because it is only to these goods that all the promises
of hearing our prayers are made. (2.) When we pray for tem-
poral goods, the promises of hearing such prayers are only con-
ditional. If God sees it for the good of our souls, he will grant
what we ask; if not, he will refuse it; unless in punishment
of our too great anxiety for, and attachment to these goods, he
should grant in his anger what he would refuse in his mercy.
Hence, (3.) We may and ought to pray for the former goods
with all the ardour of our souls, and with all the confidence of
being heard, and without any condition. But, (4.) With regard
to our temporal necessities, we should either not ask for them
at all, but humbly laying all such necessities before God, leave
it to him by a holy resignation to his will to do as he sees best;
or if we do ask for them, as it is certainly laudable and lawful
to do so, we ought to ask them only as a secondary and acces-
sary means of salvation, and always with this condition, if God
sees it is for the good of our souls, and only as far as he sees
so, but with an entire resignation to his will to give them or
not as he pleases. All this is confirmed by repeated testimo
of scripture; thus, "Be not solicitous, therefore, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed, for after all these things do the heathens seek; for your Father knows that you have need of all those things, Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and his justice and all these things shall be added to you," Matt. vi. 31. Again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it you," John xv. 23. What can we ask in the name of the Saviour, but what conduces to our salvation? Would it not be injurious to him, to ask any thing in his name which would be hurtful to our souls? and would he be a Saviour to us, if he should grant such a prayer? "If you then being evil know how to give good things to your children; how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask them?" Matt. vii. 11. What are good things in the judgment of God? Surely only such as are for the good of our soul? Would it be receiving good things from God, if we ask him for what he knows would make us eternally miserable, and he should grant them? Is it his will to give us such goods? and would it be asking according to his will, if we should pray for such? Now it is upon asking according to his will that our confidence of being heard must be founded. Hence St. John says, "This is the confidence which we have towards him, that whatsoever we shall ask according to his will, he heareth us; and we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask; we know we have the petitions which we request of him," 1 John v. 14.

But as for temporal goods, or the being delivered from temporal evils, Christ himself shows us by his own example that we should pray for them only conditionally, and with resignation; for being oppressed with sorrow in the garden at the sight of the dreadful chalice of sufferings he was going to endure, he prayed thus, "Father if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt," Matt. xxvi. 39; and again, "Father, if thou wilt, remove this chalice from me; but yet not my will, but thine be done," Luke xxii. 42. Where we see both, that it is laudable and lawful to pray for temporal favours, and that all such prayers ought to be made with perfect resignation to the will of God, and on condition that he think proper to grant them. We must pray for them, because prayer is the necessary means to obtain them, as well as all other good things; but we must leave it entirely to God to grant them or not as he thinks fit, because we are perfectly ignorant, whether it would be good for us to have them or not. In all such cases we ought to be firmly persuaded, that if he do
not think fit to grant the very thing we ask, he will grant us something else that he sees better for us; for prayer can never be fruitless; it is a promise made by Christ himself, that “Every one that asketh (properly) receiveth,” Matt. vii. 8; and when we ask temporal goods in the way Christ did; we surely ask properly, and therefore receive we shall, if not the very thing we ask, something better for us. Thus St. Paul thrice besought the Lord to be delivered from the angel of Satan that was given to buffet him, and was denied that favour; but he received a much greater one, a plentiful grace to support him, and enable him to overcome that enemy with great fruit to his soul.

(3.) That we pray with attention and fervour. These two qualities of good prayer are joined together, because they naturally arise from, and are accompanied by one another. Prayer, properly speaking, consists in two things; to wit, the desires of our heart for some good thing, and the manifesting those desires to God: and it is evident, that if either of these two be wanting, there is no prayer. This manifestation of our desires to God may be either by the heart alone, and this is to pray mentally; or they may be expressed also in words, and this is to pray vocally. The foundation then of prayer are the desires of the heart; it is by them that the heart is dilated and disposed for receiving the things we pray for; according to that of our Saviour, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill,” Matt. v. 6. These desires arise from the high esteem we have for the good things we wish for; the greater and more fervent our desires for any good are, the more they show how great our esteem is of it; but if our desires be weak and languid, our esteem must be but little. Now as the good things of God are of inestimable value in themselves, he requires of us to have a great esteem for them, and of course an ardent desire of them. This high esteem and fervent desire, is what moves him in a particular manner to bestow his gifts upon us; thus, “The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor; thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart,” Ps. x. 17. (Heb.) “In thy strength, O Lord, the king shall joy; and in thy salvation he shall rejoice exceedingly; thou hast given him his heart’s desire; and thou hast not withheld from him the will of his lips,” Ps. xx. 1. “That which the wicked feareth, shall come upon him; to the just, their desire shall be given,” Prov. x. 24. And when Daniel “set his face to make supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes, and to pray for his people with great fervour,” which he showed both in the expressions of his prayer itself, and in those peni-
tential works with which he accompanied it, at last the angel Gabriel appeared to him, and said, "O Daniel, I am now come forth to teach thee, and that thou mightest understand. From the beginning of thy prayers the word came forth: and I am come to show it to thee, because thou art a man of desires," Dan. ix. 3, 22. But when a person has no esteem for the good things of God, when he has no great desire for them, when he prefers the perishable things of this life before them, and is more solicitous about these than the concerns of eternity, he is then totally indisposed for receiving the gifts of God; and though he should say some prayers for the good of his soul, yet these prayers being languid, cold, and heartless, and he himself being as it were indifferent whether he receives them or not; such prayers are rather loathsome to God than pleasing, and more apt to move him to indignation than to pity, seeing they show a contempt of him and of his eternal goodness, and that the preference is given to the world before him. Hence it is manifest that our prayers must proceed from a heart inflamed with an ardent desire of the inestimable goods which we ask from God, just as the incense, which in scripture is proposed as an emblem of fervent prayer, then sends up its clouds of sweet smelling smoke towards heaven, when itself is burning upon the fire in the censer. Hence David says, "Let my prayer be directed as incense in thy sight, the lifting up of my hands as evening sacrifice," Ps. cxl. 2. And such are the prayers of all the saints of God, of whom we are told, that "the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God, from the hand of the angel," Apoc. viii. 4. Now when we manifest these desires to God mentally, and in the heart alone; though in some high degree of supernatural prayer, the imagination may sometimes be carried away with various distractions, even while the heart and will are exercising the most fervent affections towards God, yet ordinarily this is not the case; but our very expressing our desires to God, in our heart, naturally draws the attention of the mind along with it. But the case is very different in our vocal prayers, for there it but too often happens, that we recite with our lips those words which express the desires of the heart, whilst our mind is wandering about on a thousand idle and worldly objects, and the heart itself is perhaps engaged in affections very different from, and sometimes even contrary to, those which the words contain. These distractions of the mind in our vocal prayers may arise from different causes, (1.) From the devil, who knowing the immense advantage of prayer to the soul, endeavours by
every means in his power either to hinder us from applying to it at all, by putting a thousand impediments in our way, engaging us in a multitude of worldly cares and amusements, and giving us a backwardness and aversion to prayer; or if he cannot hinder us from practising it, he endeavours to hinder the good effects of it, by filling our mind in time of prayer with a thousand wild, impertinent imaginations and wandering thoughts, so as sometimes to put in our minds in time of prayer things that had never entered our thoughts at any other time. (2.) From bodily infirmity, the natural weakness of our mind in our present corrupt state; and the instability of our imagination; all which is so great that we can scarce so much as repeat the Lord’s prayer, but some wandering thought will present itself to our mind in time of it: for “the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things,” Wisd. ix. 15. This natural indisposition to prayer is greatly augmented by our attachment to creatures, and our occupying our mind so continually in our worldly affairs and amusements; for by this means these objects make a deep impression upon the imagination, are always present to the mind, and to fill the heart, that it can scarcely apply itself to any thing else. (3.) From ourselves; when in time of prayer we either voluntarily set our thoughts upon worldly objects, or knowingly entertain them when they are suggested to our mind by either of the two former causes. Now when distracting thoughts are borne in upon our mind in time of prayer against our will, either by suggestions of the enemy, or the infirmity of our nature, and we endeavour, as we best can, to drive them away, and to keep our mind attentive to the presence of God, with whom we are conversing, and to the subject of our prayer, these distractions, though ever so importunate, will be of no hurt to the soul, nor hinder our prayers from being heard by our good God, who “knowing our frame, and remembering that we are dust,” Ps. ciii. 4, pities our weakness in the day of battle; assists us with his grace to keep our hearts upright with him, and will reward our fidelity in fighting manfully against such temptations. But the case is very different with those distractions which arise from the third cause; for if, while we are pretending to honour God by reciting our prayers, we should either of ourselves set our thoughts a wandering upon improper objects, or knowingly entertain those that are suggested by the devil or our own imagination, without giving any attention to God, and what our lips are saying to him; this must be highly displeas-
ing to God, and will render our prayers not only fruitless but hurtful to us. Such pretended prayer is in fact no prayer at all, it is mere hypocrisy; it wants the foundation of prayer, which is the desire of the heart; it is a pretending to manifest to God the desires of the heart, by the words we repeat, whilst the heart has no desire at all of what the words may express but perhaps is occupied with affections displeasing to God. To such prayer is justly applied the reproach made by Isaias the prophet, and which our blessed Saviour applies to the Jews: "Ye hypocrites, well has Isaias prophesied of you, saying, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their hearts is far from me. In vain do they worship me," Matt. xv. 7. Of such also David says, "They loved him with their mouth, and with their tongue they lied unto him; but their heart was not right with him," Ps. lxxvii. 36. Hence therefore it is manifest, that if we wish our prayers should be acceptable to God, and profitable to ourselves, we must take care they flow from a fervent heart, burning with an earnest desire of obtaining from him those inestimable favours which we pray for, and which will conduct us to eternal bliss; and at the same time that we must say them with all possible attention of mind, using the proper means, and our best endeavours to avoid all distracting thoughts in time of prayer, and to keep our mind recollected to the presence of that great God with whom we speak, and to the good things we ask of him. Now the means to be used for this purpose are: (1.) "Before prayer prepare thy soul, and be not as a man that tempteth God," Ecclus. xviii. 23. This preparation consists in considering beforehand what we are going to do, with whom we are going to speak, and upon what subject; to wit, the concerns of our soul; in calling to mind the presence of God, in directing our intention to God, offering up what we are about to do, purely in obedience to his will, and for his honour and glory, in humbling ourselves before him as incapable of praying as we ought, and begging his assistance to enable us to perform that duty so as to please him; and this will be the proper defence against the assaults of our spiritual enemies. (2.) To divest ourselves, as much as possible, of all solicitude and anxiety about the concerns of this life; to avoid all such unnecessary employments and vain amusements, as fill the imagination with idle and vain ideas of the creatures, and carry away the heart to a fondness for them, and, by often reading and meditating on holy subjects, to imprint deeply in the mind and heart a high idea of them, and a love and affection for them; and this will be the best cure for the infirmity of
nature. (3.) To use a proper resolution and force with ourselves, to keep up a lively sense of the Divine presence during the time of prayer, and the moment we observe any distracting thought appear, immediately to reject it with disdain, whatever alluring appearance it may put on, humbling ourselves before God, and renewing our actual attention to his presence, and this will effectually preserve our will from all voluntary consent to whatever distractions may be presented to our mind from either of the former causes.

(4.) The fourth condition required, to make our prayer efficacious is, that it be humble, that is, void of all presumption upon ourselves, or upon any merits of our own, as if we either could acquire any good by our own natural abilities, or had any thing in ourselves that could deserve it from God. This is a most essential quality of prayer, and the want of it is what more than any thing else will hinder God from granting what we pray for. It is founded upon two great truths, which we can never have too deeply impressed in our mind. The first is, that of ourselves we can do no good towards our salvation, neither resist temptations, nor break ill habits, nor avoid sin, nor acquire any virtue, nor persevere in good; nor, in a word, do any thing that is acceptable in the sight of God. The second truth is, that of ourselves we deserve no help, no grace, or any good thing from him; nay, that on account of our manifold sins, ingratitude, and infidelity to him, we deserve nothing but stripes and punishments, and to be rejected by him entirely. That therefore we must never presume or have any dependence upon ourselves of obtaining any good, but expect it only from his goodness and mercy through the merits of our blessed Saviour. This holy disposition greatly increases the fervour of the soul; for we are never more earnest in desiring any good, than when we are thoroughly convinced of the greatness of our want of it, and at the same time it powerfully moves God to grant what we desire. This he declares by his prophet: "To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words?" Is. lxvi. 2. "For thus saith the High and the Eminent, that inhabiteth eternity, and his name is Holy, who dwelleth in the high and holy place, and with a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite," Is. lvii. 15. For "a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise," Ps. 1. 19. And therefore, "he hath regard to the prayer of the humble, and he hath not despised their petition." Ps. ci. 18. "For the Lord is nigh to them
that are of a contrite heart, and he will save the humble of spirit,” Ps. xxxiii. 19. But “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble,” James iv. 6. The holy servants of God were most sensible of this truth, and therefore, in all their prayers which are recorded in scripture, especially in times of distress, we find they were all grounded in this holy virtue. Thus Judith says, “Thy power, O God, is not in a multitude, nor is thy pleasure in the strength of horses, nor from the beginning have the proud been acceptable to thee, but the prayer of the humble and meek hath always pleased thee......hear me a poor wretch, making supplication to thee, and presuming of thy mercy,” Judith ix. 16. In like manner Esther, “covered her head with ashes and dung, and she humbled her body with fasts......and she prayed to the Lord, the God of Israel, saying, O my Lord, who alone art our King, help me a desolate woman, who have no other helper but thee,” Esth. xiv. 2. Daniel also, in his fervent prayer, which brought an angel from heaven to tell him what he wanted to know, says, “Incline, O my God, thy ear, and hear; open thy eyes and see our desolation......for it is not in our justifications that we present our prayers before thy face, but for the multitude of thy tender mercies,” Dan. ix. 18. The different effects of the prayers of the humble publican, and of the proud Pharisee, are well known; and the prayer of the prodigal son, by which he found favour with his father, was wholly founded in humility. Hence the wise man assures us that, “The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds; and till it come nigh it will not be comforted, and will not depart till the Most High behold: and the Lord will not be slack,” Ecclus. xxxv. 21. The reason why humility is so powerful a means to find mercy with him is, because by it we give due honour to his Almighty power, according to that, “The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shall find grace before God; for great is the power of God alone, and he is honoured by the humble,” Ecclus. iii. 20. Now though every Christian knows and believes the above two truths, upon which this humility of our prayer is founded, and on that account may be said to have humility of the understanding; yet such is the unhappy pride of our heart, that notwithstanding the conviction we have of our own weakness and unworthiness, still we feel our heart revolts at that truth, wishes always to have some good opinion of ourselves, as if there was something in us of our own, and which we have not from God and is carried away, as it were by violence, to presume upon itself, and have a dependence on its own forces. To counteract
the fatal effects of this unhappy disposition, it is a most useful practice, not only at the beginning of prayer, but also of every other duty we have to do, to make an act of profound humility before God, expressly confessing our own inability to do it well without his assistance, and our unworthiness of any help from him; and renouncing all confidence in ourselves, to throw ourselves entirely upon his mercy for what we need; and experience will show, that when this is done sincerely, and from the heart, how powerful a benediction it brings from God. But we observed in all the above examples of the humble prayers of the saints, that while they rejected all trust or confidence in themselves, they presumed wholly upon the mercy of God; and therefore,

(5.) The fifth quality of prayer is, that this humble diffidence in ourselves be accompanied with a perfect trust and confidence in God, grounded solely upon his infinite goodness, his fidelity to his promises, and the merits of Jesus Christ. This confidence or hope in God is a virtue which resides partly in the understanding, and partly in the will. In the understanding; because we firmly believe that God is exceedingly disposed and inclined by his own infinite goodness, and has bound himself by promise, to grant us the good things we ask. In the will; because adhering to this well founded belief, we undoubtedly hope, without hesitation or suspicion of the contrary, that God will actually grant our demands; and being animated with this firm hope and confidence, we present our petitions to God with greater fervour of spirit, and with a holy importunity, which to him is most agreeable. Hence St. James says, "If any of you want wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all abundantly, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is driven and tossed about by the wind; therefore, let not that man think he shall receive any thing of the Lord," James i. 5. Let him ask in faith; see the firm belief of the goodness and fidelity of God; nothing wavering; see here the unshaken hope and confidence of the will. But as prayer is the child of hope, and the proper exercise of that virtue, see above the admirable effects of prayer, when it rises from an humble heart, and is winged with a lively hope, Chap. VIII. § 2., through the whole, and § 3. No. 4. We may only further add here, the example of the good cen- turion, who in his prayer for his servant's health, joined a profound humility with a perfect confidence, in so admirable a manner, as to make Jesus Christ himself express his surprise at
it, and grant him that instant what he prayed for, Matt. viii. 8. Which shows how agreeable it is to God that we have an entire confidence in him, and presume, as the scripture expresses it, of his mercy, when we are not conscious of any thing in ourselves to put a stop to it. But on the contrary, it is a great injury and affront to God to have any diffidence in him, as it manifestly includes a supposition most injurious to his goodness; namely, that though he can, without the least trouble, and only by willing it, relieve us and assist us in what is really good for us, yet even when we apply to him for it, he will not do it. It also involves a heinous affront to his veracity, by supposing he is capable of not performing his repeated promises to hear our prayers and grant our pious requests.

(6.) Another most necessary quality of prayer, and which is the crown of all the former, is perseverance, accompanied with an humble resignation to the will of God. Though Almighty God has bound himself by promise to grant us those good things which we ask of him in prayer, and which are conducive to our salvation; yet he has not bound himself to give us them the very moment we ask them, nor yet in such manner or measure as we may ask, which perhaps may not always be the best for our souls. God is pleased indeed sometimes to hear our prayers immediately; at other times he requires to be entreated for days, and weeks, and months, and years; sometimes he is pleased to grant us at once the whole of what we ask; at other times he imparts it by little and little, and as it were insensibly. Sometimes the thing we ask, though holy and good in itself, may not be so proper for us in our present dispositions and circumstances, and God in his infinite mercy is pleased to refuse that, but rewards our prayers with something better for us. Now as to all these circumstances we must be perfectly resigned to whatever God pleases. It is enough for us to know that all is intended by his infinite wisdom for our greater good, which he alone knows how to promote; and that if we persevere in our prayer, sooner or later he will grant us our hearts' desire in the way, manner, and measure, that he knows best for us. And indeed who are we to set a time to the favours of God?

When Judith had heard that Ozias, the ruler of the people, had agreed to give up the city to Holofernes who was besieging it, if within five days God did not relieve them, she said to him and the other rulers, "What is this word by which ye have consented to give up the city to the Assyrians, if within five days there come no aid to us? And who are you that tempt the Lord? This is not a word that may draw down mercy;
but rather that may stir up wrath, and enkindle indignation. You have set a time for the mercy of the Lord, and you have appointed him a day according to your pleasure; but for as much as the Lord is patient, let us be penitent for this same thing, and with many tears let us beg his pardon......let us humble our souls before him, and, continuing in an humble spirit in his service, let us ask the Lord with tears, that according to his will, so he would show his mercy towards us," Judith viii. 10. The high priest Eliachim’s behaviour upon this same occasion, was very different from that of these rulers; for he “went about all Israel and spoke to them, saying, Know ye that the Lord will hear your prayers, if you continue with perseverance in fastings and prayers in the sight of the Lord,” Judith iv. 11. And indeed there is nothing which our blessed Saviour seems more earnest to inculcate to us, than to persevere in our prayers to God. The parable of the two friends is expressly intended for that purpose; and he concludes it with these words: "Yet if he shall continue knocking, I say to you, although he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many loaves as he needeth;" and then he immediately adds, "And I say to you, Ask and it shall be given you," &c. Luke xi. 8; thereby showing us, that this sacred promise of granting what we ask is principally made to our perseverance in asking. And no wonder that perseverance should at last be victorious; for if it could even move the heart of the friend, and against his will, to do what was displeasing to him, and grant what was asked of him, how much more must it move the heart of God, who is all goodness, who takes a delight to bestow his good things upon us, and who only delays granting them, that he may grant them afterwards more to our advantage, and as a reward of our very perseverance? The parable of the unjust judge and the widow was used by our Saviour on purpose to show us, “that we ought always to pray and not to faint,” Luke xviii. 1; that is, to persevere, without wearying, though God should delay hearing us; for that coming, he will come at last and grant us all we desire; and the example of the Canaanite woman, with the happy fruits of her perseverance, is recorded at large for our encouragement and imitation. When she first presented her prayer to our blessed Saviour, he seemed not to mind her, and “answered her not a word.” She persisted, and the disciples begged him to send her away, as being troublesome. But he seemed to despise her, as having nothing to do with her, saying, “I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of
the house of Israel." She, far from being discouraged by this apparent contempt, persisted with greater fervour; "for she came and worshipped him saying, Lord help me," He still seemed unmoved, and said, "It is not good to take the bread of the children and cast it to the dogs;" but she, not in the least disturbed at this humiliating expression, humbled herself the more, persisted the more, and even from what he said drew an argument in her own favour. True, said she, it is so; I acknowledge myself a wretched creature, and unworthy of being treated as a child, but let me have at least what even the dogs get, "for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their master." O then, indeed, our Saviour's tender heart could resist no longer. The justice of her petition, which was the cure of her daughter, who was grievously troubled by a devil, her fervour, her humility, her confidence, her persever- ance, made such a powerful assault upon him, that turning upon her he said, "O woman, great is thy faith, be it done to thee as thou wilt; and her daughter was cured from that hour," Matt. xv. 22. How strong an encouragement does all this give us never to faint, never to be weary, never to give over knock- ing at the door of the Divine mercy, till at last it be opened to us to our great consolation! How does it teach us rather to increase our fervour, our humility, and our confidence in him, when he seems not to hear us, with the firm persuasion that perseverance in these virtues will at last obtain our request. "Do not therefore lose your confidence," says St. Paul, "which hath a great reward; for patience is necessary for you, that doing the will of God, you may receive the promise," Heb. x. 35. When God delays granting what we ask, it is his will we should persevere with confidence and patience, and in his good time the promised reward will, without doubt, be given us.

When now we reflect on the continual need we have of the protection of God, at all times, in every thing we do, and on the infallible efficacy of holy prayer in obtaining for us all reasonable aid from him, we cannot wonder at the repeated in-junctions given in the holy scripture, to watch without inter- mission in this holy exercise. See above, Q. 2. No. 2. But we can never sufficiently deplore and wonder at the negligence, aversion, and backwardness of the most part of mankind to this duty. May Almighty God open our eyes to see this folly; and may he pour out upon all men the holy spirit of prayer, for in giving them this, he will undoubtedly give them by its means all good things.

Q. 9. Is it a duty to pray for others as well as for ourselves?
A. Those who have the charge of others' souls, as pastors, parents, masters of families, &c., are strictly obliged in justice, as well as in charity, to pray for those under their charge. And we are all obliged in charity to pray for one another's salvation, according to the command of the apostle. "Pray for one another, that you may be saved," James v. 6. For "God gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbour," Ecclus. xvii. 12. In the gospel we are expressly commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves, and consequently to wish and pray for his salvation, as well as for our own: Nay, we are commanded to love our neighbours as Christ loved us, and consequently to pray for their salvation, as Christ prayed for ours. St. John goes still farther, and says, "In this we have known the charity of God, because he hath laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren," 1 John iii. 16. Namely, if at any time the salvation of their souls should require it; and if so, how much more ought we to pray for their salvation? Now such prayers are most acceptable to God, having the splendour of charity added to their own intrinsic value; and if they be made with proper dispositions, as above laid down, it is not to be doubted but they are most profitable both to those who make them, and to those for whom they are made; and there are numbers of examples in the histories of the saints, of the conversions of the greatest sinners being obtained by this means; witness St. Paul by the prayers of St. Stephen, and the example of the Chanaaneean woman, by whose prayers her daughter was delivered from the oppression of the devil.

§ 2. Of the Adoration and Worship of God.

Q. 10. What is meant by the adoration or worship of God?

A. The adoration of God properly consists in this, that we, considering on the one hand our own extreme unworthiness and misery, and on the other, the infinite majesty of the divinity, humble ourselves exceedingly, and annihilate ourselves in his presence, exalting him above all things, and abasing ourselves before him. It contains an act both of the understanding and of the will, of the spirit and of the heart. Hence, to adore God is to acknowledge him to be a Being of infinite majesty, and of infinite perfection, and in consequence of that to exalt him with all our heart and affections, and to humble ourselves as a mere nothing before him. It is to acknowledge
him to be the Author and Giver of all good, on whom we totally
depend for our being itself, and every thing else, and in conse-
quence of that, to abandon ourselves totally to his Divine pro-
vidence, with an entire dependence on him. It is, to acknow-
ledge him to be our first beginning and last end, and in conse-
quence of that, to adhere to him with all the affections of our
soul. It is to acknowledge him to be our supreme Lord and
Master, who has the most absolute and unalienable dominion
over us, and is sole Master of life and death, and in consequence
of that, to subject ourselves to him by a perfect obedience to
his will. This adoration, then, contains two parts: to be firmly
persuaded in our understanding that God is what he is, which
is, to worship or adore God in spirit, and to render him all
those affections of our heart and will, and that obedience of our
whole person, which are essentially due to him, on account of
what he is, which is, to worship or adore him in truth. It is
either internal or external. Internal adoration is, when we
actually exercise in our interior, all these dispositions of the
soul just mentioned; and its proper acts are exaltation of God,
and humiliation of ourselves, submission, and dependence.
External adoration is, when by the outward actions of the body,
we testify externally those inward dispositions of the soul; and
its acts are praising and exalting God by our words, and all
those actions of the body, which either in themselves, or in the
common estimation of mankind, signify humiliation, submission,
and dependence on our part, and the giving honour and respect
to him; such as kneeling, prostration, stretching out the hands,
uncovering the head, bowing down the body, the offering incense,
and sacrifice.

Q. 11. Are we obliged to worship and adore God in this
manner?

A. It is our bounden duty to do so; we are obliged to it by
our very being as creatures; God has an unalienable right to
our adoration from his own infinite excellency, and from his
supreme dominion over us; and therefore he expressly requires
it from us: The “Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only
shalt thou serve,” Matt. v. 10. And “the true adorers shall
ador the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father also
seeketh such to adore him. God is a spirit, and they that
ador him, must adore him in spirit and in truth,” John iv. 23.
Nay, let us do as much as we can to adore, exalt, and glorify
him, we never can do enough, nor come in any degree near
what he deserves. “We shall say much and yet shall want
words: but the sum of our words is, He is all. What shall we
be able to do to glorify him, for the Almighty himself is above all his works? The Lord is terrible and exceeding great, and his power is admirable. Glorify him as much as ever you can, for he will yet far exceed, and his magnificence is wonderful. Blessing the Lord, exalt him as much as you can; for he is above all praise. When you exalt him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary; for you never can go far enough. Who shall see him and shall declare him? and who shall magnify him, as he is from the beginning?” Ecclus. xliii. 29.

Q. 12. Are the external acts of adoration above mentioned, agreeable and pleasing to God?

A. All external acts of adoration are agreeable to God, only in so far as they proceed from the internal dispositions of the soul, are signs of these dispositions, and accompanied with them. For if we give to Almighty God these external acts of adoration, and do not at the same time give him the internal worship of the heart, we are only hypocrites and liars, like those unhappy soldiers who “bowed the knees before Jesus Christ, and said, Hail King of the Jews; and such lying adoration offends God instead of pleasing him; for of such he says, “This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain they honour me,” Matt. xv. 7. These outward acts are natural signs of the inward adoration of the heart; if the heart be actually in these internal dispositions which they represent, they are true signs, and therefore agreeable to God; but if the heart be not in these dispositions, they are lying signs; and therefore displeasing to God, who knows the heart, abhors lies, and desires we should adore him in spirit and in truth.

Q. 13. Are we obliged to give God external worship and adoration?

A. Most certainly, for several reasons; (1.) The scripture expressly commands it: “Hear me, ye Divine offspring, and bud forth as the rose planted by the brooks of waters. Give ye a sweet odour as frankincense, send forth flowers as the lily, and yield a smell and bring forth leaves, in grace, and praise, and canticles, and bless the Lord in his works: magnify his name, and give glory to him with the voice of your lips, and with the canticles of your mouths, and with harps,” Ecclus. xxxix. 17. “Come let us adore, and fall down before God; let us weep before the Lord that made us,” Ps. xciv. 6. And through the whole scripture, we find the holy servants of God giving him this external adoration. Thus, when Esdras read the law to the people, he “blessed the Lord, the great God: and all the people answered, Amen, amen, lifting up their
hands; and they bowed down and adored God, with their faces to the ground," 2 Esd. viii. 6. When Job heard all the disasters that had come upon him, he "rose up and rent his garments, and having shaven his head, fell down upon the ground and worshipped," Job. i. 20. So also the wise men from the east, "seeing the star (that had conducted them to Jesus), going into the house found the child with Mary his mother, and falling down, they adored him," Matt. ii. 10. Yea, in heaven itself, "The four and twenty ancients fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and adore him—that liveth for ever and ever, casting their crowns before the throne," Apoc. iv. 10. (2.) As we are composed of a body and soul, and have received both from God, and were created what we are, on purpose to honour, serve, and adore him, he has, of course, a full right and title to the homage both of body and soul, as both are equally his sole property. (3.) External adoration is a natural effect which flows from internal worship; for such is the connexion betwixt our soul and body, that when the mind is deeply affected with any thing, it naturally makes an impression on the body, and shows itself also there; thus grief and sorrow appears in sobs and tears—joy in a cheerful countenance, and laughter; hence also, if the soul be deeply penetrated with the sense of its own unworthiness, and of the greatness of the majesty of God, this must naturally show itself in outward acts of humiliation in the body, in kneelings, prostrations, and the like. This was what it did in the humble publican in the gospel, in the wise men when they came to our Saviour, and in all those others whose examples we have just seen; so that God, in demanding this outward homage from us, demands nothing but what is the natural result of the inward adoration of the soul, when it is real. And experience also shows that these outward acts of adoration made by the body, serve also, in a considerable degree, to strengthen and increase the inward humiliation of the soul, and render our internal homage more fervent. (4.) It contributes also to the honour of God, that we make public profession of worshipping him, thereby testifying before others our submission to, and dependence upon him. (5.) It is questionless our duty to promote the worship of God among men, and by our example to encourage others to honour him. (6.) All nations at all times have looked upon it as a duty to give external worship to those whom they considered as gods, which shows, that to do so to the Supreme Being, is dictated by the very light of nature itself.

Q. 14. Do all those external acts of worship mentioned
above, so entirely belong to God, that they can be used to none but him?

A. There are many other beings above us, and in many different respects more excellent than we; both in this world, such as magistrates, princes, prelates, and other rulers, as also the holy servants of God; and in heaven as the blessed saints and angels. Now right reason shows us, and the words of God commands it, that all those who possess any particular excellency, ought to be honoured on that account, so it is the duty of others to give them that honour which is their due. "Render to all men their due......honour to whom honour is due," Rom. xiii. 7. And we see that those who possess any excellency or authority above others, expect as their due to be honoured by those below them on that account. Masters require this from their servants, parents from their children, princes from their subjects, and so of all others. Now we cannot otherwise give this honour than by some outward signs, because men cannot otherwise judge of the heart, and as we have not different signs to signify the honour and worship due to God, and that which we give to men; for all the external acts of worship above mentioned, except sacrifice, have nothing in them to determine any particular kind of worship more than another, but only signify that we do honour the person to whom we give them; therefore, all these external signs above mentioned, except sacrifice, are not so peculiar to God, but that they may be given also to creatures. Nay, we are under a necessity of using them to creatures when we mean to honour them, because we have no other way of doing it. Hence we find in the scripture itself, that not only the outward acts, but also the very words of adoration and worship are frequently given to creatures as well as to God. Thus Abraham adored the three angels, down to the ground, Gen. xviii. 2. Joshua fell on his face to the ground, and worshipped the angel, Josh. v. 15. When Abdias met Elias, the great prophet of God, he fell on his face and said, Art thou my Lord Elias? 2 Kings xviii. 7. David falling on his face to the ground, adored thrice before Jonathan, 1 Sam. xx. 41. Abigail fell before David on her face, and adored upon the ground, 1 Sam. xxv. 23. All David’s nobles bowed themselves, and worshipped God, and then the king, 1 Chron. 20. And even in common life among ourselves, poor people stretch out their hands to others, asking alms, as a sign of their humiliation and need; we uncover our heads, and bow down our bodies to one another, to testify our mutual respect; we kneel to kiss a king’s hand, or to get our parent’s blessing,
and the like. All which shows that these outward signs do not signify of themselves Divine worship more than any other; but only show in general, that we do honour and reverence the person to whom we give them, in proportion to the excellencies we know or believe to be in them. And as these external acts are nothing in themselves; but the worship expressed by them wholly depends upon the internal dispositions of him who uses them, which are always different according to the different excellencies of the person to whom they are given; therefore, when given to God, they are acts of Divine worship; when given to princes or magistrates, they are acts of civil worship, because they are given to them on account of their civil dignity and authority; and when they are given to holy persons on earth, or to the saints and angels in heaven, they are acts of religious worship, because it is from a motive of religion, to wit, the honouring God for the gifts and graces bestowed on all these, that such external worship is given them. But with sacrifice the case is different; for as this external act of adoration, both in its own nature, and in the common judgment of all mankind, represents the supreme dominion of God, and our total subjection to him, and dependence on him: it therefore can be offered to none but to God only; and therefore God expressly says, “He that sacrificeth to gods shall be put to death, save only to the Lord,” Ex. xxii. 20. See, upon this, Sincere Christian, Chap. XXIII.

§ 3. Of the Sins against the Virtue of Religion, and first of Idolatry.

Q. 15. What are the sins against the virtue of religion.

A. They are chiefly these three, idolatry, superstition and sacrilege.

Q. 16. What is idolatry?

A. Idolatry is the giving to any creature that supreme worship and adoration, which is due to God alone, whether this be done internally in the heart, or externally by outward actions. It may be divided into three kinds; (1.) Complete idolatry, which is strictly such; (2.) Imperfect idolatry, or superstition; and (3.) Interpretative idolatry. Complete or perfect idolatry is that of the heathens, who internally believed various creatures to be gods, confided in them, and prayed to them as gods, and offered up all outward acts of adoration to them as to gods, even sacrifice itself. And whatever they honoured thus as gods which was not God, is called an idol in the language of the scripture, “for all the gods of
the nations are idols.” 1 Chron. xvi. 26. Of these the scripture says, “They imagined either the fire, or the wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the great water, or the sun and moon, to be the gods that rule the world......but unhappy are they, and their hope is among the dead, who have called gods the works of the hands of men, gold and silver, the inventions of art, and the resemblances of beasts, or an unprofitable stone, the work of an ancient hand,” Wisd. xiii. 2, 10. “But the idol that is made by hands is cursed, as well as he that made it; he, because he made it; and it, because being frail, it is called a god. But to God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike; for that which is made, together with him that made it, shall suffer torments. Therefore, there shall be no respect had even to the idols of the Gentiles; because the creatures of God are turned to an abomination, and a temptation to the souls of men, and a snare to the feet of the unwise,” Wisd. xiv. 8. St. Paul tells us wherein consists the malice of this sin. “Because,” says he, “they changed the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things,” Rom. i. 23; that is, they did not give the glory which is only due to the incorruptible God, to him to whom it belonged, but gave it to creatures. Thus the children of Israel made a golden calf, “and they said, These are thy gods, O Israel, that have brought thee out of the land of Egypt,......and rising in the morning, they offered holocausts, and peace victims,” Ex. xxxii. 4. Of which God thus complains to Moses, “They have made to them a molten calf, and have adored it, and sacrificing victims to it, have said, these are thy gods,” &c. v. 8. And David speaking of this sin says, “They made also a calf in Horeb; and they adored the graven thing. And they changed their glory into the likeness of a calf that eateth grass; they forgot the God that saved them,” Ps. cv. 19. Now, this is one of the greatest and most abominable of sins, and we often find in the Old Testament, how detestable it is to God, and what severe judgments it draws from heaven upon those who were guilty of it. And as the people of Israel, from their long stay among the idolatrous Egyptians, and the example of the neighbouring nations, were most prone to fall into this crime; therefore Almighty God, in the first command thought it not enough to forbid them in general to have any other god before him; but he also, in express terms, prohibits this crime of idolatry, saying, “Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of
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those things that are in the waters under the earth; thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them; I am the Lord thy God,” Ex. xx. 4.

Q. 17. Whence did idolatry take its rise?
A. The principal cause of idolatry is, “The old serpent who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world,” Apoc. xii. 9. For this haughty spirit wanting in heaven to put himself upon an equality with God, saying, “I will ascend above the clouds, I will be like to the Most High,” Is xiv. 14, was, for such a detestable attempt, banished for ever out of heaven, and condemned to eternal misery; but untaught by his fall, and still madly ambitious of Divine honour, he endeavoured to procure from man on earth, what he could not get in heaven; and set himself to seduce the whole world from their allegiance to the God that made them, and make them give to him that worship and adoration which belongs only to Almighty God. So that all the creatures and idols which the heathens worshipped, were only the visible instruments which Satan made use of to deceive them, and he considered the worship which was given to these idols as given to himself. Thus “They sacrificed to devils, and not to God,” Deut. xxxii. 17. “For all the gods of the Gentiles are devils,” Ps. xcv. 5. And this seduction went to such a length, that, “They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils, and they shed innocent blood; the blood of their sons and their daughters, which they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan,” Ps. cv. 37. St Paul also declares the same thing: “What then,” says he, “do I say that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing; or that the idol is any thing? But the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God,” 1 Cor. x. 19. On this account it is that in scripture the devil is styled the prince of this world, by Jesus Christ himself, John xii. 31; and by St. Paul, “the prince of the power of the air—the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief,” Eph. ii. 2; and finally, “The god of this world, who blindeth the mind of unbelievers,” 2 Cor. iv. 4. A most affecting account of the various means by which the devil succeeded so far in this seduction of mankind, is given in the thirteenth, and two following chapters of the Book of Wisdom, where we are also told that, “The worship of abominable idols is the cause, and the beginning, and end of all evil,” Wisd. xiv. 27.

Q. 18. Can real idolatry be committed by the external acts, though the person do not believe the idol to be God?
A. When any external act of adoration is given to any
creature as if it were God, and with the view of persuading those present that it is done as an acknowledgment of its being God, this is real external idolatry, though the person who does it is sensible, in his own mind, that the creature to whom he gives this honour is not God. This was the idolatry of those unhappy Christians, who, in times of persecution by the heathens, bowed themselves down, or burned incense, or did any other such act of worship, before the heathen idols, in order to avoid the torments: but which the holy martyrs had in the utmost abhorrence, as a most detestable idolatry; and rather suffered whatever the utmost rage of the persecutors could inflict upon them, than be guilty of it.

Q. 19. What punishment does the scripture pronounce upon idolatry?

A. A curse and confusion: “cursed be the man that maketh a graven or a molten thing, the abomination of the Lord, the work of the hands of artificers, and shall put it into a secret place,” Deut. xxvii. 15. “Let them all be confounded, that adore graven things, and that glory in their idols,” Ps. xcvii. 7. “Let them be greatly confounded that trust in a graven thing; that say to a molten thing, You are our gods,” Is. xlvi. 17. See also Is. xliv. 9, to the end of that chapter, for the vanity of idolatry.

Q. 20. What do you understand by imperfect idolatry?

A. Almighty God, in his unsearchable judgments, permitted Satan, for a time, to seduce mankind in the manner we have seen, by plunging them into the horrid sin of idolatry; but at last he was pleased to put a stop to his reign, by means of his beloved Son Jesus Christ, whom he sent to destroy the works of the devil, and bring man to the knowledge and worship of the true God; for St John assures us, that “For this purpose the Son of God appeared, that he might destroy the works of the devil,” 1 John iii. 8. Accordingly the first effect of the publication of the gospel of Christ was to destroy this kingdom of Satan, and to deliver mankind from his captivity, and from going “after dumb idols, according as they were led,” 1 Cor. xii. 2; and to bring them to the knowledge and service of the living God. Satan seeing it was impossible for him to stame his ground longer, or support his dominion over the hearts of men in the way he had hitherto done, resolves to secure it in another manner, by engaging men to honour him, and have recourse to him for his assistance, notwithstanding the knowledge they had now got of the true God, and of Jesus Christ his Son. We are told in scripture, that “the working of Satan,” by which
he seduces men, is "in all power and signs, and lying wonders," 2 Thess. ii. 9; that is, by enchantments, and sorceries, and auguries, and divinations, and the like deceits; performed by means of impious men, whom he engages in his service. By these he formerly deluded the great bulk of mankind, and made them believe in him as God. And now, though by the light of the gospel men know that he is not God, but the enemy both of God and man, and though therefore he can no longer prevail with them to look upon him as God, and formally worship him as such; yet he still endeavours by the same diabolical means, to persuade him to give him some portion, at least, of that homage which they owe to God alone, to withdraw their confidence in God, and place it in him, to have recourse to him in various necessities, to have a fear and dread of his power; and by these means to engage them in a number of superstitious practices of his invention, and for his honour and service. This is what is meant by imperfect idolatry, to wit, the turning our backs upon the living God, whom we know to be God, and giving part of that homage, which belongs only to God, to the devil, having recourse to him for help, instead of seeking it from God, confiding in his assistance, and fearing his displeasure, and involving ourselves in all the detestable ways of superstition, which we shall more fully consider below.

Q. 21. What is understood by interpretative idolatry?

A. Satan never having been able to prevail with any great number of Christians, directly to worship him by these superstitious practices, still strives to keep up his kingdom among the great bulk of Christians in another manner; to wit, by engaging them to place the affections of their hearts upon the riches, pleasures, and honours of this world, more than upon God, to trust in them, and seek their chief happiness from the enjoyment of them; by this means he engages them in his own service, while they transgress the law of the Almighty, and do those things which are pleasing to the devil, in order to procure or preserve these objects of their affections. Now, though this be not an express formal worship of idols, like complete idolatry, nor yet a going directly to Satan for help, as in the imperfect idolatry, yet it is justly interpreted to be a species of idolatry because it is loving the creature more than the Creator, contrary to the great and essential duty of loving God above all things; and therefore the scripture expressly declares this also to be idolatry, and an idolatry which for ever excludes from heaven: "Know ye this," says St. Paul, "and understand, that no fornicator, nor unclean, nor covetous person, which is
the service of idols, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God," Eph. v. 5. "Mortify, therefore, your members, which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is the service of idols. For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of unbelief," Col. iii. 5.

§ 4. Superstition.

Q. 22. What is Superstition?

A. Superstition, taken in its general sense, is, in itself, the same as imperfect idolatry, which we have explained above, Q. 20. It consists in turning away from the true God, and seeking help from the devil; it is a withdrawing one's self from the Providence of God, and from the ordinary means appointed by him for gaining any good thing we want, and following the delusions of the devil, using superstitious means appointed by him for obtaining what we wish to have. They are called superstitious means, because they are such as either in themselves, or in some circumstance attending them, and on which the chief hope of success is placed, have no natural connexion with the end proposed, and have not been appointed by God a supernatural means for obtaining it. Almighty God has ordained two different ways of assisting us in our necessities. The one is by natural means; thus, medicines have received from God various natural virtues for recovering our health; food is appointed by him as the natural means to sustain our life; prudent examination and consideration to find out the truth in things proper for us to know; his holy law, and the light of reason, to direct us in our conduct; and so of others. The other is by supernatural means; thus, prayers, particularly those of the church, applied to us either immediately, or by means of those creatures, which she blesses for that purpose, are appointed by God as supernatural means of obtaining many good things for us, both for soul and body; fasting and alms are also ordained as means to obtain mercy and light from heaven; the relics of God's holy saints, now reigning with him in glory, have often been used by his infinite goodness for like purposes; as also all other pious practices approved by his holy church, all which we may lawfully and laudably use to obtain from his bounty a blessing on our lawful affairs, and other good things we need. But on the contrary, when we use means to gain our ends, which have no natural virtue for procuring them, and are not appointed by God, nor authorized by his church,
as supernatural means for that purpose, all such are superstitious and highly unlawful, and are always the more so in proportion to the greater degree of confidence one puts in them.

Q. 23. What are the ends people commonly have in view by superstitious practices?

A. Generally speaking, they are unlawful ends (though not always,) and this is one great cause why they have recourse to unlawful means; for when once the heart of man is so far perverted as to seek for things unlawful, conscious to himself that he cannot expect them by the blessing of God, he is easily impelled by his passions to seek them from the devil. The most ordinary ends men have in view in these things are hidden from us, either from a vain and dangerous curiosity, or from views of interest, such as to find out lost goods, or hidden treasures, or the persons who have stolen from us, or the like. (2.) To know things to come, whether regarding ourselves or others, such as what concerns our good or bad fortune, or the good or bad success of our affairs, that so we may regulate our conduct accordingly. (3.) To procure some good to ourselves or others, particularly health, success to our affairs, or the like. (4.) To procure some evil to those whom we deem our enemies, or to raise impure love in another person, either to ourselves or others. (5.) To work wonderful things in order to gain applause and esteem, or for other worldly views.

Q. 24. Are all equally guilty who use superstitious practices?

A. No; there are different degrees of guilt in those who use them; for (1.) Some have an express compact with the devil; in which he requires certain conditions on their side, which are always highly dishonourable to God, and destructive to their salvation; and he engages on his part, that, whenever such and such things shall be done, or words spoken, or observations made, as he and they agree upon, he will then do what they desire of him, and produce the effect required. (2.) Others have not this express compact with the devil himself, but only learn the things agreed upon between him and those who had the compact with him, from those who know them; but at the same time they know them to be of the devil's appointment, and that the effect produced by them is done by him. Both these kinds go in scripture by these different names, witches, wizards, sorcerers, magicians, soothsayers, fortune-tellers, diviners, charmers, and enchanters. (3.) Others again learn the various means appointed to be used for producing the effect
desired, as secrets of nature, as hidden mysteries, without knowing any thing expressly about any prior compact with the devil, though with strong suspicions of their coming from that origin, which may be the case with many, to whom the use of the means is handed down through different generations at a considerable time from the original contract, though the memory of the contract itself be lost. And (4.) others, in fine, having heard these things as useful secrets, may use them in their simplicity and ignorance, without any suspicion of the guilt they contain. Now it is manifest, that the degree of guilt is very different in each of these classes.

Q. 25. Are there any people at present in the world who are guilty of this crime?

A. (1.) As for those of the two first classes just mentioned, we may observe, (1.) That there have been many such in the world, cannot be called in question; the word of God expressly affirms it, gives several examples of such, and makes severe laws against them. (2.) That there may be such in the world at present is without doubt, because what has been, may still be. We read in the New Testament of a young woman "possessed with a pythonical spirit, who brought her masters much gain by divining," Acts xvi. We read there also of Simon the magician, who "bewitched the people of Samaria by his magical practices," Acts viii. 11. St. Paul even supposes that such may be among Christians, and reckons witchcraft among the works of the flesh, which he orders all Christians to avoid, declaring that those "who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God," Gal. v. 20. And God himself declares to St. John that sorcerers "shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone," Apoc. xxi. 8. (3.) That they are as frequent among Christians as ignorant people commonly imagine, is surely false; for it is certain that the devil's power is much abridged, wherever the gospel is received; and Almighty God speaking of the times of the gospel, says by his prophet, "I will take away sorceries out of the land, and there shall be no divinations in thee," Mich. v. 12; which shows at least that they will be less frequent, and that the devil will not have much power to delude men by these things.

(2.) But as for those of the two last classes mentioned in the preceding question, it is surprising how many such are to be found in all nations.

Q. 26. What are the several kinds of superstitious practices which are used by these last?

A. They are of different kinds according to the different
ends proposed. To mention every particular would be endless. We shall here take notice of some of the most common.

(1.) In order to know hidden things, or things to come, what numbers of idle superstitious things are done? Such as to cast the white of an egg, or melted lead into water, and observe what figure it makes, to use the sieve and shears for discovering a thief, winnowing corn in the barn on All-Hallow Eve, to know one's future husband or wife, making dumb cakes to make one dream of the same, looking through the shoulder-bone of animals, reading cups, and the like. In which one sees there is not the smallest natural connexion between the thing done, and the end proposed; and surely God Almighty never appointed these things as means to know what is wanted by them; therefore, either nothing can possibly be ever known by them, or if it be, it is only by means of the devil; and whoever uses them with the hopes of knowing any thing of them, goes to the devil for such knowledge. It is alleged by many, that they do these things only for diversion; but what begins in diversion may end in earnest; and instances are not wanting of those who had brought themselves to a persuasion that they could undoubtedly tell what would happen by these means, and had often had examples of the truth of their predictions from using them; for in all these things the devil easily enters, God so permitting, in punishment of the crime of those who use them, according to what God says upon another, but similar occasion: "Although the thing should come to pass, thou shalt not hear him, for the Lord your God trieth you," Deut. xiii. 1.

(2.) Akin to this is the pretending to know one's future good or bad luck by omens and vain observances, to judge of the success or miscarriage of affairs by them, and to regulate one's actions accordingly. If one, going out in the morning about some affair, should stumble on the threshold and fall, this is considered as a bad omen, and the affair is put off for that day; if a magpie should chatter at the window; a crow croak on the house-top; if salt be spilled on the table: all this, say they, forbodes some misfortune; if the first thing one meets when he goes out be certain animals; if others should cross the road, &c., that will be an unlucky day. Now what power have these things to forbode good or bad luck? surely they have none of themselves, nor from nature, much less by appointment of God, consequently, either they have no such power at all, which they certainly never have when people never mind them, but laugh at them; or if they have any such power to superstitious people, who let themselves be influenced by such idle fears, it
is only by means of the devil, which God permits for their punishment. Strange, indeed is the folly of all such! The word of God assures us that "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And, "that all things work together for good to them that love God;" and we know that the only thing that can deprive us of his protection, and make our affairs go wrong, or bring misfortunes upon us, is sin, and yet such people have no concern about avoiding sin, are not afraid of that monster, but among their first works in the morning they will think nothing of praying to the devil to curse, or take themselves or others, and yet for a mere idle fret be terrified lest some evil come upon them.

(3.) Much of the same nature with this, is the observance of lucky and cross, or unlucky days, a superstition which comes entirely from the ancient heathens, and began to creep in among Christians even in the time of the apostles. Thus St. Paul writes to the Galatians: "You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest perhaps I have laboured in vain among you," Gal. iv. 10. He was afraid lest this superstitious observation should deprive them of all the benefit of their conversion to Christianity. We may judge from this what a wicked thing it must be in the sight of God, to be tied down to such a slavish fear of doing what we ought to do on one day more than another, from the superstitious opinion of its being an unlucky day. Do not all times, days, seasons, and moments, equally belong to God? Does he tie himself down to give us his blessing on one day more than another? Is not his ear always open to the prayer of those that fear him? Or has he any where declared that we must not expect any blessing from him if we begin any work on certain days? And yet it is surprising how much this superstition tyrannizes over some people's minds. Holy Innocent's day happens on a Monday, for example; therefore, say they, all the Mondays that year will be unlucky, and no work must be begun, nor must we go abroad on Monday all that year. What folly! You should never cut your nails, nor comb your hair, says another, upon a Friday, lest some evil befall you on that account! But see the folly of man! People will make no difficulty to marry in forbidden times, and against the laws of the church, which offends God, and tends to make their marriage unhappy; but they will not marry in the break of the moon, because the devil puts it into their head that the marriage will be unhappy if they do so! They will not scruple to work on holidays, which they know to be a sin and displeasing to God; but if the devil puts it into
their heads that any day is unlucky they will do no work on that day, for fear of incurring his displeasure! Must not this be most provoking to the Almighty?

(4.) The observation of dreams is another source of superstitious practices. When a person persuades himself that from his dreams he certainly knows what is to happen, or how affairs are to succeed, and upon such persuasion regulate his conduct. On this subject, however, we must observe, (1.) That dreams may come from God. He was sometimes pleased to communicate his will to his servants by their means, especially under the old law, when he had not so fully revealed his Divine truths to mankind, as he has done in the gospel. Witness the dreams of Jacob, Laban, Joseph, Pharaoh, Nabuchodonosor, Daniel, the three wise men, St. Joseph, &c. And Almighty God says, "If there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision, or I will speak to him in a dream," Num. xii. 6. Of Saul likewise we are told, "that he consulted the Lord and he answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by priests, nor by prophets," 1 Sam. xxviii. 6. But, (2.) it is to be observed, that in all these examples, we find that when God did communicate his mind to men by dreams, they always were either great saints or prophets, or people in a public character, and for some affair of great importance, or for the public good; but we do not read that he acted in this manner with ordinary people, and for directing them in the common concerns of life. Nay, (3.) On the contrary, lest others should be deluded by the devil to give credit to dreams, from his own manifesting his will sometimes to his servants by their means, he makes an express and general law, for all to pay no regard to them: "You shall not divine, nor observe dreams," Lev. xix. 26. "Let there be none among you that observeth dreams......for the Lord abhorreth all these things," Deut. xviii. 10. Nor was there any fear that his orders given to his servants by dreams would be in danger of being neglected from this prohibition; because when he speaks to his servants by dreams, he accompanies them with such circumstances as show them undoubtedly to be from him. The thing proposed is always good, the manner of proposing it decent, clear, and distinct, and it leaves the mind in great peace and humility, and more fervent in prayer. (4.) Everybody will readily grant that the idle fancies which come into our head in sleep, from the constitutions of our bodies, and the various dispositions of our humours, from the fumes of what we have been eating and drinking, or from the ideas which had engaged our imaginations
through the day; can never be any sign of what is to happen to
us, nor any kind of rule for us to act by. In order to be any
such sign, our dreams must be occasioned by some supernatural
cause, either God or the devil, a good or a bad spirit. Seeing
therefore that God seldom or never now-a-days speaks to men
in this manner, and that when he was wont to do so, it was only
to great people or saints, and for great causes, and that he
expressly prohibits all in general to observe dreams; it follows
manifestly, that it is a high presumption to imagine that God
Almighty or his good angels speak to us by the foolish, con-
fused, mysterious fancies which come into our head in sleep.
And consequently, that such dreams as seem to present or fore-
bode things to come, however deep an impression they may
leave upon the imagination, either forebode nothing at all, or
if they do, it is only by means of Satan, who strives by their
means to delude us. Hence the scripture declares, that
"Dreams lift up fools. The man that giveth heed to lying
visions, is like to him that catcheth at a shadow, and followeth
after the wind......what truth can come from that which is
false? deceitful divinations and lying omens, and the dreams
of evil-doers are vanity......for dreams have deceived many, and
they have failed that put their trust in them," Ecclus. xxxiv. 7.
For when the devil finds a soul given to such idle curiosities
he never fails all he can to increase their vain observance of
them, and to procure them such dreams as have some resemblance
to things which he foresees are soon to happen, which increases
their confidence in such things, and God sometimes permits this
in punishment of their sin; and therefore, though things should
happen, as foretold by dreams, one should give no heed to them
but despise them; according to the orders of God on another
occasion: "Although that should come to pass which they fore-
tell, do not believe them; for the Lord your God trieth you,
whether you love your God with all your heart or not," Deut. xiii. 1.

(5.) To procure health for a man or beast, to prevent evil
from coming upon them, or to obtain some other good, what
number of idle charms and superstitions are often used by the
common people? such as sewing certain things in the clothes;
pronouncing certain words; tying things about some parts of
the body; carrying papers about one with certain unknown
names and figures written on them; the stones of the ford for
the fevers; the touch of the sheer smith for other distempers,
and the like. And, what particularly shows the haughty pride
of Satan, and his devices for deluding men, they sometimes
make use even of sacred things belonging to the service of God
in their superstitions; for by this means the devil has the pleasure of seeing holy things profaned, and of being himself honoured by those things which are appointed for the honour of God; whilst poor mortal man, seeing holy things employed for bringing about some good end, has less suspicion of the infernal fraud, and therefore is more easily deluded. Some of these delusions are: Prayers, which are good in themselves, said in a certain posture, and for a certain determined number of times, as an infallible means to prevent sickness, or to preserve health; certain verses of scripture written in a certain figure with other unknown characters and sewed in one's clothes, as a certain means to prevent sudden death. The holy mysteries celebrated by a priest of a certain age, with a fixed number of candles on the altar, as a certain means to obtain some bodily favour from God, &c. In all which and such like cases, we see that superstition enters in the vain circumstances added to what is otherwise good, and because the whole stress is laid upon these vanities, the infallible effect they pretend to, is attributed to them, with the certain confidence of success. Strange folly indeed, to be deluded by these things! how inconsistent our conduct! The Son of God himself passes his sacred word that all the necessaries of life shall be added to us, if we seek first his kingdom, by avoiding sin, and doing good; but him we will not believe, nor trust his word; but go on doing evil and avoiding good. The devil promises us some worldly advantages if we do some idle ridiculous thing offensive to God, but agreeable on that account to him, and we give him entire credit, and with fear and trembling exactly perform what he requires! Mistaken mortals!

(6.) But the worst kind of all is, when superstitious means are used to procure some ill to others; to bewitch them, to make them fall into diseases, or into poverty; to torment them with pains; to hurt their cattle; to kill them; to excite them to carnal love; to inspire them with hatred, &c. All which abominations, besides the detestable superstition they contain, are also grievous sins against charity, and for the most part against justice, which greatly enhances their malice in the sight of God.

Q. 27. What idea does the scripture give of all such superstitious practices?

A. The light in which the scripture proposes them, is contained under these following heads: (1.) It prohibits them as abominations: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," Ex. xxii. 18. "A man or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or is
a wizard, dying let them die, they shall stone them, and their blood shall be upon them," Lev. xx. 27. "Beware lest thou have a mind to imitate the abominations of those nations; neither let there be found among you any one......that consulteth soothsayers, or observeth dreams and omens; neither let there be any wizard, nor charmer, nor any one that consulted pytho- nic spirits, or fortune-tellers, or that seeketh the truth from the dead. For the Lord abhorreth all these things, and for these abominations he will destroy them at his coming," Deut. xviii. 9. See above, Q. 25. No. 2. (2.) It strictly forbids all com- munication with those who use such practices; "Go not aside after wizards, neither ask any thing of soothsayers, to be defiled by them, I am the Lord your God," Lev. xix. 31. "The soul that shall go aside after magicians and soothsayers, and shall commit fornication with them, I will set my face against that soul, and destroy it out of the midst of its people," Lev. xx 6. (3.) It shows us several examples of the punishment God sends upon all such. "Thus, when Ochozias, king of Israel, fell sick, he sent to consult a heathen idol about his health, but Elias the prophet came to him in the name of God, and said, “Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast sent messengers to consult Beelzebub, the God of Accaron, as though there were not a God in Israel, of whom thou mightest inquire the word, therefore, from the bed on which thou art gone up, thou shalt not come down, but thou shalt surely die. So he died accord- ingly,” 4 Kings i. 16. And, indeed, this is commonly the case with those who use superstitious means for recovering their health; they either reap no benefit at all from them, but die of that very distemper, or if they become better of it, some greater evil befalls them. Of the people of Israel we are told, that in the reign of Osee, “they gave themselves to divinations, and soothsayings; and they delivered themselves to do evil be- fore the Lord to provoke him. And the Lord was very angry with Israel, and he removed them out of his sight,” 4 Kings xvii. 17; that is, these sins filled up their cup of iniquity, and were the cause of the dispersion and utter destruction of the ten tribes. Of Manasses also, the king of Juda, we are told that, “He used divination, and observed omens, and appointed pythons, and multiplied soothsayers, to do evil in the sight of the Lord and to provoke him......therefore, thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring evils on Jerusalem and Juda, that whosoever shall hear of them both his ears shall tingle,” 4 Kings xxi. 6, 12. “And I will deliver them into the hands of their enemies, and they shall become a prey and
a spoil to all their enemies," verse 14. (4.) It shows us the folly of trusting to these things. "Stand now," says Almighty God, "with thy enchanters, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, in which thou hast laboured from thy youth, if so be it may profit thee any thing, or if thou mayest become stronger, Thou hast failed in the multitude of thy counsels: let now the astrologers stand and save thee; they that gazed at the stars and counted the months, that from them they might tell the things that should come to thee. Behold they are as stubble—fire hath burnt them—they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flames; there are no coals wherewith they may be warmed, nor fire that they may sit thereat. Such are all the things become to thee in which thou hast laboured," Is. xlvii. 12. (5.) It commands us to have no communication with them, nor to fear them, but to have recourse to God. Besides the prohibitions above related, St. Paul says, "I would not that you should be made partakers with devils. You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord, and the chalice of devils; you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and the table of devils," 1 Cor. x. 20. Wherefore, "Thus saith the Lord, Learn not according to the ways of the Gentiles, and be not afraid of the signs of heaven which the heathens fear......they shall be proved together to be senseless and foolish: a stock is the doctrine of their vanity......they are vain things, and a ridiculous work, by the time of their visitation they shall perish," Jer. x. 2, 8, 15. But "there is none like to thee, O Lord; thou art great, and great is thy name in might: who shall not fear thee, O King of nations?" Ib. verse 6. And therefore, "When they shall say to you, Seek unto them that have pythorical spirits and diviners, that mutter in their enchantments, should not the people seek unto their God, and not for the living to the dead?" Is. viii. 19.

Q. 28. Whether or not has the devil power to hurt people by means of those who use enchantments and sorceries for such a purpose?

A. In answer to this, several things must be observed, (1.) That the devils have great power and strength to do many things in the material creation, if they be allowed to use it, is undoubted. They turned the rods into serpents, by the enchantments of the Egyptian magicians, and the waters into blood, Ex. vii., and brought up frogs, Ex. viii. They destroyed Job's cattle and servants by thunder and lightning, and caused the house to fall on his children by a strong wind; and St. Paul calls them the princes of the power of the air, Eph. ii. 2. They
smote Job with sore boils, Job ii. Which shows what power they have to hurt the human body; also our Saviour declared that it was the devil who had kept the crooked woman bound for eighteen years, Luke xiii. And an angel of Satan was given St. Paul to buffet him, 2 Cor. xii. 7. And of those whom they possessed, some they made dumb, some deaf, and some they threw into fits. An evil spirit from the Lord afflicted Saul in his mind: Satan hindered St. Paul from going to the Thessalonians once and again, when he intended going to them, 1 Thess. ii. 18. A devil killed Sarah's seven husbands, Tob. iii., and a legion of his angels destroyed the herd of swine in the sea. (2.) The devil's will to do ill to man is no less than his power, for "by the envy of the devil death entered into the world," Wisd. ii. 24. Our Saviour declares "he was a murderer from the beginning." John viii. 44. And St. Peter assures us, "that he is continually going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," 1 Pet. v. 8. (3.) But notwithstanding all this, he can never do the smallest harm to any creature, but as far as he is commissioned or permitted by God. Thus the magicians of Egypt could not bring up lice, but were obliged to confess that the finger of God was there; neither could Satan go one iota further in hurting Job than his permission bore, nor could the legion go into the swine without leave from our blessed Saviour, nor could they hurt Tobias, Sarah's eighth husband. But (4.) God sometimes permits them to use their power for the hurt of men, or other creatures, as all the above examples show, and even commissions them to execute his just judgment against sinful men, according to that of David, "He sent upon them the wrath of his indignation; indignation and wrath, and trouble, which he sent upon them by evil angels," Ps. lxxvii. 49. Nay, they are the "spirits that are created for vengeance, and in their fury they lay on grievous torments; and in the time of destruction they shall pour out all their force, and they shall appease the wrath of him that made them," Ecclus. xxxix. 33. (5.) The chief causes which move God to give them such permission against men, are our sins; by which we become enemies of God, and objects of his wrath, and by which the devil acquires a right over us as his slaves; by them we deserve punishment, and it is the devil's business to punish. But of all other sins, these following most commonly put a man in the power of Satan:—Lust, for thus the angel Raphael said to Tobias—"Hear me, and I will show thee who they are over whom the devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves and
from their mind, and to give themselves to their lusts as the horse and the mule, which have not understanding; over them the devil hath power," Tob. vi. 16. Now if over those who enter into the married state with this view, the devil hath power, how much more must he have it over those who abandon themselves to unlawful lust? Pride, of which we are told that the devil "is king over all the children of pride," Job xli. 25. And when St. Paul had been taken up to the third heavens, and heard things unutterable, an angel of Satan was given to buffet him, lest he should fall into pride from these high revelations. Lastly, those who are given to discord and dissension, which is properly the sin of the devil, for "an evil man always seeketh quarrels; but a cruel angel shall be sent against him," Prov. xvii. 11.

Q. 29. What consequences flow from these truths?

A. (1.) That the surest way to hinder the devil from being able to hurt us, either by himself, or by any enchantment used against us by his agents, is to avoid sin, and live in the friendship of God, for "If God be with us who is against us?" Rom. viii. 31. But if at any time God should permit the devil to do any external evil to any of his servants, as was the case with Job, it is only as a medicine for their greater trial, and which he will turn out to their greater good. (2.) Never to be afraid of all the machinations of the devil, or of his agents, but to place an entire confidence in God; for the scripture says, "He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of Jacob.....thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night; of the arrow that flieth in the day; of the pestilence that walketh about in the dark; of the invasion, or of the noon-day devil," Ps. xc. 1, 5. Hence, (3.) all the enchantments and charms, and superstitious practises, that can be used against us, can never touch us, nor harm us, if we continue faithful to our God, and have a firm confidence in him; and therefore, (4.) We ought only to be afraid of sin, but not of the devil. (5.) That if at any time a person, in punishment of his sins, or for God's wise ends, should be afflicted by any effects of sorcery, he ought never to use, nor permit others to use, counter-enchantments for his relief; this would be a heinous crime, flying to the devil for aid, and would only give the devil more power to hurt him, and entangle him more and more in his snares. But (6.) he ought to fly only to God for remedy, by a sincere repentance of his sins, by prayer and fasting, which Christ himself assures us is so necessary for overcoming the devils, that some kinds of them cannot be cast
out but by that means, Mark ix. 28. And particularly by having recourse to the prayers of the church of Christ, to whom he has given power and authority over all diabolical machinations, saying to his apostles, "These signs shall follow them that believe, in my name they shall cast out devils," Mark xvi. 17. And this power he gives to the pastors of his church in a particular manner, in the persons of the apostles; for "He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out," Matt. x. 1; and "he gave them power to cast out devils," Mark iii. 15; and he gave them power over unclean spirits," Mark vi. 7; and "he gave them power and authority over all devils," Luke ix. 1. Which power these first pastors of the church used accordingly, of which we find several instances in the Acts of the Apostles; and all their successors, walking in their footsteps, and confiding in that original charter granted them by Jesus Christ, have continued, as occasion served, to exert this power over unclean spirits, and all their diabolical machinations, to the unspeakable comfort of those who are distressed by them, to the glory of God, and the exaltation of the true faith of his Son Jesus.

§ 5. Of Sacrilege.

Q. 30. What is sacrilege?

A. Sacrilege is an abuse or profanation of holy things. Now by holy things is understood, whatever is separated from worldly uses, and dedicated, or set apart, to be employed in the service of God; and they are divided in three classes, to wit: Holy persons, who are holy by the sacred character they bear, and are deputed to the service of God and his Church; such are ecclesiastics and religious. Holy things, which are the sacraments, the sacred vessels, the sacred ornaments, and the like, employed in the worship of God; the goods dedicated to the maintenance of his ministers, and to the necessities of his churches; the holy oils, and other things specially blessed by the church for God's honour and service. Holy places, which are churches, chapels, cemeteries, monasteries, and other religious houses, set apart for God's service. Now, by the abuse or profanation of these things is meant, when any irreverence or contempt is shown to them, either in the thing done, or manner of doing it, or by using them for profane and worldly purposes, contrary to those ends for which they were appointed as holy things; whether the purposes be otherwise lawful actions in themselves, as when sacred vessels are used to drink out of
in profane banqueting; or unlawful and criminal, as when holy things are made use of for superstitious practices.

Q. 31. How is this profanation understood to be committed, in regard to each of the three classes of holy things?

A. (1.) With regard to holy persons; it is committed by beating them, which is a great irreverence to their sacred character, and by committing sins of impurity with such as are consecrated to God by vows of chastity. (2.) With regard to holy things; profanation may be committed on them different ways; as by the unworthy administering or receiving of any of the sacraments; keeping the Holy Eucharist without becoming decency, or keeping it too long, so as to alter the species—taking the chrism, or holy oils, for any profane use—touching the consecrated vessels without permission or necessity—using them, and the sacred ornaments, for worldly and common uses—showing any irreverence to the Holy Bible, or to holy images and relics; such as throwing them on the ground in contempt, trampling them under foot, or the like—selling holy things as such; that is, selling them at more than their material value, on account of their being consecrated; making use of the words of the holy scripture for superstitious uses, as for buffooneries and the like; robbing or stealing church goods, destined for the service of God and the maintenance of his ministers, and usurping them by force, or refusing to pay them according to the destination of the donors. (3.) As to churches, and other holy places, they are sacrilegiously profaned when they are pillaged, burnt, or destroyed; when actions are done in them contrary to the worship of God, for which they are destined; when they are turned into profane uses, such as places of merchandising, gaming, drinking, or other worldly purposes.

Q. 32. On what is the respect due to holy things grounded?

A. On the connexion they have with God, who is jealous of his honour, and of the respect due to every thing that belongs to him; and it must be owned that, as, where there is a true spirit of religion and piety towards God, this will necessarily show itself in a just respect and veneration for all those sacred persons and things, which have such a near connexion with him; so, on the contrary, where this respect and veneration are wanting towards these sacred objects, it is sure sign that virtue and piety are greatly upon the losing hand, and religion itself upon the decline. Hence, we find that God Almighty commands the greatest reverence and regard to be paid to every
thing that belongs to him, and severely punishes those who fail in doing so: and,

(1.) With regard to sacred persons, he says, "Take heed thou forsake not the Levite all the time that thou livest in the land, Deut. xii. 19. "And the Levite that is within thy gates, beware thou forsake him not," Deut. xiv. 27. And why so? Because "God separated the tribe of Levi, to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to stand before him in the ministry, and to bless in his name," Deut. x. 8. "To bear the iniquity of the people, and pray for them in the sight of the Lord," Lev. x. 17. And hence Michas, when the young Levite came and agreed to stay with him as his priest, said, "Now I know God will do me good since I have a priest of the race of the Levites," Judg. xvii. 13. Again, Almighty God says by his prophet David, "Touch not my anointed, and do no evil to my prophets," Ps. civ. 15. And by the mouth of the wise man the Holy Ghost speaks thus: "With all thy soul fear the Lord, and reverence his priests. With all thy strength love him that made thee, and forsake not his ministers. Honour God with all thy soul, and give honour to the priests......give them their portion as is commanded thee," Ecclus. vii. 31. Where we see the fear, love, and honour of God is immediately followed by the respect due to his ministers, as two things naturally and necessarily connected together. St. Paul also is very plain upon this point; for when he sent Epaphroditus his fellow-labourer to the Philippians, he said, "Receive him with all joy in the Lord, and treat with honour such as he is," Phil. ii. 29. And in another epistle he says, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; that you esteem them more abundantly in charity for their work's sake; have peace with them," 1 Thess. v. 12. "Let the priests that rule well, be esteemed worthy of double honour; especially those that labour in the world and in doctrine," 1 Tim. v. 17. Let us now see how sacrilege against such as fail in this is punished: "Mary and Aaron spoke against Moses......and said, Hath the Lord spoken by Moses only? hath he not also spoken to us in like manner? And when the Lord heard this, immediately......he called upon them all three and said, Hear my words: If there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision, or I will speak to him in a dream; but it is not so with my servant Moses, who is most faithful in all my house; for I speak to him mouth to mouth, and plainly, and not by riddles and figures doth he see the Lord. Why then were ye not afraid to speak
ill of my servant Moses? And being angry with them, he went away; the cloud also that was over the tabernacle departed, and behold Mary appeared white as snow with a leprosy,” Num. xii. 1, from which she was not cured till after seven days by the prayers of Moses. The wife of a Levite is most inhumanly abused by some of the tribe of Benjamin (see Judg. xix.), for which cause dreadful war was raised against that tribe, in which no less than twenty-five thousand valiant men were killed, and their city burnt; and “All the cities and villages of Benjamin were consumed with devouring flames,” Judg. xx.; Jeroboam, king of Israel, “stretched forth his hand from the altar against a prophet, saying, Lay hold on him; and his hand which he stretched forth against him withered, and he was not able to draw it back again to him,” 3 Kings xiii. 4.; Zacharias the son of Jojada, the priest, reproving king Joas for his impiety, the king’s servants “gathered themselves together against him, and stoned him at the king’s command in the court of the house of the Lord......And when he was dying, he said, The Lord see and requite it. And when a year was come about, the army of Syria came up against Joas, and they came to Juda and Jerusalem, and they killed all the princes of the people, and they sent all the spoils to the king of Damascus; and whereas there came a very small number of the Syrians, the Lord delivered into their hands an infinite multitude, because they had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers. And on Joas they executed shameful judgments; and departing, they left him in great diseases. And his servants rose up against him for revenge of the blood of the son of Jojada the priest, and they slew him in his bed, and he died,” 2 Chron. xxiv. 20.

(2.) As to sacred vessels and other things dedicated to the service of God, it is amazing what respect and veneration he required to be shown to them. He would allow none but the high priest to enter into the holy of holies, and that only once in the year, and after a great many ceremonies and sacrifices to purify him for that purpose, as is related, Lev. xvi.; where God says to Moses, “Speak to Aaron thy brother, that he enter not at all into the sanctuary, which is within the veil before the propitiatory, with which the ark is covered, lest he die, unless he first do these things,” verse 2; and then gives orders what he was to do, and ends the chapter in these words: “And this shall be an ordinance for ever......once in a year,” verse 34. He allowed none but the sons of Moses and Aaron the priest to have the custody of the sanctuary, and ordained that, “what stranger soever cometh into it, shall be put to death,” Num. iii.
38. He permitted none but Aaron and his sons to touch the ark and all the sacred vessels; and when they were going to set forward on a journey, allowed none but them to cover up the ark and all the sacred vessels with their proper coverings, and then delivered them to those of the Levites, whose business it was to carry them, but expressly ordained these Levites, not to touch them: "They shall not touch the vessels of the sanctuary, lest they die," Num. iv. 15. And he says to Aaron, "Thou and thy son shall minister in the tabernacle of the testimony, and the Levites shall watch to do thy commands, and about all the works of the tabernacle, only they shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary, nor the altar, lest both they die, and you also perish with them," Num. xviii. 2. Nay, he would not allow any other but the priests to look at the holy vessels: "Let not others by any curiosity, see the things that are in the sanctuary before they be wrapped up, otherwise they shall die," Num. iv. 20. He also strictly ordained that the tithes and offerings which he appointed for the maintenance of his priests, and the service of the altar, should be punctually paid, and declares by his prophet Malachias, that the withdrawing of any part of that was an afflicting of God himself. "Shall a man afflict God?" says he, "for you afflict me. And you have said, Wherein do we afflict thee? In tithes and first fruits. And you are accursed with want, and you afflict me, even the whole nation of you," Mal. iii. 8. But see how he punisheth transgressions against these duties. (1.) At the taking of Jericho, God commanded, that "whatsoever gold or silver should be found there, or vessels of brass and iron, should be consecrated to the Lord, and laid up in his treasures:" and all the people were forbid to touch aught of these things, Jos. vi. 18. But Achan, of the tribe of Judah, "saw among the spoils a scarlet garment, exceeding good, and two hundred sicles of silver, and a golden rule of fifty sicles, and he coveted them, and he took them away," Jos. vii. 21. This sacrilegious robbery brought a curse upon the whole people, for in the next battle they were defeated, and lost a number of men; and when the crime was discovered, Achan, with his stolen goods, his children, his cattle, and all his goods, were brought to a valley, and there he was stoned, and they burnt all that belonged to him, and consumed them with fire," Jos. viii. 24. (2.) The Philistines, in a victory they gained over the Israelites, took the ark, and carried it away in triumph, placing it in the temple of their idol Dagon; but next morning the idol was fallen and broken to pieces before the ark, and "the hand of
the Lord was heavy upon them, and he destroyed them, and afflicted them with emrods. And in their villages and fields there came forth a multitude of mice, and there was the confusion of a great mortality in the city......and there was the fear of death in every city, and the hand of God was exceedingly heavy. The men also that did not die, were afflicted with the emrods, and the cry of every city went up to heaven,” 1 Kings v. 6, 12. So that they were forced to send back the ark to its own place. (3.) The first place the ark came to on its return, was the country of the Bethsamites. These were glad indeed to see the ark, but they, out of a sacrilegious curiosity, had the presumption to open it and look into it; for which crime God slew them with a very great slaughter, to the number of seventy of their principal men, and fifty thousand of their common people, 1 Kings vi. 19. (4.) When David in a great procession was bringing the ark to its own place, “Oza put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, because the oxen kicked and made it lean aside. And the indignation of the Lord was kindled against Oza, and he struck him for his rashness, and he died before the ark of God,” 2 Kings vi. 6. (5.) Two hundred and fifty of the leading men, but who were not priests, took upon them to offer incense, in two hundred and fifty censers, “and a fire coming out from the Lord, destroyed them all,” Num. xvi. 35. (6.) Ozias, the king, elated with his victories, “neglected the Lord his God, and going into the temple of the Lord, he had a mind to burn incense, upon the altar of incense.” The priests opposed him, as their duty required, but “Ozias was angry, and holding in his hand the censer to burn incense, threatened the priests. And presently there arose a leprosy in his forehead......and they made haste to thrust him out. Yea, he himself being also frightened, hastened to go out, because he had quickly felt the stroke of the Lord. And Ozias the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and he dwelt in a house apart, being full of the leprosy,” 2 Chron. xxvi. 16. (7.) Baltassar, king of Babylon, made a great feast, and in his drunkenness commanded the sacred vessels which his father Nabuchodonosor had brought away out of the temple of Jerusalem, to be brought, that he and his wives and nobles might drink out of them; but immediately the figure of a hand appeared, writing his condemnation upon the wall; upon which the prophet Daniel, being called to interpret the writing, spoke thus to the king: “Thou hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven, and the vessels of his house have been brought before thee, and thou,
and thy nobles, and thy wives, and thy concubines have drank wine in them, and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold ......which neither see, nor hear, nor feel, but the God who hath thy breath in his hand, and all thy ways, thou hast not glorified. Wherefore he hath sent the part of the hand which hath written that which is set down,” Dan. v. 23. Then he interpreted the writing, which was, that his days were ended, and his kingdom divided, and given to the Medes and Persians; and this sentence was immediately accomplished, for “that same night Baltassar the Chaldean king was slain, and Darius the Mede succeeded to his kingdom,” verse 30.

(3.) We come now to holy places, or churches dedicated to the service of God, and sanctified by his presence. How holy such places are, and how much God requires them to be reverence and respected, appears from many declarations of scripture. When Moses approached to see the burning bush, the Lord, who was present in the bush, said to him, “Come not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground,” Ex. iii. 5. When Joshua met the angel in the field, he “fell on his face to the ground and worshipped; and the angel said, Loose thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy,” Josh. v. 13. “Moses and Aaron, and his sons washed their hands and their feet, when they went into the tabernacle of the covenant, and went to the altar as the Lord had commanded Moses,” Ex. xli. 29, 30. And this command is thus expressed; “Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and feet when they are going into the tabernacle of the testimony, and when they are to come to the altar to offer on it incense to the Lord; lest perhaps they die; it shall be an everlasting law to him, and his seed by successions,” Ex. xxx. 19. And how great was the respect that God commanded to be paid to his sanctuary? “Reverence my sanctuary,” says he, “I am the Lord,” Lev. xix. 30. He would not allow the high priest to go near any dead person, not even his father or mother, lest he should be defiled, “Neither shall he go out of the holy place, lest he defile the sanctuary of the Lord, because the oil of the holy unction of his God is upon him,” Lev. xxii. 11. If any of the priests had a blemish, he commanded, that “he enter not within the veil, nor approach to the altar, because he hath a blemish, and he must not defile my sanctuary; I am the Lord who sanctify them,” Lev. xxii. 23. He would not allow any of the people to approach his sanctuary, but said, “I have taken the Levites, and have delivered them for a gift to Aaron and his
sons (who are the priests), to serve me for Israel in the tabernacle of the covenant, and to pray for them, lest there should be a plague among the people, if they should presume to approach to my sanctuary," Num. viii. 18. When Jacob the patriarch had the vision of the ladder reaching to heaven, and "awaked out of his sleep, he said, Indeed the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And trembling he said, How terrible is this place! This is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven," Gen. xxviii. 16. Hence David says, "Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, unto length of days," Ps. xcii. 5. And the wise man advises thus, "Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God, and draw nigh to hear," Eccles. iv. 17. God himself thus threatens those that defile his temple, "And I will visit in that day upon every one that entereth arrogantly over the threshold; them that fill the house of the Lord their God with iniquity and deceit," Soph. i. 9. St. Paul confirms the same: "If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy," 1 Cor. iii. 17. And of the execution of those threats we have several striking examples: (1.) Nadab and Abiu, though priests and sons of Aaron, yet because they polluted the sanctuary, by offering the incense with unhallowed fire, "a fire coming out from the Lord destroyed them, and they died before the Lord," Lev. x. 1. (2.) The profanation of the temple of God is declared to be one of the chief causes of the destruction of it, and of the Babylonish captivity; for thus speaks Almighty God himself to his prophet Jeremias: "Is this house then, in which my name hath been called upon, in your eyes become a den of robbers? I am he: I have seen it, saith the Lord. Go ye to my place in Silo, where my name dwelt from the beginning, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel: and now because you have done all these works.....I will do to this house in which my name is called upon, and in which you trust, and to the place which I have given to you and your fathers, as I did to Silo. And I will cast you away from before my face, as I have cast away all your brethren, the whole seed of Ephraim. Therefore do not thou pray for this people.....for I will not hear thee," Jer. vii. 11. (3.) The destruction and profanation of the temple by the Babylonians was the cause of their ruin, and of the miseries that befell them when conquered by the Medes: "Flee ye from the midst of Babylon," says the prophet, "and let every one save his own life.....The Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes; and his mind is against Babylon to destroy it, because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the
vengeance of his temple," Jer. li. 6, 11. (4.) King Antiochus resolving to bring over the Jews to his pagan rites, defiled the temple of God, and filled it full of riots and revellings, and began to persecute the Jews; and from that time forward all his affairs went wrong, his armies were beat, his cities taken, and himself returning from an unlucky expedition into Persia, "the Lord, the God of Israel, that seeth all things, struck him with an incurable and invisible plague...a dreadful pain in his bowels came upon him, and bitter torments of the inner parts......worms swarmed out of his body, and while he lived in sorrow and pain, his flesh fell off, and the filthiness of his smell was noisome to the army, and no man could endure to carry him for his intolerable stench," 2 Mach. ix. He now began to enter into himself, and remember the evils he had done at Jerusalem, and attributed all his misery to that cause, 1 Mach. vi. 12. Then he promised to repair all damages, and: "The holy temple also, which he had before spoiled, he promised to adorn, with goodly gifts, and to multiply the holy vessels, and to allow out of his revenues the charges pertaining to the sacrifices," 2 Mach. ix. 16. But all to no purpose, Almighty God would not accept these offers from his sacrilegious hands, and "he died a miserable death, in a strange country, among the mountains," verse 28. (5.) When Heliodorus came to Jerusalem to rob the temple, and would not be persuaded to desist by what Onias the high priest said to him, all the people with Onias, had recourse to God for help; and God was not wanting to avenge the sanctity of that place; for "all those of Heliodorus's men who presumed to obey him, falling down by the power of God, were struck with fainting and dread, "For there appeared to them a horse, with a terrible rider upon him, adorned with a very rich covering: and he ran fiercely and struck Heliodorus with his bare feet; and he that sat upon him seemed to have armour of gold. Moreover, there appeared two other young men, beautiful and strong, bright and glorious, and in comely apparel: who stood by him on either side, and scourged him without ceasing with many stripes. And Heliodorus suddenly fell to the ground......and by the power of God lay speechless, and without all hope of recovery," 2 Mach. iii. 23; till he afterwards recovered by the prayers of Onias the high priest. (6.) Some other examples of sacrilege and its punishments, are found in the same book, as of Lysimachus, 2 Mach. iv. 39, 43; of Calisthenes, ibid. vii. 33; and particularly of Menelaus, who stole holy vessels of gold out of the temple, and sold them, and by his briberies had once escaped the just judg-
ment of his deed, 2 Mach. iv. 32, 43. But at last, “The King of kings stirred up the mind of Antiochus against this wicked man...as the cause of all the evils. And there was in that place a tower fifty cubits high, having a heap of ashes on every side; this had a prospect steep down. From thence he commanded the sacrilegious wretch to be thrown down into the ashes......for as he had committed many sins against the altar of God, the fire and ashes of which were holy, he was condemned to die in ashes,” 2 Mach. xiii. 4. (7.) It is particularly to be remembered, that our blessed Lord himself, though he bore all his own sufferings with the most amazing meekness, yet was pleased to put on a great zeal when he saw the temple profaned. He reproved the world indeed for many sins, but he would punish with his own hands none but sacrilege; he refused to be judge in parting the inheritance between the two brothers, or in the case of the woman taken in adultery; but when he saw the temple of God profaned, he took upon himself immediately to be both accuser, judge, and executioner; and this he did two different times; once about the beginning of his ministry, “When he went up to Jerusalem, after the marriage of Cana in Galilee; and he found in the temple them that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when he had made, as it were, a scourge of little cords, he drove them all out of the temple, the sheep also and the oxen, and he poured out the changers’ money, and the tables he overthrew. And he said to them that sold doves, Take these things hence, and make not the house of my Father a house of traffic,” John ii. 13. He did the same a second time, of his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem before his passion, and said upon that occasion, “It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves,” Matt. xxi. 13. (8.) Finally, St. Paul assures us, that sacrilegious and unworthy communions not only bring ruin and condemnation upon the soul, but also many miseries and untimely deaths in this world; for “therefore,” says he, “are there many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep,” 1 Cor. xi. 30. Of which the unhappy Judas is a striking example.

Q. 33. Why is all irreverent behaviour in churches so offensive to God?

A. For two strong reasons: (1.) because the church is the house of God; that is, though God be everywhere present, he has no need of a house made with hands, Acts xvii. 24; and consequently we may worship and adore him in all places; yet as in other places we may also transact all our worldly affairs,
he is pleased to have certain places set apart for his worship alone, where nothing can be done but what regards it. Besides, God is present everywhere, but in a different character in heaven, on earth, and in hell. Even on earth itself, he is everywhere present as the sovereign ruler of all things, whether concerning soul or body; but he requires his churches to be set apart where he resides, to treat with us only about the concerns of our souls, and what relates to that alone. Lastly, though God be present everywhere, yet our corruption of heart would soon forget him, if some outward monitor did not put us in mind of his presence; this is done by his churches, which being appointed only for his service, put us in mind who dwells there. For these reasons, God Almighty makes choice of our churches as his houses, and is pleased to be in them in a particular manner. Hence when Solomon had finished the temple he said, "The Lord promised that he would dwell in a cloud; but I have built a house to his name, that he might dwell there for ever," 2 Chron. vi. 1. And when he had ended his prayer of dedication, "fire came down from heaven and consumed the holocausts, and the victims, and the majesty of the Lord filled the house," 2 Chron. vii. 1. And the night following God appeared to Solomon, and said, "I have heard thy prayer, and I have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice...... for I have chosen and have sanctified this place, that my name may be there for ever, and my eyes and my heart may remain there perpetually," v. 12. And our Saviour himself declares, "Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them," Matt. xviii. 20. The very end for which churches are made is, not that two or three, but the whole Christian people may meet in them, in the name of Jesus Christ, and adore him.

(2.) Because the Church is the house of prayer; "My house shall be called the house of prayer for all nations." Is. lvi. 7. For though God be present to hear our prayers in all places, yet as in all other places we also treat of our worldly affairs, as well as pray to God, therefore he wills that the church should be set apart for prayer alone, and that no worldly business should be transacted there. Besides, though God be willing and ready to hear our prayers in all places, yet he is much more ready to grant what we ask in the church than elsewhere, as he declared to Solomon at the dedication of the temple: "My eyes also shall be open, and my ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place," 2 Chron. vii. 15. And Jesus Christ says, "Again I say to you, that if two of you shall agree
upon earth concerning any thing whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven,” Matt. xviii. 19. It is in the house of prayer where many meet to put up their joint petitions to heaven; and we see the effect of them in St. Peter's delivery out of prison, Acts xii. David well knew this truth when he said, "We have received thy mercy, O Lord, in the midst of thy temple,” Ps. xlvii. 10. And God says by Isaías, “I will bring them into my holy mount, and I will make them joyful in my house of prayer, and their victims shall please me upon my altar; for my house shall be called the house of prayer for all nations,” Is. lvi. 7. Hence, Daniel in his captivity opened his window towards Jerusalem three times a-day, and prayed with his face towards the temple of God when he could not go there in person. Lastly, in all other places of the world, the sins and wickedness every where committed, are a hinderance to our prayers from ascending up to God, with such force and efficacy as they would otherwise have, therefore Almighty God would have holy places set apart into which no sin should enter, that our prayers made there, being the more agreeable to him, should be the more beneficial to our souls.

From all which it is easy to see, how great a perversion it is of the use of the church of God, how great a disrespect shown it, and consequently how displeasing to God to employ one's self when in the church, on any worldly affairs, on any vain amusements, in looking about to see and to be seen, in speaking with others without necessity, in doing any thing sinful; in a word, in doing any thing there but speaking to God by prayer and praises, or in hearing him speak to us by the mouth of his ministers. "Have you not houses of your own to eat and drink,” says St. Paul, “and do you despise the church of God?” 1 Cor. xi. Have you not all other places for your worldly affairs?—will you not keep even the house of God free from them? "Will you set scandals in the house in which his name is called upon, to pollute it?” Jer. vii. 30. Is he not a jealous God? Jealous of his honour and glory? How will he be pleased to see Satan's temples more respected by Turks and heathens, than his own churches by Christians? Wherefore, (1.) “The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him,” Hab. ii. 20. (2.) “But as for me, in the multitude of thy mercy, I will come into thy house; I will worship towards thy holy temple in my fear,” Ps. v. 8. (3.) “Wo to you.....ye great men, heads of the people, that go in with state into the house of Israel,” Amos. vi. 1. Remember
the Pharisee and the publican. (4.) "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts; my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord," Ps. lxxxiii. 1.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE SECOND COMMAND.

Q. 1. What is the second command?
A. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain," Ex. xx. 7; or, as it is expressed in another text, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for he shall not be unpunished, that taketh his name upon a vain thing," Deut. v. 11.

Q. 2. What is the end or design of this command?
A. It is to direct us how we ought to worship God in our words, by honouring his holy name.

Q. 3. Is God jealous of the honour due to his holy name?
A. He is most jealous of this honour; as appears both from the words of the command, with the threatened punishment annexed, and also from several other texts of scripture; thus, "Thou shalt not swear falsely by my name, nor profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord," Lev. xix. 12. "Profane not my holy name, that I may be sanctified in the midst of the children of Israel," Lev. xxii. 32. "Holy and terrible is his name," Ps. cx. 9. "Blessed be the name of the Lord, from henceforth now and for ever; from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the name of the Lord is worthy of praise," Ps. cxii. 2. "For from the rising of the sun, even to the going down, my name," says Almighty God, "is great among the Gentiles," Mal. i. 11. Hence severe judgments are threatened against those who do not give the due honour to the holy name of God; thus, "If thou wilt not fear his glorious and terrible name, that is, the Lord thy God; the Lord shall increase thy plagues, and the plagues of thy seed; plagues great and lasting; infirmities grievous and perpetual," Deut. xxviii. 58. "They profaned my holy name by the abominations which they committed; for which reason I consumed them in my wrath," Ezech. xliii. 8. From this we see how much it is our duty to honour and revere the sacred name of God, and how careful we ought to be never to profane it. This duty is a
natural consequence of the first command; for if we firmly believe God to be a being of infinite perfections, of infinite power and majesty, our supreme and sovereign Lord, who can do with as whatever he pleases; and if in our hearts we have that profound veneration and reverential love for him, which his sovereign majesty and amiable perfections most justly demands from us; how is it possible for us not to have the most humble respect and dread for his adorable name, the honour of which he is so jealous of? We find, from experience, that whenever we have a real esteem for any person, whenever we really love and honour him, we never fail to speak of him with respect and regard, and it pains us to hear any thing said by others which is derogatory to his honour, or disrespectful; how much more then ought this to be the case with respect to God, who is infinitely worthy of all possible homage from us his creatures, and whose sacred name is holy and tremendous, as he himself declares, and expressly commands us to sanctify and revere it?

Q. 4. What is the general division of the second command?

A. There are four different ways by which we honour Almighty God and his holy name by our words, and these make up four different classes of duties, into which the second command is divided; and are (1.) praising and blessing God; (2.) making and keeping lawful vows; (3.) swearing by his holy name in judgment, in justice, and in truth, when necessity requires it; (4.) calling upon his holy name to bless ourselves or others. These are the duties enjoined by this command; and the vices opposite to each of these, are the sins forbidden by it.

§ 1. Of praising and blessing God and his holy Name.

Q. 5. Is it our duty to bless and praise the holy name of God?

A. It is; and this duty is laid down in numberless places throughout the holy scriptures. Thus: “Praise the Lord, ye children, praise ye the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord, from henceforth now and for ever. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the name of the Lord is worthy of praise: the Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens,” Ps. cxii. 1. “Kings of the earth and all people, princes and all judges of the earth, young men and maidens, let the old with the younger praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted,” Ps. cxlviii.
11. "Bring to the Lord glory and honour; bring to the Lord glory to his name," Ps. xxviii. 2. "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us extol his name together," Ps. xxxiii. 4. And this is what our Saviour commands us daily to pray for, in that petition of the prayer he taught us, hallowed be thy name. The saints of God were very assiduous in performing this duty; it was their most delightful employment to thank and bless God at all times, both when he bestowed his favours upon them, and when he was pleased to visit them with crosses and affictions. Thus David says, "I will sing to the Lord who giveth me good things, I will sing to the name of the Lord, the most high," Ps. xii. 6. And Job, in the midst of all his afflictions, blessed God, and said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so it is done; blessed be the name of the Lord," Job i. 21. See above, Chap. IX. Q. 6, No. 3. As for the manner in which we ought to perform this duty, it is thus laid down in scripture: Therefore with the whole heart and mouth praise ye him, and bless the name of the Lord," Ecclus. xxxix. 41. Now by blessing and praising God and his holy name, is understood, whatever we say in his praise; as confessing him and his gospel before men, instructing the ignorant in the knowledge of God and his Divine truths, excelling and exhorting others to praise him, thanking him for all his benefits, acknowledging him to be just, wise, powerful, holy, and the like.

Q. 6. Who are those who transgress this duty of praising the holy name of God?

A. (1.) Those who upon all occasions have the name of God, or of Jesus, in their mouth, and who use one or other of these adorable names as bye-words, almost in every sentence, as if they were words without sense or meaning. This shows a great disrespect for God, and is a very great irreverence done to his holy name. Were any person to use our own name in the same manner as these use the holy name of God, we should think ourselves highly affronted by him. And can we imagine Almighty God will not be offended for abusing his venerable name in such a disrespectful manner? It is certainly most displeasing to him, as it is a direct breach of the express words of his commands. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," that is, without a just cause, only upon a proper occasion, and in a reverent manner; all which circumstances are wanting in those we here speak of; hence they stand guilty before God, for "He will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain;" and they will most certainly be
punished for it, sooner or later; for "He shall not go unpunished who taketh his name in vain." This is therefore a most dangerous custom, which those who are guilty of it ought speedily to amend, lest they feel the fatal effects of it, when it is too late; and therefore the scripture says, "Let not the naming of God be usual in thy mouth, and meddle not with the names of saints, for thou shall not escape free from them," Ecclus. xiii. 10. (2.) Those also who are guilty of blasphemy, are guilty of a grievous breach of this duty, of blessing the holy name of God.

Q. 7. What is blasphemy?

A. Blasphemy is the speaking evil of God, or of his saints; and may be committed several different ways. (1.) By denying any of the perfections of God: as by saying that he is not just, nor merciful; that he regards not the affairs of men, takes no care of us; minds not what we do; that there is no providence, or the like. This kind of blasphemy, people are apt sometimes to be guilty of, when oppressed by troubles and afflictions, especially from the cruelty, tyranny, or injustice of others. (2.) By attributing any defect or imperfection to God, as that he is cruel, that he is the author of sin, that he cannot prevent the evils that come upon us, that he cannot help us, or the like. Thus the children of Israel were guilty of this kind, when, tired with the manna, they wanted flesh; for, "They spoke ill of God; They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Because he struck the rock and the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he also give bread, or provide a table for his people? Therefore the Lord heard, and was angry, and a fire was kindled in Jacob, and wrath came up against Israel......as yet the meat was in their mouth, and the wrath of God came upon them; and he slew the fat ones among them, and brought down the chosen men of Israel," Ps. lxxxvii. 19, 30. (3.) By speaking with contempt of God, or of Jesus Christ; or of their holy names, or of the wounds, blood, passion, or death of Christ; by laughing at them, or deriding them. In this manner, when our Saviour was hanging on the cross, "They that passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads, and saying, Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days buildest it up again, save thyself; if thou be the son of God, come down from the cross," Matt. xxvii. 39. (4.) By cursing God, or wishing ill to him; at wishing there was no God, or that he did not know our sins or could not punish them. This is the language of the damned of whom we are told, "that they bite their tongues for pain,
and blaspheme the God of heaven, because of their pains and wounds," Apoc. xvi. 10. (5.) by saying that God is guilty of any sin, as of injustice, or lust, or the like. Thus the Jews blasphemed our Saviour, calling him a drunkard, a glutton, a wizard, &c. (6.) To speak in any injurious manner of the blessed Virgin, or of any of God's holy saints; for as God is honoured in his saints, when they are honoured, so is he also dishonoured by any blasphemy uttered against them. The same kind of blasphemy is committed by speaking injuriously of the sacraments of Jesus Christ, saying they are of no use or benefit to man; or of his holy scriptures, saying they contain falsehoods; or of his holy church, denying those glorious privileges with which Christ has adorned her. Of this kind antichrist will be very guilty, of whom it is said, "He opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, (that is, his church) and them that dwell in heaven," Apoc. xiii. 6. (7.) By attributing to creatures what belongs to God; as the Jews did when they attributed the miracles of Christ to Satan; and Herod, when he was pleased with, and approved the blasphemous flattery of the Tyrians, who, when he made a speech to them, said, "It is a voice of a god, and not of a man; but forthwith the angel of the Lord struck him, because he had not given the honour to God; and being eaten up by worms, he gave up the ghost," Acts xii. 22.

Q. 8. Is blasphemy a grievous sin?

A. Blasphemy is, of its own nature, a most grievous mortal sin, because it directly attacks the infinite majesty and perfections of God, is diametrically opposite to his praise and honour, and is a daring insult offered to his Divine being. Hence, we find it most severely condemned in scripture. "For such as bless him shall inherit the land: but such as curse him shall perish," Ps. xxxvi. 22. "The man that curseth his God, shall bear his sin: and he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him die; all the multitude shall stone him, whether he be a native or a stranger," Lev. xxiv. 15. "Wo to the sinful nation," saith Almighty God, "a people laden with iniquity, a wicked seed, ungracious children." Strange expressions these indeed, from the mouth of God! But what have they done to deserve such appellations? He immediately adds: "They have forsaken the Lord, they have blasphemed the holy One of Israel: they are gone away backward," Is. i. 4. "Therefore as the tongue of the fire devoureth the stubble, and the heat of the flame consumeth it; so shall their root be
as ashes; and their buds shall go up as dust; for they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and have blasphemed the word of the holy One of Israel. Therefore is the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched out his hand upon them and struck them; and the mountains were troubled, and their carcases became as dung in the midst of the streets," Is. v. 24. Hence St. Paul commands us to "put away anger, indignation, malice, blasphemy, filthy speech out of our mouth," Col. iii. 8. And we find in scripture most severe judgments inflicted on those who are guilty of this crime. Thus (1.) When Salumith's son "fell at words in the camp with a man of Israel, and blasphemed the name of God, and had cursed it, he was brought to Moses; and they put him in prison, till they might know what the Lord would command." And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Bring forth the blasphemer without the camp, and let them that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the people stone him," which was done accordingly, Lev. xxiv. 10, 23. (2.) When Benhadad, king of Syria, was overcome by the people of Israel, his servants said to him, "Their gods are gods of the hills! therefore they have overcome us; but it is better we should fight against them in the plains, and we shall overcome them," 3 Kings xx. 23. Accordingly he raised a great army, and returned to battle. "But a man of God said to the king of Israel, Thus saith the Lord, because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but is not God of the valleys, I will deliver all this multitude into thy hand," verse 28; and accordingly the Israelites gained a complete victory, and "slew a hundred thousand footmen in one day; and a wall fell upon seven and twenty thousand that were left," verse 29. In like manner, (3.) When Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came to destroy Jerusalem, and sent his general to good king Ezekias, who spoke many blasphemous things against God, the Lord spoke to him by his prophet Isaia, "Whom hast thou reproached, and whom hast thou blasphemed? Against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? Against the holy One of Israel .....Thou hast been mad against me, and thy pride had come up to my ears. Therefore I will put a ring in thy nose and a bit between thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest .....And it came to pass that night, that an angel of the Lord came and slew in the camp of the Assyrians, a hundred and eighty-five thousand .....and Sennacherib departed and went away .....and when he was worshipping in the temple of Nesroch, his
god, his two sons slew him with the sword," 4 Kings xix. 22.

(4.) When Nicanor came with a great army against the Jews, and wanted to rush upon them on the sabbath, some of them who were in his army "being constrained to follow him, said, Do not act so fiercely and barbarously, but give honour to the day that is sanctified, and reverence Him who beholdeth all things. Then the unhappy man asked, if there were a mighty One in heaven, that had commanded the sabbath day to be kept? And when they answered, There is the living God himself in heaven, that commanded the seventh day to be kept; then he said, And I am mighty upon the earth, and I command to take arms, and to do the king's business," 2 Mach. xv. 1. But in punishment of his blasphemy, he lost the battle, thirty thousand of his men were slain in the field, he fell also himself, his head was cut off, and his blasphemous tongue cut out, and given in pieces to the birds of the air, ibid. Lastly, of Antiochus, who died a wretched death, his flesh rotting away, and worms growing out of all the parts of his body, it is said, "Thus that murderer and blasphemer, being grievously struck, died a miserable death in a strange country," 2 Mach. ix. 28.

§ 2. Of Vows.

Q. 9. What is a vow?

A. A vow is a promise made to God of doing something that is good or more agreeable to God, or abstaining from something that is bad or less pleasing to God, made with deliberation, for his honour and glory. On which we must observe, (1.) That a vow is a promise; by which it differs from a resolution, for a resolution only signifies the present intention of the will to do anything without any obligation to continue in that intention, which, therefore a man may alter and change as he pleases, without sin: but a vow, besides declaring the present intention, superadds a promise to continue in that intention, and to fulfill it in action; which promise brings a strict obligation under sin of performing what it contains. Thus the scripture says, "When thou hast made a vow to the Lord thy God, thou shalt not delay to pay it, for the Lord thy God will require it. And if thou delay; it shall be imputed to thee for a sin. If thou wilt not promise, thou shalt be without sin: but that which is once gone out of thy lips, thou shalt observe, and shalt do as thou hast promised to the Lord thy God, and hast spoken with thy own will, and with thy own mouth,"
Deut. xxiii. 21. (2.) It is a promise of something good or more agreeable to God: because as by a vow we intend to please and honour God, it is absolutely necessary that what we promise be good in itself, and more agreeable to him that we do it, than that we do it not, or do the contrary. Hence a promise made to God of doing any thing trifling, or indifferent, or evil, would be mocking and dishonouring God, rather than pleasing him; as it would also be to man, if such a promise were made to him; and the scripture says, “a foolish promise displeaseth God,” Eccles. v. 3. (3.) It is a promise made to God; because it is an act of religion by which we honour God, dedicating our will and our liberty in the thing we vow, to his service, according to that of David, “Vow ye, and pay to the Lord your God,” Ps. lxxv. 12. And the prophet Isaías foretells, that under the gospel, “They shall worship the Lord with sacrifices and offerings, and they shall make vows to the Lord, and perform them,” Is. xix. 21. Hence a vow made to any saint, is like altars or churches dedicated to any saint, to wit, made to God in honour of that saint. (4.) It is a promise made with deliberation, because it must be a free act of the will, the person who makes it being sensible what he is doing, and what obligation he brings on himself. Hence the scripture says, “Thou shalt do as thou hast promised to the Lord thy God, and hast spoken with thy own will, and with thy own mouth,” Deut. xxiii. 23.

Q. 10. Is it agreeable to God when we bind ourselves by lawful vows?

A. Most undoubtedly; “the victims of the wicked are abominable to the Lord; the vows of the just are acceptable,” Prov. xv. 8. Hence we are exorted to honour God by this means; “Vow ye, and pray to the Lord your God,” Ps. lxxv. 12; and the prophet foretells that it shall be the practice of the followers of Christ to do so, as we have just seen. Nay, we find it practised by the saints of God from the beginning. Thus, when Jacob fled from his brother Esau, and God appeared to him in Bethel, in the mysterious vision of the ladder, and comforted him, “he made a vow, saying, If God shall be with me, and shall keep me in the way by which I walk, and shall give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on; and I shall return prosperously to my father’s house: the Lord shall be my God;....and of all things that thou shalt give me, I will offer tithes to thee,” Gen. xxviii. 20. And twenty years after, when he was become rich by the protection of providence, God appeared to him again, and said, “I am the God of Bethel, where thou didst anoint the stone, and make a vow to me.
Now therefore arise and return to thy native country," Gen. xxxi. 13, showing thereby how much he approved his vow, and blessed him on account of it. So Anna the mother of Samuel being barren, prayed to God for a son, and that her petition might be granted, she vowed and said to God, "If thou wilt look down and be mindful of me, and not forget thy hand-maid, and will give to thy servant a man child, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head," 1 Kings (Sam.) i. 11. How acceptable this vow was to God, the event showed; for she obtained from God, on account of it, the great prophet Samuel, and several more children after him. David, in his Psalms, frequently speaks of his vows, and of the pleasure with which he would daily pay them before all the world. "With thee," says he, "is my praise in the great church; I will pay my vows in the sight of them that fear him," Ps. xxi. 26. "Offer to God the sacrifice of praise, and pay thy vows to the most High," Ps. xlix. 14. "So will I sing a psalm to thy name for ever and ever, that I may pay my vows from day to day," Ps. lx. 9. "I will go into thy house with burnt offerings; I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken when I was in trouble." Ps. lxxv. 13. "I will pay my vows to the Lord, in the sight of all his people, in the courts of the house of the Lord: in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem," Ps. cxv. 18. In the New Testament also we read of St. Paul, "that he had a vow," Acts xviii. 18; that when he went up to purify himself in the temple, four men were given him for companions; who had a vow on them, Acts xxi. 23; and that he went up to Jerusalem "to bring alms to his nation, and offerings, and vows," Acts xxiv. 17.

And the reasons why vows are agreeable to God are (1.) Because it is of great benefit to our souls to make vows to God, when done with deliberation and prudence, and by proper advice; because it lays us under a holy necessity of doing good; and fixes the inconstancy of our own mind, and confirms our good resolutions, which otherwise are often little to be depended upon, often broken, and often changed, and on that account, insufficient to keep us steady in our duty. (2.) Because when we bind ourselves by vow to do any good, we show a greater readiness to serve God, a greater devotion and affection to him, and that we are really in earnest to please him. Just as a friend would show us a greater love and attachment, if he gave us an obligation under his hand to do us any service, than if he should reserve to himself the liberty to do it or not
as he pleased, though at present he had an intention to do it. (3.) Because what we bind ourselves to by vow is a much greater offering made to God than the good we do without vow; for by the vow we give him not only the good action we do, but also our very liberty itself; we give both the tree and the fruit.

Q. 11. What is forbidden with regard to vows?

A. We are strictly forbidden, (1.) To vow to do an evil action, which would be an insulting of God, and a threatening of him. (2.) To vow any thing that is unworthy of God; for, "Cursed is the deceitful man, that hath in his flock a male, and making a vow offereth in sacrifice that which is feeble to the Lord; for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts," Mal. i. 14. "Thou shalt not offer the hire of a strumpet, nor the price of a dog in the house of the Lord thy God, whatsoever it be that thou hast vowed, because both these are an abomination to the Lord thy God," Deut. xxiii. 18.

Q. 12. Are we strictly obliged to perform our lawful vows?

A. Most undoubtedly, and it would be a very great sin to break them; for (1.) If we be obliged in strict justice to perform those contracts and promises and engagements, which we make to men like ourselves, how much more does the fidelity we owe to God oblige us to perform exactly those sacred engagements and promises which we make to him? Hence, (2.) He expressly commands us to be exact in performing our vows, which we make to him, and assures us that he strictly demands it. "When thou hast made a vow to the Lord thy God, thou shalt not delay to pay it: because the Lord thy God will require it: and if thou delay, it shall be imputed to thee for a sin. If thou wilt not promise, thou shalt be without sin: but that which is once gone out of thy lips, thou shalt observe, and thou shalt do as thou hast promised to the Lord thy God, and hast spoken with thy own will, with thy own mouth," Deut. xxiii. 21. "If thou hast vowed any thing to God, defer not to pay it: for an unfaithful and foolish promise displeaseth him. But whatsoever thou hast vowed, pay it. And it is much better not to vow, than after a vow, not to perform the things promised," Ecclus. v. 3; for "It is a ruin to a man, after he vows, to retract," Prov. xx. 25. And St. Paul assures us, that those widows who have been consecrated to God by a vow of chastity, and afterwards marry, "have damnation, because they have made void their first faith," 1 Tim. v. 12.
Q. 13. What practical consequence flows from these truths?

A. That though a prudent and lawful vow be most agreeable to God; yet as it brings so strong an obligation on him who makes it; and as the weakness of nature, of age, or of virtue, the instability of the heart and imagination, the levity of mind, or want of fortitude, may put one in danger of not being able to perform it, or of repenting of it, and changing his will; therefore people ought to be very cautious in making vows, especially such as are perpetual, use great deliberation, try themselves well, and above all use every means they can, to know if it be the will of God that they should do it; for then they may hope with greater confidence for strength to perform it: all which requires that they should do nothing rashly, but take advice in every step they take, with those who have the charge of their souls; and be exceeding careful to sound well their own intentions for doing it.

§ 3. Of Oaths.

Q. 14. What is an oath?

A. It is a calling upon Almighty God, to witness the truth of what we say, and to punish us if what we say be false. To understand this, we must observe, that there are many circumstances in life, in which one man has a just and perfect right to know the truth of any matter from another; and yet, considering the depravity of the heart of man, our readiness to tell lies, especially where our own interest or selfish views are concerned, for “all men are liars,” Ps. cxv. 11; we cannot entirely trust the simple word of another especially where it may be against his interest, ease, or reputation, to tell the truth. On the other hand, as one man cannot see into another’s heart, to know what passes there, it was necessary to have recourse to some certain way which might be depended on, to convince others that what we say is true. Now, as Almighty God is the infallible truth himself, and searches the depth of the heart of man; as he hates and abhors all lies, and will severely punish those who are guilty of them; and as all men have, or ought to have, the greatest veneration and dread of God; therefore it was wisely judged, that there could be no greater security for a man’s telling the truth, than when he solemnly called upon this great and tremendous Being to witness it, and to punish him if he told a lie. Hence the scripture says, “Men swear by one greater than themselves: and an oath for confirmation is
an end of all their controversy,” Heb. vi. 16. Again, there are
many circumstances of life, in which one man is obliged, or
obliges himself to do some service to another in some future
time, and yet that other cannot always rely on his simple pro-
mise. In this case also the calling God to witness that one
will perform his promise, and to punish him if he fail to do so,
gives the greatest security for the performance that can be re-
quired. Hence there are two kinds of oaths, the one affirmativ!
by which we declare the truth of things past or present; the
other promissory, by which we bind ourselves to do something
for the time to come. Each of these may be either expressed
by simple asseveration; or an imprecation may be also added;
but this imprecation, though not expressed, is always implied in
the former.

Q. 15. Is it lawful to swear at all?
A. It is most lawful to swear a just oath, when there is a
proper cause for doing so; for “Thou shalt fear the Lord thy
God, and shalt serve him only, and thou shalt swear by his
name,” Deut. vi. 13; and “all they shall be praised that swear
by him,” Ps. lxii. 12. Hence we find it done by God’s holy
servants; nothing is more common in the prophets than these
expressions, “as the Lord liveth so may the Lord do to me,
and may he add more;” and the like. St. Paul says, “I call
God to witness upon my soul, that to spare you, I come not as
yet to Corinth,” 2 Cor. i. 23. And, “God is my witness, how
I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ,” Phil. i. 8.
St. John also tells us, that he saw an angel, who, “lifted up his
hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and
ever,” Apoc. x. 5. Yea, we find in scripture several examples
of God himself, who swears by himself, or by his own life, to
confirm the truth of what he says; thus, “I have sworn by my-
self,” says he, “that every knee shall bow to me,” Is. xlv. 23.
And “as I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of the
wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live,”
Ezek. xxxiii. 11. And David tells us, “The Lord hath sworn and
will not repent,” Ps. cix. 4. And “when God made pro-
mise to Abraham, because he had no one greater to swear by,
he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee,”
Heb. vi. 13. Besides, by a just and lawful oath, we greatly
honour God. It is an act of worship done to him, by which
we testify the great reverence and veneration we have for his
Divine Majesty, as the infallible truth who can never be de-
ceived, and the just avenger of all falsehood and lies.

Q. 16. Is it a true oath to swear by any creature? The
reason of the doubt is, because, as St. Paul says that "men swear by one greater than themselves;" and as the design of the oath is to confirm the truth, by calling upon one who certainly knows it, and exposing ourselves to be punished by him if we tell a falsehood, it would seem necessary that the one we swear by be one who infallibly knows the truth, and can punish us if we deserve it; which can only be God.

A. Notwithstanding these reasons, we are to consider the swearing by any creature as a true oath, and the same thing in substance as swearing by the Creator who made these creatures, and whose perfections shine forth in them: and this is the sense in which such oaths are to be understood: of which we find examples in scripture, as when Moses said, "I call this day heaven and earth to witness," Deut. iv. 26. This is the explication Jesus Christ himself gives of such oaths, saying, "Whosoever shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth in it; and he that sweareth by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon," Matt. xxiii. 21; for which very reason, he forbids all rash swearing by these creatures. "But I say to you," says he, "swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair black or white," Matt. v. 34. So, to swear by the gospel, is to swear by him whose truths are contained in the gospel; to swear by the cross, is to swear by him who died on the cross; to swear by any saints, is to swear by him whose temples the saints are; to swear by one's soul, is to swear by him who made our souls, and so of other creatures, at least of the more excellent creatures in whom the perfections of God are more conspicuous: for to swear by any mean creature, as for example, by one's shoe, would rather be deemed a mockery than an oath.

Q. 17. What is required to make an oath just and lawful?

A. The scripture requires three conditions. "Thou shalt swear, AS THE LORD LIVETH, in truth, and in judgment, and in justice," Jer. iv. 2; that is, That what we swear be true; that we swear with mature deliberation, and for a reasonable cause; and that the thing we swear to do be just and good. Otherwise, if truth be wanting, we are guilty of perjury, if we swear without mature deliberation or a just cause, we are guilty of rash swearing; and if the thing we swear be bad, we are guilty of unjust swearing, which are the three sins against this branch of the second command.
Q. 18. What is perjury?

A. It is the sin of forswearing one's self, or giving a false oath; and may be committed five different ways. (1.) When a man swears a thing to be true, which in his own mind he knows to be false. (2.) When he swears a thing to be true, which he, by mistake, thinks to be false, though in reality it be true. (3.) When one swears a thing to be true, which he is uncertain whether it be true or false; by which he exposes himself to the evident danger of swearing a lie. (4.) When one promises upon oath to do a thing, which he is resolved not to do. (5.) When a man promises upon oath to do a thing, and has a mind then really to do it, but afterwards refuses to do it, without a just and lawful cause. For in this last case the performing what one promises upon oath, is absolutely necessary to verify the oath, as much as the truth of what one swears, as past or present, is necessary to make that oath true; and therefore the scripture says, "If any man bind himself by an oath, he shall not make his word void, but shall fulfil all that he promised," Num. xxx. 3.

Q. 19. Is perjury a grievous sin?

A. It is of its own nature a most detestable sin; for (1.) It is a most grievous injury done to God, and contains a formal contempt of God, and a great irreverence against him; because by calling upon him to witness a falsehood, it supposes either that he does not know the truth, or that he can be corrupted to serve as a false witness, and give testimony to a lie, or that he does not mind whether his holy name be abused to attest lies or not. Hence it is a grievous profanation of his holy name, according to that, "Thou shalt not swear falsely by my name, nor profane the name of thy God; I am the Lord," Lev. xix. 12. And on account of these blasphemous suppositions which it contains, it is most highly injurious to his infinite veracity and holiness. (2.) It is a very heinous injury done to our neighbour and to human society; because it grievously deceives our neighbour, by that very thing which ought to give him the greatest certainty of the truth. And it tends to put an end to all society among men, which could never subsist, unless we had a certainty of the truth by oaths. Hence, in all nations, perjury has been always looked upon as one of the greatest and most infamous crimes, and severely punished by all laws. (3.) It is a grievous injury to the person's own soul; because by a false oath he gives his own consent to, and prays for his own condemnation. (4.) It excludes a soul from heaven, because swearing according to truth, when necessity requires
it, is made a condition of getting to that happy place; "Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle; or who shall rest in thy holy hill?.....He that speaketh truth in his heart, who hath not used deceit in his tongue.....He that sweareth to his neighbour, and deceiveth not," Ps. xiv. 1. "Who shall ascend into the mount of the Lord; or who shall stand in his holy place? The innocent in hands and clean of heart, who hath not taken his soul in vain, nor sworn deceitfully to his neighbour," Ps. xxiii. 1. (5.) It is severely prohibited under the greatest threats. "Thou shalt not swear falsely by my name," Lev. xix. 12. "Let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his friend, and love not a false oath, for all these are the things that I hate, saith the Lord," Zach. viii. 17. "Behold you put your trust in lying words which shall not profit you; to steal, to murder, to commit adultery, to swear falsely......and now, because you have done all these works, saith the Lord......I will cast you away from before my face," Jer. vii. 8, 13, 15. "I will come to you in judgment, and will be a speedy witness against sorcerers, and adulterers, and false swearers," Mal. iii. 5. "I saw a roll flying," says the prophet Zacharias, "and the angel said to me, this is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the earth...and every one that sweareth shall be judged by it. I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall......come to the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name; and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and stones thereof," Zach. v. 1. And when the king of Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem, and set up one of the king's seed to be king, and made a covenant with him, and took an oath of him; and he afterwards revolted from the king of Babylon, and sent for help to the king of Egypt, God said, Shall he that hath done this prosper, or be saved? And shall he escape that hath broken the covenant? As I live, saith the Lord God, in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oaths he had made void, and whose covenant he hath broke, even in the midst of Babylon shall he die......for he hath despised the oath, breaking his covenant, and having done all these things, he shall not escape. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, as I live, I will lay upon his head the oath he hath despised, and the covenant he hath broken," Ezek. xvii. 13. So likewise, "In the days of David there was a famine for three years successively; and David consulted the oracle of the Lord; and the Lord said, it is for Saul and his bloody house, because he slew the Gabonites," 2 Kings xxii. 1, contrary to the promise under oath, that they
should not be slain, made to them by Joshua, and the other princes of the people, Jos. ix. 15, 19.

Q. 20. What is meant by rash swearing?

A. Rash swearing is when a person, without any necessity, and without deliberation and proper attention, swears rashly by the holy name of God or of Jesus Christ, or of any creature belonging to him. On this we must observe, (1.) That the design of an oath being to confirm the truth, when this cannot otherwise be sufficiently done; right reason requires that the truth, to confirm which so solemn an act, as the calling the great God to witness it, is used, should be a thing of some importance; and therefore it is a great abuse of oaths to use them in common discourse on every trifling occasion where there is no such necessity, and where one would be as well believed without them. (2.) An oath is a calling upon God to witness the truth, which certainly is in itself a very lawful action, and therefore ought never to be done but with great deliberation and reflection, even where the matter is of consequence, and an oath is necessary; and this is to swear in judgment, which is entirely wanting in those who, without the least thought or consideration, swear almost at every word they pronounce. (3.) Swearing is an act of religion, by which we honour God, flying to his testimony as the last resource, in order to convince others of the truth; but rashly to call on God to witness on every ordinary and trifling occasion, is surely a great dishonour to God, and shows a very high degree of irreverence and disrespect for him, and for his holy name.

Q. 21. Is rash swearing a great evil?

A. Nothing is more common in the world than the custom of rash swearing; persons of all ages, sexes, and conditions of life, are too, too frequently guilty of it; it is even gone such a length with some people, as to have become the mode, and be looked upon as an ornament of speech. A sad and deplorable thing indeed, that the open transgression of the command of God, the profanation of his holy name, the contempt of his Divine law, should be looked upon in such a light by such as call themselves Christians! But such unhappy sinners surely do not believe, or do not reflect upon the great evils which this detestable practice contains, and the danger to which they expose their own souls by it. Wherefore these evils are, (1.) They live in the daily and repeated crime of profaning the holy and adorable name of God, and in the frequent transgression of his express command, which says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Now Jesus Christ declares to
us, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." What is to be expected then from such an unchristian custom, but that, if it be not corrected, Almighty God will more and more withdraw his graces from those who show so little regard, and so much disrespect for him and his holy name, and leave them at last to themselves? 

(2.) It involves the highest contempt of Almighty God, to be calling upon him to witness the truth of every trifling thing one is saying. Only put the case to yourself; suppose your servant should every now and then run to you and desire you to come and assure his fellow-servants, that what he had been saying to them, is true. Would you be pleased with this? Would you not think it a most disrespectful insolence? What then must it be in the sight of God, when you treat his infinite Majesty with the like contempt?

(3.) It is always more or less attended with scandal, especially in parents, in masters and mistresses of families, and in people of higher stations in life; for their example is readily followed by others, and children and servants are very apt to do, without scruple, what they see done by their parents and masters.

(4.) Such as have this unhappy custom, are daily exposed to the danger of perjury, and often are actually guilty of it. Now perjury, as we have seen, is a mortal sin of the deepest dye. For we must not imagine that those only are guilty of perjury, who, being called before a judge, swear falsely; even in common discourse, if a man swears to a lie, though only in jest, he is guilty of perjury; and perjury is always a mortal crime; for whenever we call God to witness a lie, whether the matter be great or small, whether we be in a jest or in earnest, whether before a judge or in common conversation, it is always an affront put upon God Almighty, an insult to his eternal veracity, and a great irreverence to his holy name; the very supposition that God is capable of attesting a lie, great or small, in jest or earnest, is shocking to piety. This being the case, observe what an inevitable danger those daily are in of perjuring themselves, who have the custom of rash swearing. They swear on continually, whatever they are saying, whether true or false, and yet how often are falsehoods mixed with what one says, either as to the thing itself, or in some of its circumstances? Hence (5.) It is severely condemned by the word of God. Thus: "Let not thy mouth be accustomed to swearing, for in it there are many falls," namely, profanation of the name of God, and those others just mentioned; "Let not the naming of God be usual in thy mouth, and meddle not with the names of saints, for thou shalt not escape free from them." No;
such people may flatter themselves, it is the fashion; it is the
common way of speaking; they do only as they heard one by
others; but whatever they may think or say, the word of God,
which will never pass away, expressly declares, that they shall
not escape from the punishment due to their sin; sooner or
later the day will come, when the great God of heaven, whose
holy name they so frequently abused, will himself avenge his
own cause, and punish both them and all that belongs to them;
for "a man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity,
and the scourge shall not depart from his house." Yea, even
in this world vengeance shall overtake him, for "If he swear
in vain, he shall not be justified, for his house shall be filled
with his punishments," Ecclus. xxiii. 9. "I will destroy men
from the face of the land, saith the Lord; and I will stretch
out my hand upon Juda, and upon all the inhabitants of
Jerusalem......and them that swear by the Lord, and swear
by Melchom," Soph. i. 35; which shows how detestable a thing
it is before God, to swear even by the devil; for Melchom was the
idol of the Ammonites. "The speech that sweareth much shall
make the hair of the head stand upright, and its irreverence
shall make one stop his ear," Ecclus. xxvii. 15. Hence, our
blessed Saviour, in order to prevent, or root out this most
wicked custom from among his followers, expressly forbids all
rash swearing, as we have seen above, Q. 16. The same com-
mand is repeated by his apostle, saying, "But above all things,
my brethren, swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the
earth, nor by any other oath, but let your speech be Yea, yea;
No, no; that you fall not under judgment," James. v. 12.
These sacred testimonies of the word of God, deserve to be con-
sidered and pondered with particular attention.

Q. 22. But does not this express prohibition both of our
Saviour and of his apostle, include all kind of oaths without
exception?

A. By no means; it does not include just and lawful swear-
ing, when necessity requires; but it only regards all kind of
rash swearing in common discourse; for (1.) Neither of these
texts forbids to swear by God himself, and that is what is com-
monly done in rash swearing, as by the devil, or by one’s soul.
(2.) Both our Saviour and St. James conclude, by saying,
"Let your speech be Yea, yea; No, no"; which clearly shows,
that in what goes before, they speak only about rash oaths
given in our speech or conversation. (3.) We have seen above,
Q. 15, that just and lawful oaths are commanded by God, and
are an honour done to him, and therefore cannot be forbidden
by Jesus Christ, or his apostle.

Q. 23. What is an unjust oath?
A. An unjust oath is when a person swears to do any evil thing. Now as every thing evil is an offence to God, it appears all at once, how great a crime it must be, to call God to witness that you will offend him. Such was the oath of David, when being told that Nabal had refused to give him any provision, he said, “May God do so and so, and add more to the enemies of David, if I leave of all that belong to him till the morning, any that pisseth against the wall,” 1 Kings xxv. 22. Such also, was the oath of those Jews, who “bound themselves with a curse, saying, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul,” Acts xxiii. 12. And it is surprising, how frequent these kind of oaths are in the world, when one is in a sudden passion or anger against any thing. Thus we see them used by mothers to their children when vexed by them; by masters to their servants; by servants to the cattle or horses, when they displease them, &c.

Q. 24. Is an unjust oath a great sin?
A. Those who swear to do a thing that is mortally sinful, and have a design to do it, commit at once two mortal sins; the one consisting in the will and design to do the evil action, and the other, in the great affront they put on Almighty God, by using his authority and testimony, in order to confirm them in offending him. For what is the sense of such an oath? it is as much as to say, “I swear by thyself, O God, that I will transgress thy will, and do the will of thy enemy, the devil.” A shocking oath indeed! (2.) Those who swear to do an ill thing, which they have no mind to do, are guilty of perjury; because they call to God to witness a lie. O that passionate people, and especially parents, would think seriously on this!

Q. 25. Is one obliged to keep an unjust oath?
A. The obligation which an oath brings upon us to do what we promise, arises from this, that having called upon God to witness that we will perform what we promise, he, out of respect to his holy name, obliges us to perform it, and will punish us if we do it not. Now will Almighty God oblige us to commit a sin? Will he punish us if we do not commit it? This is plainly impossible; God can never desire us, out of reverence to his holy name, to do that which highly offends him, and which he expressly forbids; nay, the very pretending to do it, because we had sworn to do it, would be a double
crime, because it would be making the holy name of God a bond of iniquity, besides, the sin of the evil done itself. Were the forty Jews obliged to kill St. Paul, because they had sworn to kill him? Or was Herod obliged to kill St. John the Baptist, because he had sworn to grant Herodias's daughter whatsoever she should ask? is he not highly condemned by all Christians as a murderer for putting that holy martyr to death? When David swore he would destroy Nabal, and was appeased from doing it, by the prudence of Nabal's wife, he blessed God for it, and said to her, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed be thy speech; and blessed be thou, who hast kept me this day from coming to blood, and revenging me with my own hand," 1 Kings xxv. 32. Hence it is plain, that an unjust oath brings no obligation of doing the sinful action. It is a very great sin to make such an oath, but it would be still a greater one to keep it; and therefore, all that a person has to do, who has been so unhappy as to swear he would do any evil thing, is heartily to repent of that crime, but by no means to add another to it, by doing the evil action.


Q. 26. Do we honour the name of God by blessing ourselves or others?

A. very much: for when we call on the name of God to bless ourselves or others, by that we show, that it is only from God we expect all good. It is therefore a prayer to God, which contains an acknowledgment, that all good comes from God; that he is all powerful and able to help us; that he is all goodness, and willing to help us; and that we put our trust and confidence in him.

Q. 27. Are any particular persons authorized to bless others?

A. The pastors of the church have this for part of their office; and this was the case even in the old law itself. Thus "The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Say to Aaron and his sons, Thus shall you bless the children of Israel, and you shall say to them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord turn his countenance to thee, and give thee peace. And they shall invoke my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them," Num. vi. 22. Here we see the different forms which God ordered the priests to use in blessing any of the people, and a promise of God, that on this being done he would bless them. And
not only Aaron, and his sons, who were the chief pastors of the people of God, but also the whole tribe of Levi was authorized to bless the people; for "At that time he separated the tribe of Levi......to stand before him in the ministry, and to bless in his name," Deut. x. 8. "And the priests, the sons of Levi shall come, whom the Lord thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in his name," Deut. xxi. 5. In the new law, the church sensible of this part of the office of her pastors, put them in mind of it, as well as of the other parts of their duty, when they are receiving the order of priesthood, for the bishop who ordains them, says to them, "It is the duty of a priest to offer sacrifice, to bless, to preside, to preach, to baptize;" and when his hands are consecrated by holy unction, the bishop says this prayer: "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to consecrate and sanctify these hands by this unction, and our benediction; that whatever they shall bless, may be blessed; and whatever they consecrate, may be consecrated; in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." And when a bishop is consecrated to that high office, the consecrator, after anointing his hand, says, "Whatsoever thou shalt bless, may it be blessed; and whatsoever thou shalt sanctify, may it be sanctified; and may the laying on of this consecrated hand, be of service to all for salvation."

Q. 28. Does Almighty God, in consequence of the blessing of the pastors of his church, bestow good things on his people?

A. We have seen above, that he expressly promised to do so. "They shall invoke my name," says he, "on the children of Israel, and I will bless them," Num. vi. 27. "And the priests and Levites rose up, and blessed the people; and their voice was heard; and their prayer came to the holy dwelling place of heaven," 2 Par. xxx. 27. When Anna, the mother of Samuel, had poured forth her soul in fervent prayer, for a son, because she was barren, Eli, the high priest blessed her, and said, "Go in peace, and the Lord God of Israel grant thee thy petition which thou hast asked of him." And immediately she went away comforted, and her countenance was no more changed; and going down to her house, the Lord remembered her and gave her her desire in having a son, who was the great prophet Samuel,—1 Kings (Sam.) i. 16. And when Samuel was grown up and brought to Eli by his parents, according to his mother's vow, to be dedicated to the service of the tabernacle; Eli, upon that occasion, blessed them, and said to the father, "The Lord give thee seed of this woman, for the loan which thou hast lent to the Lord: and they went home, and the Lord visited Anna,
and she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters," 1 Kings (Sam.) ii. 20. Such was the effect of the blessing of the high priest of God.

Q. 29. Are we Christians commanded to bless one another?

A. We are; and it is our duty, as Christians, to bless even our enemies and persecutors. Thus our Saviour says, "But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you; bless them that curse you; and pray for them that calumniate you," Luke vi. 27. And his apostles repeat the same duty: "Bless them that persecute you; bless, and curse not," Rom. xii. 14. "Not rendering evil for evil, not railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing; for unto this you are called, that you may inherit a blessing," 1 Pet. iii. 9. And this the apostles literally fulfilled themselves." We are reviled," Says St. Paul, "and we bless, we are persecuted, and we suffer it," 1 Cor. iv. 12.

Q. 30. What is the vice opposite to blessing ourselves or others, and which is forbidden by this command?

A. It is the crime of cursing; which is committed when we wish any evil either to ourselves or to our neighbours, or to any of God's creatures; such as, that sorrow may befall them; or the plague take them; or the devil speed them or take them, or confound them; or that God may curse them or damn them, or the like; and that, whether this wish be made in the heart only, or be also expressed in words. Now there are different degrees of malice in this, according to the nature of the evil which one wishes; for the greater the evil is, the greater is the malice of wishing it to any creature.

Q. 31. Is cursing a great sin?

A. It is of its own nature a most grievous sin; of a diabolical nature, full of malice, quite opposite to the spirit of Jesus Christ, and strongly condemned by the word of God. Thus, (1.) It is expressly forbidden in scripture, as we have seen above, Q. 29. (2.) It is a grievous transgression of the second command, which forbids taking the name of God in vain; and he declares, that he shall not be guiltless, nor go unpunished, who does so; how much more he, who uses the holy name of God, to implicate any evil upon himself or others? (3.) Our Saviour declares, "that whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire," Matt. v. How much more he, who wishes that the devil may take his brother, or any other grievous evil come upon him? (4.) The scripture speaks of it with horror; thus, "Their throat is an open sepulchre,
with their tongues they acted deceitfully; the poison of asps is under their lips;" and why all this? because "their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness......destruction and unhappiness is in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes," Ps. xiii. 3. (5.) It also assures that rash curses shall sooner or later be turned back on those that utter them; "as a bird flying to other places, and a sparrow going here or there; so a curse uttered without a cause, shall come upon a man," Prov. xxvi. 2; the meaning of which is, that a curse uttered without a cause shall do no harm to the person that is cursed, but will return upon him that curseth, as, whithersoever a bird flies, it returns at last to its own nest. "The spirit of wisdom is benevolent, and will not acquit the evil speaker [in the original it is, the curser] of his lips; for God is witness of his reins, and is a true searcher of his heart, and a hearer of his tongue," Wisd. i. 6. Nay, what is still more dreadful, "While the ungodly curseth the devil, he curseth his own soul," Ecclus. xxi. 31; that is, he condemneth and curseth himself, inasmuch as by this sin he takes part with the devil, and is, as it were, his member and subject. (6.) It further declares, that a curse is the portion and inheritance of those that love cursing; thus, "he loved cursing, and it shall come upon him; he would not have blessing, and it shall be far from him; he put on cursing like a garment and it went in like water into his entrails, and like oil to his bones. May it be unto him like a garment which covereth him, and like a girdle with which he is girded continually," Ps. cviii. 18. And in another place the same royal prophet says of the wicked, "The labour of their lips shall overwhelm them; burning coals shall fall upon them; thou wilt cast them down into the fire; in miseries they shall not be able to stand," Ps. cxxxix. 10. Now what is this labour of their lips? He tells us some verses before, "they have sharpened their tongues like a serpent, the venom of asps is under their lips," verse 4; by which is meant, as we have seen above, No. 4, from another psalm, "their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness," Ps. xiii.

Q. 32. What are the reasons why cursing is so severely condemned?

A. They are chiefly these following: (1.) Because it is directly contrary to that charity and love of our neighbour, which Christ so strictly requires of all his followers, and which obliges us to wish well to our neighbour, as we do to ourselves; for to love one is to wish him well, and to do him good, but to
wish one ill, is to hate him; and the scripture says, "He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walked in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes," 1 John ii. 11; and "Whoso hateth his brother, is a murderer; and you know that no murderer hath life eternal abiding in him," 1 John iii. 15. Now what greater act of hatred can be used against one than to curse him; to pray the devil may take him, or that God may damn him? (2.) It is directly contrary to the great command that Jesus Christ lays upon all his followers, of returning good for evil, blessing for cursing, and prayers for ill-usage. "But I say to you," says he, "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that calumniate you," Luke vi. 27. (3.) It directly opposes all the views of Jesus Christ, in what he did and suffered for the salvation of mankind; for Jesus Christ died for the salvation of souls, the curser prays that they may be damned; he shed his blood to redeem souls from hell and Satan, the curser wishes that the devil may take them, and that they may go to hell; Christ laid down his life to obtain for souls the blessing of God and eternal happiness; the curser prays that God may curse them and deprive them of that happiness! What a dreadful contrast is here! what opposition! what contradiction to the views and designs of our blessed Saviour! The curser declares himself to be an enemy, an adversary, an opposer of Jesus Christ; a servant of Satan, a promoter of his designs, and as far as in him lies, a murderer of souls. (4.) Because cursing is a total perversion of the use for which the tongue was given us. St James is particularly strong upon this head. He says, "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is placed among our members, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of our nativity, being set on fire by hell...the tongue no man can tame; a restless evil, full of deadly poison." These are dreadful appellations given to this member; but on what account does the apostle speak in such terms of the tongue? why so severe a condemnation of it? what is its crime, to deserve such treatment? He immediately adds the reason, "By it we bless God the Father; and by it we curse men, who are made after the likeness of God! Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing! My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth out of the same hole, sweet and bitter water? can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear grapes, or the vine figs?" James iii. 6. (5.) It is a sin which is commonly attended with great scandal of little ones; for young children,
hearimg this diabolical language spoken by their parents and servants, soon learn to speak in the same strain, and from their example begin, too early indeed, to offend God by so doing. "But he that shall scandalise one of these little ones (that is, shall teach or cause them to sin) that believe in me," says Jesus Christ, "it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea," Matt. xviii. 6. (6.) To curse any of God's creatures, which are among one's hands, such as horses, cattle, or any kind of instruments one is working with, when any cross accident happens from them, is a great ingratitude and provocation to Almighty God. These are all his benefits, given for the use and service of man, the effects of his goodness. What must he think then, when instead of thanking him for them, one curses them, and prays the devil may take them, or blast them, or confound them, or the like? What would one say, what would be his misery, if these curses should be immediately heard? If the scripture says, "While the ungodly man curses the devil, he curses his own soul," Ecclus. xxi. 31; what would it say of him, who curses the innocent creatures of God, the benefits he bestows upon us?

Q. 33. Are curses of this kind ever heard, so as to fall on those whom one curses?

A. We have seen above, that rash curses, uttered without a cause, fall back upon the curser himself, and sooner or later bring mischief upon him; but there are four cases wherein the scripture tells us, that curses are heard and fall upon those against whom they are uttered. (1.) When the poor curse the rich, who oppress and provoke them; hence the scripture says, "Turn not away thine eyes from the poor, for fear of anger; and give not to them that ask of thee, room to curse thee behind thy back; for the prayer of him that curses thee in the bitterness of his soul, shall be heard. He that made him will hear him, and therefore make thyself affable to the congregation of the poor," Ecclus. iv. 5. (2.) When widows and orphans curse their oppressors; thus, "The Lord will not accept any person against a poor man, and he will hear the prayer of him that is wronged. He will not despise the prayers of the fatherless, nor the widow, when she poureth out her complaint. Do not the widow's tears run down the cheek, and is not her cry against them that causeth them to fall? for from the cheek they go up even to heaven, and the Lord that heareth them will not be delighted with them," Ecclus. xxxv. 16. (3.) When parents curse their own children; for, "The father's blessing establishes
the houses of the children; but the mother’s curse rooteth up the foundation,” Eccles. iii. 11. We see a striking example of this, in the curse which Noah pronounced upon his son Cham, and his posterity by Chanaan, who was the father of the ancient inhabitants of the holy land: for when Cham saw and laughed at his father’s nakedness, while he lay drunk in an unseemly posture, “Noah awaking from the wine, when he had learned what his younger son had done to him; he said, “Cursed be Chanaan, a servant of servants shall he be to his brethren,” Gen. ix. 24. In consequence of this curse the posterity of Chanaan became a most wicked set of people, and were at last rooted out by the Israelites when they conquered the holy land; and those who were not extirpated, as the Gabonites, were made miserable slaves, to whom Joshua said, “You shall be under a curse, and your race shall always be hewers of wood and carriers of water unto the house of my God,” Josh. ix. 23. And the scripture describing the abominations and wickedness of all the Canaanites, says, “They were a wicked generation, and their malice natural, and their thought could never be changed,” and immediately adds the source of all their misery, in these words, “For it was a cursed seed from the beginning,” Wisd. xii. 10; alluding to the curse of Noah upon his son, their father. (4.) When people curse themselves: of which we have a striking example in the whole people of Israel; for upon hearing the accounts which the spies gave of the holy land, and of the strength of its inhabitants, they lost all their courage and confidence in God; and in their vexation of mind, prayed this curse upon themselves, “Would to God we may die in this vast wilderness, and that the Lord may not bring us into this land, lest we fall by the sword, and our wives and children be led away captives,” Num. xiv. 3; their murmuring on this occasion was most offensive to God, and he appeared to Moses, and said, “How long will this people detract me? how long will they not believe me, for all the signs I have wrought before them? I will strike them therefore with pestilence, and will consume them,” verse 11. Moses upon this interposed, with a most fervent prayer, and appeased his indignation, so that he forgave them the sin of their murmuring; nevertheless he would on no account be prevailed on to forgive them the curse they had prayed upon themselves, but swore by himself, it would be fully accomplished; “As I live, saith the Lord, according as you have spoken in my hearing, so will I do to you; on the wilderness shall your carcasses lie. All you that have murmured against me, shall not enter into the land...but your children, of
whom you said that they should be a prey to the enemies, will I bring in, that they may see the land which you have despised. Your carcases shall lie in the wilderness. Your children shall wander in the desert for forty years, until the carcases of their fathers be consumed in the desert,” verse 28. A dreadful example this for us, who are travelling through the wilderness of this life towards the true land of promise! and which shows us what danger those run of never entering there, who in their passion and anger pray certain curses upon themselves, which tend to exclude them from it. A still more dreadful example we have in the Jews, who, insisting with Pilate to have our Saviour crucified, prayed this horrid curse upon themselves and their posterity, “His blood be upon us and on our children!” This curse was heard to their sad cost; they were, from that day, rejected from being the people of God; misery ruin, and destruction, soon pursued them, and their unhappy posterity groan under this curse to the present day.

Q. 34. But what shall be said of those who have an unhappy custom of cursing?

A. That their conduct is most shocking antichristian; for (1.) Is it not a shame for a Christian to be continually praying to the devil, for the ruin of his own or his neighbour’s soul, and so backward and negligent in praying to Almighty God, for his own or his neighbour’s salvation? And this is the case with all such as have got into this unhappy custom. Scarce can they speak a sentence, without some hellish imprecation on themselves or some of God’s creatures, and yet think it an intolerable task to bend their knees to pray to the great God for his blessings, or to raise up their hearts now and then to him! (2.) They employ themselves continually in speaking the language of the damned here, and on that account may justly fear it shall be their portion to do so for all eternity hereafter; for (3.) This unhappy language they speak, is a sign of the country to which they belong. All intelligent creatures are divided into three classes: First, the angels and saints, whose country is heaven, whose language is to praise and glorify God continually, to bless his holy name, and pray for their brethren upon the earth. Secondly, the devil and damned souls, whose country is hell, whose language is to blaspheme the God of heaven, to curse themselves for their folly, in having brought themselves to that place of misery by their sins, to curse the day they were born, those who first taught them to sin, the partners of their crimes, and the like. Lastly, We men who are still upon the earth, and travelling towards one or other of these two countries. If
now, we wish to know to which of these countries we belong, consider whose language we speak. If a stranger be in any country upon his travels, and can speak only his own language, this immediately discovers what his country is; and when St. Peter was attacked as belonging to our Saviour, and denied it, they replied, "Surely thou art also one of them; for even thy speech doth discover thee," Matt. xxvi. 73; that is, discovered him to be a Galilean, and of the disciples of Jesus. (4.) They can have no inducement to it either from profit, or pleasure, or honour, as is commonly found in other sins; they make themselves mere slaves of the devil to please him, and promote his service: for it is a delight to Satan to hear the holy name of God so unworthily abused; and it is no less pleasing to him to hear Christians praying so frequently to himself, especially for some mischief to themselves or others. Satan desired always to be honoured as God, but not being able to get that honour to the full of his wishes from Christians, it delights him at least that they should often thus pray to him. (5.) Let no such people imagine that their bad custom will excuse them before God. The having such a custom itself is criminal, and they are bound in duty to conquer and destroy it. If indeed they use all their endeavours to break and destroy it, this will excuse them from the guilt, when, on any particular occasion, the force of custom may betray them; but as long as they entertain this custom, and use no endeavours, or take no pains to overcome it, this shows that they consent to it, that they approve it, and consequently are answerable for all the consequences of it, and the effects produced by it. Neither let them delude themselves as if they had no great custom of cursing, and seldom fall into it above once or twice a-day; alas! once a-day make three hundred and sixty-five curses in the year! and if more in a day, to what a multitude must it amount in the year! What will it be in a number of years? what in one's whole life! And if our Saviour assures, "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment," Matt. xxii. 36; what account must they give of their curses, who have the custom of uttering them, when they shall appear against them in such immense numbers? The curses they utter are not blown away by the wind. Though they themselves think no more of them they are not forgotten: they are laid up in store for the great day, and if not cancelled by a sincere repentance and amendment, will one day appear against them, to their eternal confusion. A horrid catalogue, indeed, will they make up! and numerous! (6.) Let
them consider seriously the following words of our Saviour: "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. A good man out of a good treasure, bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of an evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account of it at the day of judgment; for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned," Matt. xii. 35. What then shall be the fate of cursers and swearers. What we have here seen against this unhappy custom of rash cursing, is equally applicable to that of rash swearing.

Q. 35. But if the custom be only of speaking the bad word, while the person has no manner of ill will in his heart, and would be very far from wishing the evil expressed in the words, to any person, will not this excuse him?

A. Where this is really the case, it will certainly excuse him from the malice of hatred, and of wishing evil to his brother in his heart; but it will never excuse him from the guilt of profaning the holy name of God, or of praying externally to the devil, or of giving scandal to others, or of perverting the use of the tongue, and of making that member, which is given us to praise God, an instrument of honouring Satan. Neither will it excuse him from directly transgressing the following strong injunctions of the word of God, and of grieving the holy spirit; "Let no evil speech proceed out of your mouth," says St. Paul, "but that which is good, to the edification of faith, that it may minister grace to the hearers; and grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and anger, and indignation, and clamour, and blasphemy, be put away from you, with all malice," Eph. iv 29. And again he says, "But now put you also away, all anger, indignation, malice, blasphemy, filthy speech out of your mouth," Col. iii. 8. But can it be said with truth, that those who have a custom of cursing, upon every the smallest provocation, are always free from wishing in their heart, what the words express? It may indeed be, that, when their passion is over, they wish no ill to the person: but at the time they pronounce these curses, when passion hurries them on, and their mouth speaks in the bitterness of their soul, who can answer how far their heart goes along with their words? Our blessed Saviour assures us, that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" and when is the abundance of the heart greater, than on such occasions? The Israelites, in the heat of their vexation, cursed themselves that they might die
in the wilderness; no sooner was their passion over, than they were sorry for that expression, and offered to go into the holy land, and fight against its inhabitants; but this did not hinder God from hearing their curse, and declaring with an oath, "According as you have spoken in my hearing, so will I do to you; in the wilderness shall your carcasses lie." When Christians curse in their passion, and in the bitterness of the soul, do their hearts go less along with their words, than the hearts of those Israelites did?

CHAPTER XII.

THE THIRD COMMAND.

Q. 1. What is the third command?
A. "Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour and shalt do all thy works; but on the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; thou shalt do no work on it, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it," Ex. xx. 8.

Q. 2. What is the general end or design of this command?
A. To understand this, we must observe, that all the actions of man may be divided into two kinds; to wit, those which tend immediately to the service of God; and those which are immediately employed about our worldly concerns: or which comes to the same thing, those which tend immediately to the care of the soul, and those which tend immediately to the care of the body. Now, as we owe ourselves wholly to God, we ought certainly to do even our worldly actions, in such a manner as to please him, by doing them in obedience to his will, and for his honour and glory. But, besides thus sanctifying our worldly employments, the very light of nature tells us, that we are strictly obliged to lay aside some part of our time for the practice of those duties alone, which immediately tend to the worship and service of God, such as prayer, praise, thanksgiving, sacrifice, and the like. Our whole time belongs to God, for the scripture says to him, "Thine is the day, and thine is the
night, thou hast made the moon and the sun... the summer and the spring were formed by thee," Ps. lxxiii. 16. Consequently, as it is impossible for us in the present order of providence, to spend all our time in these holy exercises which belong immediately to the service of God, it is our bounden duty to set apart at least some portion of our time for these purposes. Again, as our one, only, necessary affair in this world is to save our souls, even those actions which regard the body, ought to be so regulated as to be made subservient to this great and necessary affair; but considering how apt we are to be led away by the concerns of the body, to forget the soul, it is manifest we ought to have some particular time set apart, to be employed only in what concerns our salvation. All mankind agree in allotting some proper times for the several necessities of the body, such as sleeping, eating, exercise, and the like; much more ought we to allot some proper times for the necessities of the soul; it is of infinitely more value than the body, we are come into the world only to procure its salvation, and it will profit us nothing to gain the whole world, if we lose it. Yet such is the perversion of our heart, and our attachment to our worldly concerns, that if left to ourselves to determine the proper times for the service of God and the care of our souls, we should be apt to neglect it entirely; for we see how backward we are to observe those times which God himself has commanded to be laid aside for these ends. For this reason Almighty God was pleased to determine by an express command, what portion of our time he requires from us to be spent in his service only, and in what concerns our salvation; and this is the general end and design of this third command; in which, while he allows us all the other days in the week, to be employed about our temporal affairs, and the concerns of our body, he expressly requires that we keep holy the seventh day, dedicating it entirely to his service, and the concerns of our souls.

Q. 3. Why did God command the seventh day of the week to be set apart for these ends, rather than any other, by his people, in the old law?

A. (1.) Because, having completed the great work of the creation in the space of six days, "On the seventh day, God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all the work which he had done; and he blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it he had rested from all his work," Gen. ii. 2. Therefore he commanded that all men should keep that day holy, in memory of the great work of the creation, and of the rest or repose which
God took from his work, after all was finished. And this is the very reason given in the command itself, for keeping holy the seventh day, where it is also called the sabbath of the Lord; that is, the day of his rest; for the word sabbath, signifies a rest from labour. Now, on this account the seventh day had been kept holy by the servants of God from the beginning; and though it was interrupted during their captivity in Egypt, yet we find it renewed again, immediately on their coming into the wilderness, even before the commands were given on Mount Sinai. For when the manna was sent them from heaven, none of it fell on the seventh day, and they were ordered to gather as much on the sixth day, as served for the seventh also: and what they thus gathered on the sixth day did not corrupt, as it always did, when they gathered more than one day’s provision on any other day. The reason of which, is thus laid down in scripture; “Gather it six days, but on the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord; therefore it shall not be found,” Ex. xvi. 26. (2.) Another reason for which the Israelites were commanded to keep holy the sabbath day, was this: To be a sign of their being the people of the true God; because by keeping this day in memory of the creation, and of the rest which God took after all was completed, they thereby acknowledged him to be the great Creator of the universe, and that they were his servants and people. Thus God says to them, “See that you keep my sabbath; because it is a sign between you and me in your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctify you ..........Let the children of Israel keep the sabbath, and celebrate it in their generations. It is an everlasting covenant between me and the children of Israel, and a perpetual sign,” Ex. xxx. 13, 16. (3.) That it might be a figure of the rest of Jesus Christ in the grave, on the seventh day, after he had ended all his sufferings, and completed the great work of our redemption, by his passion and death.

Q. 4. By whom and for what reason was the observance of the week, changed into that of the Sunday, or first day, among the Christians?

A. This change was made by the church of Christ, in the time of the apostles, in honour of Jesus Christ, and therefore it is called in scripture, the Lord’s Day, Apoc. i, 10. On it we find the first disciples were accustomed to meet, to celebrate the holy mysteries, and hear the word of God, and make their collections for their poor brethren: thus, “On the first day of the week, when they were assembled to break bread,
Paul discoursed with them,” Acts xx. 7. The same apostle, writing to the Corinthians about making a collection for the brethren in Jerusalem, says, “On the first day of the week, let every one of you put apart with himself, laying up what it shall well please him; that when I come, the gatherings be not then to be made,” 1 Cor. xvi. 2. The reasons for making this change were these: (1.) God commanded the seventh day to be kept holy by the people of Israel, as a continual memorial of the creation, and of his resting on that day, after all was finished, because that was then the greatest and most remarkable thing that God had done in the world. But after the coming of our Saviour, many more wonderful things were done; and much greater benefits bestowed on mankind, upon the first day, which made it proper to change the keeping of the seventh, into the first day, as a continual memorial of these favours. For on the first day of the week, our Saviour rose from the dead, having conquered sin and death, and completed the great work of our redemption, and therefore it is called the Lord’s day. On the first day, the apostles received their commission from Jesus Christ, as apostles, with the same power and authority which he, as man, had received from his Father. “As my Father sent me,” says he to them, “so I send you,” John xx. 21. On the same day, they received the power of forgiving the sins of the people, when he breathed on them, and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them,” verse 23. On the first day, the Holy Ghost came down upon the apostles, to confirm, enlighten, and inflame them, and to enable them to execute the great work of converting the world to the faith of Christ. On the same day, the faith and law of Christ was first solemnly published to the world, and on it the church of Christ was, properly speaking, formed and established, and the great privilege of infallibility conferred upon her by the Holy Ghost, who was then given her. Add to all this, that the creation itself, is also most fitly commemorated on that day, as it was on the first day of the week, on which that great work was begun.

Another reason for this change, was this. The seventh day was appointed for the Israelites, to be a sign of their being the people of God, as we have seen above; but as on the coming and death of Christ, they were no more his people, the observation of that day was no more necessary. (3.) As the keeping of the seventh day was a figure of the rest of Jesus Christ in the grave; by his death and burial this figure was fulfilled; and therefore, like all the other ceremonial parts of the old law, which
were figures of Christ, on being fulfilled by him, it was then done away.

But here it must carefully be observed, that though the particular day of the week, to be kept holy for the service of God, was changed from the seventh to the first, yet the obligation of keeping one in seven for that purpose, and keeping it in the manner prescribed by this command, remains in all its force; for by the law of nature itself, we are obliged to set apart some time for that purpose, and it is the express law of God that this should be one day in the week, which for the above reasons is now fixed to be the Lord’s day.

§ 1. Of Sanctifying the Lord’s Day.

Q. 5. In what manner are we commanded to keep the Lord’s day?

A. The command itself is perfectly clear on this point, and contains two parts. In the one we are commanded to abstain from all unnecessary worldly actions, called servile works, on that day, as being a hinderance to the sanctification of it: in the other part we are commanded to keep it holy, by exercising ourselves in such works of piety and virtue as immediately tend to the worship and service of God, and the good of our own souls. And as it is by these last that the day is properly and truly kept holy, therefore all worldly works are forbidden, that our mind may be at leisure, to apply itself wholly to the works of piety and virtue.

Q. 6. How great is the obligation of abstaining from all unnecessary servile work on the Lord’s day?

A. This will clearly appear from the command itself, the promises made in scripture to those who obey it, and the threats against those who transgress this duty. Thus,

(1.) From the command itself; because (1.) It begins with the word Remember; which shows the importance of this duty, and how strictly God requires it to be observed; for even among ourselves, when masters give any orders to their servants which they are positive shall be obeyed, nothing is more common than to use this expression. (2.) It prohibits all such works in the strictest manner. “In it thou shalt do no manner of work.” (3.) It prohibits parents and masters, from allowing their children or servants, or even their cattle to work on it. (4.) It forbids the very strangers, who may happen to be with us, to do any work on that day. (5.) This command is repeated by the prophet Jeremias in these strong terms, “Thus saith the
Lord: Take heed to your souls, and carry no burdens on the sabbath day; and bring them not in by the gates of Jerusalem. And do not bring burdens out of your houses on the sabbath day; neither do ye any work; sanctify the sabbath day, as I have commanded you,” Jer. xvii. 21. (6.) The church of Christ with the whole weight of her authority forbids the same, and Christ declares that “he that will not hear the church, is to be accounted as a heathen and a publican,” Matt. xviii. 17.

(2.) From the encouraging promises annexed to the performance of this duty, which are: “Keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary; I am the Lord. If you walk in my precepts, and keep my commandments and do them, I will give you rain in due season; and the ground shall bring forth its increase, and the trees shall be filled with fruit......and you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land without fear,” Lev. xxvi. 2. And the scripture goes on for several verses, declaring, in the name of God, many other blessings that should attend them, if they carefully observed this command. In the prophet Jeremiah, after declaring the command of not working on the sabbath, above related, and complaining of his people for the neglect of it, Almighty God goes on thus: “And it shall come to pass, if you will hearken to me, saith the Lord, to bring in no burdens by the gates of this city on the sabbath day; and if you will sanctify the sabbath day, to do no work therein; then shall there enter in by the gates of this city, kings and princes, sitting on the throne of David ......and this city shall be inhabited for ever,” Jer. xvii. 24. “Thus saith the Lord......Blessed is the man that doth this, and the son of man that shall lay hold of this, that keepeth the sabbath from profaning it, that keepeth his hands from doing evil......They that shall keep my sabbaths, and shall choose the things that please me, and shall hold fast my covenant; I will give to them, in my house and within my walls, a place and a name better then sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall never perish......I will bring them into my holy mount, and I will make them joyful in my house of prayer; their holocausts, and their victims shall please me upon my altars,” Is. lvi. 2. “If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy own will in my holy day, and call the sabbath delightful, and the holy of the Lord glorious, and glorify him, whilst thou dost not thy own ways, and thy own will is not found to speak a word: Then shalt thou be delighted in the Lord, and I will lift thee up above the high places of the
earth, and will feed thee with the inheritance of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," Is. lviii. 13. We see, in these glorious promises, all kinds of blessings, both temporal and spiritual, plenty of all the necessaries of this life, internal happiness and delight of the soul, an everlasting name that shall never perish, admittance to a place within his house, and the possession of his holy mountain, the heavenly Sion, promised in the most solemn manner to those who do not profane the sacred times dedicated to the service of the Almighty. What encouragement!

(3.) From the punishments threatened against those who transgress this command: thus, "Keep my sabbath," says God himself, "for it is holy unto you: he that shall profane it shall be put to death: he that shall do any work in it, his soul shall perish out of the midst of the people. Six days shall you do work; on the seventh day is the sabbath; the holy rest to the Lord. Every one that shall do any work on this day, shall die," Ex. xxxi. 14. In Lev. xxvi., above cited, after declaring all the blessings that should come upon his people if they kept his sabbaths, and walked in his commandments, Almighty God proceeds to declare the many evils that should come upon them, if they did otherwise; to wit, poverty, famine, pestilence, wars; and then adds, if they still persisted in their wickedness, "And I will destroy your land, and your enemies shall be astonished at it, when they shall be the inhabitants of it; and I will scatter you among the Gentiles, and I will draw out the sword after you, and your land shall be desert, and your cities destroyed. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, all the days of her desolation: when you shall be in the enemies' land, she shall keep a sabbath, and rest in the sabbaths of her desolation, because she did not rest in your sabbaths, when you dwelt therein," Lev. xxvi. 32. So also in Jeremias, after showing the blessings that should come upon those that kept the sabbath, he adds, "But if you will not hearken to me to sanctify the sabbath day, and not to carry burdens, and not to bring them in by the gates of Jerusalem by the sabbath day: I will kindle a fire at the gates thereof, and it shall devour the houses of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched," Jer. xvii. 27.

(4.) Add to all this the following striking examples. (1.) Of the man gathering sticks on the sabbath, which is thus related in scripture: "And it came to pass, when the children of Israel were in the wilderness, and had found a man gathering sticks on the sabbath day, that they brought him to Moses and Aaron, and the whole multitude; and they put him into prison,
not knowing what they should do with him. And the Lord said to Moses, Let that man die, let all the multitude stone him without the camp. And when they had brought him out, they stoned him: and he died, as the Lord had commanded," Num. xv. 32. (2.) Of the whole people of Israel, who were at last cast out of their own land, and carried away captive for this sin, as the Lord had threatened in Lev. xxvi., above cited: for God himself, recounting to his prophet Ezechi el, chap. xx., all the favours he had done to his people, and their continual rebellions against him, which had made him at last throw them off, and for which he was now become inexorable, declares, no less than four different times in that chapter, that the violation of his sabbath was one of the principal causes of so dreadful a judgment. The holy servant of God, Nehemiah, was very sensible of this; for when, about the end of the Babylonish captivity, he came from Babylon to Jerusalem, with authority from the king to rebuild the city, and govern the people; on his arrival he reformed several abuses, and among others, he tells us: "In those days I saw in Juda some treading the presses upon the sabbath, and carrying sheaves, and leading asses with wine and grapes and figs, and bringing them into Jerusalem upon the sabbath day. And I charged them that they should sell on a day on which it was lawful to sell. Some Tyrians also dwelt there, who brought fish, and all manner of wares, and they sold them on the sabbaths to the children of Juda in Jerusalem. And I rebuked the chief men of Juda, and said to them, what is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the sabbath day? Did not our fathers do these things, and our God brought all this evil upon us and upon this city? And you bring more wrath upon Israel by violating the sabbath. And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem were at rest on the sabbath day, I spoke; and they shut the gates, and I commanded that they should not open them till after the sabbath; and I set some of my servants at the gates, that none should bring in burdens on the sabbath...... and I spoke also to the Levites that they should be purified, and should come to keep the gates, and should sanctify the sabbath day: for this also remember me, O my God, and spare me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies," 2 Esd. (Neh.) xiii. 15. (3.) Of Nicanor, that furious enemy of the people of God, who going to battle against the valiant Judas, "purposed to set upon him with all violence on the sabbath day. And when the Jews that were constrained to follow him, said, Do not act so fiercely and barbarously, but give honour
to the day that is sanctified, and reverence him that beholdeth all things: that unhappy man asked, if there were a mighty One in heaven, that had commanded the sabbath to be kept? And when they answered, There is the living God in heaven, the mighty one that commandeth the seventh day to be kept: then he said, And I am mighty upon earth, and I command to take arms," 2 Mach. xv. 1. But in punishment of his impiety, his great army was totally overthrown by a handful, which Judas had with him, five-and-thirty thousand were slain, and himself killed on the field; his head and hand with the shoulder cut off, and carried in triumph to Jerusalem, his tongue cut out, and given by pieces to birds, and his hand hanged up over against the temple, as is related in the following part of the chapter.

Q. 7. What kind of works are chiefly forbidden on the Lord's day?

A. The design of forbidding us to work on the Lord's day is, that we may not be hindered by the cares and occupation of our worldly affairs, from applying ourselves to those holy employments which regard the worship of God, and the good of our souls. Consequently, whatever kind of worldly work would naturally engross our time, and carry off our minds from the necessary attention to the proper employments of the day, are all, according to the spirit of the law, forbidden upon the Lord’s day. Of these we have chiefly the following classes. (1.) All servile works, properly so called, to wit, all such bodily works as are commonly performed by servants, tradesmen, and labouring people, for gaining their bread, and which regard the concerns of the body, and of this world. (2.) All courts of justice, processes, trials, examination of witnesses, and the like; because these things take up much time, and very much engross the mind. (3.) All markets, fairs, making bargains, and even private merchandising, for the same reasons; and we have seen above, last Q. No. 4, what judgment the scripture passes on all such employments. (4.) Carrying loads and burdens, either by one’s self, or with cattle, of which see also the preceding question. (5.) All meetings for dancing, drinking, or gaming, are also strictly forbidden on Sundays, by the church, for several reasons. Because of the danger of spending too much time in them, because they greatly dissipate the mind from every thing serious, and because they are the source and inlet to many sins. They are dangerous at all times, and often fatal, and justly considered more the service of Satan than of God, and consequently never to be used on the sacred times appointed for God’s service.
Q. 8. Is it lawful in any case to work on the Lord’s day?
A. There are three cases in which this is allowed, (1.) Real necessity; as for example, to make ready food for man or beast, which could not be provided before: thus our Saviour excused his disciples for plucking the ears of corn, and eating them on the sabbath day, and declared them innocent in so doing,” Matt. xii. 3, 7. To remedy any sudden misfortune that may happen to man or beast; thus our Saviour says, “What man shall there be among you that hath one sheep, and if the same fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not take hold of it, and lift it up?” Matt. xii. 11. So also he says, “Doth not every one of you on the sabbath day, loose his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead them to water?” Luke xiii. 15. To defend one’s self against enemies in war, when attacked by them on the sabbath day as we read,” 1 Mach. ii. 40. To save one’s corn, if it be in danger of being destroyed by violent wind; or the like. (2.) Charity, in assisting the poor and distressed; provided this be done without any return, either in work or money, as a fee or reward for it; for if one should do any service to a poor person, on the Lord’s day, or any other holiday, on condition that the poor man should give him a day in harvest, or any other such help, it is the same in the sight of God, as if he had wrought on the holiday for himself. We find our Saviour frequently doing works of charity on the sabbath, curing the sick, healing the lame, or the like, and defending his so doing, by unanswerable arguments, against the Pharisees, who found fault with him. And the reason is, because charity is the end of the law, and therefore no law can hinder works of real charity. (3.) Works of piety for the service of God or religion, provided also they be due for his sake, and without any temporal fee or regard. Thus our Saviour says, “Have ye not read in the law, how, that on the sabbath day, the priests in the temple break the sabbath, and are without blame?” Matt. xii. 5. But in all these cases, care must be taken, that the work do not interfere with, nor hinder the assisting at the public worship of God, on these days, which we are strictly commanded to attend, unless when the necessity itself excuses from it, as in the case of assisting and waiting upon the sick, who cannot be left alone.

Q. 9. What is required in order to sanctify the Lord’s day?
A. It would be a great mistake to imagine, that, because we are forbidden to work on the Lord’s day, we may therefore make it a day of bodily rest, and spend it in idleness and doing nothing, or in vain amusements; or that it is enough to assist
at the public worship of God, and then idle away the rest of the day. The design of Almighty God in forbidding work on that day, is only to give us time and leisure for other more important duties, which regard his service, and our own salvation; and he expressly commands us, "to keep that day holy." Now to keep any day holy, is to apply it to holy uses, to spend it in holy exercises, and these are only such as regard the worship of God, and the concerns of our souls. Indeed whatever regards these two ends, go always hand in hand; for whatever tends to the glory of God is useful to our souls, and whatever is truly of service to our souls, is always agreeable to God, and makes that time holy which is spent in them. Hence, the proper exercises in which we ought to spend the Lord's day, in order to sanctify it, or to keep it holy, are chiefly these following: (1.) To assist at the public worship of God, in offering the holy sacrifice of the altar; and this duty is strictly enjoined to all, by an express command of the church, and therefore can never be neglected without a grievous sin, unless real necessity excuse from it. (2.) To attend the preaching of the word of God, and the explication of the Christian doctrine: by both which all are instructed in, and excited to their duty as Christians, and their fervour renewed in God's service, which our worldly occupations through the week, are but too, too apt to weaken and cool. (3.) To prepare for, and approach to, the holy sacraments, when one's own devotion, or the solemnity of the time calls to that duty. (4.) To read the holy scriptures, and other good books of piety and devotion; for these are the fountains of heavenly light, by which God speaks to the soul, and illuminates her with the knowledge of his will, when read with humility of heart, and a pious intention; and especially when to the reading is joined serious and attentive meditation on the great truths contained in them. (5.) To examine diligently the state of our souls; how we have spent the week before; and how our accounts stand with God.—To call to mind the numberless benefits we have received, and daily do receive, from his infinite goodness; to thank and praise him for them; and to humble ourselves at the sight of our own ingratitude towards him. (6.) To converse with God, in humble prayer, both for ourselves and others; and beg of him what he sees we stand in need of, both for soul and body. (7.) To exercise works of charity and mercy, whether spiritual or corporal, to our neighbours in distress. (8.) To watch over those under our charge, whether children or servants, and see that
they sanctify that holy day, giving them time, and other necessary helps of good books or instruction for that purpose.

Q. 10. How much of the Lord’s day ought we to spend in these holy exercises?

A. The law of God commands us, “to keep that day holy; consequently it is not enough to keep an hour or two holy; for an hour or two is not the day. If one hires a servant for a day’s work, though the servant should employ an hour or two more in working for him, he will not be satisfied with that as a day’s work; but will expect that he should work the whole day, or at least such a large portion of it, as in the common estimation of mankind, may truly be said to be the work of a day. In like manner, in order to keep the Lord’s day holy, we must employ not a small part of it only, but such a portion of it as may be justly esteemed the day, in those holy exercises, which truly make it a holy day.

Q. 11. But is it not lawful to recreate one’s self on the Lord’s day by taking some innocent amusement?

A. To refresh the mind with some innocent recreation on the Lord’s day, is not at all forbidden; nay, it is laudable when one’s state of body or mind requires it; but then it must be owned, that amusements and recreations are not the proper means to make the time holy which is spent in them: consequently, they are only allowable as a relaxation of the mind, after the duties of the day are fully complied with, and therefore to be used only with great moderation; for if the greatest part of the day be spent in amusement, it can never be said that the day is kept holy.

Q. 12. Why then does the command of the church mention only the hearing of mass, as the necessary duty for sanctifying the Lord’s day.

A. The Spirit of God, and the spirit of his church, are the same, and therefore cannot contradict one another. Both the command of God, and the command of his church, oblige us to keep the Lord’s day holy; consequently, they both oblige us to the performance of such exercises of devotion on that day, as may truly make it holy. But as all the different exercises of devotion are not equally fit for every one; therefore both God and his church leave to each one to choose, either by himself, or with the advice of the pastor of his soul, such holy exercises as may be most proper for him. Yet as the assisting at the public worship of God is the duty of all, especially on days set apart for that purpose, therefore God himself in the old law, and the church in the new, command all to assist at the public
worship of God on these solemnities. Not as if this alone were enough to keep them holy, but that all are obliged to this as an essential duty of the day, being left to their own choice, to employ themselves in any other such pious works as best suit them, in order to fulfil the words and spirit of the law, "in keeping that day holy."

§ 2. Of Sanctifying the Holidays.

Q. 13. Did God command any other days to be kept holy in the old law, besides the sabbath or seventh day?

A. Yes; he instituted several other great solemnities throughout the year, in memory of the special favours he had bestowed upon his people, that they might never forget these favours, but render to him, on the annual return of these festivals, the due thanksgiving and homage which they owed to him on their account. And he commanded these solemnities to be observed with the same religious veneration as the sabbath itself, by abstaining from all servile works, and offering up to him sacrifices of adoration and praise to his holy name. The institution of these solemnities or holidays is related in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, and the various sacrifices that were to be offered on each of them, are prescribed in the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth chapters of the book of Numbers. And as they are all commanded to be kept in the same manner, as the sabbath or seventh day; so they are called in scripture by the same name, the sabbaths of the Lord, or days of rest from servile work to be kept holy to the Lord. Concerning their institution, their number, and the manner of keeping them, we have this account in scripture. (1.) The feast of unleavened bread, or of the passover, instituted in memory of their deliverance from Egypt, lasted for seven days. "The first day shall be most solemn unto you," says Almighty God, "and holy: you shall do no servile work therein. But you shall sacrifice to the Lord seven days. And the seventh day shall be more solemn and more holy; and you shall do no servile work therein," Lev. xxiii. 7. "And when your children," says Moses to the people, "shall say to you, What is the meaning of this service? You shall say to them; It is the victim of the passage of the Lord, when he passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, striking the Egyptians, and saving our houses," Ex. xii. 26. "And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying, This is what the Lord did to me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be as a sign in thy hand, and as a memorial before
thy eyes; and that the law of the Lord be always in thy mouth, for with a strong hand, the Lord hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt," Ex. xiii. 8. (2.) The feast of pentecost, in which they offered the first fruits of their harvest to God. Of this, after prescribing the sacrifices to be offered in it, the scripture says, "And you shall call this day most solemn and most holy. You shall do no servile work therein. It shall be an everlasting ordinance in all your dwellings and generations," Lev. xxiii. 21. (3.) The feast of trumpets, in memory of the law being given to the people on Mount Sinai with thunders and lightnings, and the sound of trumpets. "The seventh month," says Almighty God, "on the first day of the month you shall keep a sabbath, a memorial, with the sound of trumpets, and it shall be called holy. You shall do no servile work therein, and you shall offer a holocaust to the Lord," Lev. xxiii. 24. See here how the word sabbath is used for a holiday, as well as for the seventh day. (4.) The feast of atonement, which was instituted for expiating the sins of the people, by fasting and humiliation, and various kinds of sacrifices. "Upon the tenth day of the seventh month," says Almighty God, "shall be the day of atonement: it shall be most solemn, and shall be called holy, and you shall afflict your souls on that day, and shall offer a holocaust to the Lord. You shall do no servile work in the time of this day, because it is a day of propitiation, that the Lord your God may be merciful to you. Every soul that is not afflicted on this day, shall perish from among his people. You shall do no work therefore on that day; it shall be an everlasting ordinance to you, in all your generations and dwellings. It is a sabbath day of rest, and you shall afflict your souls," Lev. xxii. 27. (5.) The feast of tabernacles, towards the end of September, when all the fruits of the earth were gathered in. It was instituted in memory of the particular protection of God over his people in the wilderness, when they dwelt in tents for forty years: "That your posterity may know," says Almighty God, "that I made the children of Israel to dwell in tabernacles, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt," Lev. xxiii. 43. This feast was kept with great solemnity and joy, and lasted for eight days together, and "The first day," says the scripture, "shall be called most solemn and most holy, and you shall do no servile work therein. And seven days you shall offer holocausts to the Lord. The eighth day also shall be most solemn and most holy......you shall do no servile work therein," Lev. xxiii. 35. From all which we see how strictly Almighty God requires his people to keep these holidays, both as to the abstaining from
work, and offering up sacrifices to him: putting them upon the same footing with the sabbath, or seventh day itself, and on that account calling them by the same name of sabbaths.

Q. 14. Were any other holidays instituted in after-times by the people of God, besides those ordained immediately by God himself?

A. It was to keep up the memory of the great benefits God had bestowed upon his people, and to excite them to render to him the tribute of gratitude, praise, and thanksgiving continually for these favours, that God himself ordained the above holidays to be observed with so great solemnity. From the same principles, the rulers and people of the Jews, in after-times, when they had received other remarkable favours from God, instituted other holidays, to perpetuate the memory of them, and to praise and bless God for them. Thus, (1.) the feast of the dedication of the temple, which was first instituted by Solomon, when the temple was first built by him in Jerusalem; as is related, 3 Kings viii. and 2 Chron. vii. It was renewed again after the Babylonish captivity, when the temple was rebuilt, "And the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of the house of God with joy," 1 Esd. vi. 16. It was renewed also by Judas Machabeus, after the temple had been polluted by the heathens, and a new altar raised in it. "And they kept the dedication of the altar eight days, and they offered holocausts with joy, and sacrifices of salvation, and of praise......and Judas and his brethren, and all the church of Israel decreed, that the day of the dedication of the altar should be kept in its season, from year to year, for eight days, from the five-and-twentieth day of the month of Casleu, with joy and gladness," 1 Mach. iv. 56; that is, about the end of November. And this feast was still kept even in our Saviour's time, who honoured it with his presence, for "it was the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem, and it was winter; and Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch," John x. 22. (2.) The feast of Judith, in memory of her victory over Holofernes; of which we are told, "The day of the festivity of this victory is received by the Hebrews in the number of holidays, and is religiously observed by the Jews, from that time until this day," Judith xvi. 31. (3.) The feast of Esther in memory of the deliverance of the people of God from the destruction intended for them by Aman. For after that happy deliverance, Mardocai wrote the whole account of it, and sent it by letters to all the Jews,
"Both those that lay near, and those afar off, that they should receive the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar for holidays, and always at the return of the year, should celebrate them with solemn honour.... And the Jews undertook to observe with solemnity, all that they had begun to do at that time, which Mardocei by letters had commanded to be done; ..... which the Jews took upon themselves and their seed, and upon all that had a mind to be joined to their religion; so that it should be lawful for none to pass these days without solemnity," Esth. ix. 20, 23, 27. These were three great holidays, instituted by the church of the Jews, and kept with great devotion: besides several others of less note. All which were instituted in memory of the temporal benefits bestowed by God on that people, and were figures of those most excellent holidays which were afterwards to be instituted by the church of Christ, in memory of the more important benefits which the Saviour of the world brought to all mankind; for which reason those of the Jews all ceased, with the reprobation of that people, and gave place to those of the Christians, of which they were figures.

Q. 15. What are the principal ends, for which the church of Christ has instituted holidays among her children?

A. For the same ends for which the Sundays are kept holy; to wit, (1.) To dedicate a further portion of our time to the service of God alone; that in them we may all join in praising and adoring our God, and rendering him that homage which we owe to him, as our sovereign Lord. (2.) To have leisure, from our worldly affairs, to apply ourselves more earnestly to the concerns of our souls. God takes to himself, as is most just, the glory of having these days dedicated to his service, but gives all the profit to us. (3.) To keep us in mind of the great and ineffable mysteries of our redemption; the incarnation and birth of our Saviour, his sufferings, death, and resurrection, his glorious ascension into heaven, the coming of his holy Spirit, and the like; to excite us to the proper sense we ought to have of these inestimable effects of the love of God to us, and to render to God the just tribute of thanksgiving, adoration, and praise, which we owe to him for them. (4.) To honour God in his saints, and to be encouraged and assisted to follow their holy example, by a life of virtue and piety. (5.) That those who, by their state of life, have little or no leisure to be instructed in these and other great truths of their religion on other days, may have time on these solemnities to acquire that
necesary knowledge of them, on which their salvation so much depends.

Q. 16. In what manner does the church command these holidays to be kept?

A. In the same manner in which we are commanded to keep the Sundays themselves. Because, (1.) The ends or intentions for instituting them, are the same as those for instituting the Sundays, and therefore they are to be kept in the same manner in order that these ends may be attained. (2.) In the old law God commanded the holidays to be kept in the same manner as the sabbath; and as the sabbaths and holidays of the old law were only figures of the Sundays and holidays of the new, if those of the old law were kept with the same solemnity, where only temporal benefits were commemorated, how much more ought those of the new law to be kept with equal devotion; since they are the substance of which the others were only figures, and are instituted to commemorate the great spiritual benefits of our redemption? Consequently, we are obliged to observe the holidays of the church of Christ, both by abstaining from all unnecessary servile work, by assisting at the holy sacrifice of the altar, and by spending them in such other religious exercises as may truly make them holy.

Q. 17. Would it be a sin to break or profane these holidays?

A. Most undoubtedly; for (1.) It is robbing God of that portion of our time, which, by his own authority announced to us by his holy church, is set apart, and allotted for his service. (2.) It is always a source of great scandal, both to the members of the church, whom by the bad example it encourages to do the same, and greatly offends those who are well disposed; and also to those who are out of the church, giving them too just a handle to blaspheme our holy religion, while they see any of us act so contrary to what they know we profess to be our duty. (3.) It is disobedience to the strict command of God's holy church, of which Christ says, "He that hears you, hears me; and he that despises you, despises me;" and "He that will not hear the church, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican." (4.) It is taking part with those wicked men, of whom the scripture says, "They said in their hearts, the whole kindred of them together, Let us abolish all the festival days of God from the land," Ps. lxxiii. (5.) It is depriving their own souls of all these spiritual benefits, from which these sacred solemnities are appointed.
Q. 18. But is it not a great loss to the people to want the
profits of their work on these days?

A. In answer to this, (1.) Is it not an infinitely greater loss
to their souls, to lose the grace and favour of God, by robbing
him of that portion of their time, which he demands from them,
and by that means bringing upon themselves the guilt of mortal
sin? (2.) How many days and hours do they throw away in
sinful occupations, without any regret? Is it not a shame for
Christians to throw away their time with pleasure, when serving
the devil; and only then to regret it when spent in the service
of God, and in the concerns of their salvation? (3.) Has not
God a thousand ways to make up that loss, by giving a blessing
to their affairs, and making things proceed prosperously with
them? And is it not a criminal distrust in his Divine pro-
vidence, to imagine he would let us be hurt in our affairs, by
our attention to his service, without making up that loss some
other way, more to our advantage; especially as he has made
such glorious promises to us, as we have seen above, in holy
writ, of blessing our temporal affairs, if we be careful to
sanctify the days set apart for his service? (4.) Has he not
threatened in the severest manner to punish those who profane
his holidays, and will not the accomplishment of these threats
be an infinitely greater loss to us than the loss of the work of
these days? (5.) Has he not ten thousand ways, unknown to
us, both to fulfil his promises, and execute his threats? Where
then is our faith, if we be deterred from doing our duty by
such unchristian fears? But observe, among other things of
this nature in the old law, God commanded that every seventh
year should be a sabbath of rest, of which he says, "Six years
shalt thou sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy
vineyard, and shalt gather the fruits thereof: but in the seventh
year there shall be a sabbath to the land, thou shalt not sow
thy field, nor prune thy vineyard: what the ground shall
bring forth of itself, thou shalt not reap; neither shalt thou
gather the grapes of the first-fruits as a vintage; for it is a
year of rest to the land," Lev. xxv. 3. And as God foresaw
that such an objection might be made against his ordinance
as is proposed in this question against keeping the holidays
see how he prevents and answers it: "But if you say, What
shall we eat the seventh year, if we sow not, nor gather our
fruits? I will give you my blessing the sixth year, and it shall
yield the fruits of three years: And the eighth year you shall
sow, and shall eat of the old fruits until the ninth year; till
the new grow up, you shall eat the old store," verse 20. How
does this confound our want of confidence in our all-powerful
God? How does it condemn our fears of hurting our temporal
affairs by serving him?

Q. 19. In what consists the obligation of hearing mass on
Sundays and holidays?

A. It consists in two things; first in being present during
the time of the celebration of mass; and secondly, in assisting
at it in a proper manner, that is with attention and devotion
On each of these the following things are to be carefully attended
to. And,

(1.) With regard to our being present, the command ex-
pressly obliges us to hear mass on Sundays and holidays.
Now, to hear mass is to hear the whole mass, and consequently
the command obliges all to be present at the celebration of
that august sacrifice, from the beginning to the end; and who-
ever is absent from any portion of it, through his own fault, is
guilty of a sin; and the sin will always be the greater, the
longer the time be that he is absent; and if he be absent during
any one of the four principal parts of which the mass is com-
posed, it is the same thing as to the obligation, as if he had
been absent during the whole; so that he would be under the
necessity of hearing the mass again that day, if he had the oppor-
tunity of doing it. To understand this, we must remember that the
celebration of this holy sacrifice is divided into four parts; to wit,
The preparation of the people, which is from the beginning till the
course of the gospel; The preparation of the matter for the
sacrifice, which is from the end of the gospel till the sanctus:
The action of the sacrifice itself, which is from the sanctus till
the pater noster; and the communion, which is from the pater
noster till the end. Now, in order to fulfil the obligation laid
upon us by the command of hearing mass, we must be present
at all these four parts, as they are all necessary for the integrity
of the sacrifice; and if a person should delay going to church
till the first part be ended, though he assist at all the other
three, yet he cannot be said to hear mass, nor to fulfil the obli-
gation. If indeed this delay be owing to real necessity, and not
to any fault of his, his absence will not be imputed to him as a
sin; and he will do well to make up for his absence by greater
fervour during those parts at which he is present; but if his
delay be owing to his own sloth or negligence, or any other
fault of his own, it will be a grievous sin, for which he must
answer to God; unless he have some other opportunity of hear-
ing mass that day, which if he have, he is as much obliged to
embrace it, as if he had not heard any part of the former mass
at all. This is particularly to be remembered by all such as
have but one opportunity of hearing mass: for if they, through
their own fault, delay going to church till after mass has begun,
they are guilty before God; and their guilt is always the greater
the farther the mass is gone on; and if they delay till after the
gospel they are not supposed to fulfil their obligation of hearing
mass that day. The reason is, because by such culpable absence,
they rob Almighty God of part of that homage which he ex-
pressly requires of them; and the longer they are absent,
the greater is the robbery; and if they be absent during the
whole first part of preparation, they rob him of the whole, as
to the object of the command. Farther the scripture says,
"Before prayer prepare thy soul; and be not as a man that
tempeth God," Ecclus. xviii. 23. Where we see, that even in
our ordinary prayers, it is tempting God to presume to approach
him, and to speak to his sovereign Majesty, without some pro-
per preparation.—On this ground the church, from the very
times of the apostles, and directed by the Holy Ghost, consi-
dering that the holy sacrifice of the mass is the most sacred
and divine homage that can possibly be made by man to God,
has ordained the first part of it to be a preparation of her
children for celebrating it worthily. If therefore a person by
his own fault absent himself from this preparation, how can he
be freed from a very grievous presumption, besides his dis-
obedience to the command?

(2.) As to the manner of assisting at mass, this must be done
with great attention and devotion; for if in our ordinary
prayers, attention and the fervour of devotion are necessary
conditions for making them acceptable to God, as we have seen
above, Chap. X. Q. 7, No. 10; how much more must they be
required in assisting at the holy sacrifice, which is the most
sacred and divine prayer we can offer to Almighty God? Be-
sides, the offering this holy sacrifice to God is the most perfect
external act of supreme homage and adoration which can be
given to him. Now, we have seen above, Chap. X. Q. 10, that
no external act of homage which we give to God, can be agree-
able to him as coming from our hands, unless it flow from, and
be accompanied with, the internal homage and worship of the
heart; nay, that such acts are displeasing to him, and hypo-
critical in his eyes; consequently, if we be present at the holy
sacrifice, and make a pretence of assisting there with our bodies,
whilst our hearts are wilfully employed about our worldly affairs,
we offend God, instead of pleasing him. Lastly, as this holy
sacrifice is in itself so holy and venerable an action, being a
memorial and mystical representation of the great mystery of our redemption, the passion and death of Jesus Christ, who here offers himself up in sacrifice to his eternal Father, by the ministry of his priests; consider what a profanation it must be of these Divine mysteries, if, when present there, we either, in our outward carriage, show any unbecoming carelessness and inattention, or fail in that internal respect and devotion, which is so necessary on so sacred and solemn an occasion.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON CHARITY, TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR, AND OURSELVES.

Q. 1. Why is this subject of charity, or the love of our neighbour, brought in here?

A. Because all the following commands regard principally the duties we owe to our neighbour; and St. Paul says, they "are all comprised in this word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," for which he immediately adds this reason, "The love of our neighbour worketh no evil;" and then concludes, "Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. xiii. 9. For this reason, it is of great consequence to understand properly the nature and obligations of this love of our neighbour; as it is the foundation on which all the following commands of the law of God depend.

§ 1. The Nature and Grounds of Charity towards our Neighbour.

Q. 2. What is properly meant by charity, or the love of our neighbour?

A. To understand this, we must observe, that love, taken in its general signification, is an affectionate inclination of the will towards the object we love, by which we wish its welfare, and are readily disposed to do it good. This definition agrees in general to every kind of love. But the several different kinds of love are distinguished from one another by the different motives from which our love arises, and the different kinds of good which we wish to its object. Hence we find the following principal kinds of love in the world. (1.) Natural love, which is implanted in us by nature itself, and arises from that intimate connexion we have with those with whom we are united by the ties of blood; such is the love between parents and children, brothers and sisters, and others who are nearly
related in consanguinity; and the goods, which this love tends to procure for its object, are all those things which we think can contribute to make us naturally happy; such as riches, honours, esteem, and other such worldly enjoyments. This love is found in heathens as well as among Christians: yea, it is found in a very strong degree even in the brutes themselves: it does not, properly speaking, depend upon our own choice, nor is it an act of our free will, but is implanted in us by the Author of our nature, for the best of purposes; hence there is no merit in having it, but he would be a monster and unnatural who should want it. On all these accounts it is not the love of charity. (2.) Interested love: which arises from motives of worldly interest, and tends only to promote the worldly interest of its object: such is the love which people of the same neighbourhood have for one another; of the members of any society, formed for their mutual support and advantage: and such in general is the love of all worldly friendships. This love is found not only among heathens, and those who know not God, but even among the worst of men, such as a band of robbers, or pirates: it is founded wholly in our self-love, has no merit in the sight of God, and is not the virtue of Christian charity. (3.) Carnal love: this is founded on the beauty of the human face and person, is found among all mankind, is one great source of all the abominations of lust, and, generally speaking, tends only to the gratification of that base passion; and is so far from being of any value in the sight of God, or agreeable to him, that it is too, too often the origin of crimes which are most hateful and detestable to him, and on this account is far from being the love of charity. (4.) Rational love: which arises from motives that reason highly approves, on account of the moral forms which they contain; and are the virtuous dispositions of the soul, such as learning, prudence, valour, generosity, humanity and the like. To this kind of love, we are much impelled by nature itself, and our moral sense approves it, but neither is this the love of charity; for it is found among the heathens themselves, and arises only from that natural sense we have of the beauty of virtue. (5.) The love of gratitude: that is, the grateful affection and good will which one has towards his benefactor; this is also a very laudable disposition of the soul, and highly approved of by our moral sense, but it is more a good natural disposition than a virtue of the free will; it is found not only in those who know not God, but even in many of the brute creation; and for these reasons neither is it the love of charity. (6.) Charity is the love we bear to our neighbour for
God's sake; the motives on which it is founded, are all taken from God, and are of a supernatural kind; and the goods which it wishes, and tends to procure, to its object, are principally such as concern its eternal salvation.

Hence we see the great difference there is between the love of charity, and those other kinds of love above mentioned; for (1.) The motives on which all other kinds of love are founded, and from which they rise, are natural, that is, such as are competent to man, considered in his natural state as a human creature, in which he finds some natural pleasure or advantage, agreeable to his self-love, and which he perceives by his natural faculties, by his senses or reason: the motives on which the love of charity is founded, are all supernatural; such as belong to man, as a Christian, and which are discovered to him by revelation. (2.) The welfare or happiness of the person we love, in those other kinds of love, is only such as belongs to this world; riches, pleasures, honour, power, and the like; and in these they rest, as in their ultimate object. But the welfare or happiness of those we love by the love of charity, is principally their eternal salvation, and all other goods only as the means to acquire it, and with subordination to it. Hence it appears, that the love of charity, which we bear towards our neighbour, is a branch of the love of God; because by it we love our neighbour for God's sake, as a thing belonging to God, and connected with him; and its whole tendency is to bring our neighbour to God, to whom he belongs. And this is the reason why this love of our neighbour is called charity: because charity, properly speaking, in the language of scripture, is the love of God; and when we love our neighbour for God's sake, we in reality, love God in our neighbour, and therefore such love is really an exercise of our love to God, and of course an act of charity. Hence we may observe, that not every good we do to our neighbour is charity, but only such as we do for the sake of God, and in obedience to his will. And this is a most necessary observation for practice.

Q. 3. Is eternal salvation, and the means to acquire it, the only good which the love of charity wishes to our neighbour, and tends to procure for him?

A. To understand this, we must repeat what we observed above, Chap. IX. Q. 6, No. 4, "that such is the natural disposition of our heart, that when we have a strong and tender affection for any one, our love is not confined to his person alone, but extends itself to every thing that belongs to him: our regard for himself makes every thing that is his, dear to
us;" and on this account we are not only ready to serve our friend in his own person, but also to serve him in every thing that is his, merely because it is his; and not only to preserve it for him, if it be in any danger, but also to assist it in any other way; in which it may stand in need of our assistance, whether for its relief, improvement, or happiness; in this manner we behave to our friend's children, his relations, his servants, his cattle, or his goods. Consequently, where one has a sincere love for God, this must necessarily show itself in loving every thing that belongs to God; and especially our neighbour, who, of all other creatures in this world, has the greatest relation and most intimate connexion with him. A love for our neighbour then, flowing from this source, must impel us not only to wish and procure his eternal happiness, as its principal and ultimate object, but also to wish, and endeavour to procure, his real welfare in every respect; especially when we consider that it must be agreeable to God, for whose sake we love our neighbour, that we wish and procure him all kind of happiness; and still more so, when we reflect that God himself expressly commands us to do so, as the strongest proof we can give of our love to himself. Hence it appears, that the love of charity towards our neighbour embraces all kinds of good things, in its wishes, for his welfare, his eternal salvation as its principal object, and all other good things as subservient to it, and with the proper subordination to it. And hence it further appears, that the other kinds of love, above mentioned, though considered in themselves they are very different from charity, yet may easily be raised to the high dignity of belonging to it; if our wishes for the respective goods they have in view be kept in due subordination to salvation, the means used to procure them be only such as are consistent with the law of God, and the motive be sanctified by a pure intention to please God.

Q. 4. What then are the motives, flowing from the love of God, on which charity towards our neighbour is founded?

A. They are these following: 1. The connexion our neighbour has with God, which is manifold, and (1.) He is a child of God by creation, and his adopted son by grace, whom he dearly loves; "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God," 1 John iii. 1. "In the fulness of time God sent his Son...that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; and because you are sons, God sent the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father," Gal. iv. 4. Hence in the Lord's prayer we are
commanded to address God as our Father; nay, our Saviour says in the gospel, "Call none your father upon earth; for One is your Father, who is in heaven," Matt. xxiii. 9, to show us that God is our Father, in a manner so much more perfect and excellent than man, that in comparison of him no man deserves that name. (2.) In consequence of being a child of God, our neighbour is a brother of Jesus Christ, and as such all the members of his mystical body are acknowledged by him; thus, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother," Matt. xii. 50. "And Jesus said to them (the holy women who waited at the sepulchre), Be not afraid; go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee: there they shall see me," Matt. xxviii. 10. And to Mary Magdalen, on the same occasion, he said, "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God," John xx. 17. (3.) He is the picture of God, the work of his own hand, and created by him to his own image; for at the beginning God said, "Let us make man to our own image and likeness...and God created man to his own image; to the image of God he created him; male and female he created them," Gen. i. 29. (4.) He is a member of that mystical body of which Christ is the head, for "We being many are one body in Christ," Rom. xii. 5. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body; so also in Christ. For in one spirit were we all baptised into one body," 1 Cor. xii. 12. And, "all we, being many, are one body, who partake of that one bread," 1 Cor. x. 17. Now "Christ is the head of the church, he is the saviour of the body, Christ...as head) cherisheth the church (his body), for we are members of his body, and of his flesh, and of his bones," Eph. v. 23, 30. "For he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first born from the dead," Col. i. 18. (5.) He is highly esteemed and greatly beloved by God and by Jesus Christ; who have given the most convincing proofs of their affection for him, in all the benefits and graces bestowed upon him, and in all that Jesus Christ has done and suffered for his salvation; for he is redeemed by the blood of Jesus. (6.) He is made to be eternally happy with God in his kingdom, of which he is an heir; for "The Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God; and if sons, heirs also: heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 16. All these relations to God are indeed chiefly competent to our Christian brethren, but even those who are not
Christians partake of several of them; for they are children of God by creation, and capable of becoming so by grace; they are the work of his hands, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and made to be eternally happy with him, and capable of being brought to the actual possession of that happiness. Now each of those connexions, which our neighbour has with God, contains a most powerful argument to excite in our hearts an ardent love for him, and cannot fail to do so, if we have any real love for God in our soul. For how is it possible to have a sincere love for God and for Jesus Christ, and not have the same for our neighbour who is so nearly connected with them, is so highly prized and esteemed by them, and for whom they have such an ardent love, that God the Son died on a cross for his salvation? On this so natural and necessary a connexion between our love for God and our love for our neighbour, the beloved disciple argues in this strong manner: "Dearly beloved, let us love one another, for charity is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God...in this is charity; not as though we had loved God, but because he first loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins: My dearest, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another...if we love one another, God abideth in us, and his charity is perfected in us...Let us therefore love God, because God first hath loved us: if any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not?" 1 John iv. 7, 10, 19. And no wonder; for how can we pretend to love the Father, if we hate his Son? "Have we not all one Father?" says the prophet, "hath not one God created us? why then doth every one of us despise his brother?" Mal. ii. 10. And St. John lays down this general rule, "Every one that loveth him that begot, loveth him also who is born of him," 1 John v. 1; or how can we pretend to love the head, if we hate the members? or to esteem the original, when we despise the picture? or to have any regard for our friend, while we hate those whom he loves?

II. The second grand motive to love our neighbour, is, because God, whom we love, expressly commands it, not only as a duty which he requires from us, but as a natural proof of our love to him. We have seen above, Chap. IX. Q. 5. No. 2, that one of the principal duties which flow from the love of God, is obedience to his holy commandments, and the sacred scripture places the very essence of Divine charity in it: "This is the charity of God," says St. John, "that we keep his commandments," 1 John v. 3; and, "This commandment we have from God, that he who
loveth God love also his brother,” 1 John iv. 21. Now this command he lays down in many different places, and in the strongest terms. (1.) Our Saviour declares that the command of loving God, is the first and greatest command, “and the second,” says he, “is like to this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;” and then, to show the great importance of these two commands, he assures us, that on them “dependeth the whole law and the prophets,” Matt. xxii. 37. (2.) He enforces our observance of this command by all our love to him, and by all that he is to us: “This is my commandment,” says he, “that you love one another, as I have loved you,” John xv. 12. If you have any love for me, if any gratitude for all that I have done for you, show it, in obeying these my orders of loving one another; consider it as my commandment, who am your Redeemer, and give proof of your love to me by obeying it. (3.) He declares, that he lays it upon us, to serve as a sign to the world, that we belong to him, and that it is the proper characteristic of his disciples: “I give you a new commandment,” says he, “that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another,” John xiii. 34. (4.) He prays to his heavenly Father in the most pressing manner, to bestow this brotherly love upon all his followers, as a proof to the world, that he himself was sent by the Father as the Messias. “Holy Father,” says he, “keep them in thy name whom thou hast given to me, that they may be one as we also are......and not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me,” John xvii. 11, 20. (5.) He declares he will not accept of a gift from our hand, unless we be in charity with our brother: “If thou bring thy gift to the altar,” says he, “and there shall remember that thy brother hath any thing against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift,” Matt. v. 23. (6.) The same important duty is strongly inculcated by the apostles, Thus, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as most dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and delivered himself for us,” Eph. v. 1. “Above all those things have charity, which is the bond of perfection,” Col. iii. 14. “Purifying your souls in the obedience of charity; with a brotherly love, from a sincere heart, love one another earnestly,” 1 Pet. i. 22. “Before all things, have a constant mutual charity among yourselves,” 1 Pet. iv. 8.
III. A third most powerful motive to the faithful observance of this duty, is the declaration which Jesus Christ makes, that he considers every thing we do to our neighbour, as done to his own person; he looks on all as his brethren, and as members of his body, of which he is the head; and as one naturally thinks himself deeply concerned in every thing done to his brother, nor is it possible to do any thing to any of the members of our body, but the head must equally partake of it, so Jesus Christ expressly declares, that whatever good we do "to one of these his least brethren, we do it to him;" and whatever good we refuse to "do to one of these least ones, we do it not to him," Matt. xxi. 40, 45. And on the same grounds it follows, that whatever ill we do to the least of his brethren, he will also esteem it as done to himself. This same truth he had told long before by his prophet, saying to his people, "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of my eye," Zach. ii. 8. Now the circumstances in which our blessed Saviour made the above declaration are particularly to be remarked, for he did it when giving a most awful account of the general judgment, and declares that the sentence of eternal bliss will be passed on the good, as a reward for the acts of charity and mercy which they had done to his brethren, because he considered them all as done to himself; and that the sentence of eternal reprobation will be passed on the wicked, in punishment of their having omitted to serve him in the persons of his brethren, by neglecting to exercise these acts of charity and mercy towards them, which they stood in need of. Which shows that he not only considers what we do to our neighbour as done to himself, but also that he will most strictly reward or punish us accordingly. All this he has also most expressly declared in several other parts of scripture; thus, "He that oppresseth the poor, upbraideth his Maker; but he that hath pity on the poor honoureth him," Prov. xiv. 31. "He that despiseth the poor, reproacheth his Maker; and he that rejoiceth at another man's ruin, shall not be unpunished," Prov. xvii. 5. "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord; and he will repay him," Prov. xix. 17. "Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones, a cup of cold water, only in the name of a disciple, Amen, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward," Matt. x. 42. "For God is not unjust, that he should forget your work, and the love you have shown in his name; you who have ministered, and do minister unto the saints," Heb. vi. 10. From this it follows, (1.) That the love we owe to our neighbour, obliges us to wish
and do them every kind of good they may stand in need of, which we would wish and do to Jesus Christ himself, were he in their place. (2.) That it obliges us never to reflect on what our neighbour may be in himself, whether agreeable or disagreeable in our eyes, whether our friend or enemy, whether deserving or undeserving; but only to consider his present need of our assistance, and that what we do to him, Christ will set down to his own account as done to himself; observe his own words, "the least of these my brethren." And the reason is, because in Christ there is no distinction of persons; we are all his members and his brethren; and that is enough: "For in one spirit we are all baptized in one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free," 1 Cor. xii. 13. And therefore in Christ, "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus," Gal. iii. 28. Or as the same apostle expresseth it in another place, "Where there is neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all," Col. iii. 11. From the same principle it also follows, (3.) That it is only in loving and doing good to our fellow-creatures, that we can do any essential service to our blessed Saviour. For in every good thing we do, which is directed immediately to Jesus Christ in his own person, such as making acts of love, of praise, or adoration to him, what profit is it to him? It adds nothing to his essential happiness, nor would the want of it diminish one iota of his bliss; but when we do any good to our neighbour, we do a real service to Jesus Christ, because we do a service to his members, and help and assist his brethren. Hence he gave his sanction and approbation to what a pious person said, that "To love one's neighbour as one's self, is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices," Mark xii. 33. And he declares again and again in his gospel, what he had said by his prophet, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," Matt. ix. 13; Mark xii. 7.

IV. A fourth motive to the love of our neighbour, is the very spirit and nature of the Christian religion, to which we are called, and of which we are members. St. Paul lays a particular stress upon this motive, and uses it with great earnestness to enforce the observance of this duty: "I therefore," says he, "a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you, that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called, with all humility and mildness, with patience supporting one another in charity, careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of
peace." In these words he lays down the practice of charity towards our neighbour, as the walking worthy of our vocation, worthy of the name of a Christian, worthy of the religion we profess; and he immediately subjoins the reason why it is so, showing that every thing in this religion tends to union and love among its votaries. "One body, and one spirit," says he, "as you are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all," Eph. iv. 1. Every one of which considerations affords a most powerful motive to brotherly love and unity; and the same argument is used by the prophet Malachy to show how shameful it is for those who are united by so many sacred ties, to live in discord and animosity among themselves: "Have we not all one Father," says this prophet: "Hath not one God created us? Why then doth every one of us despise his brother, violating the covenant of our fathers?" Mal. ii. 10. To the same purpose our Saviour says, "One is your master, and all you are brethren...and one is your Father who is in heaven...one is your Master, Christ," Matt. xxiii. 8. And on this account the consideration of our being brethren is frequently used in scripture to enforce our loving one another; thus, "Let love be without dissimulation...loving one another with a brotherly love," Rom. xii. 9.

"As touching the charity of brotherhood, we have no need to write to you; for yourselves have learned of God to love one another. For indeed you do it towards all the brethren in all Macedonia; but we entreat you, brethren, that you abound more," 1 Thess. iv. 9. "Let fraternal charity abide in you; and do not forget hospitality; for by this, some, being not aware of it, have entertained angels......and do not forget to do good and to impart; for by such sacrifices God's favour is obtained," Heb. xiii. 1, 16. "And finally," says St. Peter, "be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, being lovers of the brotherhood, merciful, modest, humble; not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing: for to this you are called, that you may inherit a blessing," 1 Pet. iii. 8.

V. A fifth motive to the love of our neighbour is taken from the excellencies of this holy virtue, and the great benefits that flow from it to our own souls, as declared in scripture. Thus, (1.) It is a most powerful means to obtain mercy from God, and get pardon of our own sins; hence "Before all things," says St. Peter, "have a constant mutual charity among yourselves; for charity covereth a multitude of sins," 1 Pet. iv. 8.
And this it doth, both by preventing many sins, which are committed where charity is wanting, and also by moving God to show us the same mercy and love that we show our neighbour; according to the law he has established of treating us, as we treat others; "Take heed what you hear," says our blessed Saviour, showing by this introduction the importance of what he is going to say, "Take heed what you hear; with what measure you shall mete, it shall be measured to you again," Mark iv. 24. And in St. Luke, descending to particulars, he says: "Judge not, and you shall not be judged; condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven; give, and it shall be given to you; good measure and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall they give unto your bosom. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall he measured to you again," Luke vi. 37. So also he says, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," Matt. v. 7. But his apostle adds, "Judgment without mercy, to him that hath not done mercy," James ii. 13. From all which it appears that Almighty God has put it in a manner into our own hands to obtain from him what treatment we please, by treating him in the persons of our neighbours, as we wish he should treat us. (2.) It implants in the soul a multitude of noble virtues, with which it is always accompanied, and which never fail to render a person beloved by all that know him. St. Paul thus describes them; "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," 1 Cor. xiii. 4. (3.) The faithful observance of this duty is the fulfilling of the whole law; for "Thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is comprised in this word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The love of our neighbour worketh no evil. Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law," Rom. xiii. 9. Again he says, "Bear ye one another's burdens: and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ," Gal. vi. 2. And "by charity of the spirit, serve one another for all the law is fulfilled in one word, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," Gal. v. 13. And indeed the very nature of love shows the same truth, for, to love is to wish well, to do good, and to do no ill to the person we love; and what is this, but to fulfil all the duties towards others which
are contained in the law? (4.) It is the life of the soul, and that for several reasons; for where the love of our neighbour reigns, there the grace of God reigns, yea God himself; for "If we love one another, God abideth in us: and his charity is perfected in us...God is charity, and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 12, 16. Besides, as we have seen above, it roots out sin from the soul, which is the death of the soul; and it plants all virtues there, which are the fruits of life, which the scripture declares thus: "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren," and, on the contrary, it is immediately added, "He that loveth not, abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer: and you know that no murderer hath life eternal abiding in himself," 1 John iii. 14. (5.) It is the light of the soul. The principal cause that leads us on in sin, without knowing whither we are going, is our self-love, which blinds us; for it causes us to make an idol of ourselves; and to have no other view but to please ourselves, and satisfy our own will. But when the holy virtue of charity takes place in our soul, it makes us forget ourselves, and our own sensual and worldly interest, in order to promote the interest of Jesus Christ, by serving him in his brethren and members; and thus our mind being freed from the dark clouds and mists of our passions and self-love, the grace of God shines clearly in the soul, and his heavenly wisdom points out to her the steps she ought to take in order to please God; Thus, "He that saith he is in light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother, abideth in the light, and there is no scandal in him. But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth; because the darkness hath blinded his eyes," 1 John ii. 9. (6.) "Charity," as St. Paul assures, "never falleth away," 1 Cor. xiii. 8; because the motives on which it is founded are always the same. All the other kinds of love, above mentioned, Q. 2, are founded only on natural or worldly motives, which are all perishable, or their force may be destroyed by various accidents; and when these motives fail, our love, which is founded on them, must fail of course; but when we love our neighbour purely for God's sake, nothing is capable of altering it; for whatever change may happen in the person of our neighbour, or in his dispositions towards us; though he should become our enemy; though he should do us every kind of evil; yet still his relation to God remains the same; still he is a child of God, created to his image, redeemed by the blood of Jesus, a
member of his mystical body; and what is more to be considered, still God commands us to love him. And consequently, if our love for him be founded purely on these motives, it must remain entire, whatever way he may be affected towards us. Yea, it is most certain that then the love of charity towards our neighbour shines forth in its brightest splendour, when it is exercised towards our enemies, as we shall consider now more particularly.

§ 2. The Love of our Enemies.

Q. 5. What is meant by the love of our enemies?
A. All the love we bear to our neighbour, which is founded on any natural or worldly motive, such as the first five kinds of love mentioned above, Q. 2, is merely a natural love, to which our nature itself inclines us, and to which our self-love even impels us, because it finds its own satisfaction, its interests, or its pleasures in it. Hence all such love, considered in itself, has no merit in the sight of God so as to conduct in any degree to our eternal salvation; it is found even in the most vicious, and sometimes even in the brutes; and therefore, our Saviour says, "If you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not also the heathens the same?" Matt. v. 46. And though this natural love may be raised up to become a branch of Christian charity, when we perform the lawful duties belonging to it, from motives of the love of God; yet such is the propensity of our nature to the exercise of such love, that it is not an easy matter to abstract our will entirely from the impulses of nature, and to practise the duties of it purely for God's sake. But when the question is of loving our enemies, that is, such as are disagreeable to us, such as offend us, such as injure us, and actually hate us, and wish us ill, nature and self-love are so far from inclining us to love them, that they have the greatest repugnance to it; they recoil, they start back at the thought of it; and the great difficulty we find in loving our enemies, arises wholly from the opposition and aversion, that nature and self-love have to it. Hence then the love of our enemies is wholly a supernatural virtue; not only because it is founded in the supernatural motive of the love of God, but also because it is repugnant to nature, subversive of all the inclinations of nature, far above all the strength of nature, and cannot be practised without a particular assistance of the grace of God.
But for this very reason, it is the most shining and God-like part of the love of our neighbour, and the distinguishing character of a true Christian; one of the brightest ornaments of the soul in the sight of God, and of all other acts of charity the most profitable and advantageous to those who practise it. On this account our blessed Saviour, being solicitous that his followers should not mistake him on a duty of so vast importance, is exceedingly clear and precise upon it, has left us some of the most prevailing motives to induce us to the faithful observance of it, and descends, in his instructions concerning it, to the particular branches of duty, in which he requires us to practise it, namely, absolutely enjoining us never to seek revenge on those who injure us, from our hearts to forgive whatever offence they commit against us, and to return good for the evil they do us; besides the other common duties of love which we owe them as well as all others.

Q. 6. What are the particular motives proposed for the love of our enemies?

A. All the strong motives mentioned above, for the love of our neighbour in general, include our enemies as well as others; for as they include all mankind without exception, all who are joined to us in the same nature, because all such are the creatures of God, his children by creation, made to his image, redeemed by the blood of Christ, beloved by him, and created to be eternally happy with him, so they of course embrace even those among them, who are for the present enemies to God by their sins: and if we are obliged by the general law of charity, to love even those who are enemies to God, much more are we obliged by it to love those who are enemies to ourselves, and in whom all the above motives concur, as well as in others. Besides these, our Saviour has also laid down to us the following strong inducements to make us love our enemies. And (1.) He expressly commands it. "You have heard," says he, "that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thy enemy. But I SAY TO YOU, love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you," Matt. v. 43. To which is added in St. Luke, "and bless them that curse you," Luke vi. 28. Now in this command observe how strongly it is expressed; I say to you, I, who am your God, your Redeemer, your Master, I say to you; this is my express orders; this is my command to you my disciples, to you and to all who wish to belong to me. Observe also how he descends to the particular manner in which he wills this his command should be obeyed, which leaves no
room for evasion or false interpretations. To enforce the perfect observance of it, he (2.) proposes his own example: "This is my command," says he, "that you love one another, as I have loved you," John xv. 12. Now this is the high perfection of his love to us, that he loved us even when we were his declared enemies, by sin, and to such a degree as to lay down his life for us. "God commendeth his charity towards us, because when as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us," Rom. v. 8. "In this is charity; not as though we had loved God, but because he first loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins. My dearest, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." 1 John iv. 10. Besides this general example of his love to his enemies, he also gave us several particular instances of it; thus, he admitted the treacherous kiss from Judas, and spoke to him with the affection of a friend, even when in the very act of betraying him: he miraculously healed the servant's ear, which had been cut off, even though he was among his enemies, who came to take him prisoner; and when hanging on the cross in the greatest torment, and insulted and mocked by his furious persecutors, he prayed for them to his Father, and excused them, "Father," says he, "forgive them, for they know not what they are doing." To this he adds, (3.) The example of his heavenly Father and assures us, that it is by imitating him in this virtue, we are in a special manner his children: "But I say to you, love your enemies......that you may be the children of your Father, who is in heaven; who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust," Matt. v. 45. "But love ye your enemies......and you shall be the sons of the Highest, for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil," Luke vi. 35. Observe here the different way our Saviour speaks when he is recommending to us the love of our brethren in general, and the love of our enemies; he gives the first as the distinctive character of being his disciples: "In this," says he, "shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another;" but when he speaks of the love of our enemies, as being the most God-like exercise of charity; he declares that it makes us become children of the most high God. "Love your enemies......and you shall be the sons of the Highest;" showing by these different expressions, that as the dignity of sons is far more excellent than that of disciples; so the love of our enemies far excels in dignity every other branch of the love of our neighbour.

To the command of loving, and doing good to our enemies,
he, (4.) Makes our forgiving them from the heart all the injuries they do us, an express condition of getting pardon of our own sins from God. For this end he proposes to us the parable of the ten thousand talents, in which, after declaring, that when the servant refused to forgive a trifling debt to his fellow servant, though his lord had forgiven him an enormous sum; his lord hearing this, chid him severely for it, "and delivered him to the torturers, till he should pay all the debt," he concludes thus, "So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother, from your hearts," Matt. xviii. 35. To make us the more sensible of this, and to keep us continually in mind of it, in that daily prayer, which he taught us to use, he puts this petition, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;" which therefore no man can say, who keeps malice in his heart against his enemy, without praying for his own condemnation. And immediately after teaching us that Divine prayer, he gives this reason for inserting that petition; "For," says he, "if you forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences. But if you will not forgive men, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your offences," Matt. vi. 14. Where we see it is a fixed law, decreed by the great God, that "Either we must from our hearts forgive our enemies, or God will never forgive us." St. Paul inculcates this motive in these words, "Be ye kind one to another, merciful, forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you in Christ," Eph. iv. 32. And again, "Put ye on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience; bearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against one another; even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so do you also," Col. iii. 12. The Holy Ghost, by the mouth of the wise man, makes use of the same argument in the following strong terms, expressing astonishment that any one should dare to expect mercy from God, who refuses to forgive his neighbour; "He that seeketh to revenge himself, shall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will surely keep his sins in remembrance. Forgive thy neighbour if he hath hurt thee; and then shall thy sins be forgiven thee when thou prayest. One man keepeth anger against another: and doth he seek to be healed by God? He hath no mercy on a man like himself, and doth he entreat for his own sins? He that is but flesh nourisheth anger, and doth he ask forgiveness of God? Who shall obtain pardon for his sins?" Thus speaks the Spirit of God, and from this most just reasoning, concludes
with the three following important advices. "Remember thy last things, and let enmity cease...Remember the fear of God, and be not angry with thy neighbour. Remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook the ignorance of thy neighbour," Ecclus. xxviii. 1. Which advices contain three most powerful helps, to assist us in this virtue of forgiving our enemies; to wit, the remembrance of our last things; the remembrance of the fear of God, how stupendous his power, how dreadful his anger, how horrible to fall into his hands; and the remembrance of the covenant of the Most High, that is, of the fixed law he has made with man, that as we treat our neighbour, so he will treat us.

To these powerful motives is added, (5.) The repeated command, in different parts of scripture, besides those above mentioned, of never seeking revenge, nor returning evil for evil, but of repaying evil with good. Thus, "If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals on his head, and the Lord will reward thee," Prov. xxv. 21. Because, by so doing, you will mitigate his mind, and make him your friend; for "A mild answer breaketh wrath, but a harsh word stirreth up fury," Prov. xv. 1. Also, "By patience a prince shall be appeased, and a soft tongue shall break hardness," Prov. xxv. 15. And by this means you will contribute to save his soul, inasmuch as you use the proper remedies to cure him of the hatred he has against you, by continuing in which he would ruin his salvation.

To the same purpose God gave this command in the old law: "If thou meet thy enemy's ox or ass going astray, bring it back to him. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lie underneath his burden, thou shalt not pass by, but shalt lift him up with it," Ex. xxiii. 4. So also, "When thy enemy shall fall, be not glad; and in his ruin let not thy heart rejoice; lest the Lord see, and it displease him," Prov. xxvi. 17. And in the New Testament, "Bless them that persecute you," says St. Paul, "bless and curse not;...render to no man evil for evil...if it be possible as much as is in you, have peace with all men. Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved, but give place to wrath, for it is written, 'Revenge is mine, I will repay,' saith the Lord; 'but if thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him to drink, for doing this, thou shalt heap coals fire on his head.' Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good," Rom. xii. 14, 17, 18. "See that none render evil for evil to any man, but ever follow that which is good towards each other, and towards all men," 1 Thess. v. 15.
"Not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing; for unto this you are called, that you may inherit a blessing," 1 Pet. iii. 9. Hence we find, (6.) Most dreadful threats in scripture against those who keep up anger, and the spirit of revenge against their neighbour, thus, "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy," James ii. 13. And Jacob upon his deathbed foretelling the future doom of his children by the spirit of prophecy, said of Simeon and Levi, "Cursed be their fury, because it was stuborn; and their wrath, because it was cruel; I will divide them in Jacob, and will scatter them in Israel," Gen. xlix. 7. "Thus saith the Lord, for three crimes of Edom, and for four, and I will not convert him; because he hath pursued his brother with the sword, and hath cast off all pity; and hath carried on his fury, and hath kept his wrath to the end," Amos i. 11. The reason is, because God is the great judge of all the earth; he only knows the just deserveings of every one, and has reserved to himself the power of vengeance, as St. Paul, above cited, expressly declares. Hence, whoever wants to revenge himself, usurps a power which belongs only to God, besides acting contrary to all the duties of charity; hence, "Say not, I will return evil; wait for the Lord, and he will deliver thee," Prov. xx. 22.

From all this it is manifest, that we are more strictly commanded to love those of our brethren, whom we commonly call enemies; that is, those against whom we may find any natural antipathy or aversion, from the imperfections and defects we may see in them, or who may have any ill-will towards us, or have done us any injury; than even those others, who have never injured us. For (1.) All the motives for loving our neighbour in general, equally embrace all mankind, whether friends or enemies, and consequently our obligation in that respect, to love both, is equal; but (2.) Besides these common motives, we have also the above special motives to the love of our enemies in particular; which have no place in our friends; and which lay us under so strong an obligation of loving our enemies, in all its branches, as leave no room for evasion; and show the feebleness and folly of all those pretexts brought by our self-love and pride, to palliate our too, too frequent transgression of this sacred duty.

Q. 7. From whence arises the great difficulty we find in our hearts of obeying this sacred command of loving our enemies?

A. It arises principally from three causes, the removal of
which is the most infallible means to remove all the difficulty and to make the practice of this duty, even in its highest perfection, both easy and delightful. And these three causes are three most pernicious delusions, under which all mankind more or less lie, occasioned by our self-love and the corruption of our nature by sin; and what makes our misfortune here most deplorable is, that we are pleased with our delusion, we are unwilling to be undeceived, yea, when our judgment is convinced of our mistake, by the force of the reasons brought to show it, we can scarce let ourselves believe it is so, and in practice we commonly go on as before. Now, these delusions, which are the causes of our difficulty in loving our enemies, are as follow:

(1.) The great attachment our self-love has to the enjoyments of this life, to ease, health, pleasures, riches, reputation, and the like; makes us naturally look upon these things as real goods, and their contraries as real evils; we find ourselves born with an innate bent of the soul towards happiness, and an aversion to suffering and misery; and by reason of the sensible pleasure our nature finds in the enjoyment of worldly goods, we fondly imagine the happiness, for which we find ourselves born, is only to be found in the possession of them; and the pain and inconvenience our nature feels in the want of these goods, or in suffering the opposite evils, make us look upon that want or suffering as real misery. How very false and unjust our judgments are in thinking so, we have seen at large, Chap. IV. In consequence of this mistaken judgment, which we all have in some degree or other, of what are real goods or real evils, we grasp at the enjoyments of this life with avidity, and we fly from its sufferings with horror. Hence, when we are either deprived of any of the worldly good things we enjoy, or when any of the contrary evils are inflicted upon us, we consider this as a great misfortune, and as a real injury done us, which tends to make us miserable; we are pained in mind on account of it, and conceive an aversion against those whom we consider as the causes of it. And as reasons of justice, and prudence, and self-preservation, and other such plausible pretexts, concur to justify our endeavouring to secure to ourselves that in which we place our happiness against all injuries: we not only conceive an aversion and hatred to those who thus injure us, but we even applaud ourselves as acting reasonably in pursuing them with vengeance, both as a just punishment for what they have done, and as a defence against the like for the future. From all this it is evident, that if we sought our
happiness only in God, and not in the enjoyments of this life, as the whole tenor and spirit of our holy religion requires we should do; if "our affections were set on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth," Col. iii. 2; if, with St. Paul, we "counted all things but as dung, that we might gain Christ," Phil. iii. 8; if we were ready to leave possessions, and parents, and children, and all we have in this world, for the sake of Christ, and even to lose our life itself, rather than to lose him; if, in a word, we had so little esteem or attachment to the present life, that "we used this world as though we used it not," 1 Cor. vii. 31; it is manifest, that, when deprived of its goods, or exposed to its evils, this would give us no concern; we would think it no offence, nor look on it as any injury; on the contrary, considering the great advantages we might gain to our souls, if we made a Christian use of such trials, we would esteem them rather a service done us than an injury; of course, we would conceive no hatred or aversion against those who deprived us of these goods, nor in any degree count them as enemies; but would, without any difficulty, preserve the same love and affection for them as for all others. Do we ever count a man our enemy, or conceive a hatred against him, who takes a handful of sand out of our field? Certainly no; but we would look on him as an enemy indeed, who should take a handful of gold out of our pocket. Whence is the difference? We highly esteem, and are strongly attached in our affections to the gold, and it therefore gives us pain to want it: we undervalue the sand, and have no attachment to it, and therefore it gives us no concern to be deprived of it. But did we consider both in the same light, the effects produced would be the same. Examples of the truth of this are not wanting in great numbers in the church of Christ. The apostles, when imprisoned and scourged, instead of seeking revenge on their persecutors, rejoiced, that they were counted worthy to suffer ignominy for the sake of Christ. The scripture gives this account of the first Christians: "The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul; neither did any one say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but all things were common to them," Acts iv. 32. St. Paul gives this testimony of those to whom he wrote one of his epistles: "You both had compassion on them that were in bonds, and took with joy the being stripped of your own goods, knowing that you have a better and a lasting substance," Heb. x. 34. And all the innumerable armies of martyrs suffered not only the loss of every thing that was dear to human
nature, but also laid down their lives in the midst of the most cruel torments, without showing the least resentment against their barbarous persecutors, nay, behaving towards them with the most heroic charity and affection. To arrive at so perfect a detachment from the world as these holy saints did, is a very high degree of Christian perfection, and not to be looked for in ordinary Christians; yet the reflection that the injuries we receive from our neighbour appears to us in so strong a light, only by reason of our inordinate attachment to this world, the violence of our pride and self-love, and the corruption of our nature; and that they are far from being such, if considered by the light of faith; this reflection, I say, if properly attended to, would be a strong preservative against the aversion and hatred we too commonly conceive for those who occasion them, and a powerful means to enable us to preserve that charity and love towards them which is so strongly enjoined us by the law of Jesus Christ. And if, as our Saviour so strictly requires of all his followers, we set ourselves in good earnest to mortify our self-love, that most dangerous enemy of our souls, and to break the unhappy attachment we have to this world, the more we should advance in this holy exercise, the less difficulty should we find in bearing the greatest injuries with patience, and in preserving a true Christian charity and a love for those who occasion them.

(2.) Another mistake, which greatly deludes us in this matter, is the false opinion we have, that our neighbour, who occasions any affliction to us, is the source and cause of what we have to suffer. With this prepossession, we attribute our trouble to his mistake or carelessness, or to his malice and hatred and ill-will against us; and whilst we see nothing in these dispositions of his mind towards us, but what is odious and criminal, we naturally conceive a reciprocal hatred and aversion for him, when from these dispositions of mind he injures us. This is a most fatal delusion, and no less unjust than fatal; for our holy faith assures us in the strongest manner, that whatever cross, trouble, or affliction comes upon us, and whatever be the immediate occasion of it, all flows originally from the express will and decree of God, our sovereign Lord and Master, as from its real cause and source; and that our neighbour, who occasions it, is nothing but the mere instrument in the hand of God, of executing what he has expressly willed and declared from all eternity to send us. It is true, our neighbour, who injures us, commits a sin by doing so, with which God is offended; and this sin of his, which resides pre-
cisely in the malice of his own will, God only permits; but the effects of this sin, in what we suffer from it, is no less directly willed and decreed by Almighty God, than any other natural event, as the motion of the earth, or the course of the heavenly bodies. To explain this by a convincing example: Almighty God, out of infinite love to man, had decreed from all eternity that our Saviour Jesus Christ should suffer all the torments of his passion, and die an ignominious death upon the cross for our salvation. In the treasures of his infinite wisdom, he had numberless different ways by which he could have executed this gracious design; but foreseeing that the Jews, abusing their free-will from the malice of their hearts, would, if permitted, do all they did against our Saviour, and fully execute what he in his eternal counsel had decreed to be done, though by so doing they committed the greatest of crimes, he was pleased to permit them to do what their malice suggested, and made use of their sin as an instrument in his hand to execute his decrees. And this is the very light in which his holy word represents the matter to us; for thus St. Peter declares it to the Jews, in his first sermon to them: "This Jesus, being delivered up by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you, by the hands of wicked men, have crucified and slain," Acts ii. 23. And the whole disciples assembled together, with one voice declared the same truth, in these still stronger terms: "O Lord......of a truth there assembled together in this city against the holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel; to do what thy hand and counsel had decreed to be done," Acts iv. 27. Now this is precisely the case with us in all the crosses and trials that come upon us in this life. Almighty God from all eternity foresees them all most distinctly, with every circumstance attending them; and from all eternity his hand and counsel decree to send them upon us in time; this decree he could execute in numberless different ways: but foreseeing that our neighbour, from the malice of his own heart, and the abuse of his free-will, would, if permitted, consent to do an unjust action, which would accomplish his Divine will on us, through his incomprehensible judgments he permits him to do so, making use of his sin as an instrument in his hand, to send us that trial which he had resolved to inflict upon us. Here then we clearly see, that it is a most miserable delusion to imagine that our neighbour is the cause of our sufferings; and most unjust, as well as a great folly, to attribute them to his negligence, malice, or ill-will, and to conceive an aversion or anger against
him on that account. Does a parent attribute the death of his child to the sword that runs him through the body, and rise in a passion against it as the cause of his death? would not everyone look on him as a madman, if he did so? Does a sick person attribute the pain he feels in having his leg cut off, to the surgeon's knife or saw, and conceive an aversion to him on that account? would he not be deemed to have lost his judgment if he did so? The sword and knife are but instruments, but the hand that manages them is the cause of what is done. Just so it is in our case: Our neighbour who injures us, is but the instrument in the hand of God; but God himself is the cause of all we suffer, who manages the instrument as he pleases, and regulates every word our neighbour speaks, and every thing he does against us, with such precision that he cannot touch a hair of our head, nor do us the smallest hurt, further than God has from all eternity decreed to inflict upon us. And hence the scripture expressly declares, that "Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God," Ecclus. xi. 14. And "Shall there be evil in a city," says the prophet, "which the Lord hath not done?" Amos iii. 6. Whatever be the immediate occasions, or secondary causes by which these things are brought about, they are all the instruments used by Almighty God, by which his eternal decrees are accomplished. Did we seriously reflect on these truths, and receive all the trials that are occasioned to us by others as coming expressly from the hand of God; did we consider our neighbour, who occasions them, in no other light than as the instrument which God makes use of for executing his holy will upon us, who would dare to complain? who would consider what he suffers as an injury? who would think himself unjustly dealt with? In fact, it was thus all the holy saints of God behaved; in this they found the greatest peace of mind amidst the severest trials; and by this means preserved in their hearts the most cordial love and charity for their greatest persecutors. This is the great lesson which Jesus Christ himself gave to all his followers, and has left recorded for our instruction in his sacred gospel; for when he was taken prisoner in the garden, and St. Peter drew his sword to defend him, he said to Peter, "Put up your sword into the scabbard. The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" John xviii. 11. He does not attribute the cup of his passion to the malice of the Jews, or to the cruelty of the soldiers. He knew these were only the instruments in the hands of his Father; but considering it wholly as the decree of his Father, from his hand he receives it, and for
his sake drinks it with pleasure. See above, Chap. 11, § 3, and there in particular, Q. 19. Let us therefore follow this divine example. Let us be firmly persuaded that God is the author of every trial that comes upon us; that he hath decreed from all eternity to send it on us, and that our neighbour who injures us is nothing but the instrument of executing those eternal decrees of God in our regard. Now what difference does it make to us, whether he is pleased to make use of inanimate and irrational creatures, or of the malice of our neighbours, for that purpose? This makes no odds in what we suffer, nor makes our trial less beneficial to our soul. Their malice, considered in itself, can hurt only their own souls; and considered in the effects it has on us, makes them neither more nor less, than if they came from other creatures; it is the eternal will of God that we should suffer them; and therefore suffer them we must, whatever be the instrument he is pleased to make use of. Let us therefore be firmly persuaded of these truths, and we shall find the love of our enemies far from being so difficult a duty as we imagine; especially if we further reflect that our sufferings are trials, from whatever immediate occasion they come, are not only expressly sent us by the hand of God, but are moreover the effects of his paternal goodness to us, and intended by him as the most efficacious means of procuring many blessings to our souls, and effectually securing our eternal salvation, as we have seen above, Chap. IV. Q. 10.

(3). Another grievous delusion we commonly fall into here, is the false persuasion we have, that our neighbour who injures us, is our enemy; which is an idea so shocking to our nature and self-love, and so contrary to our unhappy attachment to the esteem and love of others, that it divests him in our eyes of every title or claim to pity or compassion, and represents him only as a just object of aversion and indignation. But this is no less unjust than the former. For, on what account can we look on him as our enemy? This must be either on account of his ill-will towards us or on account of the effect which flows from his ill-will in the sufferings it occasions to us. Do we then count him our enemy, because he occasions the cross that comes upon us? In this view he is nothing, but the instrument in the hands of God, who sends his cross upon us. This cross we must suffer, because God has so decreed; if we did not suffer it by means of our neighbour we should have to undergo it from some other occasion; but because God is pleased to make use of our neighbour's ill-will as his instrument, shall we for that look on him as our enemy? how unjust is such a conclusion!
Does the poor criminal look on the executioner as his enemy, because he executes the just sentence pronounced against him by the judge? Or would we look on an angel as our enemy, if God should send one of these heavenly spirits, to do what is done by our neighbour against us? Or does a sick person consider the apothecary as his enemy, because he gives him a bitter potion to drink by the physician's prescription? On the contrary, he receives it with pleasure from the apothecary's hand, and drinks it up readily, notwithstanding all the pain it gives him, from the hopes of the good effect it will have in recovering his health. Is not this precisely our case? Almighty God, like a wise and skilful physician, prescribes a severe cross for us, as a most necessary, though bitter medicine for the health of our soul; our neighbour is employed by our heavenly physician to prepare the potion for us, and present it us to drink; and for this shall we consider him as our enemy and hate and detest him on that account? How unjust, how unreasonable would it be to do so? On the contrary, every motive of religion obliges us to look upon him as a real friend, considering the admirable benefits which God intends for our good, from what our neighbour does; and which it will effectually produce in our souls, if we ourselves do not by our folly prevent it. What our mistaken self-love calls an injury, an affront, a misery, is, in the eyes of religion, a tree of life, if we use it properly; for by it we may discharge the heavy debt of punishment we owe to the Divine justice; by it we can dispose our offended God to grant us pardon and mercy for our sins; by it we may gain a complete victory over self-love, that mortal enemy of our souls: in it we have the most effectual means of acquiring humility, meekness, patience, resignation, those darling virtues of Jesus Christ, and of practiseing that God-like virtue of brotherly love, in its highest perfection; by it we may exceedingly augment our merit in the sight of God, and lay up a great reward for our souls in heaven. These are the sublime effects which the crosses and trials that God sends us, by the hand of our neighbour, operate in the soul; and it is with a view to produce these effects that he sends them; and shall we look on him as an enemy, and not rather as our friend, whom the Divine providence employs for such a salutary purpose? With as little reason can we deem him our enemy, on account of the malice of his heart against us. For let us suppose he has as enraged a malice against us as the devil himself, if Almighty God does not think proper to use his malice as an instrument in his own hand to execute his will
on us, what hurt can his utmost malice do us? Not so much as touch a hair of our head; for “not a hair of our head shall fall to the ground without our heavenly Father.” Had not the devil a most inveterate malice against Job? but what was Job hurt by it? Till Almighty God was pleased to make use of Satan’s malice to put Job to the trial, he could not do him the smallest harm. Let therefore our neighbour rage against us as he pleases, whom does he hurt by so doing. Not us even in the smallest degree; consequently we cannot in any reason consider him as our enemy; but he grievously hurts himself, he offends his God, and wounds his own soul, and therefore is a real enemy to himself, but by no means to us. In this view, then, instead of being an object of our anger or aversion, whoever injures us is a real object of our pity and compassion; for if we have any love for God, any zeal for his glory, any desire for the salvation of souls, how can we fail to be moved with pity and compassion, to see our brother, for whom Jesus Christ died, offending God in so grievous a manner, and plunging himself into the abyss of mortal sin, by his hatred to us; especially if we have had the misfortune, even though undesignedly, to give him any manner of handle for doing so? What condescension should we not be ready to make to deliver a poor soul from such misery? What tenderness and compassion ought we not to show, what good offices should we not be ready to do, in order to mitigate his wrath, and extricate him from the jaws of Satan? This is charity: this is to love God in our neighbour; this is to fulfill the law of Christ. But to look on our brother as our enemy, because he has an ill-will to us, is to be a real enemy to our own souls; to hate or despise him on that account, is to renounce our own salvation; and to pursue him with rancour and vengeance, for which we have not the smallest grounds in justice or reason, is to reproach the Almighty for punishing us by his means, and to withdraw ourselves from his Divine providence; to persecute as an enemy one who is a real friend, and to provoke the Divine vengeance against ourselves.

Whoever considers these truths attentively, will not be surprised that our Saviour, the more effectually to deliver us from such an abyss of spiritual misery and content with commanding us to love those whom we call our enemies, and to do them good, exhorts us in the warmest manner to be ready in the disposition of our souls, even to suffer more from their hands, rather than resent what they have already done us: “I say to you,” says he, “do not resist evil; but if any
man strike you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall force thee to go one mile, go with him other two. Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away,” Mat. v. 39. Such is the high perfection our blessed Saviour recommends to us in this sublime virtue. But to arrive at this perfection, self-love and our attachment to the things of this world must be crucified in us; for till then we shall scarce be able to understand, but by no means to relish the beauty of such sublime perfection. Happy then all those who set themselves in earnest to take off their affections from “the things of the earth, and place them on the things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God,” Col. iii. 2. This is the only sure foundation on which the spiritual edifice of Christian virtue can be built; and the more perfectly this foundation is laid, the more easily and speedily will the soul ascend to the holy mountain of perfection.

§ 3. The Love of Ourselves.

Q. 8. Is it lawful or laudable to love ourselves?

A. On this we must observe (1.) That to love, as we have seen above, is to wish well and to do good to the one we love; or, which comes to the same thing, to wish and procure his happiness. All mankind are born with an innate, inextinguishable propensity to happiness, which invariably urges every one to wish his own happiness, and endeavour to procure it. To love ourselves then is a fundamental law of nature itself, impressed in our souls, and interwoven with our frame, by the great Author of our being, for the best of purposes. Our Blessed Saviour, in commanding us to love our neighbour as ourselves, presupposes this innate principle of our nature, and lays it down as the standard, by which we should regulate our love to others. (2.) Now there are two different kinds of happiness of which we are capable; the one consisting in the sanctification of our soul, and our being united to God our sovereign good, by grace in this life, and by glory in the next: the other consisting in the gratification of our senses and appetites in the enjoyment of the good things of this present life, and indulging ourselves in all the pleasures of flesh and blood. And these two different kinds of happiness are diametrically opposite, and wholly inconsistent with one another, as we have seen above, Chap.IV. Q. 4, No.4. Hence (3.)
There arise two different kinds of love, which we may have for ourselves, according to that kind of happiness we wish for, and endeavour to procure. If we place our happiness in God, and seek for it only in the sanctification of our souls, and in our being, as far as in us lies, united with him; our love for ourselves will be a holy, spiritual, sanctified love; a branch of the love of God; and the proper exercise of that fundamental law of nature, that innate propensity with which we are created to seek for happiness. To love ourselves in this manner then, is to fulfil the great end of our being, and to secure the only one thing necessary, our eternal salvation. If we place our happiness in the enjoyment of this life, and in the gratification of our passions and lusts; our love for ourselves will be a carnal, sensual, animal love, a perversion of the end for which we were created, and which will lead us at last to eternal misery. (4.) Before the fall, man loved himself only with a holy, spiritual love, walking always with his God, and having no other view but to please him, and prepare himself for being eternally united to him, in everlasting happiness. But after the fall this holy love was in a manner quite extinguished in his soul, by the corruption of sin; and the carnal, sensual, animal love, violently seized upon all his powers and faculties; so that in the present corrupted state of man, we naturally love ourselves only with that unhappy self-love, which is the source and spring of all our sins here, and leads us to eternal misery hereafter, and hence it is called by the name of self-love: not because it deserves that name, but because by the corruption of sin. it naturally predominates in all mankind. We bring it into the world with us, and we are so blinded by it, that by nature we know no other happiness, but what we find by indulging in it. It is indeed loving our corrupt nature, and consists in honouring, flattering, and pleasing it; and conformably to this, the mortification required from us by our Saviour, is called self-denial, and hating ourselves, because it consists in denying the inclinations of our nature, as corrupted by sin, in treating all its perverse affections with severity and rigour, as having a real but holy hatred for them. (5.) Hence it follows, that to love ourselves with the love of charity, with that spiritual, holy love which unites us to our God, is the only true love of ourselves, and which alone deserves to be called love; but to love ourselves with a carnal, sensual love, with that self-love which flows from the corruption of our nature by sin, is really to hate ourselves, and to be our own greatest enemies. But (6.) As this unhappy self-love is
deeply interwoven in our very frame, so that we bring it into the world with us, and are in continual danger of being ruined by its lusts and delusions; it is therefore our great duty to strive to extirpate it from our souls, and implant in its stead that holy, spiritual love, which alone will bring us to God. To excite and enable us to do this, is the great design of all that our blessed Saviour did and suffered for us; to this all his commands, all his counsels, all the sacred maxims of his gospel tend; and for this purpose it is, that he lays it down as the first step in his service, that we deny ourselves, mortify our lusts, and crucify our flesh with its vices, as we have seen above at large, Chap. IV. § 2. But (7.) As even in the state of innocence, man enjoyed many things which gave pleasure to his senses and natural appetites, such as the pleasing relish we feel in eating and drinking, the comfort of rest and sleep, the satisfaction we enjoy in contemplating the beauties of the works of God, in hearing the charms of music, and the like; insomuch, that the very place in which God placed our first parents at their creation, was, from the abundance of those delights which it contained, called "a paradise of pleasure, planted by the hand of God," Gen. ii. 8, and as in our present state, there are many other things, which, considering our present weakness, are necessary for enabling us to discharge our duties in it, and which naturally give us pleasure and satisfaction; such as a good name, the society of good neighbours, the approbation of our friends, a good state of health, and the like; and as Jesus Christ, our model and Master, who was sanctity itself, used many of these things as occasion required, without the smallest detriment to his sanctity, from the pleasure his human nature received from them: for these reasons it appears, that the holy, spiritual love, which we ought to have for ourselves, does not require of us to divest ourselves of all human enjoyments and natural satisfactions; we should cease to be human creatures if we did so; on the contrary, it even requires of us to use them according to our lawful necessities, but to regulate the use of them by what the law of God prescribes, both as to the measure and manner, and motive of using them.

Q. 9. What prescriptions does the law of God lay down on this subject?

A. To understand this properly we must observe (1.) That we do not belong to ourselves: we are not our own masters, but we belong to God, and are wholly his property; not only by our creation, as we have seen at large, Chap. II. § 3, but
also by our redemption, of which the scripture says, "Know ye not, that you are not your own; for you are bought with a great price!" 1 Cor. vi. 20. And what this is, St. Peter tells us thus, "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unsotted and undefiled," 1 Pet. i. 18. St. Paul also says on this subject, "None of us liveth to himself; and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Therefore whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's," Rom. xiv. 7. (2.) If therefore our sovereign Lord, for his own good ends, leaves us to the freedom of our own will, in this our mortal state; he, at the same time, lays us under the strict obligation of taking all necessary care of our being, both as to soul and body, both which he commits as a trust in charge of our free-will, for their preservation and improvement, that in due time we may be able to restore ourselves to him again, and be happily united to him for ever. All this is repeatedly declared to us in the parables of the talents, of the vineyard, of the unjust steward, and others such. (3.) To make us the more diligent in discharging the duties required, for the preservation and improvement of our being, he has been graciously pleased to add a particular relish and sensible pleasure to the performance of these duties; and as for those among them which are absolutely necessary for those ends, he stimulates us to perform them by a painful and uneasy sensation, which he has joined to the neglect of them. Thus in the improvement of the soul, we are stimulated to the acquisition of knowledge by curiosity, and we find a great satisfaction in acquiring it: we are deterred from evil by the checks of our conscience or moral sense, and the approbation of that internal monitor gives the soul a most delightful pleasure when we do good. We are also encouraged to this improvement of the soul, by the pleasure we receive from the approbation of others, and the satisfaction of a good reputation; and we are deterred from a contrary conduct by the fear of shame, and the pain of disgrace and infamy. In the necessary care of our body, the relish we find in eating and drinking, in repose and sleep, in clothes, in exercise, in cleanliness, &c., renders the exercise of all we do in performing these duties, or what relates to them, both easy and agreeable, though otherwise they would be most disgusting; as we see in eating, which is most disagreeable and painful, when one has lost his appetite, and has not the proper relish for what he eats; and on the contrary, the painful
sensations of hunger, and thirst, and weariness, force us in a manner to do what our body in these circumstances necessarily requires for its preservation. In like manner, we are incited to labour for acquiring a necessary competency of worldly goods, as the means ordained by God for the preservation and improvement of our being, by the pleasure we enjoy in the use of these means; and we are deterred from idleness and sloth, by the pain and misery which accompany the want of them. (4.) Our self-love strongly co-operates with our duty in procuring and using all the means required for the necessary preservation and improvement of our being; though with different degrees of ardour, according as the objects are more or less necessary, and according to the various dispositions of different people; and hence all mankind are naturally impelled to desire, seek for, and endeavour to procure and preserve the various goods of life which conduce to the above ends, and in which our nature finds relish and pleasure. But here lies the great inordinacy and corruption of our self-love, that it seeks these things merely for the sensible pleasure which accompanies them, places its happiness in the enjoyment of that pleasure, and rests in it as in its end. And as this pleasure is ordained by God, by no means as our end, nor as the object of our happiness, but merely as a help to enable us to perform our duty with more ease and alacrity; and consequently, as it is incapable of making us happy, or filling the boundless capacity of the soul; hence it is, that our deluded self-love, never satisfied to the full with any degree of pleasure it finds in those enjoyments, pursues them with still greater ardour, in hopes of increasing its satisfaction from the increased measure of the sensual delight it receives from them; and the more we yield to it in this pursuit, the more the whole man becomes enslaved to these pleasures, and is hurried on headlong to every kind of excess, to the great offence of God; and to the eternal ruin of the soul. So that instead of preserving our being for God, as his property, and restoring it to him when he calls for it, with the improvement he expects; by following the suggestions of self-love we destroy and corrupt both soul and body, and deprive Almighty God of both for ever. Upon these principles are founded the prescriptions which the law of God lays down for the exercise of that spiritual sanctified love which we owe to ourselves, and they are,

(1.) That we are to consider the temporal good things of this life, on no account as the end for which we are created, but only as the means of God’s appointment for preserving us in
health and strength both in body and mind, by which we may be enabled faithfully to discharge those duties which he has laid upon us, whether of religion, or justice, or charity, in order to obtain at last the enjoyment of himself, which is the great end for which he has created us. Hence it is our duty, to use our lawful industry, and peaceably to labour, according to the state of life in which God has placed us, for procuring such a competency of the goods of this life as is necessary for preserving our health and strength in his service. Thus St. Paul says, "We entreat you, brethren, that you use your endeavour to be quiet, and that you do your own business, and work with your hands, as we commanded you," 1 Thess. iv. 10. Again, he confirms this duty from his own example, and repeats it in still stronger terms: "Neither did we eat any man's bread for nothing, but in labour and in toil, we work night and day... for also when we were with you, we declared this to you, That if any man will not work, neither let him eat. For we have heard that there are some among you, that walk disorderly, not working at all, but curiously meddling. Now, we charge them that are such, and beseech them by the Lord Jesus Christ, that working with silence they would eat their own bread," 2 Thess. iii. 8. Nay, it is to our performing this duty that the promise is made by Almighty God of supplying his faithful servants with the necessaries of life, by giving his blessing to their lawful endeavours; thus, "Blessed are all they that fear the Lord, that walk in his ways; for thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands: blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee," Ps. cxxvii. 1. "Say to the just man, that it is well, for he shall eat the fruit of his doings," Is. iii. 10. And this duty was imposed upon man immediately after the fall, when God said to Adam, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread," Gen. iii. 19. But,

(2.) As the success of our labours, for procuring these goods, depends more upon the blessing of God than upon our own industry; therefore we are not allowed to be anxious or solicitous about the success of our affairs; but having done our part, and recommended all to God, we must be perfectly resigned to his will, and fully content and satisfied with whatever portion of the necessaries of life he shall think fit to bestow upon us; fully persuaded that he only knows what measure of them is best for us, and will never fail on his side to grant us what he knows to be most for our real good. Thus, "Be not solicitous," says our Lord, "saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? for after these things
do the heathens seek. For your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added to you. Be not therefore solicitous for to-morrow: for the morrow will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," Matt. vii. 31. To which St. Paul adds, "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and certainly we can carry nothing out; but having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content," 1 Tim. vi. 6. Consequently we must not set our hearts upon having great abundance of the goods of this life; for this would be indulging our corrupt self-love, and exposing ourselves to the utmost danger; therefore the same holy apostle immediately adds, "They that will become rich, fall into many temptations, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition," verse 9. And if God in his providence should send us abundance of these good things, we must by no means set our hearts and affections upon them, but make such a sanctified use of them for our real good, as God in his holy law has prescribed to us. Thus, "If riches abound, set not your heart upon them," Ps. lxi. 11. And "Charge the rich of this world not to be high minded, nor to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God...to do good, to be rich in good works, to give easily, to communicate to others: to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the true life," 1 Tim. vi. 17.

(3.) We are by no means to consider the relish and pleasure which our nature feels in the lawful and necessary use of these goods, whether in those of the mind or body, as an object desirable for itself, in which we may rest and seek our happiness; but only as a seasoning graciously joined to them by our good God to enable us to use them with greater ease and alacrity. Consequently we must never attach our affections to that pleasure, nor be solicitous about procuring it, or augmenting it, much less must we use the things themselves for the satisfaction of enjoying it: but receive it with thanksgiving as a gift of God, and use the things themselves as our duty requires us to do, with the utmost indifference, whether we receive that relish from them or not, or in what degree soever we may find it, according to the orders of the apostle, "Thus therefore I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that they also who have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though
they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed
not; and they that use this world, as though they used it not;
for the fashion of this world passeth away: But I would have
you to be without solicitude,” 1 Cor. vii. 29.

(4.) When we are threatened with any temporal evil, whether
in our person, or in our goods, or in our reputation; the love
we owe ourselves, and the care we are obliged to take of our-
selves, for God’s sake, as his property, requires that we should
use such lawful means as reason suggests to us, to prevent that
evil; that we should pray to God to be delivered from it, and
if necessary should fly from it: thus our Saviour teaches us to pray
daily, “Deliver us from evil;” and he gave this rule to his
apostles, “When they shall persecute you in this city, flee into
another,” Matt. x. 23. But as we wholly belong to God, and
he may do with us whatever he pleases; and as we do not know
when any evil threatens us, but it may be his will actually to
send it upon us; therefore we ought to use all these means of
avoiding it with great indifference, without any solicitude about
the success, and with an entire resignation to the will of God
to escape, or undergo the threatened evil, as he shall please to
ordain. Our Saviour himself prayed to his Father to be de-
ivered from the bitter cup of his passion, but immediately adds,
“yet not my will but thine be done.” Thus David, when fly-
ing from his rebellious son Absalom, who sought to destroy him,
sent back the ark into the city, and said, “If I shall find grace
in the sight of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me
both it and his tabernacle;” and then immediately adds, “But
if he shall say to me, Thou pleasest me not: I am ready, let
him do that which is good before him,” 2 Kings (Sam.) xv. 25.
Thus the valiant Judas exhorting his little army to do their
part in fighting manfully to defend their country and the
sanctuary from the destruction that threatened them, said,
“Gird yourselves and be valiant men, that ye may fight with
these nations that are assembled against us, to destroy us and
our sanctuary;” but immediately adds, “Nevertheless, as it
shall be the will of God in heaven, so be it done,” 1 Mach. iii.
58. And if, notwithstanding our endeavours to escape it, the
threatened evil should come upon us, by this we are certain that
it is the will of God we should suffer it, and therefore must
submit to it with all readiness, and receive it from his hand
with silence and patience, saying with our blessed Saviour,
“The cup that my Father giveth me shall I not drink it?” or
with Eli, “It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good in his
sight;” or with David, “I was dumb and I opened not my
mouth, because thou hast done it." But when any temporal evil comes upon us, as we do not know how far it may be the will of God, that it should continue to afflict us, it is also most lawful and even our duty to use the proper means to be delivered from it; but always with the same holy dispositions as above, with the same indifference in using these means, and with the same resignation to the will of God, if they should prove unsuccessful, and the evil continue. Thus it is our duty to take the proper remedies for recovery of health, to vindicate our reputation against false accusations, and the like. But,

(5.) The great and most important part of this holy exercise, is, that in all these other branches of it our only motive in what we do, be, to please God, to obey his holy will, to give him glory. So that we must use the good creatures of God, not to please ourselves, nor to gratify our own humour, but because it is his holy will we should use them for preserving our health and strength in his service, saying to him with the royal prophet, "I will keep my strength to thee, for thou art my protector," Ps. lxviii. 10. We must use them within the strict bounds of moderation and necessity, carefully restraining our self-love from running into any excess; because God requires us to do so, and prohibits all excess in the use of his creatures, as hurtful to the end for which he gives them, and therefore displeasing to him. We must use them with great indifference, cutting off all attachments to the pleasure we receive from them, because he forbids us to set our affections on any thing in this world, otherwise "the love of the Father is not in us." We must use them with resignation, from the same motive, being as willing to want them as to have them, if it be his holy will to deprive us of them; and even to suffer their opposite evils with equal readiness, if it be his holy will to send them to us. In a word, whatever we do, whatever we omit, or whatever we suffer, we must endeavour to keep God always before our eyes, to do all in obedience to his will, and with a view to his glory; according to that express rule which he has given us by his holy apostle, "whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31.

Such then is the holy love of ourselves, which the law of God enjoins; a love which is diametrically in opposition to all the corruptions of self-love, which is a very sublime exercise of Divine charity, which contains in itself a very high degree of Christian perfection, and to the acquisition of which it is the duty of all to aspire; because, it is only by loving ourselves in this manner, that we shall we brought at last to the posses
sion of that eternal bliss for which we were created, and which
alone can satisfy, to the full, that boundless propensity to happi-
ness, which every man feels in his own breast, and which nothing
but the possession of him who made us can gratify to the full.

§ 4. Of the Manner of Loving our Neighbour.

Q. 10. In what manner are we commanded to love our
neighbour?

A. The scripture proposes three rules which we ought to
follow, in the manner of loving our neighbour: That we love
our neighbour as we love ourselves; That we love him as the
members of the same body love one another: and, That we
love him as Christ loved us.

Q. 11. How are we to love our neighbour as ourselves?

A. To love our neighbour as we love ourselves, is the very
expression of the commandment, “Thou shalt love thy neigh-
bour as thyself;” the meaning of which is, that the love we
owe to our neighbour ought to have the same tendency and the
same properties, with the love which we have for ourselves.
With regard to its tendency, it ought to have in view the real
happiness of our neighbour, principally in the next life, and
also in the life which now is; because such is the tendency of
the love which we have for ourselves. And by this our exterior
conduct towards him must be directed. Our neighbour is a
human creature like ourselves, and has the same natural
feelings, and the same common dispositions of nature as we have;
and therefore we are to judge of the effect our conduct will
have upon him, from the effect a similar conduct from others
has upon ourselves, according to that of the wise man, “Judge
of the dispositions of thy neighbour by thyself,” Ecclus. xxxi.
18. Hence arise two general rules, for the practice of loving
our neighbour as we love ourselves. The first is negative, and
laid down in the Old Testament in these words, “See thou
never to do to another, what thou wouldst hate to have done to
thee by another,” Tob. iv. 16. Whatever is hurtful to us,
either as to soul or body, we naturally hate to have done to us,
and the holy love we owe to ourselves requires us to avoid and
fly from it; therefore if we love our neighbour as ourselves we
must never do any such things to him. The second is positive,
and given us by Jesus Christ in his gospel, in these words, “All
things whatsoever you would that men should do to you do you
also to them,” Matt. vii. 12. The love we have for ourselves,
makes us wish for such a treatment from our fellow-creatures,
as contributes to make us happy; it gives us pleasure and
satisfaction when they behave towards us in that manner; and it makes us uneasy and discontented, when they treat us otherwise. Consequently if we love our neighbour as ourselves, if we wish his happiness as we wish our own, we must carefully do to him, in order to make him happy, all those things whatsoever we, according to the holy love we owe to ourselves, would wish others to do to us were we in his situation. These two general rules take in a very wide field, and if our unhappy self-love did not blind us, and hinder us from judging of our neighbour's case with the same measure by which we judge of our own, would alone suffice to regulate our whole conduct towards others. Without descending to more particular injunctions, we would need only to put ourselves in our neighbour's place, and ask our own heart, what we would wish others to do or not to do to us, and if our heart spoke impartially, our duty would immediately appear; especially if our love for our neighbour not only have the same tendency, but also the same properties, with our love for ourselves. Now these properties are principally three, and regard our judgments, our affection, and our actions; for, (1.) With regard to our judgments, the love we have for ourselves makes us always ready to form the most favourable judgment of ourselves, of our own dispositions, and of our own actions; and where undeniable malice does not appear, we always put the best construction we can upon them; we are ingenious in finding out a thousand pretexts to excuse our conduct in the eyes of the world, where it may appear dubious; we even very often take our imperfections and defects for virtues. We have a great aversion to condemn ourselves, if we can find any plausible palliation; and we always wish and desire, that other people should have the same favourable opinion of us, that we have of ourselves. In this manner, therefore, ought also our judgments to be disposed towards our neighbours, if we really love them as we love ourselves; and such the law of God requires love to be, which condemns all rash judgments, suspicions, and jealousies, and all uncharitable opinions and interpretations of our neighbour's dispositions and conduct, as we shall afterwards see in its proper place. (2.) We love ourselves with a real sincere love. We very often profess to love others, when we have little love for them in our heart, or we profess to have it in a much greater degree than we really have. But this is not the case with the love we have for ourselves; we always have a real, true, and a sincere love for ourselves, and from our heart wish ourselves to be well and happy; this love is connatural to us,
and born with us; it is implanted in us by our great Creator, and approved by him; and with the same sincerity of affection he requires we should love our neighbour for his sake; thus, "With a brotherly love, from a sincere heart, love one another earnestly," 1 Pet. i. 22. "Let love be without disimulation, ... loving one another with a brotherly love," Rom. xii. 9. "Now the end of the commandment is charity, from a pure heart and a good conscience, and unfeigned faith," 1 Tim. i. 5. Such was the love of St. Paul, when he said to king Agrippa, "I would to God, that both in little and in much, not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, should become such as I am, except these bands," Acts xxvi. 29. (3.) We love ourselves with an efficacious love; a love that shows itself in action. We are not content with barely wishing ourselves well; but with great diligence use our best endeavours to acquire and preserve those things which we know, or imagine will contribute to make us well. Such therefore ought also to be our love for our neighbours, and such the law of God requires it should be; and such indeed is all love where it is real and sincere: witness that of parents to their children, of two sincere friends, and others such. Hence the scripture says, "He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth," 1 John iii. 17. "And if a brother or sister be naked, and want daily food, and one of you say to them, Go in peace, be you warmed and filled; yet give them not those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit?" James ii. 15. And our blessed Saviour shows in the strongest terms the necessity of this property of our love for our neighbour, when relating the sentence that shall be passed on the good and bad at the last day, he expressly declares, that sentence of eternal bliss shall be passed on the good, because the love they had for their neighbour was an efficacious love; and that the wicked shall be condemned to eternal woe, because their love for their neighbour wanted that property.

Q. 12. How are we to love our neighbour as members of the same body love one another?

A. This rule is proposed to us by St. Paul, who says, "As in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members of one another," Rom. xii. 4. And having laid down this foundation, he draws from it this con-
clusion, “Let love be without dissimulation: hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good: loving one another with a brotherly love,” verse 9; to wit, such as the members of the same body, like so many brothers, have for one another; and then he goes on summarily to enumerate the great duties which such love requires. Now, in examining the manner in which the members of the body love each other, the two following particulars are chiefly taken notice of in scripture.

(1.) The members of the same body never envy those above them, nor despise those below them. We must consider with the apostle, that, “the body is not one member, but many,” 1 Cor. xii. 14, which have all their different uses, of which some are more honourable, others less; as we see for example, in the use of the eye, the hand, and the foot; but yet, they are all necessary for the good of the whole; for, “If the whole body were eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were hearing, where would be the smelling?” verse 17.—Hence none of the members can say, it has no need of the others. “The eye cannot say to the hand, I need not thy help: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you,” verse 21. In all this variety of offices and uses of the members, they never envy one another the advantages they possess, nor complain of the station they themselves are in. If the eye receive any pleasure from the beauties of the sight, if the tongue be delighted with delicate food, the other members do not envy them that pleasure, but rejoice in it as a common good to the whole; the foot does not complain of its low station, nor of the heavy weight it carries, nor frets when obliged to pass through dirty places, but performs its work with alacrity for the benefit of the whole body. On the other hand, the eye does not despise the foot on account of its mean station, nor look down upon it with contempt, as an object unworthy of its regard; much less does the mouth smile at its mistakes, nor the tongue expose it to ridicule, when it makes any false step. On the contrary, all strive to hide the infirmities of the less honourable members; for “Such as we think to be the less honourable members of the body,” says the scripture, “upon these we bestow more abundant honour, and those that are our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness; for our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, giving the more abundant honour to that which wanted, that there might be no schism in the body, but the members might be mutually careful one for another,” verse 23. See here a beautiful picture of the love we owe to one another! We are all one body in
Christ, and members one of another; we have all different stations, offices and uses, in this body; we have all mutually need of one another, and are all necessary for the whole; for, if all were masters, who would serve them? if all were servants, who would employ them? if all were rich, who would work for them? if all were poor, who would supply them? Now, “It is God who hath set the members, every one of them, in the body, as it hath pleased him,” verse 18. Consequently every one ought to be content and satisfied with the station which God in his providence has assigned to him, and diligent in fulfilling the duties belonging to it; for, “As the Lord hath distributed to every one, as God hath called every one, so let him walk...... let every one abide in the same calling in which he was called,” 1 Cor. vii. 17, 20. We ought never to envy our fellow members any advantage they may possess above us, nor be sorry that God has given them what he hath denied to us; but rather rejoice in their advantages, strive to make good use of our own talent, and praise God as the author of all. Much less ought we to despise or ridicule our fellow members who are in any respect below us, but rather study all we can to hide their infirmities, and show them the more attention and regard on that account, in order to encourage them, and make their situation the easier for them. And though their imperfections and defects, whether of body or mind, whether natural or moral, should be naturally disagreeable to us, yet we must remember, that it is by the will or permission of God they are what they are; that their weakness and imperfections are their misfortunes, which demand our compassion and pity, as being our fellow members, and members of that body, of which Jesus Christ is the head: that we are all weak and infirm, full of defects and imperfections; and on that account that we also give to others many occasions of bearing with us; that therefore it is our duty to “bear one another’s burdens, and so we shall fulfil the law of Christ,” Gal. vi. 2. “Put ye on therefore,” says St. Paul, “as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another,” Col. iii. 12. “Do not esteem him (your imperfect brother) as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother,” 2 Thess. iii. 15. If a man be overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual, instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted,” Gal. vi. 1.

(2.) Another particular exercise of the love between members of the same body, is laid down by St. Paul, and proposed
for our example in these words: "If one member suffers any
thing, all the members suffer with it; and if one member glory,
all the members rejoice with it. Now you are members of
Christ, and members of member," 1 Cor. xii. 27, that is, of one
another. Thus, if the stomach be out of order, the head suffers
along with it; if the head be distressed, the stomach is not
well. What members are at a greater distance in the body
than the eyes from the foot? and yet if the foot be pricked
with a thorn, the eyes immediately seek to find it out; all the
body bends to let the eyes get near it, the tongue demands
where it is, the hands are employed to pull it out, and deliver
the suffering member from its torment; the pain is only in the
foot, and all the members are concerned for it, and employed
to relieve it. This is a lively picture of what our love to our
brethren ought to be. "Rejoice with them that rejoice," says
St. Paul, "weep with them that weep. Be of one mind one
towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend
to the humble," Rom. xii. 15. And such is always the effect of
true love. See it between husband and wife, parents and child-
ren, and all others, who have a real affection for one another.
To this also belongs the readiness which all the members have
to fly to the assistance of any member that may be threatened
with any evil. Thus, if the head be threatened with a blow,
the hand immediately rises up to defend it; if the body be in
any danger, the feet carry it off by running away; if the breast
be pained with a cough, the hands instantly fly to the sides to
support them. Another beautiful example to show how we
ought to behave to our brethren.

Q. 13. How are we to love our neighbour as Christ loved us?
A. This rule is given us by Jesus Christ himself, and we
are expressly enjoined to observe it, as his special command:
"This is my command," says he, "that you love one another,
as I have loved you." "A new command I give you, that you
love one another as I have loved you." And this example,
besides containing all the perfections of the two former rules
in the most eminent degree, includes also three other excel-
lencies, which carries our love to our neighbour to its greatest
perfection. For,

(1.) Christ loved us with a gratuitous love, without any pre-
ceeding merit or deserts on our part; nay, when by our sins
we deserved the utmost of his hatred, he also loved us without
the least expectation of any benefit from us, in return to his
love for us; nay, though he well knew how ungrateful we
would be for all he had done for us. See this considered at
large, Chap. III., through the whole, and especially §§ 3 and 4. Hence if we would love our neighbour as Christ loved us, we must not consider his deserts, whether he be agreeable or disagreeable to our nature, whether friend or enemy; whether we may expect he will be grateful or ungrateful to us, for what we do for him, whether it may otherwise turn out to our advantage or disadvantage, or the like. None of these favourable circumstances ought to be the motives of our loving him; nor ought those that are unfavourable, to be a hindrance to it. The reason is, because whatever our neighbour be with regard to any of these things, still he is the child of God, created to his image, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and whom God commands us to love, &c. And as the love of our neighbour, which Christ requires, ought to be founded only on these motives, consequently the more purely we adhere to these motives, the more God-like our, love will be; the less any worldly views engage us to it, and the less our own self-love finds any interest or pleasure in it, the more delightful will it be to God, because the more resembling Jesus Christ, and of course the more profitable will it be to our own souls. “If you love them that love you, what reward shall you have?” says Christ himself, “do not even the publicans the same?” And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not sinners also the same?” Matt. v. 46. But to be agreeable to God, he says, “Love your enemies, do good and lend, hoping for nothing thereby; and your reward shall be great, and you shall be the sons of the Highest; for he is kind to the unthankful and the evil,” Luke vi. 35. “And when thou makest a dinner or supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsman, nor thy neighbours, who are rich, lest they also invite thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind; and thou shalt be blessed: because they have not wherewith to make thee recompense; for recompense shall be made thee at the resurrection of the just,” Luke xix. 12. And the good Tobias gave this among other holy advices to his son. “Eat thy bread with the hungry and the needy, and with thy garments cover the naked,” Tob. iv. 17.

(2.) The love that Christ bears to us is a comprehensive love. There are many whose charity is so very limited and confined, as not to extend to any beyond those of their own family or kindred, or of their own party or country; and they think it a sufficient excuse for their not helping others, to say, “He is none of my concerns; I have
nothing to do with him; let his own people take care of him, and the like. This is far from the example that Christ gives us. He came to this world and laid down his life on the cross, not for one people, or one country, or one nation only, but for all mankind; he died for all and "wills that all should come to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved. And he makes his sun to rise upon the good and upon the bad; and rains upon the just and the unjust;" to teach us that our love for our neighbour ought to embrace all mankind, and not to be confined to any one set of men more than another. And indeed to act otherwise, is nothing but a mere natural love, founded upon natural motives only, and it is little else than the effect of passion or inclination. True charity is founded in God, and as all mankind have such relation to God as obliges us to love them for God's sake, therefore it embraces all without exception, and most sincerely wishes every human creature well, being ready on all occasions to help and serve them, according to their wants and its own abilities. Hence when our neighbour is in any need of help from us which we can give him, we are not to consider his family, his country, or his religion; but we are to consider him as our neighbour, whom God commands us to love; and as a brother of Jesus Christ in distress, whom he commands us to relieve. This our Saviour beautifully displays to us in the parable of the good Samaritan, who, though the Jew that fell among the thieves was a stranger to him, of a different nation and of a different religion, yea, though the Jews were always at enmity with the Samaritans, and though the poor man had been neglected by the priest and Levite of his own people, yet no sooner saw his distress, than he immediately went to him with a heart full of compassion, and performed all the duties of the most tender affection. And after telling this, our Saviour concludes thus, "Go and do thou in like manner," Luke x. 37. It is true indeed, when two persons are in equal need, and we cannot help them both, the right order of charity requires that those be preferred, towards whom we have the greatest ties, and especially where any motives of justice enter. Thus, parents, to whom we owe so much, are to be helped before strangers; friends and benefactors before indifferent persons; Christians and members of the church before aliens. And this is both agreeable to reason, because of the greater ties we have with those, above the common motives of charity which are found in all; and it is expressly commanded by Almighty God, in these words of the apostle, "In doing good let us not fail: for in due time
we shall reap, not fainting. Therefore whilst we have time, let us do good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith,” Gal. vi. 9. It is also confirmed by the example of God himself; for though he loves all men, and wills that all should be saved, and for that purpose gives to all the necessary helps to put them in the way of salvation; and though he bestows the common effects of his love upon all, by making his sun to rise on the just and on the unjust; yet he bestows his special favours more liberally and in more abundance upon those who, by making a good use of those he gives, are more nearly united to him by the ties of his grace, and by a more perfect resemblance of his blessed Son Jesus. But with regard to our good-will, and our general readiness to help all in distress, where we can, none of the human race ought to be excepted, according to the rules of Christian charity.

(3.) The love of Christ to us is strong and perseverant. This is the constant character of true charity, for “Love is strong as death: burning love is hard as hell; the lamps thereof are lamps of fire and flames. Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it,” Cant. viii. 6. And hence the apostle declares, that “Charity never falleth away,” 1 Cor. xiii. 8. This is particularly remarkable in the love of Jesus Christ to us, for “having loved his own, who were in the world, he loved them even to the end,” John xiii.

1. The deluge of injuries mankind committed against him, could not stop the amazing effects of his love; whatever ingratitude we show him, he still continues to love us, and to bestow his favours upon us. And this is the grand rule he desires us to follow in loving our neighbours, so as even to lay down our life, if necessary for their salvation, after his example. “In this we have known the charity of God, because he hath laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren,” 1 John iii. 16. And if our lives, how much more our ease, our goods, or any worldly enjoyment. And the reason why no behaviour of our neighbour ought to diminish our love for him, is, because, as the motives on which the love of our neighbour is founded, never fail, so no behaviour of his should alter our love to him, being founded on such unalterable motives.

Q. 14. What is the general sense and tendency of the commands of the second table, which prescribes the duties we owe to our neighbour?

A. This will easily appear from what has been said, as they all tend to elucidate the exercise of the love of our neighbour.
For all the duties of this love are reduced to three general heads. (1.) To give to those above us, and to those below us, whatever love and service their station in life requires from us, like the members of the same body; and this is prescribed by the fourth command. (2.) To do our neighbour no harm, neither in his person, goods, nor reputation; but on the contrary, do to him what service we can, on each of these, according as his necessities require, and our abilities allow. And this is the subject of the four following commands. (3.) Not even in thought to desire any evil to him, but to have a real good-will for him, and to wish him well; and the duties of this class are contained in the two last commands.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FOURTH COMMAND.

Q. 1. What is the fourth command?
A. "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land, which the Lord thy God will give thee," Ex. xx. 12. Or, as it is expressed in another place, "Honour thy father and mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee, that thou mayest live a long time, and it may be well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God will give thee," Deut. v. 16.

Q. 2. What is the general scope or meaning of this command?
A. To understand this, we must know who are meant in scripture language by father and mother. These are (1.) Our natural parents, according to that of the wise man, "Hearken to thy father that beget thee; and despise not thy mother when she is old," Prov. xxiii. 22. And "He that feareth the Lord, honoureth his parents, and will serve them as his masters, who brought him into the world," Ecclus. iii. 8. Now these are called parents, by way of excellence, because to them, under God, we owe our natural life; and to preserve this life and make us happy in it, they feed and nourish us; they guide and direct us; they give us instruction, education, and advice; they correct and reprove us when we do ill, and encourage us to do good; they protect and defend us, while under their care, and provide all necessaries for us, when we cannot help ourselves.
(2.) The pastors of our souls are also called our fathers, because from them we receive the spiritual life of grace in baptism; and in order to preserve this life in us, and bring us to life eternal, by them our souls are fed with the word of God, and the holy sacraments; by them we are instructed in the fear of God, and our duty as Christians; and by their good advices, and by their prayers and holy sacrifices, we are defended from our spiritual enemies. Hence St. Paul says to the Corinthians, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you by the gospel," 1 Cor. iv. 15. And to the Galatians, "My little children, of whom I am in labour again, till Christ be formed in you," Gal. iv. 19. Hence Eliseus addressed his master and pastor Elias, by the name of father, 4 Kings ii. 12. And when the prophet Eliseus himself was upon his deathbed, Joas the king; "went down to him, and wept before him, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the guider thereof," 4 Kings xiii. 14.

(3.) Kings and princes, civil magistrates, and rulers of the people, are also called fathers, because of the authority they have over the people, and the care they take in providing for their civil happiness, defending their persons and properties, keeping up good order, and preserving peace among them. Thus the prophet, speaking of the protection which the church should receive from kings and princes, says, "And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nurses," Is. xlix. 23. (4.) Heads of families are also called fathers of their families, for the same reason; so Naaman's servants came to him and said, "Father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, surely thou wouldst have done it," 4 Kings v. 13. The same we find of teachers and instructors; the same of those who are our superiors in age. From all which it appears, that though by father and mother, our natural parents are principally understood, yet, according to the style of the scripture, these words include all lawful superiors, and therefore that the scope and design of this fourth command is to point out to us the duties we owe to all those who have any lawful authority over us; and, as the relation betwixt superiors and inferiors is mutual, to show us also the duties which all, who are in authority, owe to those under their charge. We shall explain only some of the most important; and,

§ 1. The Duties of Children to their Parents.

Q. 3. On what is founded the obligation of children to honour their parents?
THE DUTIES OF CHILDREN.

A. It is founded on duty, gratitude, and interest. And (1.) On duty, from the express command of Almighty God, besides the light of nature which strongly dictates this duty to us. Hence we find all the holy servants of God most attentive to their parents, in obedience to this command. Thus when Joseph heard his father was approaching to Egypt, "He made ready his chariot, and went up to meet his father, and seeing him he fell upon his neck, and embracing him, wept," Gen. xlvi. 29. "And he nourished his brethren and all his father's house, allowing food to every one," Gen. xlvii. 12. And when king Solomon's mother came to see him, "The king arose to meet her, and bowed to her, and sat down upon his throne: and a throne was set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand," 3 Kings ii. 19. But especially we have the example of Jesus Christ, who went down to Nazareth, and was subject to them (his parents), Luke ii. 51. In obedience to his mother's desire, he wrought the miracle at the marriage of Cana; though otherwise, "his hour was not come," John ii. 4. And with his dying words upon the cross, he recommended her to the care of his beloved disciple. (2.) On gratitude; arising from what our parents have done and suffered for us; which is so great that it is impossible for us ever to make them a return in any shape proportionable to what we owe to them for it; consequently it is our strict duty in gratitude, and even, on some occasions, in justice, to do at least all we can for them. Now to our parents, under God, we owe our very being. After bringing us to the world, they provide all necessaries for our preservation and well-being, when we cannot do the smallest thing to help ourselves; for at our birth we are more helpless and miserable than any other living creature. Food, raiment, cleanliness, education, and every other necessary in our helpless days we owe to our parents. And what have they not suffered on our account? What does not the mother suffer from sickness, pains, loathings, and other uneasinesses, during the nine months the child lies in the womb? Who can conceive her pangs and torments in labour, her pains and groanings, and danger of death itself? And after we are born, her sufferings are not at an end on our account; for many months she feeds us with the substance of her own body, watches over us by night and by day, loses her own rest to take care of us, and is in continual care and solicitude about us. Can we ever repay our parents for all this? Hence the scripture says, "Honour thy father, and forget not the groanings of thy mother: remember that thou hadst not been born, but through them; and make a return to them as they have done
to thee," Ecclus. vii. 29. "Thou shalt honour thy mother all the days of her life: for thou must be mindful what, and how great perils she suffered for thee in her womb," Tob. iv. 3. (3.) On their own interest, which arises not only from the general promise of a long and happy life annexed to the command itself, and which, being the only command of the ten, that has such a special promise joined to it, shows how much Almighty God requires it to be obeyed; but also from the many other promises of particular blessings both for our soul and body, which are found in scripture, annexed to the faithful discharge of this duty. Thus, "Children, hear the judgment of your father, and so do, that you may be saved. He that honoureth his mother, is as one that layeth up a treasure. He that honoureth his father shall have joy in his own children: and in the day of his prayer he shall be heard. He that honoureth his father shall enjoy long life," Ecclus. iii. 2, &c. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forget not the law of thy mother; that grace may be added to thy head, and a chain of gold to thy neck," Prov. i. 8. How much it is the interest of children to honour their parents, appears also from the dreadful threats against those who dishonour them: such as a short and miserable life, and an untimely death, as we see exemplified in Absalom; with many other particular threats, which we shall see by and by; and especially those following: "The Levites shall pronounce and say to all the men of Israel with a loud voice, Cursed be he that honoureth not his father and mother: And all the people shall say, Amen," Deut. xxvii. 14, 16. "Of what an evil name is he that forsaketh his father? and he is cursed of God that angereth his mother," Ecclus. iii. 1. And this curse consists in sending those evils upon them, which are the reverse of the blessings mentioned above, as the portion of those who fulfil this command. Hence parents who are unhappy in their children, would do well to reflect upon their former behaviour to their own parents, and they will perhaps find good reason not to wonder at their own mishap. Undutiful children would also do well to look forward to that store of misery they are laying up for themselves in their old age, from their own children, if they ever have any. Lastly, what should greatly interest children to be dutiful to their parents, is the happiness of inheriting their parents’ blessing and the fatal consequences of incurring their curse. Thus, *Honour thy father in work and word, and all patience, that a blessing may come upon thee from him, and his blessing may remain in the latter end. The father’s blessing establisheth
the houses of the children, but the mother's curse rooteth up
the foundation," Ecclus. iii. 9. Thus when Isaac blessed his
son Jacob, though by mistake, instead of Esau, yet after-
wards, inspired by God, he said, "I have blessed him, and he
shall be blessed," Gen. xxvii. 33. How fatal the curses of
parents are to their children, we have seen above, Chap. XI.
Q. 33.

Q. 4. Wherein does this honour consist which children are
commanded to show to their parents?

A. This honour consists in three things; love, respect, and
obedience; which point out three classes of duties that children
owe to their parents.

Q. 5. What kind of love do children owe to their
parents?

A. It must have all the properties of the love of our neigh-
bour, (for which see above, Chap. XIII. § 4, through the
whole,) in a very eminent degree. Because, besides all the
general motives for loving our parents, which are common to
all others, we have all those strong reasons above mentioned,
for loving them in particular more than others, whom these
reasons do not concern. Our parents even represent God him-
self to us, and bear his image in a very striking manner as he
is our Creator, our Preserver, our Governor, our bountiful Pro-
vider; in all which qualities they act under him as his vice-
gerents. Consequently our love for our parents must be most
cordial and sincere: we must have a real affection for them,
and from our heart wish them well. This sincerity we must
show both by words and actions, praying for them, doing them
every service we can, and studying to the utmost to make their
life happy and agreeable to them, by a dutiful, affectionate,
and respectful behaviour towards them; but especially by
giving them all necessary assistance both for soul and body,
when want, old age, or sickness, or any other distress comes
upon them; "Son," says the scripture, "support the old age
of thy father, and grieve him not in his life. And if his under-
standing fail, have patience with him, and despise him not
when thou art in thy strength; for the relieving of thy father
shall not be forgotten; for good shall be repaid thee for the sin
of thy mother; and in justice thou shalt be built up, and in the
day of affliction thou shalt be remembered, and thy sins shall
melt away as ice in the fair warm weather. Of what an
evil fame is he that forsaketh his father? and he is cursed of
God that angereth his mother," Ecclus. iii. 14.

Q. 6. Is it a grievous sin in children to do any thing
contrary to this love which they ought to have for their parents?

A. Is it a very grievous sin; as will best appear by the sentence which the word of God passes upon it, in all its different branches, of thoughts, words, or actions. Thus (1.) To hate their parents, or wish any ill to them in their hearts; for example, to wish they were dead or in sickness or the like, is a very great crime; for, if it be a grievous sin to wish any ill to any neighbour (as we have seen above, Chap. XI. Q. 30,) even though our enemy; and if the scripture says, "Thou shalt no hate thy brother in thy heart," Lev. xix. 17; how much more grievous must it be to hate, or wish ill to our parents, whom we are so much more strictly bound to love, than we are to love our neighbour in general? It is directly contrary to the first principles of charity; it is contrary to the very impulse of nature itself, and makes one a monster in nature, worse than the very brutes that perish. (2.) To show this hatred outwardly, by expressing it in words, or cursing one’s parents, is a mortal sin of the deepest dye, and we find the greatest of punishments pronounced against it, both death of the body and death of the soul. Thus, "He that curseth his father or mother, shall die the death," Ex. xxi. 17. "He that curseth his father or mother, dying let him die; he hath cursed his father and mother, let his blood be upon him," Lev. xx. 9. Hear this and tremble, you who are guilty of this crime! And as for the soul, "He that curseth his father and mother, his lamp shall be put out in the midst of darkness," Prov. xx. 20; that is, his life shall be cut off in the midst of his sins. (3.) If they proceed to actions, and strike their parents, this is still worse; it is an actual hurt to the parents, and a grievous insult upon their authority; and therefore, "He that striketh his father or mother, shall be put to death," Ex. xxi. 15. (4.) Though they abstain from these more manifest signs and effects of hatred to their parents, yet if they speak to them in a harsh, hasty, passionate manner, give them ill language and short answers, contradicting them, and vexing them with such undutiful behaviour; all this is also a great sin against the love they owe them; a direct transgression of the command given, as above in the preceding question, and of it the scripture says, "He is cursed of God that angereth his mother," Ecclus. iii. 18. And "He that afflicteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is infamous and unhappy," Prov. xix. 26. (5.) To neglect to assist one’s parents in their necessities, is a sin which one could scarce believe would enter into the breast of
man, did not experience show the contrary. It is certainly a very great crime both against justice, and charity, and gratitude, considering what we owe to our parents, which we can never repay. Hence the scripture says, "Of what evil fame is he that forsaketh his father?" Ecclus. iii. 18. And if, as the word of God assures us, "He that stealeth anything from his father or from his mother, and saith, This is no sin, is the partner of a murderer," Prov. xxviii. 24, even though the loss can be borne by them; what must he be, who, when his parents are in want and misery, refuses to give them the necessary assistance, to which they have so strong a title both in justice and gratitude?

Q. 7. In what manner are children to respect the parents?

A. (1.) They must have inwardly in their hearts a great esteem and reverential fear of their parents, and by no means despise or contemn them, whatever weaknesses or infirmities they may observe in them; these claim sympathy and compassion from children, but never can authorize any contempt. "Let every one fear his father, and his mother...I am the Lord your God," Lev. xix. 8. "Son, support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life. If his understanding fail, have patience with him, and despise him not when thou art in thy strength," Ecclus. iii. 14. "Hearken to the father that begot thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old," Prov. xxiii. 22. "And the Levites shall pronounce and say to all the men of Israel...Cursed be he that honoureth not his father and his mother: and all the people shall say, Amen," Deut. xxvii. 14, 16. (2.) They must honour their parents in their words and in all their outward behaviour, paying them all deference on every occasion, speaking to them with respect, showing a regard to what they say, and yielding to their opinions. See examples of this above, Q. 3, No. 1. Hence to call one's parents bad names, to reproach them, to upbraid them for their defects, to mock them, or deride them, is a very grievous sin; of which the scripture says, "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth the labour of his mother in bearing of him, let the ravens of the brooks pick it out, and the young eagles eat it," Prov. xxx. 17: where by the ravens and eagles are justly understood the infernal spirits; as our Saviour also represents by the birds of the air, those infernal spirits who take the word out of the heart of those who receive it, Matt. xiii. 4, 19. And as for reproachful words, if "He that saith to his brother, Thou fool, shall," as Christ assures us, "be in danger of hell fire," Matt. v. 22; what has he to expect
who speaks so to his parents? Cham, the son of Noah, for laughing at his father, brought a most dreadful curse upon a great part of his posterity, Gen. ix. 25. (3.) Above all the rest, they must never expose the weakness or defects of their parents to others; never speak of them, nor complain of them so as to expose them to contempt; but rather do all they can to hide and cover them from the eyes of the world. They must always remember that whatever faults they have, still they are their parents, and that the respect and honour which they owe them, obliges them to defend them, and preserve them from contempt. "Glory not in the dishonour of thy father; for his shame is no glory to thee. For the glory of a man is from the honour of his father; and a father without honour is the disgrace of the son," Ecclus. iii. 12. (4.) While under their parents' jurisdiction, they ought to consult with them in all their undertakings, and do nothing of any moment without their advice and concurrence. And this is particularly to be observed, when children are thinking about settling in the world, and entering into the married state. On which see Sincere Christian, Chap. XXVII. § 2.

Q. 8. In what manner are children obliged to obey their parents?

A. This is a branch of their duty which God Almighty most strictly requires from children; "Hear, my son, the instruction of thy father, and forget not the law of thy mother; that grace may be added to thy head, and a chain of gold to thy neck," Prov. i. 8. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is just. Honour thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with a promise," Eph. vi. 1. "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord," Col. iii. 20, and Rom. i. 30, and 2 Tim. iii. 3. The apostle reckons disobedience to parents among those sins of the heathens and false teachers which render them odious to God, and bring on their reprobation. Now this duty consists in three things; (1.) In the obedience itself, by which they exactly perform what their parents command them, and avoid what they forbid. So long as children are under their parents' authority, and in their family, they are obliged to obey their parents in all things, which are not against the law of God: this the apostle above cited expressly declares: "In all things," says he, and, "in the Lord:" and this particularly takes place in all family concerns, which are entirely subject to the parents' management and authority. And as the parents have the charge of their children's souls intrusted to them by Almighty
God, and have authority over them for this purpose; of course they have a right to command the children in what regards their own behaviour, the company they keep, the books they read, the diversions they take, and the like. So that whatever orders or prohibitions parents give with regard to these things, the children are obliged in conscience to obey them. (2.) In the manner of their obedience; that it be cheerful, ready, and pleasant, without excuses, without delay, or shifting; without murmuring or stubbornness; without giving harsh words or making opposition; all which is most disagreeable to the parents, tends to anger them, and is contrary to the respect the children owe to them. (3.) In receiving reproof and correction with patience; humbly acknowledging their fault like the pro-
digal son, asking pardon, and promising amendment. "He that loveth correction loveth knowledge; but he that hateth reproof is foolish," Prov. xii. 1. "A man that is prudent and well instructed, will not murmur when he is reproved," Ecclus. x. 28. "Hast thou seen a man wise in his own conceit? There shall be more hope of a fool than of him," Prov. xxvi. 12. "Instruction is grievous to him that forsaketh the way of life; he that hateth reproof shall die," Prov. xv. 10. "The man that with a stiff neck despiseth him that reproveth him, shall suddenly be destroyed; and health shall not follow him" Prov. xxix. 1. Now if all this be true, even when corrected by any friend, out of charity; how much more when corrected by one's parent, who has full authority, and a just right to do so!

Nothing shows more clearly, how much Almighty God requires this obedience in all its parts, than what he ordained in the old law to be done to unruly children. "If," says he, "a man hath a stubborn and unruly son, who will not hear the commandments of his father and mother, and being corrected, slighteth obedience; they shall take him and bring him to the ancients of his city, and to the gate of judgment, and they shall say to them, This our son is rebellious and stubborn, he slighteth hearing our admonitions, he giveth himself to revelling, and to debauchery, and banquetting. The people of the city shall stone him, and he shall die, that you may remove the evil out of the midst of you, and all Israel hearing it may be afraid," Deut. xxi. 18. Where observe, Almighty God orders his own parents to be his accusers, because by his disobedience he had lost the very being of a child; and all the people were to stone him, as a public nuisance, enough to bring a judgment upon the whole place. On the contrary, to show how agreeable the
obedience of children is before God, even when the things commanded them by their parents are in themselves indifferent; hear what we are told by the prophet Jeremias: "And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine and cups; and I said to them, Drink ye wine? And they answered, We will not drink wine; because Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, You shall drink no wine, neither you, nor your children for ever; neither shall you build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyards, nor have any; but you shall dwell in tents all your days, that you may live many days upon the earth, in which you are strangers. Therefore we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all things that he commanded us," Jer. xxv. 5. And this obedience was so agreeable and pleasant in the eyes of God, that the prophet concludes thus to that family, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Because you have obeyed the commandments of Jonadab your father, and have kept all his precepts, and have done all that he commanded you; therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, There shall not be wanting a man of the race of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, standing before me for ever," Ibid. verse 18.

§ 2. Of the Duties of Parents to their Children.

Q. 9. How are the duties of parents to their children divided?

A. They are divided into two classes; the duties they owe to their children's bodies, and those they owe to their souls. Those of the first class need little to be said on them, as they are of less importance, and parents are commonly rather too solicitous about them; but those of the other class are of the highest importance, and require a particular attention, as it is in them that parents are generally most deficient, and very often both to their own and their children's eternal ruin.

Q. 10. Whence arises the obligation of parents to take due care of their children's souls?

A. It arises from three most important sources; from what they owe to God; from the eternal happiness of their children; and from their own eternal salvation, as also their happiness in this life.

(1.) With regard to God, parents for the most part are not sufficiently aware of, and seldom think as they ought on the great obligation they contract with Almighty God on account of the children he bestows upon them. Their children belong
ininitely more to God than to the parents, both as to their souls and bodies. They are wholly the property of God, as well as the parents are; he is sovereign Master of the one and the other, both by creation and redemption; the parents are only the instruments in the hand of God, of bringing the children into being; but it is God who gives them both soul and body; and all their powers and faculties. The children become still more the property of God by baptism, in which they are solemnly dedicated to his service for ever, and the parents contract a new obligation on this account, of taking care of them for God. If therefore Almighty God still leaves these children with their parents, it is only a deposit, in trust; committing them for a while to their care, that as they were the instruments in his hand of bringing their children into being, so they may also be the instruments of bringing them to eternal happiness, which is the great end of their being. Hence parents contract the strictest obligation towards God, of fulfilling this charge; by taking all necessary care of the trust committed to them, that they may be able one day to restore it to him again, in the state and condition which he requires from them. It is with this, as with all the other talents which God bestows upon us; he only lends them to us for a time, and we must improve them according to his will, and be able to give him a good account of them, to whom they belong, when he calls for them; and if we be deficient in so doing, we must answer to him for our neglect.

(2.) As for the eternal happiness of the children; we may justly say, that it depends in a manner wholly on the care the parents take of them. We come into this world under the greatest disadvantages as to eternity. Ignorant of the great truths that conduct to eternal bliss, violently bent upon every thing that leads us to eternal misery, surrounded with numberless enemies and dangers; if left to ourselves we must inevitably perish. Like the earth of which we are formed, if left without proper culture, we can produce nothing but weeds and tares, and noxious fruit. But as the earth, if properly cultivated, may be highly improved, and made to bring forth the most salutary productions; so if by proper care and attention, our minds be seasoned betimes with the fear of God, and instructed in the great truths of eternity; if our natural propensity to evil be corrected, and the seeds of virtue sown in our souls; there is no degree of Christian perfection and sanctity, but what, with the help of God, we are capable of acquiring. This however can only be done to any purpose in
our tender years; our souls are then like a piece of soft wax, that may be moulded into any form one pleases; and like a sheet of clean paper, fit to receive any impression, either of virtue or vice, good or evil; but according to the form we take then, so will our future conduct be; for, "A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it," Prov. xxii. 6. Hence it is manifest that the eternal salvation of children depends, in a manner, entirely upon the dispositions implanted in them when young; if these be good and virtuous, they will contribute to bring them to eternal bliss, but if evil, they will lead them to eternal misery; for, "His bones shall be filled with the vices of youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust," Job xx. 11. Now to whom does it belong to implant proper dispositions in the children's minds? Most undoubtedly to their parents before all others; and that for the following cogent reasons. (1.) For this very purpose their children are given them in trust by Almighty God, to whom they belong. (2.) For this purpose he has implanted in their hearts, that natural love they have for their children, and that affectionate desire for their happiness. (3.) For this purpose he has implanted in the minds of children, that reverential love and esteem which they have for their parents, and which gives these last vast authority over their children, and makes it easy for them to form them any way they please, if they do not lose that authority by their own ill conduct. Hence it is, that whatever they say, makes a deep impression upon their children; whatever they do, is an example which they readily follow; whatever they approve, the children esteem, and whatever they condemn, the children judge to be evil. Considering all this, and that the parents alone have their children always in their company, in their tender years, and consequently, have daily opportunities of instilling into their minds the dispositions required for improving their souls; it clearly appears how easy a matter it is for parents, and for parents alone, to form their minds in the way that Almighty God requires. Add to this, that as their children depend on them for food and raiment, and all other necessaries, this puts it in their power to enforce their instructions with suitable rewards and punishments, which never fail to have a great effect upon their tender minds. From all which it is plain, that it is entirely in the parents' power, to make of their children what they please; which is confirmed by many noble examples. We admire the heroic virtue of Susannah, of whom the scripture gives this character, that she "was a very
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beautiful woman, and one that feared God;" but it immediately adds the reason, "for her parents being just, had instructed their daughter according to the law of Moses," Dan. xiii. 2. Tobias the son was a most holy man, and, as the scripture tells us, "lived ninety-nine years in the fear of the Lord with joy," Tob. xiv. 16. And what was the source of all his sanctity? His father, "from his infancy, taught him to fear God, and to abstain from all sin," Tob. i. 10. And indeed, if children heard nothing from their parents, but what was good and virtuous, and saw nothing in their conduct but examples of piety; and if to such good instructions and examples, parents joined their fervent prayers to God for their children, what effects of virtue and sanctity might not be expected in the children? How great an obligation does all this lay on parents, faithfully to do their part, when the salvation of their children so much depends on their doing so? especially if it be added, (4.) that without their care, all that any other can do, whether masters or pastors, will, generally speaking, serve to little or no purpose.

(3.) The happiness of parents themselves, both for time and eternity, no less than that of their children, depends in a very great degree upon the manner they discharge this duty. For (1.) As to their eternal happiness: God has committed their children in trust to their care; they are therefore accountable to God for their souls. If therefore they be wanting to their charge; if through their fault or neglect, the children's souls be lost, they must answer to God for that loss. "His blood will I require at your hand," said Almighty God to the pastors of his people, Ezech. iii. 18, if any one of them be lost through your fault. How much more will he do so from parents, whose ties to their children are in many respects so vastly stronger than those of pastors to their people? Our blessed Saviour pronounces a dreadful woe upon him that shall scandalize little children by causing them to sin; what will be the woe of parents, if they be the cause of the loss of their children's souls? Reflect on this, Christian parents! At the last day, it will not be asked you, if you left your children rich, if you gave them fine clothes, if you taught them the art of making money, or the like; but the great question will be, what has become of their souls? What answer will you make to this? The heinousness of the sin, in neglecting this, is so great, that, it is equalled in scripture to that of denying our faith itself. "If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," 1 Tim.
v. 8. And if Christ will deny those who deny him, what will he do to those who are worse than infidels? The man who received the one talent was condemned, because he had not made a good use of it: what would have been his condemnation, had he lost or destroyed it? what, if he had given it to his master's enemies? what then will be the fate of parents, when instead of improving the talent committed to their charge, a talent not of gold or silver, but immortal souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus, they actually ruin them, and give them over to the devil? (2.) As for their happiness in this life, the scripture says, "The child that is left to his own will, bringeth his mother to shame," Prov. xxix. 15. And "A child left to himself will become headstrong. Give thy son his way, and he will make thee afraid; play with him, and he shall make thee sorrowful...... give him not liberty in his youth, and wink not at his devices. Bow down his neck while he is young, and beat his sides while he is a child, lest he grow stubborn and regard thee not, and so be a sorrow of heart to thee," Ecclus. xxx. 8. How often do we see these divine oracles verified in the world? Children neglected get into habits of vice, become obstinate and undutiful, and occasion many a sore heart to their poor parents. Nay, what is more common than that even those, for whom the parents have the greatest affection, and to whom on that account they are most indulgent, become afterwards the greatest cause of their misery? What torment must it be to parents, if they live and see their children running on to their eternal perdition, while their own conscience racks them for being themselves the guilty cause of it? If indeed they have been diligent in performing their duty, this will be a comfort to them; but what must be the torture of their souls, if their conscience assure them that they themselves are the unhappy cause which now hurries on their children to hell? How often does it happen, that children of this kind fall into snares and miseries of different kinds, and involve their parents in their disgraces? God, in his justice, thus punishing the neglect of parents, even in this life, by means of their children themselves? David, through too great indulgence to his eldest son, had not heart to punish him for violating his own sister; but what a deluge of misery did this bring upon David? Eli for the same reason did not correct his impious sons, and it proved the utter ruin of his whole family?

Q. 11. What is the principal caution that parents should attend to, for properly discharging their duty towards their children?
A. The most important thing that parents have to attend to in this, is, to regulate their love and affection towards their children. If this be well done, all the rest will be easy; but if this be neglected, all will go to ruin, for without this, it will be next to impossible for parents to perform any part of what they owe to their children in a Christian manner. This then is the root of all the rest, and requires to be particularly explained. What we have said above, Chap. XIII. Q. 8, of the love of ourselves, is particularly to be observed here. There are two different kinds of love which parents may have for their children; a natural love, by which they desire to make their children happy in this life, to see them living at their ease, having nothing to suffer, and enjoying the goods of this world in abundance; without any further concern, or at least any serious thought, on what is to come upon them hereafter; the other is a supernatural love, or the love of charity, by which they wish indeed to see their children happy in this life, but much more in the life to come; and their principal aim is to make them good and virtuous, that so they may save their souls. Now experience shows that all parents have implanted in their hearts that natural love for their children; for they naturally wish them all manner of worldly happiness, and endeavour to procure it for them; they are happy when they see their children pleased, and it grieves them when they see them in affliction and sorrow. This love is implanted in the hearts of parents by the great Author of nature, for the very best of purposes; and if kept in proper regulation, and in due sub-ordination to the supernatural love of charity, which as Christians they ought to have for them, is a source of great good to the children; but if left to itself, like all our natural affections, it easily degenerates into passion, and proves the ruin both of children and parents. To regulate this natural affection, parents must call in to their assistance the love of charity, which will teach them that their principal view in loving their children should be to save their souls; that this must be preferred to every thing else; and that though it should cost them ever so much pain and sorrow, all must be endured and borne with, rather than hurt their souls. If this be laid down as the invariable rule to direct the love parents have for their children, all will be well; but if this be excluded, numberless evils will follow; for if they are guided by the impulse of natural affection only, this will easily degenerate either to a passionate fondness for their children, or into an unnatural harshness towards them from which the worst of consequences must flow.
Q. 12. How shall parents know if they have too great a fondness for their children?

A. There is nothing more common than for parents, and especially mothers, to fall into this extreme, of a passionate fondness for their children: but as in this they are only guided by passion, and not at all by reason, and much less by grace, like all other passions, it so blinds them, that it is almost impossible to make them sensible of it; and while every other person, that is but half-an-hour in their company, sees they are ruining their children by their fondness and too great indulgence, they themselves are persuaded they are doing well, and think they have good reason for all they do. It is therefore necessary to point out the signs by which they may discover their fatal mistake, and by which all parents would do well to examine themselves impartially, that they may not deceive themselves in a point, on which their own and their children's good so much depends. Wherefore (1.) This unhappy passion, like all other inordinate affections towards any person, makes parents blind to their children's faults; they can see nothing amiss in them, but all is well done that they do. When parents have sincerely at heart their children's salvation, as charity is a clear-sighted virtue, they observe everything in them that has the least tendency to hurt their souls, and immediately take notice of it. But when they are actuated only by a passionate natural fondness for their children, this makes them see, mind, or care for nothing in them but what concerns their present satisfaction. (2.) In consequence of this, they are always displeased with those who have the charity to tell them of their children's faults, they refuse to believe them, and perhaps will even give them ill returns for their charity. As their passion will not allow them to think their children capable of any fault themselves, they are highly displeased that any other person should think so of them; and they would wish everyone to have the same high opinion of them which they have themselves. This shows a great excess of blindness, and of the unhappy love which occasions it; far different indeed from those who have a sincere love of charity for their children; for such think themselves obliged to anyone that informs them of any fault their children may commit, when out of their own sight; they look on them as their real friends, and esteem them for it; because it puts it more in their power by correcting it, to secure the main thing they had in view, their children's salvation. (3.) Parents, who have this passionate fondness for children, cannot bear to hear them cry, or to see
them weep, and therefore they never have resolution enough to give them proper correction, even when they do things glaringly evil. This is a great sign of the excess of their passion, and shows that rather than put their children to a little pain here by a proper correction, they are willing to expose them to the pains of hell hereafter. Not so with those Christian parents, who prefer their children’s salvation to everything else; for they, well knowing that the vices of their children, if not remedied, will ruin their souls, never mind the putting them to smart and pain by necessary chastisement, which they know will contribute to make them eternally happy. (4.) From the same natural fondness it happens, that such parents can never refuse their children anything they ask, lest forsooth they should cry and be displeased, which they cannot bear to see; and therefore they must be refused nothing, but must have their own will, and everything must be their way; which is the most ruinous thing that can be done to a poor child. Thus those parents, who love their children’s souls, well knowing, are careful to teach them to break their own will, by yielding to it only when they see proper, and their great study is to keep their children dependent upon their pleasure. (5.) By such fatal indulgence the children of those fond parents are not at all under their parents’ command, but the parents are commanded by them; which is a most palpable sign of the excess to which their passion has reached. (6.) When the parents allow their children to be disorderly and rude in their presence, and overlook in their own children what they would highly condemn in their neighbour’s, this also shows clearly how deeply they are infected with that poisonous fondness for them.

Q. 13. What are the consequences of such passionate fondness in parents to their children?

A. The consequences of this are most pernicious, for (1.) The children being thus accustomed to their own way, contract such a habit of obstinacy and wilfulness, that there is no contradicting them in anything; they become stubborn and imperious, are never in good humour but when they get their will, nor is there any peace in the family if they be thwarted; they must command, forsooth, and everyone else must obey and humour them, otherwise there is nothing but passion, fretting and discontent. (2.) It puts a fatal impediment to the education of the children. Such parents are incapable of giving their children proper instructions themselves. To instruct young children is a task that costs no small pains; it is commonly
necessary to use some force to keep them to their learning; especially at the beginning: and such parents are no ways calculated to use the necessary force with them. But if the children be put to school to learn with others, being so much accustomed to their own will at home, they know not what it is to obey their masters, and therefore will learn just as much as they please, which is commonly nothing at all. The masters dare not correct them, or if they do, the children run home and complain to their foolishly fond parents of bad usage. This puts them in a passion, breeds ill-will against the master, and the children are sent no more to school, but are allowed to grow up at home in ignorance and idleness, as well as stubbornness.  (3.) As nature, if not kept under, will soon break out into vicious practices, these unhappy children, being thus accustomed to be their own masters, as they advance in years become a prey to their passions, and are in the utmost danger of being hurried on by them to crimes. They daily become more and more self-conceited, impatient of all reproof, advice, or admonition, and, generally speaking, carry their vices with them to the grave.

Q. 14. What must be done to prevent all these evils.

A. The cause of all these evils being the inordinate love and passionate fondness which parents have for their children, the only way to prevent them, is for the parent to take away this cause, and study to regulate their affection for their children by what the supernatural love of charity dictates; which teaches them above all things to keep their children under their own command; and whatever it may cost them in the meantime to make them perfectly obedient, and accustom them to have no other will but the will of their parents; for this will prove a source of all good to their children; whereas their being allowed to become slaves to their own will is the source of all their misery. Indeed there is perhaps no part of the duties of parents of such absolute necessity, of such general importance, as this is, of keeping up their own authority, and teaching their children obedience. It is the order of nature, it is the order of reason, it is the command of God, that children should be all obedience to their parents; but it is the duty of parents to teach them to be so, and this they will never accomplish, unless they accustom their children to it betimes. The corruption and pride of our own heart above all things value liberty, and make us love to be our own masters; and this disposition shows itself almost as soon as we are capable of knowing one thing from another. If it be indulged, it will always become stronger
and stronger, till at last it becomes unconquerable. Leave a young horse in the hills under no command till he become old, and what will you then make of him? Our case is the same. Therefore there is nothing in which the duties of parents is more concerned than in this point. Their interest also strongly concurs; for it is not to be doubted that the most part of those children, who afterwards prove a torment to their parents and of whom the parents, with so much reason, complain for being ill-natured, disobedient, and stubborn, are so for no other reason, but because the parents gave them too much of their will at first, and did not keep them under command from their infancy. It is a common observation, that custom becomes a second nature: but it may with equal reason be averred, that the most part of our natures are but first customs. What we first get a habit of, sticks close to us like our nature itself; if good, it will beget a good nature; if bad, it will produce the contrary. It is therefore of the utmost consequence, that parents accustom their children from their tenderest years, to be obedient and pliable to their will; as this will be the most effectual means to give them a good nature, which will remain all their life afterwards. Hence the word of God says, "Hast thou children? Instruct them, and bow down their neck from their childhood," Ecclus. vii. 25. "A horse not broken, becometh stubborn; and a child left to himself will become headstrong. Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid; play with him, and he shall make thee sorrowful. Laugh not at him, lest thou have sorrow and thy teeth be set on edge. Give him not liberty in his youth, and wink not at his devices. Bow down his neck while he is young, and beat his sides while he is a child, lest he grow stubborn, and regard thee not, and so be a sorrow of heart to thee," Ecclus. xxx. 8.

Q. 15. What rules should parents observe, in order to teach their children obedience?

A. The following rules are to be observed for this purpose. (1.) When they order their children to do or forbear any thing, they must be sure to cause their orders to be obeyed. Let it be ever so much against the child's will, let it cry and weep as much as it pleases, no matter; this will do it no harm, and it will soon dry up its tears, if it see they are not regarded. If parents be constant in this point, and the child find them resolute in causing their orders to be obeyed, it will soon become tractable as a lamb: but if parents once yield to the child's crying, and come into its will, this will only increase its
obstinacy on other occasions, will teach it that the parents may be overcome, and consequently will make the bringing it to a proper obedience the more difficult. There is one important caution to be remarked here; namely, that both the parents must mutually support one another in this point. It often happens, that when one parent orders any thing, which the child is not willing to do, it runs to the other parent, who supports it and takes its part; this is ruining the whole, and encouraging the child in its obstinacy. Parents must be very cautious in this, if they wish the child's real good, and always support what either does, encouraging the child to obedience, and showing that it can never be agreeable to the one if it do not cheerfully obey the other. (2.) When the child asks any thing, and is impatient for it, this is the time it ought by no means to get it, but be obliged to moderate its ardour, and wait till the parent please. If it cry and weep, tell it plainly that, so long as it does so, it shall never get it; and that the only way to get it, is to compose itself, and to wait with patience till you think proper. This is of great importance; for besides teaching them obedience, it also teaches children not to be too much attached to any thing they desire, and to deny their own will in things they have a liking to which lays the foundation of acquiring great virtue. (3.) When the parents give the child any thing it desires, or that is agreeable to it, they must never give it as in compliance to its will, but as a favour from themselves; and therefore should oblige the child to receive it as a favour, and always to thank them for it. This has a great effect in bringing the child by degrees to have an entire dependence on the parents' will, so as not to have any will of its own, but in submission to its parents; and if once it come this length, parents may make of it what they please. (4.) Above all things parents should never laugh nor seem pleased, when the child does or says any thing improper or contrary to their orders, though it be ever so witty, as may sometimes be the case; but let its obedience alone be the thing that meets with their approbation; for it is in this chiefly, that what the scripture says takes place, "Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid; play with him and he shall make thee sorrowful. Laugh not with him lest thou have sorrow, and at last thy teeth be set on edge," Ecclus. xxx. 9. (5.) The parents would do well to accustom children to frequent trials of obedience in little things, and to encourage them to it, by some little rewards, with proper correction if they disobey.
Q. 16. May not parents, by obeying these rules, show too much harshness to their children?

A. A harsh behaviour in parents towards their children is most blameable, and very pernicious; but it is very different from the above rules. When parents are never content with their children, but always scolding them and chiding them; and very often upon the smallest provocation cursing and beating them; never giving them any encouragement, but on all occasions using them with austerity and harshness, and keeping them always in terror; such a behaviour may have the most fatal consequences. Indeed it is the smallest number that err on this side; but those who do, would do well to consider—(1.) That such harshness in parents is altogether unnatural. God has implanted in all creatures a love and tenderness towards their young; and he commands his rational creatures not to extirpate this affection from their hearts, but to moderate and give it a proper direction. To act therefore in direct opposition to this is to act against nature itself, and makes one worse than tigers or lions. (2.) It greatly diminishes that affection and regard, which children have by nature implanted in them towards their parents; for however strong this may be in the children, if they meet with nothing from their parents, but signs of hatred and aversion, this will necessarily cool their love towards them, which may end in the misery of both parents and children. (3.) It has the worst of effects upon the children themselves; it breaks their spirit, discourages them from all good, makes their parents' company a torment to them, renders all advice useless to them, and makes them take the first opportunity they can get to leave their parents, and expose themselves in the wide world to misery and perdition; and who will have to answer for such consequences before God? Hence, therefore, parents ought always to show a love and tenderness for their children, never to behave in a passion towards them; but even in teaching them the necessary obedience by the above rules, to do it with all mildness, but at the same time with all firmness, convincing their children, by their whole carriage, that it is by no means out of harshness or aversion to them, but only their real good, which they have in view. Hence we find, that the word of God makes a great difference betwixt necessary discipline, and harshness of behaviour, and while it condemns the latter, commands the former: "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged," Col. iii. 21. "And you, fathers, provoke not your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline
and correction of the Lord,” Eph. vi. 4. And our Saviour in the parable of the prodigal son, shows parents what ought to be their love and affection for their children.

Q. 17. What are the other duties of parents to their children?

A. To instruct them; to give them good example; to watch over them; to correct them; and to pray for them.

Q. 18. How great is the obligation of instructing their children?

A. This is manifest from what we have seen above, Q. 10, No. 2, where it appears also, that the things in which they ought principally to instruct them, are, the principles of religion, and the law of God, and that these instructions be given them from their earliest years according as their capacities open, and enable them to receive them. Besides the reasons there given, this duty is strictly commanded in scripture. Thus, “Hast thou children? Instruct them,” Ecclus. vii. 25. “He that instructeth his son, shall be praised in him, and shall glory in him, in the midst of them of his household. He that teacheth his son maketh his enemy jealous, and in the midst of his friends, he shall glory in him,” Ecclus. xxx. 2. “Instruct thy son, and he shall refresh thee, and shall give delight to thy soul,” Prov. xxix. 17. God himself informs us, in what these instructions should consist; thus, “Forget not the words that thy eyes have seen, and let them not go out of thy heart all the days of thy life. Thou shalt teach them to thy sons, and to thy grandsons,” Deut. iv. 9. “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt tell them to thy children,” Deut. vi. 6. “Lay up these my words in your hearts and minds...teach your children, that they meditate on them,” Deut. xi. 18. “Set your hearts on all the words which I testify to you this day; which you shall command your children to observe and to do, and to fulfil all that is written in this law; for they are not commanded you in vain, but that every one should live in them,” Deut. xxxii. 46. And of Abraham God himself says, “He shall become a great and mighty nation, and in him all nations of the earth shall be blessed; for I know that he will command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and do judgment and justice,” Gen. xviii. 18.

Q. 19. In what manner ought parents to instruct their children?

A. The word of God points it out in a very striking manner, from some examples there related, of what holy people did,
who were attentive in performing this duty; thus, (1.) "Tobias taught his son from his infancy, to fear God, and abstain from all his sin," Tob. i. 10. This then must be the foundation; this the first thing to be instilled into their tender minds, as soon as they are capable of knowing any thing, from their infancy. To do this, parents should teach them betimes to pronounce the sacred names of God, and Jesus Christ, with great reverence; never speaking of God or Jesus Christ in their presence, without putting on an air of great respect, showing by such behaviour, the great veneration due to our sovereign Lord. Children in their earliest years are not capable of understanding who God is; but when they see their parents behave with so great awe when speaking of him, this naturally impresses in their minds a high and reverential idea of him; for the same reason, when they speak of any thing virtuous and good in presence of their children, they should always speak of it with great esteem and approbation; and on the contrary, when speaking of any thing sinful, show every sign of abhorrence and detestation of it, as being the greatest of evils, taking care to mention the torments of hell as the place prepared for sinners. Such behaviour makes a deep impression on the tender minds of children; they naturally conceive sin must be something very dreadful, when they see and hear their parents speak of it in such a manner; and this impression sinks into their minds, and if properly cultivated afterwards, produces the best of effects. (2.) When Tobias's son was become older, the father gave him this instruction, "All the days of thy life have God in thy mind, and take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord thy God," Tob. iv. 6. Which shows parents, that when their children are a little older and capable, they should instruct them in the knowledge of God that made them of his infinite power, of our obligation to serve him, and especially of his being present every where, so that they can hide nothing from him; and from these considerations, cultivate the good impressions formerly given them of a horror for sin, and a fear of offending God. (3.) Tobias at the same time taught his son, how much we depend on God for everything; that he is the author of all good, that nothing can prosper without his blessing, and from thence showed him the obligation we lie under of thanking and praising him, and praying to him; saying, "Bless God at all times; and desire of him to direct thy ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in him," verse 20; which shows how careful parents should be to instruct their children betimes in the duty of prayer, to teach them to say their prayers, and see they
perform that duty punctually. (4.) He also instilled into his son's mind, a high idea of the virtue of charity and mercy towards those in distress, as the most assured means to make God hear his prayers, and bring many great blessings to the soul; "Give alms," says he, "out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person; for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee; for thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity. For alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer a soul to go into darkness. Alms shall be a great confidence before the Most High, to all them that give it," verses 7, 10. (5.) Of Susannah also we read, that she was very beautiful, yet she was "one that feared God;" and the reason is immediately added, "for her parents being just, had instructed her according to the law of Moses," Dan. xiii. 2. Which shows that as children advance in years, the parents should be careful to continue their instructions till they teach them their whole duty, and what the law of Jesus Christ requires of them. Wherefore to discharge this important duty properly, parents must not be wanting on their own part, and must take care to cause their children to attend the public instructions on the Christian doctrine given by their pastors, assisting them at home to learn their catechism, and causing them frequently, but especially on Sundays and holidays, to read good books of instruction, and such portions of the holy scriptures as are best adapted to their tender years.

Q. 20. How great is the obligation of parents to give good example to their children?
A. This is of so great importance, that without it their best instructions will signify little or nothing. Our nature is so formed, as experience teaches us, that all men are much more ready to follow the example of what they see in others, than the advices and instructions they receive from them. Nothing is more ordinary than that people who live in the same place have the same customs, the same dispositions, the same manners; and why so? Because they learn from one another's example, which insensibly, but most powerfully, engages their imitation. It is further observed by experience, that we are much more ready to follow the example of what is bad than of what is good, because the one favours our corrupt inclinations and passions, and the other is contrary to them. Now if this be the case with all men, it is vastly more so with children; they are not capable of judging by themselves of what is right and what is wrong, and therefore they principally act by imi-
tation; and even when they are corrected for imitating any ill thing, which they see or hear in others, they do not always immediately leave off; the force of example going farther to make them follow it, than even the correction does to make them avoid it. But if the persons whom they imitate be their parents, this gives a great sanction to what they do after their example; for nature has implanted in them such a respect for their parents, and such an esteem and veneration towards them, that whatever they hear or see in them, they think sacred and right, and what they may justly imitate. Hence if the parents join good example to their instructions, and practise themselves what they teach their children, this cannot fail to produce the best of effects in them. But if they act otherwise, and their actions give the lie to their words, what is to be expected? What shall the children do? They hear their parents tell them one thing, and they see them do the quite contrary: this must necessarily destroy all the force of their instructions and advice; and as the example they see in their parents makes a deeper impression on their minds than the instructions they receive from them, especially when the example is favourable to self-love, they will very soon have wit, or malice enough to think, that if such a thing were ill, as their parents say it is, they would not do it themselves; that therefore they may do it too; and thus forgetting the instructions, they will adhere to the example, to the eternal ruin perhaps of their poor souls. Hence it is manifest, of how unspeakable importance it is, that parents join good examples to their instructions, and confirm by their own behaviour what they teach by their words. And indeed, to what purpose will it be for parents to tell their children, that they must not curse, for example, nor fly in a passion, nor speak bad words, nor omit their prayers: if on every occasion they curse themselves, break out into anger, speak bad words, and never bow their knee to God? Will their children think their advice serious, or to be minded? Christ pronounces a dreadful woe on any one who scandalises little ones, by being the occasion of leading them to sin; what must be the woe of parents, if by their bad example they scandalise their own children?

Q. 21. In what manner ought parents to discharge their duty in watching over their children?

A. Parents are to their children what shepherds are to their flocks, their guides and guardians; as therefore shepherds are obliged to watch over their flock, both to provide what is good for them, and defend them from what is evil; so parents are
obliged to watch over their children, and not only provide for them what may be necessary for the good of their souls, but also defend them from whatever may expose their souls to danger. This watching consists chiefly in two things: The first is, to take care that their children punctually perform those duties which the law of God requires from them. Although parents be diligent in giving their children good instructions, and even confirming them by good example; yet such is the natural bent of our heart to evil, that all this will be insufficient to cause the children effectually to practise according to the instructions given them. We generally find no small difficulty in everything contrary to self-love, till by practice we begin to get a habit or custom of it; for by this it becomes not only easy, but even agreeable. Wherefore to the good instructions and advice which parents give their children, they must also join a proper vigilance and attention over them, to see that they actually do what they prescribe for them; yea, to cause them to do it in their own presence, that there may be no neglect, but that by habit and proper encouragement they may contract a liking to what duty requires. This ought particularly to be observed in saying their prayers, getting their catechisms, attending the Christian doctrine, and spending the Sundays and holidays well. The second branch of this parental vigilance, is to take care that their children be not exposed to any danger of learning evil. This is of the utmost consequence, because being naturally more inclined to learn evil than good, though the parents be exact in doing their part, yet if the children be, by any other means, exposed to see or hear what is bad, this will have more effect to teach them ill, than all their parents can do, to teach them good. Wherefore (1.) Parents should be very attentive what kind of servants they employ about their children, and never allow any servant to speak any bad words in presence of their children, without a very severe reprehension. Many a poor child has been ruined by servants, who by their unchristian conduct have both taught and encouraged children to wickedness. (2.) They must also be exceedingly watchful what company their children keep, and absolutely prohibit them from such as are bad, for “evil communications corrupt good manners,” 1 Cor. xv. 33. They must take care that they read no bad or dangerous books; that they frequent no diversions where their innocence may be exposed; for by all these means many a poor soul is led on to eternal perdition. (3.) They ought also to watch over their dispositions, and observe any vicious turn that they may take,
in order to curb and rectify it at the beginning, before it be-
come too strong by being neglected.

Of this duty of parental vigilance, the scripture speaks as
follows: "Hast thou daughters? have a care of their body,"
Ecclus. vii. 26. "On a daughter that turneth not away her-
self, set strict watch; lest finding an opportunity she abuse
herself," Ecclus. xxvi. 13. The care of a good father in this
branch of his duty is thus described: "The father waketh for
the daughter when no man knoweth; and the care of her taketh
away his sleep when she is young, lest she pass away the flower
of her age; and when she is married, lest she should be hateful;
in her virginity, lest she should be corrupted, and be found
with child in her father's house; and having a husband, lest
she should misbehave herself. Keep a sure watch over a
shameless daughter, lest at any time she make thee become a
laughing-stock to thy enemies, and a by-word in the city, and a
reproach among the people, and make thee ashamed before all
the multitude," Ecclus. xlii. 9.

Q. 22. What is the obligation of parents of correcting their
children?

A. To watch over their children, and observe any fault they
commit, or any vicious disposition that grows up in them,
would be to little purpose, if the parents did not use the proper
means to correct what is amiss, and root out the growing evil.
What would it signify if a gardener should visit his garden
daily, and observe all the weeds that began to spring up in it,
if he let them grow on, and took no pains to destroy them? Now
the amending what is amiss, and rectifying bad disposi-
tions in children, can only be done by suitable correction; and
consequently, as it is of the utmost importance that children
be cured of their evil inclinations and bad dispositions, it is
equally so that parents be diligent in this branch of their duty,
which is the proper means of doing so. In correcting children,
great prudence is necessary; and the easiest means are first
to be tried; counsel and advice, showing the evil, and threat-
ening the punishment, should first be used; but if none of these
will do, recourse must be had to stripes. Our corruption is so
great, that it hurried us on to what is evil, even when we know
the evil and see the danger; and except we meet with present
afflictions to draw us back, the fear of pain to come, commonly
makes but too, too small an apprehension upon us. Even in grown-
up people, how often is this the case? Let each one ask his own
conscience. But how much more must it be so in children,
who are not capable of judging between right and wrong, and
have not a full knowledge of the evil? In them the rod must be at last the only certain means of correction, and hence we find it frequently, and in the strongest terms recommended, or rather commanded in scripture; and the great advantages that flow from it are there declared. Thus, "He that spareth the rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him, correcteth him sometimes," Prov. xiii. 24. "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, and the rod of correction shall drive it away," Prov. xxii. 15. "Withhold not correction from a child; for if thou strike him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from hell," Prov. xxiii. 13. "He that loveth his son, frequently chastiseth him, that he may rejoice in his latter end," Ecclus. xxx. 1. This latter end is understood either of the son, who, corrected by the chastisements from his father, becomes a good man, and dies a good death; or is understood of the father, who will rejoice when he comes to die, both for having done his duty to his son, and in seeing the good effects of his doing so, in his virtuous behaviour. "Bow down his neck while he is young, and beat his sides while he is a child, lest he grow stubborn, and regard thee not, and so be a sorrow of heart to thee," Ibid. verse 12. But nothing more strongly shows how strictly Almighty God requires this duty from parents, than the history of Heli the high priest. He was old and infirm, his two sons officiated for him, as priests in the temple; they were bad men, did much evil, and greatly scandalized the people; all this came to the father's ears, he calls his sons, and gives them a gentle reproof in these words, "Why do you these kind of things which I hear, very wicked things, from all the people? Do not so, my sons, for it is no good report I hear," 1 Kings ii. 23. But he went no further, nor used the authority he had both as their father, and as a high priest to correct them, and put a stop to these disorders. For this reason, God sent a prophet to him, who in the name of God upbraided Heli with his ingratitude, considering all that God had done for him and his house; declaring that his neglect in correcting his sons, was "honouring them rather than God;" and therefore denounces these most severe punishments on him and his family; "that his posterity should be rejected from the priesthood, and reduced to poverty; that there should be no old man among his posterity, and that his two wicked sons should die a violent death in one day," See 1 Kings ii. 29. All this however did not rouse up the too indulgent father, and therefore some time after, God appeared to the young prophet Samuel, and revealed to him, that all the evils
he had before told Heli, would soon come upon him. "In that
day," says he, "I will raise up against Heli, all the things I
have spoken, concerning his house. I will begin, and I will make
an end. For I have foretold to him that I will judge his house
for ever, for iniquity, because he knew that his sons did
wickedly, and did not chastise them. Therefore have I sworn
to the house of Heli, that the iniquity of his house shall not
be expiated with victims nor offerings for ever," 1 Kings iii.
12. And in fact all he had said was soon literally accom-
plished.

Q. 23. What excuses do those parents bring for themselves,
who imitate Heli, in neglecting to correct their children?

A. They generally bring one or other of these two: (1.)
"That they have not heart to do it; they cannot bear to hear
them cry, or to see them afflicted." But we have seen above,
that this is only the effect of a passionate and excessive natural
fondness for their children, which has the most pernicious con-
sequences; and it shows plainly, how little regard such parents
have for their children's souls, since they prefer their present
ease to their future happiness, and rather than afflict them for
a moment, by wholesome correction here, expose them to
eternal misery hereafter; according to that of the wise man.
"Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and deliver his soul from
hell," Prov. xxiii. 14. Besides, it is the greatest folly in
parents, to yield to this natural weakness, and shows how little
they know their own interest even in regard to present happy-
ness; because to avoid one aching heart in correcting their
children, which would bring a blessing to both, they lay
the foundation of great misery, and many an aching heart
afterwards, when, for want of necessary correction, the children
follow their own ways, and are the cause of much affliction to
their too indulgent parents. Heli, like such parents, would
not correct his sons, for fear of displeasing them; but what a
deluge of misery did this afterwards bring upon him and them,
and upon his whole posterity? All which would have been
prevented, had he corrected them as he ought to have done.
David also, when his eldest son Ammon, committed a wicked
crime, in ravishing his own sister, neglected to correct so
scandalous an action as it deserved; for the scripture says, "he
would not afflict the spirit of his son Ammon, for he loved
him, because he was his first-born," 2 Kings xiii. 21. But who
can express the many miseries and heart-aches which David
afterwards had to suffer from his parental indulgence?

(2.) But say they, "He is yet but a child, he knows no
better; we must overlook many things in the like of him; he will acquire more sense afterwards, and amend when he becomes older.” This excuse is very common, but is in reality a miserable delusion instead of an excuse; and more dangerous than the former, as it puts on an appearance of reason, whereas the former is acknowledged for the effect of passion and weakness; although indeed they commonly go hand in hand, the former being the radical cause of neglecting correction and this the apparent reason to palliate and defend it. Wherefore we must observe, that there are indeed many things in children which must be overlooked; but what are they? not things that are vicious, or show any ill disposition of the heart; but such as are only childish, and do not show any thing malicious, and which will naturally leave them, when they come to more years. “When I was a child,” says St. Paul, “I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away the things of a child,” I Cor. xiii. 11. Things of this kind must be often overlooked in children, and it would be a great folly in parents to be always chiding and correcting them for such failings; but if the fault be immoral, or show any vicious disposition of the heart, such as telling lies, speaking bad words, disobedience, or stubbornness, it is certainly the greatest cruelty in parents to overlook such things in their children, and let them pass uncorrected; and it is a pernicious mistake to imagine that dispositions of this kind will afterwards leave them when they come to more years; on the contrary, such is the unhappy corruption of the heart of man, “prone to evil from our youth up,” that if these first buds of vice be not rooted out by proper correction, they will always grow stronger and stronger by indulgence, till at last they become incorrigible. “But,” say they, “he is yet a child, and knows no better.” It is true; but this is the very thing that makes correction the more necessary. If he knew the evil and were capable of judging, admonitions and reasoning might do some good, but as that is not the case, there is nothing but the fear of the rod which is capable to amend him; and therefore because he knows no better, he should be corrected when he does amiss, that the smart of correction may teach him the thing is bad, and keep him from doing it again.

Q. 24. In what manner must correction be given, in order to be profitable?

A. There is nothing in which the prudence and good sense of a parent more appears, or is more necessary, than in correcting their children in a proper manner: and the want of
this is the reason why we see so much correction in the world, and so little benefit from it. Two advices are most necessary on this head:

(1.) That parents never correct their children while they themselves are in a passion. Nothing is more common than passionate correction; when the parents lose all patience with their children, become in a fury, curse and threaten them, and at last fly out upon them, and beat them without mercy or reason. Is this correction? It is nothing less than anger and passion, and glutting their own revenge, but by no means correction. It is not intended for the good of the children, but to satisfy the angry parents' rage for the vexation the children give them. This will never amend the children, but may probably make them worse; for, first, the blessing of God can never be expected on such correction, as by it the parents greatly offend God; secondly, such behaviour has much more the appearance of hatred than of love towards the children. They will easily see that it arises more from impatience in the parents than from any love to them, or desire of the good of their souls; and therefore, instead of producing any amendment, will naturally rather make them more obstinate, will sour their tempers, and take away their esteem and affection for their parents, as experience shows is often the case. Wherefore, when parents see it necessary to correct their children for any fault, let them (1.) Compose their own mind as far as possible, that what they do may be an act of reason and duty, not a vent of passion; at least let them take care not to show any outward signs of passion to their children. (2.) Recommend the matter earnestly to God, at least in their own heart, that he may assist them to act properly in it, and give his blessing to what they do: then (3.) Take their child aside, show him the fault he has done, and the evil of it, as far as his capacity can understand it; express their sorrow at being obliged to correct him, endeavour to convince him, that it is against their own will, and only for his good that they do it, and then give him calmly what correction they judge proper, assuring him he may expect worse if he do the like again, but their favour and countenance if he amend and do well.

(2.) They must endeavour to proportion the correction to the fault. It is not easy to give a general rule for this; much must be left to the prudence of parents according to the circumstances; the following hints may be of service. (1.) Many mere childish faults are to be overlooked entirely, as we
have seen above. (2.) In things that are rather mean and base
than malicious, it will often be sufficient to shame them out of
them. (3.) Disobedience to parents should never be suffered,
even in small matters; but cost what it will, they should
always be made to obey. Parents indeed should be prudent
and cautious in giving their orders, but once given, they must
enforce them. (4.) When they tell lies to excuse their faults,
this also should never be passed with impunity; indeed if they
ingenuously confess their fault, and promise amendment, this
may be a just reason, as a reward for telling the truth, for
moderating the correction, or even passing it entirely, if
it be the first fault, with a serious admonition not to repeat it
again; but if they be found to tell lies for excusing and
concealing their fault, this should never be passed without
correction; for if once they find lies to succeed with them, they
will soon get a habit of lying in other things too. (5.) If they
begin to pick and steal, when discovered, oblige them to restore
it with their own hands, and on their knees, to ask pardon.
(6.) Speaking bad words should be severely corrected.

Q. 25. Are parents strictly obliged to pray for their children?

A. This is the most important duty of the whole, because all
the rest will signify little or nothing without it. Let a
gardener be ever so assiduous in cultivating his garden, weeding
it, and sowing good seed in it, yet if it be not watered with the
dew of heaven, all he does will signify nothing. So also,
though parents be ever so exact in all the above duties for
cultivating the souls of their children, yet if the blessing of
God do not accompany their endeavours, all will be to no
purpose. “Paul may plant, and Apollo may water, but it is
God that gives the increase;” and “except the Lord build the
house, in vain they labour that build it.” Hence the principal
care of parents must be to draw down the blessing of God upon
their children, for obtaining of which, every Christian knows,
that frequent, fervent, and persevering prayer is the most
powerful and efficacious means. They ought therefore daily to
offer up their children to God, as being his own property, and
only intrusted to their care, and beg of him to preserve these
souls which he bought at so dear a rate; they ought to
acknowledge to him with all humility, their own incapacity of
performing these duties, and implore his assistance to enable
them, and to bless their endeavours. The Blessed Virgin, as
soon as she was allowed by the law to enter the temple of God,
took her son Jesus in her arms, and made an offering of him
there to his eternal Father, and of Job we read, that rising up early he offered up sacrifices and holocausts to God for every one of his children, lest they should have sinned and offended God. These are examples recorded for the imitation of parents.

Q. 26. What consequences flow from what is said above with regard to parents themselves?

A. That parents of all others ought to be good Christians themselves: (1.) Their charge is very great; their duties as parents are many and difficult, and their own salvation, as well as that of their children, depends upon their performing them well; consequently they stand in great need of help from God, which they cannot expect if they live not in his friendship. (2.) Parents are exposed to many dangers of ruining their souls, not only from the neglect of the above duties, but also from the many temptations they meet with in providing necessaries for their children as to this life, and from the trials and crosses they meet with in their own family; now to escape these dangers and overcome these temptations, it requires great virtue and great help from above. (3.) It is impossible for them to discharge some of the above duties without being good Christians; such as giving good example, &c. (4.) The virtue and happiness of children depend in a great degree on the piety and virtue of the parents; for “The just man that walketh in his simplicity shall leave behind him blessed children,” Prov. xx. 7. But “The children of sinners become children of abomination......the inheritance of the children of sinners shall perish, and with their posterity, shall be a perpetual reproach,” Ecclus. xli. 8.

Q. 27. What are the sins of parents which are forbidden by this command?

A. Everything contrary to the above duties, but especially these following: (1.) Teaching or encouraging their children in anything evil, either by word or by example, and particularly the instilling into their tender minds worldly maxims and sentiments of pride, vanity, love of fine dress, revenge, and the like; which is but too, too often done by many parents, who have it more at heart to make their children friends of the world than friends of God, and who by thus encouraging in them the natural propensions of self-love, lay a sure foundation for their eternal ruin. (2.) Bringing up their children in a false religion or exposing them for worldly views to the danger of losing their religion. This is a piece of cruelty which one would scarce think could exist among Christians, more to be
deplored than that of Herod in murdering the holy innocents; for he only murdered their bodies, which secured the salvation of their souls; but such anti-Christian parents, for the sake of the world, murder their children's souls; nor is there anything in the whole scripture to which it can be compared, but to the barbarity of those people who "sacrificed their sons and their daughters to devils; and they shed innocent blood: the blood of their sons and of their daughters, which they sacrificed to the idols of Chanaan," Psalm cv. 37. But of such the Lord says, "If any man... give his seed to the idol of Moloch, dying let him die, the people of the land shall stone him: and I will set my face against him: and I will cut him off from the midst of his people; because he hath given of his seed to Moloch," Lev. xx. 2. Now Moloch is one of the names by which the devil was worshipped among the people of Chanaan. (3.) Using unjust means to procure riches for them; for this never fails sooner or later to bring the curse of God upon themselves and upon their children, and to destroy their families even to the foundation, according to the prophecy of Zacharias, who saw a book flying, and the angel told him, that "this is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the earth, and every thief shall be judged as is there written. And I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall come into the house of the thief; and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and it shall consume it with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof," Zac. v. 1.

§ 3. Of the Duties of Servants.

Q. 28. Is the condition of a servant favourable to the salvation of those who are in that state of life?

A. One of the chief causes why servants are unhappy in their state is, that they are in it against their will; they count it a misfortune to be obliged to engage in it, and for this reason they are not content, but wish to get out of it as soon as they can. Indeed we need not be surprised at this, while we see that for the most part we form our judgments of things more from the suggestions of self-love than from the rules of the gospel. Sloth cannot bear to be obliged to hard labour; our love of liberty is shocked to be tied to the will of another: pride disdains to be in a state which is so much looked down upon in the world; but if servants would take religion for their guide, instead of these enemies of our salvation, they would soon be convinced that the re are few states of life so favourable
to their eternal happiness as theirs is; for (1.) They are
certain it is God himself who wills them to be in that state,
and has placed them in it as the properest state for them in
which to work out their salvation. When people have it in
their own power to choose a state of life, they seldom consult the
will of God about it; their self-love, their pride, their ambi-
tion, their desire of ease, or of riches, generally speaking, are
their only counsellors. But when one is in such circumstances
of life as to be obliged to be a servant, he may be sure it is
nothing but the providence of God that wills him to be in this
state. It is not sloth, nor pride, nor ambition, it is not a choice
of his own will, but the necessity in which Almighty God has
placed him that obliges him to it. Now this is of vast advan-
tage for their salvation; for being there by the will of God,
they will receive more abundant graces; it will be more easy
for them to save their souls, and their reward will be greater,
if they lay their heart to their duty in it, and co-operate with
the views of Providence. (2.) They have it more in their
power, than in any other state of life, to imitate Jesus Christ,
and become perfect followers of him, because their very state
and condition has a great resemblance to that which he chose
for himself while upon the earth; for he, "being in the form
of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but de-
based himself, taking the form of a servant," Phil. ii. 6; and
he declares himself, that he "came not to be served, but to
serve," Matt. xx. 28. And in fact, for poverty, humility,
obedience and labour, what servant ever had more of them
than Christ had? Hence therefore, as in their state of life they
so much resemble him, it becomes an easy matter for them to
resemble him also in their souls. If a rich person desire to imi-
tate him, how difficult is the task? He must either sell all he
has, and give to the poor, or if he continues to possess his riches,
he must take off his heart entirely from them, and use them as
if he had used them not. How difficult is it in the midst of
honours to imitate the humility of Jesus? or for one who is his
own master to practise obedience? (3.) Their state of life even lays
them under the happy necessity of practising some of the most
necessary Christian virtues, by which they most resemble their
Saviour. Such as humility; for their state of life is a state of
humility and subjection, and exposes them to many humiliations
from others, and to be employed in mean and humble offices.
Penance; for all the labours and toils of their state is a penance
laid upon them by God himself, who says, "In the sweat of thy
face shalt thou earn thy bread." And obedience; to practise
which is the essential quality of a servant. So that being obliged to the practice of these virtues by the duties of their state of life itself, they have only to sanctify them by performing them with a true Christian spirit, in order to acquire great grace and benediction from God to their souls. (4.) Their state is also a great preservative against many sins, to which rich people, and those who are in the way of making riches, are exposed; particularly solicitude and anxiety about temporal concerns, pride, covetousness, forgetfulness of God, and all those sins which flow from idleness. But (5.) One of the greatest advantages of the state of servants is, that they may be always certain of doing the very thing which God wills them to do in all the various duties of their state. To do the will of God is the great end of our being, it is the perfection of our soul, it is a source of great peace and happiness to our mind here, and the only passport which will gain us admittance into heaven hereafter, as Jesus Christ himself assures us, saying, “Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven,” Matt. vii. 21. Now to do the will of God so as to please him, two things are required; first, that what we do be the very thing that the will of God requires we should do; and secondly, that our motive for doing it be really in obedience to his will, and to please him. Of these two, the great difficulty lies in knowing what it is that God requires from us upon every occasion; for if once we be certain of this, it is an easy matter to sanctify our intention, by doing it for his sake, and purely because he wills it from us. It would therefore be a great happiness if we could always know precisely the thing that is agreeable to him we should do. Those who are their own masters are very often at a loss to know this, even though desirous of it; they are in the greatest danger of mistaking the subtle suggestions of self-love for the will of God; and if they be in a state of life to which God has not called them, but in which their own passions and worldly views have engaged them, they can scarce be certain of doing the will of God, in any of their ordinary actions. But with servants it is not so; they are placed in that state by the will of God, and they know that every lawful thing they do in their master’s service, and in obedience to his commands, however trifling or mean in itself, is the very thing which God expressly wills them to do; so that they have only to sanctify what they do, by considering it as the will of God, and offering it up to him in obedience to his will, in order to make every.
thing they do pleasing to him, and of the utmost benefit to their own souls. The scripture is clear and beautiful on this head. “Servants, be obedient to your masters......not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with a good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men,” Eph. vi. 5. “Whatever you do, do it from the heart as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that you shall receive of the Lord, the reward of inheritance. Serve ye the Lord Christ,” Col. iii. 23. (6.) They will be more mildly dealt with by the Divine justice, than those of a higher station of life; and that for several reasons. For if they have received fewer talents, of the goods of this life, they will have less account to give; for “he to whom much is given, much will be required from him.” If they have less knowledge of other Christian duties, not connected with their state, and if their very state of life itself hinders them from being so fully instructed in all the law of God as others are, they will be less severely punished when they transgress it, than those who know better, “for that servant who knew the will of his Lord......and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes,” Luke xii. 47. Besides, they have no charge of others to answer for, as masters and parents, and all who are in authority have; and consequently have to account only for themselves; and their state of life affords them great opportunity of doing penance for the faults they commit, and consequently of satisfying by that means the Divine justice, before they leave this world. On all these accounts the scripture says, “A most severe judgment will be for them that bear rule; for to him that is little, mercy is granted, but the mighty shall be mightily tormented,” Wisd. vi. 6.

Q. 29. What are those duties which servants owe to their masters?

A. They are all reduced to these three heads: justice, obedience, and respect.

Q. 30. What are the duties of justice?

A. Justice is a duty which we owe to all men, and consists in giving to every one their own. The transgression of it is, of its own nature, a mortal sin, from which it can only be excused by the smallness of the matter. Injustice obliges those who are guilty of it, to restitution, without which, if they are able, the sin will never be forgiven. But servants are in a particular manner obliged to be just towards their masters; because
in their case, besides the common duty of justice which we owe to all, there is either an explicit or implicit contract of fidelity, by which they are obliged to be just and faithful; and their masters trust their goods and work to them accordingly. Hence the scripture says of this duty, "Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters...no defrauding, but in all things showing good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," Titus ii. 9. And a glorious reward is promised them by our Lord; "Who, thinkest thou, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord has set over his family, to give them meat in season? Blessed is that servant whom, when his Lord shall come, he shall find so doing; Amen, I say to you, he will set him over all his goods," Matt. xxiv. 45. Now this justice or fidelity, obliges servants to these duties; (1.) Not to wrong their masters, in their goods, either by taking them to themselves, or giving them away to others, or wasting them: and that neither in little nor great matters; for our Saviour says, "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater; and he that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater," Luke xvi. 10. Again he says, "If the evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord is long a-coming, and shall eat and drink with drunkards; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day that he looketh not for him, and at an hour that he knoweth not; and shall separate him, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt. xxiv. 48. (2.) Never to see their masters wronged by others, nor be accessory to others doing so; otherwise they become partakers of their crime; and by the fidelity they owe their masters, they are obliged to use their endeavours to hinder others from wronging them, and to discover it to their masters, if necessary either for preventing or recovering what may have been lost. (3.) To be diligent and careful in doing the work their masters lay upon them, and to improve the goods committed to their care; and to be equally diligent in all this, whether their masters be absent or present; remembering that though their masters see them not, yet God sees them, to whom they must give an account, and be rewarded or punished accordingly.

Q. 31. What is the duty of servants with regard to obedience.

A. Obedience is the essential duty of a servant, of which the scripture speaks thus: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ. Not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but, as the servants of
Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With a good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good things any man shall do, the same shall he receive from the Lord, whether he be bond or free,” Eph. vi. 5. “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not serving to the eye as pleasing men, but in simplicity of heart, fearing God. Whatsoever you do, do it from the heart, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that you shall receive of the Lord, the reward of inheritance,” Col. iii. 22. “Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters, in all things pleasing, not gainsaying,” Tit. ii. 9. In these clear testimonies of holy writ, the obedience of servants is fully laid down; for there we see, (1.) The greatness of the duty; as being expressly commanded by God to servants by name; and declared to be serving God himself. (2.) The extent of it; in all things, that is, in all their master’s lawful commands, particularly in what regards the nature of the service for which they are engaged. (3.) The manner of doing it; to wit, without stubbornness or gainsaying, or any contradiction, but in the simplicity of their heart, as unto Christ himself, and with a good will. (4.) The intention they ought to have in their obedience; doing it as the will of God; doing service to God; fearing God. (5.) Their reward for it; which is the kingdom of heaven, as their inheritance to be received from the Lord.

Q. 32. What is the respect that servants owe to their masters?

A. On this duty the scripture says, “Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling,” Eph. vi. 5 “Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward; for this is thanks-worthy, if, for conscience towards God, a man endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, committing sin and being buffeted for it, you endure? but in doing well, you suffer patiently, this is thanks-worthy before God. For unto this you are called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, did not revile; when he suffered, he threatened not,” 1 Pet. ii. 18. “Whosoever are servants under the yoke, let them count their masters worthy of all honour, lest the name of the Lord, and his doctrine, be blasphemed. But they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but serve them the rather, because they are faithful and beloved, who are
partakers of the benefit," 1 Tim. vi. 1. In which words we see, (1.) The greatness of this duty, and how strictly servants are commanded to fear, respect, and honour their masters, since the neglect of this brings a reproach upon our Lord himself, and upon his doctrine; and consequently, that those servants who act contrary to this duty, are a disgrace to their religion. (2.) That they are obliged to show this respect to their masters, even though they treat them in a harsh and disagreeable manner, "not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." (3.) That even when treated ill, though innocent, they must "for conscience towards God endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully," imitating the example of Christ; and that God will reward them. For Christ suffered for us all, but in this point he leaves an example, of suffering unjustly, to servants in a particular manner, to whom all the above passage of St. Peter is addressed. Oh, how happy were it for Christian servants, to meditate night and day on this golden sentence of that great apostle, and have it deeply imprinted in their heart! but oh, how contrary to this is the common behaviour of the most of servants now-a-days! (4.) That when their master reproves them for any fault, (as they are in duty obliged to do,) they must not fly in a passion, and give ill language to their masters, for this would be a contempt of God himself, whose authority their master bears; but if innocent of what is laid to their charge, they may with modesty declare their innocency according to truth, or bear with silence till their master's heat be over; and if they be guilty, acknowledge their fault, ask pardon, and promise amendment. When king Saul, in a passion, threw his dart at David to kill him, David withdrew from his presence, and applied to Jonathan to vindicate his innocence; and Joseph rather chose to go to prison, than attempt his vindication with his enraged master and mistress, from an accusation of which he was perfectly innocent. But when Abraham's servant, Agar, behaved disrespectfully to her mistress Sarah, and fled from her, the angel of God appeared to her and said, "Return to thy mistress, and humble thyself under her hand," Gen. xvi. 9. (5.) That they must be particularly careful never to show any signs of disrespect to their masters when they are not present, either by words or gestures, never to speak ill of them, nor expose their failings, nor any imperfections that they may observe in them; but rather to take their part, and defend their character when attacked by others. (6.) That they must never discover to the world any of the secrets of the family, so as to expose it to censure and contempt.
Q. 33. What duties do servants owe to their fellow-servants?

A. The great end which servants ought to have in view with their fellow-servants is, to preserve peace and charity among themselves; with this, their life will be a life of happiness; without it, of misery. Now to keep and cement this peace, the following duties are required. (1.) Never willingly to give any cause of offence to their fellow-servants, either by words or actions; and (2.) Never to take offence at others, but bear with Christian meekness and patience whatever is said or done against themselves; endeavouring to receive it with patience as from the hand of God, and to behave with mildness and affection towards those who do it. "A mild answer breaketh wrath, but a harsh word stirreth up fury," Prov. xvi. 1. "A sweet word multiplieth friends and appeaseth enemies," Ecclus. vi. 5. "A wise man in words shall make himself beloved," Ecclus. xx. 13. (3.) To be ready to help and assist one another in everything they have to do. 'By charity of spirit serve one another," Gal. v. 13. "The members of one body are mutually careful one for another," 1 Cor. xii. 25. "If I, being your Lord and master," says Jesus Christ, "have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so do you also," John xiii. 14. (4.) Never to say or do anything that can sow discord among their fellow-servants, and much less between them and their masters. Nothing indeed is more common than this, and nothing is more pernicious. "The tale-bearer shall defile his own soul, and shall be hated by all.... the silent and wise man shall be honoured," Ecclus. xxi. 3. (5.) Never to keep up idle debates or disputes with their fellow-servants about trifles, for this never fails to create disgust and ill-will. "The servant of the Lord must not wrangle, but be mild towards all men," 2 Tim. ii. 24. "Do not contend in words, for it is to no profit," 2 Tim. ii. 14. "It is an honour to a man who separates himself from quarrels," Prov. xx. 2. "Avoid disputes, and you shall lessen sins," Ecclus. xxviii. 10.

§ 4. The Duties of Masters to their Servants.

Q. 34. What are the scripture maxims by which masters should regulate their conduct towards their servants?

A. Chiefly these following: (1.) That the authority they have over their servants is from God, for "there is no power
but from God, and those that are, are ordained of God," Rom. xiii., who by the overruling disposition of his blessed providence, raises up some to a higher station in life, and keeps others in a lower one, according to his pleasure. Hence servants are commanded to obey their masters, as "they would Christ himself, and as to the Lord, and not unto men." (2.) That God has given them their authority not so much on their own account, as for the benefit of those under their charge, as is the case with all others in authority, as well as them; whether kings, magistrates, pastors or parents. (3.) That they shall be called to a strict account how they use this authority; if they exercise it for the end for which it is given them; and will be most severely punished if they abuse it. "Power is given to you," says the scripture, "to all in authority, by the Lord, and strength by the most High, who will examine your works, and search out your thoughts......horribly and speedily will he appear to you, for a more severe judgment will be to them that bear rule; for to him that is little, mercy is granted, but the mighty shall be mightily tormented; for God will not accept of any man's person, neither will he stand in awe of any man's greatness; for he made the little and the great, and he has equal care of all, but the greater punishment is ready for the more mighty," Wisd. vi. 4. (4.) That all mankind are but one family to God, who is the common Lord of all, and to whom all are accountable, and that those in authority are only higher servants of this common Master: for, as St. Paul says to masters, "both you and they have a Master in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him," Eph. vi. 9. And therefore our Saviour declares, that if in this great family he who is in a higher station, and has the care of others, shall become an evil servant, and say, "My Lord is long a coming, and shall begin to strike his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with drunkards, his lord shall come...and shall separate him, and appoint him his portion with hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt. xxiv. 48; for "if any man has not care of his own, and especially of those of his own household, he has denied his faith, and is becoming worse than an infidel," 1 Tim. v. 8. (5.) That the laws of humility and brotherly love, so essential to the being of a true Christian, ought in a particular manner to be exercised towards servants. After Jesus Christ had washed his disciples' feet, he said, as a lesson for all his followers: "You call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am; if then I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one.
another's feet; for I have given you an example, that as I have
done to you, so do you also. Amen I say to you, the servant
is not above the master; neither is the apostle greater than he
that sent him. If you know these things, you shall be blessed
if you do them," John xiii. 13. Also "The princes of the
Gentiles lord it over them. It shall not be so among you, but
whosoever will be greater among you, let him be your minister,
and he that will be first among you shall be your servant,"
Matt. xx. 25. This is the idea which the gospel gives us of
the Christian spirit of authority, and Jesus Christ himself is
proposed as the model after which all in power among his fol-
lowers ought to copy. (6.) That a servant who is a good
Christian and truly fears God, is a great treasure, and brings
a blessing from God to the family where he lives; and on the
contrary, that a wicked servant, who offends God, and lives a
sinful life, is a means to bring a curse on those among whom
he dwells. Thus when Joseph was servant to Pharaoh's officer
in Egypt, "The Lord blessed the house of the Egyptian for
Joseph's sake, and multiplied all his substance, both at home
and in the fields," Gen. xxxix. 5.

Now from these scripture principles the duties of masters to
their servants will easily appear; for, as masters are but
higher servants themselves in the family of God, the common
Master of all, and have received a charge from him over others
of his servants who are under them, the duties which they owe
to their fellow-servants under their charge may be reduced to
the same general heads as those of an upper servant or steward
in a great man's family, to wit, to take care of those under
them, faithfully to perform the duties they owe to their common
master, and to treat their under servants themselves according
to their common Master's will who is in heaven.

Q. 35. What are the duties of masters of families with re-
gard to the service of their heavenly Maker?

A. (1.) To see that their servants faithfully perform their
duties to God, particularly in their prayers, in spending the
Sundays and holidays well, in frequenting the holy sacraments;
and to allow the proper time for these duties, and for getting
themselves well instructed in their religion. Our common
heavenly Master requires these duties from servants as well as
from others, and therefore as masters of families are but stewards
and upper servants in the family of God, they are obliged to
see that those under their inspection faithfully perform his
work. Their own interest also concurs to engage them to do
this, because the better Christians, and the better instructed in
their duties their servants are, the better servants they will be to them, and the greater blessing will they bring on their families. (2.) To be careful in reproving and correcting their servants, whenever they say or do any thing offensive to God. A steward in a great man’s family is obliged not only to see that the servants under him faithfully perform what they owe to their common master, but also that they do nothing against him, or offensive to him. And indeed it seems very odd, that a master of a family should use all the weight of his authority to reprove and correct his servants for any fault committed against himself, and yet stand dumb like a stock when they offend and insult the great God, both his and their common Master! (3.) To give them good example in all the above Christian duties, and particularly in having daily family prayers among them; for their good example will have the greatest weight to excite and encourage their servants to all good; whereas if they give them ill example, it will have the quite contrary effect, in spite of all the advices and reproofs they can give them. (4.) To pray for them, after the example of the good Centurion, who had recourse to Jesus Christ with so much fervour for his distressed servant.

The great commendation which God himself gave to Abraham, as the reason why he made choice of him to be the one from whom the Redeemer of the world should come, was, because “I know,” said God, “that he will command his children and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do judgment and justice,” Gen. xviii. 18, 19.

Q. 36. What is the treatment which our heavenly Master requires that masters of families should give their servants whom in his providence he has put under them?

A. The last question contained the duties of masters to their servants’ souls; this regards their duties towards their bodies; and these are, (1.) To treat them with mildness and humanity as their fellow Christians; this is a necessary consequence of the Christian maxims for the conduct of masters, which we have seen above. The scripture also commands the same, and enforces this duty by this most powerful motive; that masters are but upper servants in the family of God, to whom the whole belongs, and who “has equally care of all,” and will undoubtedly call masters to an account of their treatment of those under them: “And you masters, do the same things to them, forbearing threatenings, knowing that the Lord of both them and you is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him,” Eph. vi. 9. A treatment of this kind gains the
affections of servants, and attaches their hearts to their masters, preserves peace, and makes all persons happy: whereas a contrary conduct in masters has the quite contrary effects. This mildness should chiefly appear in giving their orders in an easy, humane manner, not with imperiousness and contempt; and in reproving or correcting them in such a manner, as to convince the servants that it is duty, a regard for their welfare, but by no means passion which moves them to it; and they should take care not to be chiding and scolding them for every little mistake they may fall into. Servants are flesh and blood as well as others, and have their weakness in abundance, and therefore masters and mistresses must give the necessary indulgence for human nature in them, and see many little failings without always seeming to observe them; hence the scripture says, "Be not as a lion in thy house, terrifying them of thy household, and oppressing them that are under thee," Ecclus. iv. 35. (2) To treat them with justice; "Masters, do to your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven," Col. iv. 1. This justice consists in giving them a wholesome and sufficient diet for their maintenance, and in exactly paying their wages. "The wages of him that has been hired by thee, shall not abide with thee until the morning," Lev. xix. 13. "Thou shalt not refuse the hire of the needy and the poor......but the same day shalt thou pay him the price of his labour, before the going down of the sun, because he is poor, and with it maintaineth his life; lest he cry against thee to the Lord, and it be imputed to thee for a sin," Deut. xxiv. Tobias also gives this advice to his son; "If any man hath done any work for thee, immediately pay him his hire, and let not the wages of thy hired servant stay with thee at all," Tob. iv. 15. And St. James assures us, that to do otherwise is a sin that cries to heaven for vengeance: "Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth, and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth," James v. 4. (3) To treat them with great gratitude; where a servant behaves well, has a great care and affection for his master, and has been a long time about his family, certainly more than strict justice is due to him, as a grateful recompense for his services: the word of God is clear on this point, thus, "Hurt not the servant that worketh faithfully, nor the hired man that giveth thee his life. Let a wise servant be dear to thee as thy own soul, defraud him not of liberty, nor leave him needy," Ecclus. vii. 22. If thou hast a faithful servant, let
him be to thee as thy own soul; treat him as a brother," Ecclus. xxxiii. 31. In these words we see in what way masters should treat good and faithful servants, above what strict justice may demand. Let them be dear to thee as thy own soul; treat them as brothers; defraud them not of liberty; leave them not needy. Hence in time of sickness, or when old age approaches; or if any misfortune should come upon them, then is the time to show a particular care about them, and give them the necessary relief and assistance.

§ 5. The Duties of Married People.

Q. 37. Is it of importance to instruct married people in the duties of their state?

A. Nothing is more so; for the married state is ordained by Almighty God, as the means for the propagation of mankind, and on that account the great bulk of mankind at one time or other engage in it; and as their happiness in that state depends upon their fulfilling all the duties of it, it is therefore highly necessary that they be properly instructed. Besides, as the duties annexed to the state of matrimony are commanded by God himself; of course the eternal happiness of married people, as well as their temporal felicity, depends upon the faithful observance of them, which cannot be expected unless they know what they are. Indeed if all the duties, which the law of God requires from those who are engaged in the married state, be exactly complied with, it becomes an emblem of heaven itself, and conducts to that happy place at last; but if, on the contrary, these duties be neglected, the married state becomes a resemblance of hell, and will at last end in eternal misery. There is therefore scarce any branch of Christian duties, which those who have the charge of souls, ought more frequently to explain and inculcate to their people, than the duties of a husband and wife to each other, and the great obligation they lie under of faithfully performing them.

Q. 38. What are the scripture principles on which these duties are founded?

A. These will best appear from the description which the scripture gives us of the institution and nature of the holy state of matrimony. Of this we are told, that at the creation of the world, "The Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul......And the Lord God said, It is not good for man to be alone, let us make him a help like unto himself......
Then the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon Adam: and when he was fast asleep, he took one of his ribs, and filled up flesh for it. And the Lord God built the rib, which he took from Adam, into a woman; and brought her to Adam. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh," Gen. ii. 7, 18, 21.

From this account, given us by God himself, the following truths flow: (1.) That two people being joined in marriage, are no longer to be considered as separate people, or different from one another, having separate views, separate designs, or separate interests; but as two joined together in one; that is, joined together in the strictest bond of union that possibly can be between two persons in this world; so that man and wife ought to look upon one another as parts of themselves, "bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh;" as members of one another, joined together in the same flesh. (2.) That this union between husband and wife is so strong, that no power upon earth can dissolve it; "Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife." It is the work of the most high God, and nothing but the death of either party can break it. This our blessed Saviour declares in the plainest manner in the gospel, when referring to this very account of the institution and nature of marriage given by Moses, he concludes from it, in these words, "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder," Matt. xix. 6. See this point fully discussed in the Sincere Christian, Chap. XXVII. Q. 7. (3.) That the woman was created to be a helper to the man. This the word of God expressly declares in these terms: "And the Lord God said, It is not good for man to be alone, let us make him a help like unto himself." St. Paul also confirms the same, saying, "The man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man, for man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man," 1 Cor. xi. 8. This then was the original design of Almighty God, that the woman should be a helper to the man, and she was created for that end. But this is so to be understood, that the husband also must be a helper to the wife; and that it is the will of God, that this help should be mutual; and that as the wife serves and helps the husband in things which he could not so well do himself, so the husband is also obliged to serve and assist her in things which she could not so well perform, and this is what St. Paul declares, adding
to what he said above, "But yet neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord: for as the woman is of the man, so also, is the man by the woman." verse 11, to teach us that, although the first man was created immediately by the hand of God without the woman, yet in all their posterity man should not have his being "but by the woman," "and therefore being equally necessary for one another's existence," they have a mutual dependence upon, and ought mutually to help one another. (4.) That though they be thus created for each other, and for their mutual help, yet the husband has the chief power, that he is the superior, and has authority over the wife, who is therefore subject to him: this follows from their very first formation; and therefore St. Paul says, "But I suffer not the woman to use authority over the man, for Adam was first formed, then Eve: and Adam was not seduced; but the woman being seduced, was in the transgression," 1 Tim. ii. 12. This subjection was expressly confirmed by God himself, in punishment of her transgression, when he said to Eve, "Thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee," Gen. iii. 16. Hence St. Paul concludes, "Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife," Eph. v. 22. (5.) That the principal view which married people ought to have with regard to one another, is to contribute all they can to make each other happy both in this life, and much more in the life to come. "It is not good," said Almighty God, "for man to be alone;" and therefore, in order to promote his good, God made the woman to be a help to him; and as we have seen that the design of God in uniting them together, was for their mutual help, and consequently for their mutual good; therefore this is the great view they ought to have, to comply with this gracious design of their Creator, and promote their mutual happiness. To be happy here, and much more to be happy hereafter, is what all desire and aim at for themselves; this is a principle implanted in our breasts by the Author of our being: while people remain single, they have to think of acquiring this happiness only for themselves, except what the common duties of charity require towards all men in general; but when two are joined together in marriage, they become one and the same flesh, members of one another, parts of themselves, and therefore are strictly bound to wish and promote one another's happiness, both here and hereafter, as they do their own.

"Men," says St. Paul, "ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself," Eph. v. 28.
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Now to love one, is nothing else but to wish and promote his happiness.

These are the sacred principles, founded in God's holy word; from whence all the duties of the married state flow, and which may be all divided into two classes; namely, those duties which are required to make one another happy in this life, and those which contribute to secure their mutual happiness in the life to come. But it must be observed, that these two classes of duties mutually serve to promote one another, and the ends they both have in view; for whatever tends to make married people Christianly happy in this world, serves also to promote their eternal salvation; and whatever serves to make them happy for eternity, contributes also to make them happy in this present life.

Q. 39. What are the duties of married people, necessary for promoting their happiness in this life?

A. When we consider the strict union there is between married people, which nothing but death can dissolve, it immediately occurs, that the most essential means of promoting their common happiness in life, is to preserve peace and concord between themselves. Where peace is wanting, and discord and dissension reign, there happiness cannot dwell. If two single people should quarrel, and disagree with each other, it will make them less happy than they would otherwise be, but they have a remedy; they may separate from one another, and be happy with other people; but in the married state this cannot be done, for though they should separate as to their persons, the bond of marriage stills remains entire, which hinders them from contracting such a connexion with any other; and this very separation itself is a source of much unhappiness to them. If worldly prosperity abound with married people, discord embitters all the sweets of their plenty, and hinders them from enjoying these blessings; whereas union and concord between themselves, double all these enjoyments, and enhance the value of their prosperity. On the contrary, if they meet with crosses and misfortunes in life, peace and concord alleviate these afflictions, and from their mutual sympathy and consolation, even diminish their smart; but discord and dissension increase the poignancy of all their other sufferings, and make them miserable indeed! Hence it appears, that of all things married people ought to have at heart, the first and most essential for their mutual happiness is, to preserve peace and concord between themselves; and that every selfish humour ought to be sacrificed for this end. On this the scripture says, "With three
things my spirit is pleased, which are approved before God and man: The concord of brethren, the love of neighbours, and man and wife that agree well together," Ecclus. xxxvi. 1. Now, to procure and preserve this peace, there are three classes of duties; the first is common to both, the second is proper to the husband, and the third belongs to the wife.

(1.) The first is, that they should have a mutual love for one another, "according to God." The command which Jesus Christ lays on all his followers, to love one another, obliges in the strongest manner those who are joined together in marriage; for though the duty of loving our neighbour, rests ultimately in our love for God, on which it is founded, yet there are many other particular motives to enforce it, which indeed are all subordinate to the grand motive of the love of God, but are not all found equally in every neighbour; and where these concur in greater numbers, there God himself commands us to have a stronger love, and be more diligent in the exercise of it. Now there are some particular motives to mutual love between married people, besides what they have in common with every neighbour, which are to be found no where else, and from which the scripture concludes, how great their love for one another ought to be. "Husbands, love your wives," says St. Paul, "as Christ also loved the church;"......Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies. "He that loveth his wife, loveth himself; for no man ever hated his own flesh, but nouriseth and cherisheth it, as also Christ does the church," Eph. v. 25. In these words we see how strictly this mutual love between married people is commanded, and the particular motives upon which it is grounded. (1.) Marriage is an emblem or resemblance of the union which Jesus Christ has with his church; hence, that it may be a true figure, a real resemblance, it is absolutely required that the husband love his wife, as Christ loves his church; that is from the same motives, and for the same ends, or with a sincere love of charity, or a love according to God; and of course, that wives return a mutual love of the same nature to their husbands, as this is of its own nature a mutual duty. (2.) "Husbands ought to love their wives as their own body;" because they are no longer two, but one flesh, and no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it; and as they are mutually members of one another, not in a mystical or figurative sense only, as is the case with our other neighbours, but really united together in one flesh, "bone of bone, and flesh of flesh;" therefore this love must be so much the stronger and mutual,
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between them. (3.) "He that loveth his wife, loveth himself." Married people must look on one another not only as members of themselves, but as their very self; and therefore ought to have the same love for one another as for themselves. We are commanded indeed to love our neighbours in general, as we love ourselves, that is, after the manner that we love ourselves, and with the due proportion, according to the order of charity; but in married people the apostle declares that the love required between them, is not only after the manner in which they love themselves, but that in loving one another they actually love themselves; so that every act of love they show to each other, is actually loving their very selves, because they are no more two, but one flesh.

To these strong reasons, given by the word of God, which show the obligation that married people have to love one another according to God, we must also add this other; that without this mutual love, it will be impossible for them to preserve peace between themselves, and consequently to be happy in each other; and it may be justly affirmed that one chief cause of all the jars and miseries that attend married people, is the want of this holy love of charity. They may indeed have a sensual passion for one another, which tends only to the gratification of their lusts; but as this is wholly a selfish affection, it can never produce the happy effects of concord and peace, when occasions occur to disturb it. The character which the scripture gives us of charity, is, that it "is patient, is kind, seeketh not its own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil," 1 Cor. xiii.; that it makes us "bear one another's burdens," Gal. vi. 2, and "with mildness and patience support one another," Eph. iv. 2, "bearing one another and forgiving one another," Col. iii. 13. Now it is plain, that where such a love as this is, there peace and harmony must dwell; for this love teaches, never designedly to give any cause of displeasure to others; not to be stiff or rigorous in exacting what is agreeable to ourselves, or what we may think our due; not to become angry and in a passion when any thing is done against us; to condescend to the weaknesses and imperfections of others; to bear their infirmities with mildness and patience; to be ready to forgive them when they do any thing against us; in a word, to bear and forbear: if all this be faithfully complied with, how could dissension enter? Married people must therefore remember that there are none to be found without their faults, weaknesses and imperfections, that there are numbers of failings and inequalities of temper, which the very best of people are subject to, and which do not appear to one
another before marriage; but which will soon be discovered upon a nearer acquaintance. They must therefore lay their account with meeting such things in the one they marry; but they must remember, that the one they marry will meet with the same thing in them; that there is no effectual remedy to the displeasure these things may occasion, but to have a true love for each other according to God; that is, to consider that God commands them to love one another, with the love of charity, and faithfully to behave towards one another, for God's sake, according to the rules which, as we have just seen, that love of charity prescribes, as contained in the characters given of it by St. Paul.

(2.) The second class of duties necessary for promoting the happiness of the married state, contains the part which the husband ought to act, and consists in this, that he ought to exercise the authority which God has given him over the wife, in the manner which the law of God requires. It is always observed in every community, that when those who have the authority use it with discretion and mildness, and those who are subject cheerfully comply with what their superiors thus require of them, there peace and concord reign; but wherever superiors pretend to exceed the limits of their authority, or exercise it with harshness and severity, it never fails to produce the worst of consequences. This observation is justly applicable to husband and wife. We have seen above, that, by the law of God the husband is head of the wife, and has authority over her; but his authority is given him for their common good, and the exercise of it is prescribed by God's law, which therefore he is obliged carefully to observe, and by doing so their mutual happiness will be promoted. We cannot have a better idea of the nature of this authority, than from the example of Jesus Christ towards his church: "The husband," says St. Paul, "is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church." And therefore the way that Christ exercises his authority over his church is the best model of the way that husbands ought to act towards their wives. Now we find throughout the whole scripture, that Jesus Christ is always represented to us, as governing his church with great meekness, sweetness, and love, and abundantly supplying her with all necessaries for her welfare; sometimes we see him, as a skilful and wise physician, treating her infirmities with the greatest compassion and tenderness; sometimes, as an indulgent father, bearing with the imperfections of his children with great indulgence; sometimes, like the good Samaritan, by the most charitable beneficence gaining the hearts even of his
enemies; sometimes as an affectionate spouse, caressing his church with the most endearing attention. Such also ought to be the conduct of husbands to their wives; with compassion and tenderness endeavouring to remedy their failings; like an indulgent parent, bearing their natural infirmities; by a kind and affable behaviour, soothing and curing the sallies of their passion; and in all cases showing that a tender love and real desire for their good, is the ground of their whole behaviour. The husband then must remember that his authority over his wife is not like that of a master over his slaves, nor even like that of a father over his children; but is like the authority which the head has over the members of our body, or rather like that of Christ over his church; consequently he has no right to maltreat her, or abuse her, or to show aversion or bitterness towards her, either in words or actions. Hence the scripture says, “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter towards them,” Col. iii. 19. St. Peter enforces this duty by two strong reasons. “Ye husbands likewise give honour to the weaker vessel, and as to the co-heirs of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered.” Consider, says he, that God has given you superiority over them, not only in authority, but also in fortitude and strength of mind, in knowledge and other respects, and therefore you ought to honour them as the weaker vessels, by a more tender love and greater condescension for them, remembering also that they are co-heirs with you of eternal life; besides, that otherwise, if you treat them with harshness, your prayers will not be heard of God, for if you show not the necessary compassion towards the wife of your bosom, how can you expect that God will show mercy to you? This last argument is strongly urged by God himself, as recorded by his prophet, saying, “I have no more a regard to sacrifice, neither do I accept any atonement at your hands. And you have said, For what cause? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, whom thou hast despised; yet she was thy partner, and the wife of thy covenant. Did not one make her, and she is the residue of his spirit? And what doth one seek but the seed of God? Keep then your spirit, and despise not the wife of thy youth,” Mal. ii. 13. To all which we may add, that the faults of the husband in this point are very often the chief source of the disquiet and unhappiness which so often attend the married state; especially if to this be joined his neglect of providing for the necessities of his wife and family, and squandering away his time and money in idleness, gaming, or drinking, while his poor
wife and children are next to starving at home; which is a most
heinous crime, for "If any man have not care of his own, and
especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and
is worse than an infidel," 1 Tim. v. 8.

(3.) The third class of duties regards the wife, and requires
that she should behave to her husband with all due respect,
obedience, and deference. If it be the husband's duty not to
exceed the bounds of his authority, but to exercise it with all
leniency and discretion, it is no less the duty of the wife to re-
spect his authority, and yield to it with a cheerful submission
and obedience. This the very nature of subordination requires,
and the model proposed to wives for the exercise of this duty,
is the example of the church of Christ; that therefore they
should consider their husband's authority as flowing from God
himself, and behave with all submission to him on that account,
as to the Lord; "Let women be subject to their husbands, as
to the Lord......as the church is subject to Christ, so also let
the wives be to their husbands in all things," Eph. v. 22. Now
the church obeys her heavenly spouse, not out of servile fear,
as slaves obey their masters, but out of the love and affection
she has for him. She fears him indeed, she respects him as
being her Lord and her God, and a God of infinite Majesty;
but the grand motive of her obedience is the ardent love she
has for him; this makes her cheerfully submit to all his com-
mands, endeavour in all things to please him, and spare no
pains to promote his honour and glory. Thus therefore ought
the wife to behave towards her husband; she must respect and
honour him. "Let the wife fear her husband," says the word
of God, Eph. v. 33. She must readily comply with his will
and his lawful command; she must study to please him, and
make every thing agreeable to him: "Let the wives be subject
to their husbands," says St. Peter, "whose adorning, let it not
be in the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold,
or the putting on of apparel, but in the hidden man of the
heart, in the incorruptibility of a quiet and meek spirit, which
is rich in the sight of God. For after this manner, heretofore,
the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves,
being in subjection to their own husbands; as Sarah obeyed
Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are, doing
well, and not fearing any disturbance," 1 Pet. iii. 1. Where
we see that wives must not be extravagant in their expenses
on fine clothes and gaudy attire, but study to adorn their hearts
with a quiet and meek spirit, yielding obedience and respect to
their husbands in their words, as well as in all their behaviour,
and then they need not fear any disturbance. Instead of squandering away their husbands' goods, they must apply with diligence to the care of their affairs, managing and improving their temporal concerns to the best of their power; this is their office; in this they are properly a help to their husbands, by taking care of things within doors, while the husband is providing for them and their families by his labour abroad; hence the scripture says of a good wife, "The heart of her husband trusteth in her, and he shall have no need of spoils; she will render him good and not evil all the days of her life," Prov. xxxi. 11. See that whole chapter.

Q. 40. If married people would faithfully observe these sacred duties which the law of God enjoins them, doubtless they could not fail to be happy in each other; but if either of them act contrary to these duties, what must the other do?

A. When discord and disagreement happen between married people, from the fault of either party, it seldom happens that the other behaves in a proper manner, which always makes the matter worse and worse; but to excuse their own conduct, they plead necessity, and the impossibility of putting up with the ill behaviour of the other. Thus the husband who maltreats his wife, and perhaps even beats her, pleads necessity; that his wife is of such a bad temper, continually out of humour, always scolding and tormenting him, &c., that he is obliged to use severe correction with her, and to treat her roughly. The wife on the other hand, to palliate her undutiful behaviour to her husband, flies to the same excuse, and perhaps adds, that he is never at home, throws away his money in company and drinking, and leaves her to starve, and the like. But when either party is so much to blame, and fails in the duties which the law of God requires, however human prudence and worldly wisdom, or rather, which is more truly the case, however self-love and passion may authorize the other party, from the plea of necessity, to retaliate by a harsh and severe behaviour, yet it is certain the law of God allows no such thing, nor would even prudence itself approve it, if consulted impartially, and not through the mist of passion. The pretended correction which is used in such cases, is nothing else but the vent of impatience and passion, and carries the person beyond all bounds of reason; consequently it is offensive to God, both in the source from whence it rises, and in the means it uses. Experience itself teaches that it never does good, but much ill; it irritates the other party, it excites passion, it creates aversion and hatred, and banishes peace entirely. On this account it may be said,
with all truth, that where married people disagree, there are always faults on both sides; for however much the one party may fail in duty, it is certain that if the other party has prudence, and bears with these failings in meekness and patience, as the law of God commands, things may be kept in a tolerable way for the most part: and if to patient suffering is added a loving behaviour, fervent prayers are poured out to God, a happy change may in time be brought about; and hence the scripture says, "If a woman have a tongue that can cure, and likewise mitigate and show mercy, her husband is not like other men," Ecclus. xxx. 25. And the same holds true of a husband. But if this should not happen, there are two other remedies remaining for the innocent person; first, to receive this cross as sent from the hand of God for the sanctification of his soul, and bear it with resignation to the Divine will; and secondly, if things become so outrageous that he cannot bear with them, and is in danger of hurting either his soul or body, he may come to a separation from the offending party; provided, however, this be done with proper deliberation and advice, and by lawful authority, after other means have been used in vain, and not by his own authority alone, which is never allowable by the laws of God and his church, except in cases of very extraordinary danger either for soul or body, and where the lawful authority cannot be had recourse to. On this last head the word of God speaks thus: "To them that are married," says St. Paul, "not I, but the Lord commandeth, that the wife depart not from her husband; and if she depart, that she remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband. And let not the husband put away his wife," 1 Cor. vii. 10: which clearly shows that it is not lawful for them to make a separation by their own authority alone.

Q. 41. What are the duties of married people, required for promoting mutually their eternal salvation?

A. Though we have considered the duties of married people as divided into two classes, according as they principally or more immediately tend to promote their temporal and eternal happiness, yet as all these duties are laid on them by the law of God, and obedience to his law is the surest means to promote real happiness in this life, as well as in the next, according to the words of our Saviour, "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and his justice, and all these things shall be added to you;" hence it is that all the duties of married people which we have already seen as conducive to their present happiness, are equally necessary for promoting their eternal salvation, for if they fail
in their mutual love to one another by hatred, aversion or ill will, if the husband use his authority with harshness and severity, if he despise his wife, and neglect the care of his family, or the like, or if the wife refuse the subjection she owes to her husband, if she attempt to usurp his authority, and on that account be obstinate in her own will, and provoke her husband by ill language, and the like, in such cases the offending parties transgress the law of God, and sin, and not only hurt their own soul, but by their bad example and provoke become the occasion of sin in their consorts, and contribute to the ruin of their souls also; whereas by the exact performance of all the above duties, they both please God, and draw down his blessing upon soul and body, and promote their eternal, as well as their present happiness. But besides these, the following duties more especially regard the good of their souls.

(1.) They must keep their love for each other within proper bounds, and not allow it to go to excess: however much they are obliged to love one another, the extent of this love has its bounds; and they not only sin when they fail in the necessary love they owe to one another, but also when they carry their affections beyond those limits which the law of God prescribes. Married people must therefore always remember, that though they are bound to love one another, yet they are bound to love God more; and that if their love for one another be greater than their love for God, they can have no part with him for ever. Christ himself assures us, that if we love anyone more than him, we are not worthy of him; but that if for his love, a man leave his wife or other worldly objects, he shall receive an eternal reward; he even declares, that whosoever "does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, yea, and his own life also, cannot be his disciple," Luke xiv. 26; that is, whoever does not love all these so much less than God, that he is ready to part with them all rather than offend God, is not worthy of him, cannot be his disciple, nor have any part with him. Hence then the rule to know if married people love one another more than God, is to see if they consent to displease God by sin, rather than displease one another; for if on any occasion, by persuasion, or for fear of displeasing their partner, married people should do anything against the law of God, this is a clear sign that their love goes to excess, because they love one another more than God. The following examples will illustrate this: When Adam, rather than displease Eve, eat the forbidden fruit, Almighty God gave this preference he
showed to her as the great guilt of his sin, and said, "Because thou hearkenedst to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work," &c., Gen. iii. 17. Of Solomon we are told, that "He loved many strange women...... and when he was now old, his heart was turned away by women to follow strange gods; and his heart was not perfect with the Lord......but Solomon worshipped Astor the goddess of the Sidonians, and Moloch the idol of the Ammonites ...... and the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his mind was turned away from the Lord the God of Israel," 3 Kings xi. 1. (4.) Of Achab king of Israel it is recorded, "That he did evil in the sight of the Lord, above all that were before him......and he took also to wife Jezabel, daughter of Eibbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went (to please her) and served Baal and adored him......and he did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, than all the kings of Israel that were before him," 3 Kings xvi. 30; for all which the scripture gives this sad character of him: "Now there was not such a one as Achab, who was sold to do evil in the sight of the Lord," 3 Kings xxi. 25; and then immediately adds the cause, "for his wife Jezabel set him on!" he loved his wife more than his God! and rather than displease her, he abandoned his God, and the true religion, and became an idolater! So also Ananias and his wife Sapphira agreed together to retain part of the price of their land, and conceal it; on which account St. Peter said, "Why have you agreed together to tempt the spirit of the Lord?" Acts v. 9, and they were both struck dead in an instant! How contrary to these was the behaviour of Job? for when his wife, overwhelmed with distress at the extreme misery which had come upon them, advised him to offend God and die, rather than endure such wretchedness, he reproved her in these words:—"Thou hast spoken like one of the foolish women;" but he inviolably persevered in his innocence, for "in all these things Job did not sin with his lips," Job ii. 10.

(2.) They must give one another good example, and pray earnestly for their mutual happiness and salvation. Of all the means we can use for the good of our neighbour's soul, there is none more excellent than these two; they are also most powerful, and there can be no objection against them on the part of others. Hence all are commanded to live good lives, not only for their own sakes, but also for the edification of others. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may
see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven," Matt. v. 16. We are also commanded to pray for all men; "I desire therefore first of all," says St. Paul, "that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all men...for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour," 1 Tim. ii. 1. Now if the common charity we owe to the souls of all men oblige us to these duties, the nearer our connexion is with the soul of anyone, the more this obligation increases in his regard; and consequently it is exceeding urgent on married people, as none can have so great a connexion with the souls of others, as they have with one another's. These duties of prayer and giving good example, are above all things, most necessary, when either of the parties lead a bad and sinful life. Suppose, for example, the husband is given to company, drinking, or gaming, and when at home is always in bad humour, and a torment to his family. This is, to be sure, one of the greatest trials a poor woman can meet with: but what must she do? If she follow the suggestions of passion, she will only hurt her own soul, and make things worse and worse; and it is too much to be feared, that, if all circumstances were known between married people who do not agree, this would often be found to be one of the chief causes of their misery, that when the husband is out of humour, and does anything amiss, the wife flies into a passion, raises his anger, makes his home, and her company disagreeable to him, and in a manner forces him to seek that satisfaction in company abroad, which he does not find in his own house. But must she bear all his ill-behaviour, as if she had neither sense nor feeling? Must she see herself and children reduced to misery, and say nothing? Far from it. It is her duty to use every prudent measure to reclaim her husband; the only question is about the manner of doing this. If constant experience show that treating him with harshness, losing her temper, and giving vent to her passions, instead of proving a remedy, serves only to exasperate the evil, and greatly damages her own soul; does not common sense, as well as the law of God, condemn that method? What therefore the law of Christ, and the spirit of his religion require from her is, (1.) To consider this trial as sent to her by the disposition of Divine Providence, and endeavour to sanctify it for the benefit of her own soul by patience, humility, and resignation. (2.) To use all her endeavours to gain her husband's affections, by a mild, submissive, and endearing behaviour, that she may make him take a liking to her company,
and a pleasure in being with her; and this she has very much in her power to do, if she only can command her own temper, and, as the word of God expresses it, "has a tongue that can cure and mitigate." (3.) When he is sober, and kept in good humour by such a winning behaviour, let her endeavour to make him sensible of the evil of his ways, not by complaining or quarrelling, but with gentleness, regretting it as a misfortune, and showing more concern for the danger of his own soul, than for what she herself has to suffer by it; but be extremely cautious not to insist even in this, if she sees he does not take it in good part, but wait another favourable opportunity. (4.) Above all things else, she must frequently pour out her most fervent prayers to God for his conversion, and endeavour to render her prayers agreeable to God, by a life of piety and virtue. Let her never forget, that though she hates her husband's evil ways she is bound to love his person; and that the change of his heart must come from God. If she behave perseverantly in such a conduct, one of two things will happen; either Almighty God will reward her piety, and crown her wishes by the conversion of her husband, to her great joy; or if he permit the trial to continue, she may confidently expect a great reward in heavenly glory, and will have the consolation, that if their worldly affairs go to ruin by her husband's ill conduct, she has not been the guilty cause of pushing him on to it, by a provoking behaviour. In fact, the above line of conduct is what we see has always been followed by the holy servants of God, and there are not wanting striking examples of the happy effects it produced in the conversion of the criminal party. As this is a most interesting subject to those concerned in it, we shall relate the following examples from the Rev Mr. Butler's Lives of the Saints. St. Monica, mother of the great St. Augustine, "as soon as she was marriageable, was disposed of to one Patricius, a man of honour and probity, but an idolater. She obeyed and served him as her master, and laboured to gain him to God; though the chief argument she used, whereby to reclaim him from his vices, was the sanctity of her conduct, enforced by an affectionate, obliging behaviour; by which she commanded his love, respect, and esteem. She tolerated the injuries done by him to her marriage bed in such a manner as never to make him the least bitter reproach on that subject. As on the one hand he was very good-natured and loving, so on the other he was hasty and choleric. Monica never thwarted him by the least action or word while she saw him in anger; but when the fit
was over, and he was calm, she mildly gave him her reasons, and an account of her actions. When she saw other wives bearing the marks of their husbands' anger on their disfigured faces, and heard them blaming their roughness of temper or debaucheries, she would answer them, Lay the blame rather on yourselves and your tongues......She bore all his follies with patience and silence, made no other return but that of a greater obsequiousness, and waited an opportunity to make him sensible of his mistake, when that was necessary. ...And one of the happy fruits she gained by her patience, was her husband's conversion to Christ; who thereupon became chaste and faithful to all the duties of a good Christian." Another similar example we have in St. Elizabeth, who was married to Dionysius, king of Portugal. "Though he was a friend of justice, and a valiant, bountiful, and compassionate prince, yet he was in his youth a worldly man, and defiled the sanctity of the nuptial bed with abominable lusts. The good queen used all her endeavours to reclaim him, grieving most sensibly for the offence to God, and the scandal given to the people; and she never ceased to weep herself, and to procure the prayers of others for his conversion. She strove to gain him over only by courtesy; and with constant sweetness and cheerfulness cherished his natural children, and took great care of their education. By these means she softened the heart of the king, who, by the succour of a powerful grace, rose out of the filthy puddle in which he had waddled for a long time, and kept ever after the fidelity that was due to his virtuous consort." To these we shall add, from the same pious historian, the example of St. Margaret, queen of Scotland, and wife to Malcolm III.

"Malcolm was rough and unpolished, but neither haughty nor capricious. Margaret, by the most tender complaisance, and the most condescending and engaging carriage, always full of respect, gained so great an ascendant over him, as to seem entirely mistress of his heart......she softened his temper, cultivated his mind, polished his manners, and inspired him with the most perfect maxims and sentiments of all Christian virtues; so that he became one of the most virtuous kings that had ever adorned the Scottish throne." These examples show the Christian conduct, which married people should observe. (3.) They must preserve inviolably the sanctity of the marriage bed. "Let marriage be honourable in all," says the word of God, "and the bed undefiled; for, fornicators and adulterers God will judge," Heb. xiii. 4. On this delicate subject we shall only observe, that of all the causes of the ruin of the souls of
married people, none is more pernicious than nuptial infidelity; for the crime of adultery is one of the greatest of crimes, expressly forbidden by name, by the law of God, and no wonder, for (1.) It is a grievous profanation of the sacrament of marriage, and, in a most criminal sense, divides what God has joined together in one flesh. (2.) It is a grievous injustice to the innocent party; for, “The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband, and in like manner also, the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife,” 1 Cor. vii. 4. It is a much more grievous injustice than stealing; for, “The fault is not so great when a man hath stolen......but he that is an adulterer for the folly of his heart, shall destroy his own soul,” Prov. vi. 30. (3.) It contains a grievous breach of the vow, made before God, and in the face of his church, of mutual fidelity; which is essentially included in the act of receiving marriage. (4.) If ever it be discovered, or even suspected by the other party, which seldom fails to be the case, it generally sows the seeds of eternal discord, ruins the peace of the family, occasions many sins by suspicions, jealousy, alteration, and what not? and is a great means to plunge both husband and wife into eternal misery. See more of this below on the sixth command. We shall conclude with observing, that the command prohibiting adultery, not only forbids the actual crime itself, but also all manner of lustful thoughts, words, or actions towards another person; for if Christ himself declares of all in general, “That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart,” Matt. v. 28; how much more guilty in the sight of God must married people be who do this, than others?

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIFTH COMMAND.

Q. 1. What is the fifth command?
Q. 2. What is the general sense and end of this command?
A. It is to direct us in all those duties which regard the preservation of our own, or of our neighbour’s life and person, whether as to soul or body.
Q. 3. How so?
A. As the command does not say, Thou shalt not kill another, but says in general, "Thou shalt not kill," therefore it forbids to kill all human creatures, whether ourselves or others; again, by the word kill, is understood not only the actual taking away of life, but also all such actions as have a tendency to do so, by hurting the person. And as we can hurt any one's person, either as to the life of his body, or as to the life of his soul, this command equally forbids both the one and the other. Lastly, according to the explication given by our blessed Saviour to this command, it also forbids those very affections of the soul, and those passions which wish or desire any hurt to our neighbour's person, and which are the first roots and springs from whence our doing any hurt to our neighbour's person proceeds; for he says, "You have heard, that it was said to them of old, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of judgment; but I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of judgment," Matt. v. 21, 22. Now as anger is the first and smallest tendency of the will to hurt our neighbour, and killing him is the greatest injury we can do him, and both are forbidden by this command; hence all the intermediate degrees are forbidden also.

Q. 4. What then are the particular sins forbidden by this command?

A. (1.) Such as either take away life, or hurt the body, or have a tendency to do so; as murder, fighting, and beating, quarrelling, and dissension. (2.) Such affections or passions as are the roots from whence all the injuries done to our neighbour's person arise, particularly anger, envy, or hatred. (3.) Such actions as kill, or tend to kill the soul, to wit, giving scandal and bad example.

Q. 5. What are the duties enjoined by this command?

A. All the works of mercy, both spiritual and corporal, particularly, (1.) pardon of injuries, (2.) alms-giving, and (3.) brotherly correction.

§ 1. Murder, Quarrelling, &c.

Q. 6. Is murder a grievous sin?

A. It is one of the most grievous injuries we can do against our neighbour, for (1.) It is a sin that cries to heaven for vengeance, as God himself declared to Cain, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the earth. Now therefore, cursed shalt thou be upon the earth, which hath opened her mouth, and received the blood of thy brother at thy hand,"
Gen. iv. 10. And the souls of those that were slain, "cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, Oh Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth?" Rev. vi. 10. (2.) In consequence of this, God himself has declared that he will be the avenger of this sin. "I will require the blood of your lives at the hand of every beast, and at the hand of every man, and of his brother will I require the blood of man; for whosoever shall shed man's blood, his blood shall be shed; for man was made to the image of God," Gen. ix. 5. (3.) God most strictly commands this crime to be punished with death. "He that striketh a man with a will to kill him, shall be put to death......If a man kill his neighbour on set purpose, thou shalt take him away from my altar, that he may die," Ex. xxi. 12. (4.) It is a great injury done to God by destroying his image; and this is the reason he himself gives, as above, for his so strictly avenging it, especially as it is done against his will, and against his express command; it is an usurpation of an authority which belongs to God alone; it not only deprives our neighbour of what is most valuable to him in this world, but it also endangers the eternal loss of his soul.

Q. 7. Is there any kind of murder more grievous than others?

A. Most certainly; for (1.) Premeditated murder, or that which is intended and designed before-hand in cold blood, as they say, such as that of Cain's murdering his brother Abel, is much more grievous, and shows a greater malice of the heart than accidental murder arising from some sudden passion or quarrelling. (2.) Murder committed under the cloak of justice, as was the murder of Naboth by Jezabel, where false witnesses were employed to swear him guilty, is still more grievous, because it is an abuse of justice, and attended with perjury. Also (3.) The more valuable the life of a person killed is, and the more necessary for the good of others, the more grievous is the murder; hence the murder of superiors and all in authority is a murder of a most grievous kind. (4.) The more sacred the person is, especially if he be also in authority, the more grievous is the murder; such is the murder of the pastors of the church, and the murder of kings, who being the fathers of the whole people, their persons are most sacred, and the murder of them is most criminal. (5.) The nearer the person murdered is connected in blood to the murderer, the more grievous is the crime; hence the murderer of parents or children, husband or wife, brothers or sisters, or other blood relations, has
always been looked upon with a particular horror and detestation.

Q. 8. What kind of crime is that of woman with child who, to hide their own shame, do things to cause abortion?

A. This is a most detestable crime; it is a real murder if the child be quick, which, by some late discoveries, happens much sooner than is commonly imagined, and it is a murder of one's own child! and, what is more deplorable, it is a murder of the soul as well as the body, for by preventing the poor child from being baptized, it is for ever excluded from the kingdom of heaven. Hence we see what a crime all those are guilty of who give or advise women with child to take or do any thing to procure abortion: and how careful women in that situation ought to be to avoid every thing that might endanger their miscarriage.

Q. 9. Is self-murder a grievous sin?

A. It is certainly one of the most grievous kinds of murder, for, (1.) It is directly against the command of God, which says in general, "Thou shalt not kill." (2.) It is totally subversive of that strong principle of self-preservation, so deeply imprinted in the heart of man by nature itself; and it shows either that the reason is greatly perverted, or the mind blinded by the most unnatural passions, when a man can deliberately act in opposition to so powerful a principle; as we see in Achitophel, who being a proud, self-conceited man, hanged himself in a fit of vexation, because his advice was not taken, and is the only example of the kind in the Old Testament, 2 Kings xvii. (3.) It is usurping an authority which only belongs to God, who is the sole master of the life of man; for man is the keeper of his own life, not the master of it; and it is destroying the image of God against his express command. (4.) It is, generally speaking, the effect of despair or some other criminal passion, and on that account (5.) is followed by the eternal destruction of the soul in hell-fire; as was the case with the unhappy Judas who betrayed his Master, and then hanged himself in despair, which is the only instance in the New Testament of this crime, and whom all those take for their model who are guilty of it.

Q. 10. Why is fighting, quarrelling, and the like, forbidden by this command?

A. Idle disputes, contentions, strife, quarrelling, beating, fighting, and the like, are all immediately forbidden by this command; because they are of their own nature injurious to our neighbour's person, as well as to our own, either by giving
displeasure and vexation to the mind, and exciting anger and
hatred, or by hurting the body; they have also a natural ten-
dency to murder, and experience shows that murder has
numberless times arisen from their beginnings; for "as the
vapour of a chimney and the smoke of the fire goeth up before
the fire, so also injurious words and reproaches, and threats,
before blood," Ecclus. xxii. 30. And lastly, because such
behaviour is directly opposite to the spirit of charity, concord,
and brotherly love, which our blessed Saviour so strictly
requires in all his followers, and of which he has given us so
many striking examples.

Q. 11. What judgment then ought a Christian to form of
these sins?

A. One very opposite to that which the world has of them,
and which would scarce be believed, if the word of God were
not so clear and express upon it; for (1.) As all those sins are
directly contrary to charity and the love of our neighbour,
consequently all the arguments and motives which our holy
religion proposes to show us the necessity of charity, serve at
the same time to show how detestable these sins are before God.
(2.) All these testimonies of scripture which recommend the
practice of meekness, humility, and patience under injuries,
show us at the same time our obligation of not keeping up
contentions, but even of suffering the wrong, rather than to
keep up strife and disputes: and in fact, the scripture expressly
says, "Why do you not rather take wrong? why do you not
rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded," 1 Cor. vi. 7.
Hence, "It is an honour to a man to separate himself from
quarrels; but all fools are meddling with reproaches," Prov.
xx. 3. (3.) The sacred scripture lays it down as a sign of our
being Christians, and as acting according to the spirit of our
religion, that we avoid all such works of darkness. "The night
is passed, the day is at hand, let us therefore cast off the works
of darkness, and put on the armour of light; let us walk
honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not
in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy, but
put you on the Lord Christ;" Rom. xiii. 12, 13; where we see
that contention and envy, as well as drunkenness and impurity,
are classed among the works of darkness, quite contrary to the
spirit of Jesus Christ. What is meant by putting on Christ,
the apostle shows in these words, "Put ye on therefore, as the
elect of God, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty,
patience, bearing with one another, forgiving one another,"
Col. iii. 12. And no wonder; for exhorting to unity, he brings
this reason, "For God is not the God of dissension, but of peace, as also I teach in all the churches of the saints," 1 Cor. xiv. 33. Hence he assures us, "If any man seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the church of God," 1 Cor. xi. 16. (4.) Almighty God himself declares that strife and contention destroy the value of our good works, even of fasting itself; "Why have we fasted," said the people of Israel to God, "and thou hast not regarded?" To which God answers, "Behold you fast for debates and strife, and strike with the fist wickedly. Do not fast as you have done until this day, to make your cry to be heard on high. Is this such a fast as I have chosen?" &c. Is. viii. 3. (5.) But to complete this affair, the word of God declares, that all these things are the works of the flesh, of their own nature mortal sins, and for ever exclude from heaven. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are...enmity, contentions, emulations, wraths, quarrels, dissensions,...of which I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things, shall not obtain the kingdom of God," Gal. v. 19, &c.

§ 2. Anger, Envy and Hatred.

Q. 12. What is anger?

A. When we see or hear of any thing which we look upon as an injury either to ourselves, or those for whom we have a regard, and feel a motion of displeasure and discontent arising in our breast against the offender; with a desire of punishing him for the injury done; this feeling in our breast is anger. It is divided into two kinds; a just and laudable anger, and an unjust and sinful anger.

Q. 13. What do you mean by a just and laudable anger?

A. When the cause of our displeasure is just, and the com-
motion we feel within our breast is moderate and subject to reason, and the punishment we desire is proportioned to the offence, both in its quantity and in the manner of inflicting it; and lastly, when we desire the punishment not out of any ill-will to the person of the offender, but only for the sake of justice, his amendment, and the preventing the like again; then this is a just and laudable anger, and is called zeal, and is even a duty strictly enjoined to all those who have a charge and authority over others. Thus, when parents see their children do any ill, and are displeased at it, and with calmness and moderation correct them, this is a just anger, for want of which Eli, the high priest of God, was so severely punished.

Q. 14. What is an unjust and sinful anger?
A. When any one of the above conditions is wanting, that is, when there is not a just cause, or when the displeasure of our minds exceeds all reason, and becomes a passion, or when the punishment we wish to inflict is above measure, and unproportioned to the offence, or when we wish it out of revenge, and from the pleasure of seeing the offender suffer more than for love of justice; then our anger is vicious and sinful, and the more of these circumstances that concur, the more criminal our anger is. This sinful anger is called "an inordinate love or desire of revenge." Such is the anger of parents and masters, who upon every little offence or mistake of their children or servants fly into a fit of passion, cursing and swearing, and threatening every evil to them.

Q. 15. What is, properly speaking, a just cause of anger?

A. An injury may be done either to God or man. Now according to the spirit of Jesus Christ and his holy religion we should never be deliberately displeased at any injury done to ourselves, but endeavour to bear all with patience, and meekness, and resignation to the will of God, using the lawful remedies or preservatives with all calmness and mildness; as we have seen above at large, Chap. XIII, §§ 2 and 3. But if we have that love of God which our duty requires from us, we must be grieved and displeased when we see him offended by sin; both on account of the injury done to him, and on account of the hurt done to the soul of the offender. Hence, properly speaking, sin is the only just cause of zeal or holy anger, according to the spirit of Jesus Christ and of his holy religion. Thus we see that Jesus Christ bore all the injuries done to himself in his own person without the least emotion or displeasure against his enemies; but when he saw his heavenly Father offended by the profaning of his holy temple, he showed a great degree of zeal in making a scourge of cords, and driving away those who profaned it.

Q. 16. Is passionate anger, or an inordinate love of revenge a great sin?

A. It is of its own nature a deadly sin. (1) Because it is directly contrary to the spirit of the gospel, which requires meekness and patience, and submission to the will of God in all injuries or crosses. (2) Because Jesus Christ expressly declares, that he "who is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment," and he who carries his anger so far as to call his brother opprobrious names, and wish evil to him, "shall be in danger of hell-fire," Matt. v. (3) Because it is the source of many other sins, such as oaths, curses, blasphemies,
reproaches, dissensions, enmities, and often of murder itself, as in Saul, when in his anger he put to death eighty-five inno-
cent priests of God, and in Herod, when he murdered the holy innocents, &c. (4.) Because anger or wrath, is by St. Paul, numbered among the works of the flesh, which exclude from heaven, Gal. v. 20; where it is classed with idolatry, witch-
craft, lust, and other such deadly crimes.

Q. 17. What is envy?

A. It is a repining or uneasiness of mind at our neighbour's good, whether that good be of soul or body, which the envious man thinks a lessening or hurt to his own good, or to the esteem and excellence which he desires.

Q. 18. Is envy a grievous sin?

A. It is a most grievous sin. (1.) Because it is directly contrary to the love of God. The love of God requires we should rejoice when he is glorified, consequently when he bestows his gifts and favours on others, which displays his goodness and bounty, and excites them to love him. Now envy is grieved at his goodness to others, finds fault with the way he dispenses his gifts, repines at his bounty, and would put a stop to it if it could. (2.) It is quite opposite to the love of our neighbour; for this makes us rejoice at our neighbour's good, and sympathize with him in his misfortunes: "Rejoice with them that rejoice," says St. Paul, "and mourn with those that mourn:" but envy acts quite the reverse, rejoices at their misfortune, and mourns at their good; charity considers our neighbours as our brethren, and as members of Jesus Christ, and therefore makes us wish for and rejoice in their good; envy repines and is sorry at their good, as if they were members of Satan. (3.) It is the parent and source of many other crimes, particularly hatred and malice; hence the envious are always ready to judge rashly, to censure and condemn their neighbours, to put the worst construction on all they say and do, and to slander and backbite them; they are generally whisperers and tale-bearers, and seek to set every other person against those whom they envy; they endeavour to do them all kind of evil, and take a malicious satisfaction in any ill that comes upon them; and are sometimes pushed on to the most shocking crimes; witness Cain, Joseph's brethren, Saul in what he did against David, and the Pharisees against Christ. (4.) It is a diabolical sin, and shows those who are guilty of it belong to the devil; for the scripture expressly says, "By the envy of the devil death came into the world, and they follow him who are of his side," Wisd. ii. 24. (5.) It is
by St. Paul numbered among the works of the flesh, which exclude from heaven, Gal. v. (6.) It is often most severely punished by God even in this life, as in Cain, Moses’s sister, Corah, Saul, Daniel’s persecutors, and others, as recorded in the holy scripture.

Q. 19. Is it a grievous sin to hate our neighbour?

A. It certainly is of its own nature a most grievous sin. (1.) Because directly opposite to charity, or the love of our neighbour, in all its branches. (2.) Because it is directly opposite to the love of God, which obliges us to love our neighbour for his sake, as being his image, his creature, his child, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and designed to enjoy God for ever. Hence the scripture says, “If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not?” 1 John iv. 20. (3.) The scripture says, “Whoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer hath life eternal abiding in himself,” 1 John iii. 15.

Also, “He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes,” 1 John ii. 10.

§ 3. Alms-giving.

Q. 20. What do you mean by alms-giving?

A. The relieving the bodily wants of our neighbour out of the substance of this world which we possess.

Q. 21. Are we full masters of the goods of this world which we call our own, such as riches, lands, and the like?

A. With regard to other men we are, because the good of society, and the order of good government requires that each individual should be secured in the full possession of that portion of the goods of life, which he lawfully acquires, or which naturally devolves to him, and that no one should be allowed to disturb him in the uses he pleases to make of them. But with regard to Almighty God, the case is very different; for he is the sole and absolute master of us and of all we have or possess, and can do with us and all our goods whatever he pleases, so that with regard to him we are only stewards of that portion of worldly goods which we have, and are obliged to use them in the way he commands us.

Q. 22. How do you show this?

A. It scarce needs a proof to a Christian; but however, proofs are not wanting. Thus: “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof, the world and all they that dwell therein,”
Ps. xxiii. 1. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts," Hag. ii. 9. "The land is mine," says Almighty God to his people; "you are strangers and sojourners with me," Lev. xxv. 23. "The Most High ruleth over the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will," Dan. iv. 22, 29. "The blessing of the Lord maketh men rich," Prov. x. 22; for "Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God," Ecclus. xi. 14. "What have you which you have not received?" 1 Cor. iv. 7. All this shows that God is sovereign master of whatever we possess in this world, and that we are obliged to use the goods of this life according to his will, and shall be called to a strict account by him for the use we make of them, is manifest from the parable of the talents, Matt. xxv.; and the punishment of the unprofitable servant: yea, the more we possess of these things, the greater our account shall be, for "he to whom much is given, much shall be required of him; and to whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more," Luke xii. 48. The same also appears from the parable of the unjust steward, who was called to an account and put out of the stewardship, for having wasted his master's goods.

Q. 23. Why has Almighty God distributed the goods of this world in so unequal a manner among men?

A. For several reasons. (1.) For the greater union of society, that all having a mutual dependence on one another, might be linked together with the greater love as members of one body. (2.) For exciting men to industry and labour, in order to earn their bread, he leaves some in poverty; and he gives others riches that they may have wherewith to support those whose industry and labour is of use to them. But (3.) As the great end of the Divine Providence, in his dispensations to men, is the salvation of their souls, he places some in poverty, that by patience, humility and resignation to the will of God, they may sanctify their souls and secure their salvation; and he gives riches to others, that by charity and alms-giving towards the poor, they may do the same. These he makes the stewards of his family, and commits his goods in abundance to them that they, out of that abundance, may supply the wants of all his poor servants under them; and he declares, that what they do to the least of his brethren, he esteems as done to himself.

Q. 24. Does God absolutely command the rich to give alms to the poor?

A. He certainly does; for besides its being included in this
fifth commandment, as necessary for the support of their life, he expressly orders it in other places of the scripture: Thus, "If anyone of your brethren shall come to poverty, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor close thy hand, but thou shalt open it to the poor man; thou shalt lend him that which thou perceivest he hath need of," Deut. xv. 7; and a little after, "There will not be wanting poor in the land of thy habitation; therefore, I command thee to open thy hand to thy poor and needy brother that dwelleth in the land," verse 11. Hence, "Help the poor, because of the commandment, and send him not away empty handed, because of his poverty," Ecclus. xxxix. 12. Also, "But yet that which remaineth give in alms," Luke xi. 41. 

Sell what you possess and give alms; make to yourselves bags which grow not old; a treasure in heaven which faileth not," Luke xii. 33. "Let everyone labour, working with his hand the thing which is good, that he may have something to give him that suffereth need," Eph. iv. 8. "Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded, nor to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God......to do good—to be rich in good works—to give easily—to communicate to others—to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the true life," 1 Tim. vi. 14. See here both the proper use of riches, according to the will of God, and the happy effect of this use of them. Lastly, our Saviour assures us, that the sentence of eternal happiness and misery shall be pronounced upon us at the day of judgment, according as we have, or have not, performed this duty, Matt. xxv. And the rich glutton was condemned for not doing it, to eternal misery, Luke xvi.

Q. 25. Have, then, the poor a right to be helped by the rich?

A. In the sight of God they certainly have; for as God is the common master both of rich and poor, and has given riches to the one, as to a steward in his family, with orders to supply the wants of the poor out of their abundance; for the scripture expressly says, "Let your abundance supply their wants," 2 Cor. viii. 14; therefore, the poor, who are the creatures of God as well as the rich, have a just title, before God, to such supply; just as the lower servants in a great man’s family have a title to have their food and wages from the steward, whom their common master has set over them for this purpose. Hence the scripture calls the alms-giving to the poor a debt, and the refusal of it a defrauding the poor—"Son, defraud not the poor of alms, and turn not away thy eyes from the poor......Bow down thy ear cheerfully to the poor and pay what thou owest," Ecclus. iv. 1, 8.
Q. 26. Is it, then, a great sin to be backward in helping the poor?

A. The scripture says, "he who has the substance of this world, and sees his brother in necessity, and shuts his bowels against him, how does the love of God remain in him?" 1 John iii. 17. And no wonder, for (1.) To neglect the poor is a sin against the providence of God, by disappointing his views, and giving occasion to the poor to complain against it, and a handle to wicked men to deny it; hence, "he who despises the poor reproaches his Maker," Prov. xvii. 5. (2.) It is a sin against the supreme dominion of God in refusing to apply his goods according to his will, as if man were the sole master of them himself. (3.) It is a sin against charity in both its branches. (4.) It is a sin against justice in the sight of God.

Q. 27. Is there any encouragement from scripture, besides the command, to the practice of alms-giving?

A. Very great; for there we are assured, in the strongest terms, that it is of the greatest advantage both to our temporal and spiritual concerns.

Q. 28. How is alms-giving of advantage to our temporal concerns?

A. In several respects; and (1.) As to our worldly goods and possessions, it is the most effectual means to get a blessing upon them, and increase them. " Honour the Lord with thy substance, and give him of the first of all thy fruits; and thy barns shall be filled with abundance and thy presses shall run over with wine," Prov. iii. 9. "He who gives to the poor shall not want," Prov. xxviii. 27. "He that ministereth seed to the sower, will both give you bread to eat, and will multiply your seed, and increase the growth of the fruits of your justice," 2 Cor. x. 10. Nor can we be surprised it should be so; for "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him," Prov. xix. 17; and that with great interest; for, "Give to the Most High according to what he has given to thee, and with a good eye do according to the abilities of thy hands, for the Lord maketh recompense, and will give thee seven times as much," Ecclus. xxxv. 12. Christ himself declares the same truth in these words, "Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure and pressed down and shaken together, and running over," Luke vi. 38. And so earnest is Almighty God in this point, that to convince us how much we may depend on his promises, "Try me in this," saith the Lord, "if I do not open to you the floodgates of heaven, and pour you out a blessing even to abundance," Mal. iii. 10. On the contrary, "He who
despises the poor shall suffer want,” Prov. xxviii. 27. “He that stoppeth his ear against the cry of the poor, himself shall also cry, and shall not be heard,” Prov. xxi. 13. “Some distribute their goods, and grow richer; others take away what is not their own, and are always in want,” Prov. xi. 24. Consider here the examples in scripture of the almighty power of God, in supplying all necessaries to his servants; how he fed the Israelites in the Wilderness; Elias when he fled from Ahab, and the five thousand in the gospel; all which show how easy it is for him to perform all the promises made to alms-giving, and abundantly to repay whatever is given for his sake. (2.) It procures comfort and help in sickness and distress. “Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and poor, the Lord will deliver him in the evil day: The Lord will preserve him, and give him life, and make him blessed upon the earth, and deliver him not up to the will of his enemies. The Lord will help him in his bed of sorrow...thou hast turned all his couch in his sickness,” Ps. xl. 1. “Place thy treasure in the commandments of the Most High, and it shall bring thee more profit than gold. Shut up alms in the heart of the poor, and it shall obtain help for thee against all evil, better than the shield of the mighty, and better than the spear; it shall fight for thee against thy enemies,” Ecclus. xxix. 4. (3.) It brings a blessing upon their posterity. “These were men of mercy, whose godly deeds have not failed; good things continue with their seed...their posterity are a holy inheritance, and their children, for their sakes, remain for ever: their seed and their glory shall not be forsaken,” Ecclus. xlv. 10.

Q. 29. Of what advantage is alms-giving to our spiritual concerns?

A. The scripture mentions what follows: And (1.) In general, “Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and the harbourless into thy house; when thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thy own flesh; then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall speedily arise, and thy justice shall go before thy face, and the glory of the Lord shall gather thee up,” Is. lviii. 7. “He that is inclined to mercy shall be blessed, for he hath given of his bread to the poor,” Prov. xxii. 9. “He that showeth mercy to the poor shall be blessed,” Prov. xiv. 21. “The lips of many shall bless him that is liberal of his bread,” Ecclus. xxxi. 28. “I have shown you all things,” says St. Paul, “how that labouring you ought to support the weak, and to remember the word of the Lord Jesus, how he said, “It is a more blessed thing to give
than to receive,” Acts xx. 35. “Go sell what thou hast,” says Christ himself, “and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven,” Matt. xix. 21. And “When thou makest a feast, call the poor and the maimed, and the lame, and the blind, and thou shalt be blessed, because they have not where-with to make thee recompense; for recompense shall be made thee at the resurrection of the just,” Luke xiv. 13. For “Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward,” Matt. x. 42. (2.) It frees us from sin, by obtaining from God the grace of true repentance, and inclining him to mercy; “Water quencheth a flaming fire, and almsgiving resisteth sins,” Ecclus. iii. 33. “Stretch out thy hand to the poor, that thy expiation and blessing may be perfected,” Ecclus. v. 36. “Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor, for so it shall come to pass, that the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee; for alms deliver from all sin,” Tob. iv. 7, 11. Hence the angel said to Cornelius, “Thy prayers and thy alms are come up as a memorial in the sight of God,” Acts x. And the advice Daniel gave to Nabuchodonosor to avert the impending judgments of God, was this, “Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to thee, and redeem thou thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor,” Dan. iv. 24. (3.) It delivers from death, and secures eternal life; for, “He that followeth justice and mercy shall find life, justice, and glory,” Prov. xxi. 21. “If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little; for thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity, for alms deliver from all sin and from death, and will not suffer a soul to go into darkness,” Tob. iv. 9. “Almsgiving delivers from death, and purges away sin, and maketh a man find mercy and eternal life,” Tob. xii. 9. “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, for I was hungry and you gave me meat,” &c. Matt. xxv.

Q. 30. In what manner ought we to give alms in order to receive all these blessed effects of them?

A. Our alms-giving, to be truly agreeable to God, and profitable to ourselves, must be accompanied with these four conditions. (1.) We must give as to God, and not as to man. This is of the greatest importance, and what properly makes our alms to be charity. Whatever way we behave to the poor, Almighty God looks upon it as done to himself: “He that oppresseth the poor, upbraideth his Maker; but he that hath
pity on the poor, honoureth him,” Prov. xiv. 31. “He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him,” Prov. xix. 17. “Whatsoever you did to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me,” Matt. xxv. 40. In consequence of this, we have seen above, how amply he will repay all the good done to him in the persons of the poor, both in our temporal and spiritual concerns. On the contrary, and for the same reason, he will severely punish those who neglect the poor; for he has declared in scripture, that he is “the refuge, the strength, the protector, and the avenger of the poor;” and assures us that “he that stoppeth his ear against the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself, and shall not be heard,” Prov. xxi. 13. Witness the rich glutton in hell crying for a drop of water. And “he that giveth to the poor shall not want; but he that despiseth his entreaty, shall suffer indigence,” Prov. xxviii. 27. “Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy,” James ii. 13; and that he will pass the sentence of reprobation on them at the last day, who have neglected to assist him in his poor brethren, Matt. xxv. 41. From all which it is manifest, that as Jesus Christ expressly considers all we do to the poor as done to himself, we ought therefore, in giving alms, to look on our poor brother as one sent by Jesus Christ himself asking assistance from us. Had we a lively sense of this truth, what noble effects would it produce? Would we ever dare to reproach or upbraid, or oppress, or insult our poor brother? “If thou didst know the gift of God,” said Jesus Christ to the Samaritan woman, “and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink,” John iv. 10. So if we did but reflect who it is that asketh of us in the person of the poor, instead of being backward to give, or think we did the poor a favour, we should be happy to have the opportunity of giving, and look upon his asking as favour done us?

(2.) We must give with a pure intention for God’s sake. This also is of great importance, and absolutely necessary to make our alms an act of charity. Some give alms out of natural compassion; this is, to be sure, a very amiable disposition, but it is not charity; a heathen, Turk, or Jew would do the same. Some give to be seen by men, and get praise from them; this is vanity and pride, and very far from charity; and our Saviour assures us, that such as these need expect no reward from God, Matt. vi. 2. Some give to be rid of the poor man’s importunity; but this is being no better than the unjust judge in the gospel, who neither feared God, nor regarded man, but yet did justice to the widow, “because she was trouble-
some to him,” Luke xviii. 5. Some give alms out of human respects, because the person who asks for the poor is one whom they stand in awe of; but neither is this charity. Now unless our alms be really acts of charity, they will be of no avail before God. “Though I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor,” says St. Paul, “and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing,” 1 Cor. xiii. 3. To make our alms charity, they must be given purely for the love of God, to please him, to relieve Jesus Christ in his poor members, and for his sake. Hence he himself gives us three excellent rules for our conduct on this matter: (1.) To avoid all ostentation, and never to do or say any thing with a view of letting others know what alms we give. “When thou dost an alms-deed,” says he, “sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honoured by men. Amen, I say to you, that they have received their reward,” Matt. vi. 2. (2.) To endeavour as far as we can to keep secret and hidden from men, the alms we give. “But thou,” he adds, “when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth,” verse 3. (3.) To desire to be known only to God, to offer it up purely for his honour and glory, and to look for our reward only from him; “That thy alms,” says he, “may be in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee,” ver. 4. (3.) We must give abundantly; that is, according to the wants of the poor, and our own abilities. (1.) This is the express command; “Thou shalt open thy hand to the poor man, and thou shalt lend him that which thou perceivest he has need of,” Deut. xv. 8. And therefore, “In this present time,” says St. Paul, “let your abundance supply their wants,” 2 Cor. viii. 14. “According to thy ability stretch out thy hand and give to the poor,” Eccles. xiv. 13. “Give to the Most High according to what he hath given to thee; and with a good eye do according to the ability of thy hands, for the Lord maketh recompense,” Eccles. xxxv. 12. “According to thy ability be merciful; if thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little; for thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity,” Tob. iv. 8. (2.) The measure of our alms to the poor is the measure of the mercy of God to us; for, “with the same measure that thou shalt mete withal, it shall be measured to you again,” Luke vi. 38. We are all poor and beggars in the sight of God, and stand in the utmost need of mercy; now, when we ask mercy from God, in what manner do we ask it? The royal prophet teaches us: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy; and
according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out all my iniquities," Ps. i. 1. And indeed it is not a small mercy that will suffice for us, considering our manifold necessities for soul and body, for time and for eternity. If, therefore, we give but sparingly to the poor; if we be hard-hearted, and close-handed to them; if we show but a small mercy to Jesus Christ in the persons of his brethren, with what face can we ask a great mercy from him, when we know that he has expressly declared, that he will measure to us as we mete to him in the persons of his poor members? Let not thy hand be stretched out to receive, and shut when thou shouldst give," Ecclus. iv. 36. (3.) To give abundantly is to imitate God himself, "who giveth to all abundantly and upbraideth not," James i. 5. Hence, "The eyes of all hope in thee, O Lord, and thou givest them meat in due season; thou openest thy hand, and fillest with thy blessing every living creature," Ps. cxxiv. 15. "Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to him, and his wonderful works to the children of men, for he hath satisfied the empty soul and filled the hungry soul with good things," Ps. cvi. 8. Let every one consider how liberal Almighty God has been to himself, in providing abundance of all necessaries for him since his first coming into the world, and learn from that in what manner he ought to imitate his liberality towards others. It is properly by doing so, that we become children of God; and our Saviour commands us to imitate him in this, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful," Luke vi. 36. (4.) But to make even our abundant alms thoroughly agreeable to God, "we must give them cheerfully;" that is, with a willing heart and a pleasant countenance. This is greatly recommended to us in the word of God: thus, "In every gift show a cheerful countenance......and with a good eye do according to the ability of thy hands, for the Lord maketh recompense," Ecclus. xxxv. 11. "He that giveth let him do it with simplicity......he that showeth mercy with cheerfulness," Rom. xii. 8. The reason is because Jesus Christ, who receives our alms by the hands of the poor, regards more the disposition of the heart with which we give it, than the thing itself we give; and therefore St. Paul, exhorting to this duty of alms-giving, says, "He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly, and he who soweth in blessings shall also reap of blessings. Every one as he hath determined in his heart, not with sadness, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver," 2 Cor. ix. 7. Now there are some very strong incitements to make us give both abundantly and cheerfully, if we consider,
who it is that asks—Jesus Christ. What doth he ask? His own goods. As what does he ask alms. As a favour done to him, as a supply to his necessities, as a loan which he engages to repay, and with great interest. What things do we need from him? Mercy, grace, salvation—all good things for soul and body, for time and eternity. How may we best obtain these things? By giving liberal alms with cheerfulness. What do we give? A bit of bread, a trifle of money. What do we receive? Pardon of our sins and eternal life. Ah, what a profitable bargain! How happy should we be to have an occasion of making it.

From this quality of giving our alms cheerfully, it naturally follows, that we ought also to show great lenity and mildness towards the poor, sympathising with them, and speaking kindly to them even when perhaps it may not be in our power to help them; and by no means to treat them with harshness, remembering that what we do to them, Jesus Christ considers as done to himself. On this head the scripture is very strong: “despise not the hungry, and provoke not the poor in his want. Afflict not the heart of the needy, and defer not to give to him that is in distress......turn not away thy eyes from the poor for fear of anger; and give not to them that ask of thee room to curse thee behind thy back. For the prayer of him that curseth thee in the bitterness of his soul shall be heard; for he that made him shall hear him. Make thyself affable to the congregation of the poor......bow down thy ear cheerfully to the poor, and pay what thou owest, and answer him peaceable words with mildness,” Ecclus. iv. 2. “My son, in thy good deeds make no complaint; and when thou givest any thing, add not grief by an evil word. Shall not the dew assuage the heat? So also the good word is better than the gift......a fool will upbraid bitterly; and a gift of one ill-taught consumeth the eyes,” Ecclus. xviii. 15. “There is a gift that is not profitable; and there is a gift, the recompense of which is double......the gift of a fool shall do thee no good, for his eyes are sevenfold. He will give a few things, and upbraid much; and the opening of his mouth is kindling of a fire,” Ecclus. xx. 10.

Q. 31. But what if a person has little to spare, and is not able to give abundantly?

A. To give abundantly is not measured, in the sight of God, by the quantity given alone, but by what is given, and the abilities of the one who gives it; and if one who has little gives part of that little willingly, he will be as acceptable as another who gives a much greater quantity of his abundance;
nay, a single penny from one may be more abundant alms before God than a pound from another. Thus, "Jesus sitting over against the treasury, and many that were rich cast in much; and there came a certain poor widow, and she cast in two mites, which make a farthing. And calling his disciples together, he said to them, Amen, I say to you, this poor woman hath cast in more than all they who have cast into the treasury; for all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want cast in all she had, even her whole living," Mark xii. 41. Now who is there above the condition of a beggar, but may spare something, though it be but a little, to help those who have less than themselves.

But those who make this objection of having little to spare, let them examine well whence this arises, and perhaps they will find that by a proper management they might have plenty. To understand this, let us consider the following rules laid down in scripture. (1.) "That which remaineth," says our blessed Saviour, "give in alms;" Luke xi. 41; that is, that which remaineth over and above your own real necessaries. The primitive Christians were so observant of this rule, that they frequently fasted themselves, that they might have to help those in want; and the holy Fathers give this as one reason for fasting, that we may have the more to spare to help the poor. This is indeed little to be expected now-a-days; but it deserves to be seriously reflected on by those who indulge themselves in unnecessary delicacies above their station, who frequent idle company, and drinking, who spend their money in gaming, in plays and such like expensive diversions; and then say, they have nothing to spare to assist Jesus Christ in his poor members. Let them consider what excuse they will be able to allege before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, when they will be accused of having spent so much of his goods in the service of their passions and of Satan, that they had not to spare to give to himself when he asked it of them. (2.) "Let him labour," says St. Paul, "working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have something to give to him that suffereth need," Eph. iv. 28. This rule belongs chiefly to those who labour for their bread, and points out to them the use that Almighty God requires they should make of what they earn, such as servants and all single persons, who have none to provide for but themselves, by the trades they follow. Let them examine well by this rule how they spend their gains, and if they find that they throw them away on fine clothes far above their station, and which their forefathers never knew, on com-
pany, on gaming, on drinking or the like, let them consider well how this will stand before God.

Q. 32. But if one has a family to provide for, must he not take care of them, lay in some provisions for them, and even think of old age that is approaching?

A. All these are most excellent reasons when used to hinder one from spending his money in gaming, and drinking, high living, fine clothes, expensive diversions and the like; because then they are reasons of worldly, indeed, but laudable prudence, opposed to the follies of self-love. But when they are used to hinder us from giving alms, while they are not used to stop these follies, they are mere delusions, diabolical reasons, and such as will never stand the test of the sanctuary; because employed against the command of God, and involving in them a grievous insult to his Divine providence, and a distrust in his Divine promises of amply blessing both the temporal affairs, and the children of those who in obedience to his holy will are liberal to the poor. Many have ruined themselves and their families by not using these reasons against the follies of their self-love, but where shall one example be found of those who ruined their families by giving alms.

§ 4. Of Brotherly Correction.

Q. 33. What is brotherly correction?

A. It is a spiritual alms-giving, to the soul of our neighbour, or a charitable admonition to our Christian brother, when we see him either doing any thing which is hurtful to his soul, or in any danger of being led away to do so, made with a view to his spiritual good only.

Q. 34. Are all obliged to perform this duty of brotherly correction?

A. Every one is obliged to perform it in the proper circumstances, both out of charity and by the command of God; but those who have authority over others, such as masters, parents, and pastors of souls, &c., besides these reasons from charity, are also obliged to perform it to all under their charge, as a duty annexed to their office, by which they are bound to take a particular care of the souls of those under them, and not to allow God to be offended by them.

Q. 35. What are the grounds of this duty for all in general?

A. (1.) That charity, or love of our neighbour, which Jesus Christ requires of all his followers; for, as we have seen above,
this love must be founded in, and arise from the love of God, and must tend to God; that is, we must love our neighbour because he belongs to, and is nearly connected with God; and we must show our love to him principally by endeavouring to bring him to God. And, indeed, if the natural affection we have for any friend, makes us have a regard for every thing that belongs to him, and, if we see any thing of his in danger of being lost, makes us use every means in our power to save it for him, how much more ought our love for God to make us do all we can to save our neighbour's soul, and bring it to God, when we see it in danger of being lost to God by sin. (2.) The duty of corporal alms-giving which we owe to our neighbours in their bodily wants; for if we be so strictly obliged in charity to assist him in his corporal necessities, how much more in what regards his soul, and his eternal salvation? (3.) The command of loving our neighbour as Christ loved us; for the love of Christ to us was chiefly directed to the salvation of our souls. All he did and said, and suffered, was intended principally for this end; such, therefore, ought our love for our neighbour to be; and as Christ loved us to that degree, as to lay down his life for the good of our souls, so, says the holy scripture, “we ought to lay down our lives for our brethren;” 1 John iii. 16; namely, when the good of their souls require it. If, therefore, we ought to lay down our lives for the good of our neighbour's soul, how much more to give him an admonition in charity, and in brotherly correction, when we see him in danger of hurting his soul. (4.) Our love of God enjoins the same duty; for how can we pretend to love God, if we see our brother's soul, which is so dear to God, in danger of perishing, and will not speak a word to preserve it? The scripture says, “If any man hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him?” 1 John iii. 17. How much more may it be said, if any one sees his brother's soul in need of spiritual admonition, and shall shut up his bowels from him, and refuse to give it him, how does the charity of God abide in him. (5.) The scripture assures us that “God gave to every one a command concerning his neighbour,” Ecclus. xvii. 12. What this command is we learn from St. Paul, when he says, “We being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another,” Rom. xii. 5. Now, “God hath so tempered the body together......that there might be no schism in the body; but the members might be careful one for another, and if one member suffer any thing, all the members suffer with
it," 1 Cor. xii. 24, 26. Hence, therefore, the command given to every one concerning his neighbour is, to love one another as members of the same body, and "to be careful one for another," and consequently to give all help and assistance to our brother in his wants, especially in those of his soul. (6.) Our blessed Saviour himself expressly commands it: "If thy brother shall offend against thee, go and reprove him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother," Matt. xvii. 15. In which words this duty is clearly commanded, and at the same time the motive of it is plainly pointed out to us; for our Saviour by saying, "If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother," teaches us, that our only view in rebuking him should be, his amendment, and the gaining of his soul, which, by what he was doing, was in danger of being lost. (7.) The same command is several times repeated in scripture, with reasons adjoined to enforce its observance; thus, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart, but reprove him openly, lest thou incur sin through him," Lev. xix. 17. Where we see that our neglect of this duty, where our admonition might have been of service to our brother, renders us partakers of his sin by our silence. So also the wise man says, "Deliver them that are led to death, and those that are drawn to death forbear not to deliver. If thou say, I have not strength enough, he that seeth into the heart, he understandeth, and nothing deceiveth the keeper of thy soul, and he shall render to a man according to his works," Prov. xxiv. 11; that is, when you see your neighbour in danger of the death of the soul, forbear not to deliver him; and though you think your admonition will not succeed, no matter; do your best, and God, who sees the heart, will reward you. And a little after he adds, "They that say to the wicked man, Thou art just, shall be cursed by the people, and the tribes shall abhor him; they that rebuke him shall be praised, and a blessing shall come upon them," verses 24, 25. Again, "Reprove a friend, lest he may not have understood, and say, I did not; or if he did it, that he may do it no more," Ecclus. xix. 13; that is, if you hear any bad report against your brother, admonish him of it, lest it may not have come to his ears that such things are said of him; that if innocent he may defend himself, and if guilty he may amend. Also, "Admonish thy neighbour before thou threaten him, and give place to the fear of the Most High," Ecclus. xix. 17; that is, if your neighbour do any injury to yourself, keep down your anger, and fall not into fits of passion and threatening, but correct him in private with mildness, for fear of
offending God. Lastly, "Reverence not thy neighbour in his fall, and refrain not to speak in the time of salvation," Ecclus. iv. 27; that is, be not ashamed to correct thy neighbour when he falls into any fault, and refrain not to admonish him in what may be of help to his salvation; perhaps that is the time, on making a proper use of which, his salvation may depend. (8.) A great reward is annexed to it; for, "If any of you err from the truth, and one convert him, he must know, that he who caused a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." James v. 19, 20.

Q. 36. Why are the pastors of souls more particularly obliged to admonish and correct the faults of those under their charge?

A. Because, besides the above reasons from charity and the command, which regard them as well as all others, there are several other strong reasons to show that it is particularly incumbent on those who have the charge of others, and especially on the pastors of souls, to admonish those under them, and to correct their faults, as being a duty annexed to their office and strictly enjoined them by Almighty God.

Q. 37. What are these reasons with regard to pastors of souls?

A. Chiefly these: (1.) They are, by their office, intrusted with the care of promoting the glory of God among men, for, "they are taken from among men, and appointed for men in the things that appertain to God," Heb. v. 1. They are the ministers of God, the ambassadors of God, and the dispensers of his mysteries, consequently they are obliged to seek and defend his glory and honour, as the very end of their vocation. Jesus Christ, who is the chief pastor, declares of himself, "that he sought not his own glory, but the glory of his Father, who sent him," John vii. 18—viii. 5; and says, "that if he sought his own glory, his glory was nothing," verse 54. And the night before his passion, he addressed himself to his Father in these words—"I have glorified thee upon earth—I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," John xvi. 4. Now as this was the work committed to Christ by his Father, to glorify him upon earth; so it is also by Christ committed to all those who are pastors of souls under him, to whom he says, "As my Father sent me, I also send you." And Almighty God so strictly requires this duty from them, that he speaks thus to those who neglect it: "And now, O ye priests, to you is this commandment—if you will not hear, if
you will not lay it to heart, to give glory to my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will send poverty upon you, and will curse your blessings; yea, I will curse them, because you have not laid it to heart," Mal. ii. 1. From this it plainly follows, that, as those who have the charge of souls are strictly obliged, by their office, to promote the glory of God among their flock, they are no less obliged to hinder his being dishonoured by them, by admonishing and correcting their people for whatever they see among them contrary to his holy will. (2.) They are also, by their office, entrusted with the care of souls redeemed by the blood of Christ, and have undertaken the charge of bringing these souls to God; consequently they are strictly obliged to use all endeavours to prevent, and take away from these souls, whatever may tend to their ruin and destruction; and therefore, to admonish and correct them for their faults. (3.) The commission which God gave to his priest and prophet Jeremiah, and in him (as their model) to all who have the charge of souls, shows with what courage they ought to perform this duty: "Lo, I have set thee this day over nations and kingdoms, to root up and to pull down, and to waste, and to destroy, and to build and to plant......Thou, therefore, gird up thy loins, and rise and speak to them all that I command thee. Be not afraid at their presence, for I will make thee not to fear their countenance," Jer. i. 10, 17. (4.) The injunction given to Ezechiel, is particularly clear, and dreadfully strong upon this point, and shows the greatness of this duty, both in admonishing the wicked when they do amiss, and the good when they are in danger of offending God: "Son of man," says Almighty God, "I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel......If, when I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, thou declare it not to him, nor speak to him, that he may be converted from his wicked way and live; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hand. But if thou give warning to the wicked, and he be not converted from his wickedness, and from his evil way, he, indeed, shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul. Moreover, if the just man shall turn away from his justice, and shall commit iniquity, I shall lay a stumbling-block before him; he shall die, because thou hast not given him warning; he shall die in his sin, and his justices which he hath done, shall not be remembered; but I will require his blood at thy hand. But if thou warn the just man, that the just man may not sin, and he doth not sin, living he shall live, because thou hast warned
him, and thou hast delivered thy soul," Ezch. iii. 17, &c. This needs no explication—it speaks to the point indeed, and at the same time shows how much the death or salvation of souls may depend upon the omitting or giving them a seasonable and charitable admonition; "He shall die," says God, "because thou hast not given him warning," and again, "living he shall live, because thou hast warned him." The same thing is repeated, Ezch. xxxiii. (5.) Almighty God, speaking to his prophet Isaiah on the duty of warning sinners, expresses himself thus: "Cry—cease not—lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their wicked doings, and the house of Jacob their sins," Is. lviii. 1. And it is given as one of the causes of the ruin of Jerusalem, that their prophets did not lay open their iniquity to the people. "Thy prophets have seen false and foolish things for thee; and they have not laid open thy iniquity to excite thee to penance," Lament. ii. 14. (6.) All these commands and admonitions to the pastors of souls from the Old Testament are confirmed, and greatly enforced by what St. Paul enjoins to his disciple Timothy under the gospel—"I charge thee, before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, by his coming and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, and out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke with all patience and doctrine." And that none who have the charge of souls might be deterred from this duty, lest it be taken amiss, or give offence, he forewarns his disciples that this will sometimes be the case. "There shall be a time when they will not endure sound doctrine ... And will turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned to fables:" Yet this notwithstanding, he immediately adds, "But be thou vigilant—labour, in all things—do the work of an evangelist—fulfil thy ministry," 2 Tim. iv. 1. Do your duty, let them take it as they please; save your own soul; for if you neglect your part, "their blood will be required at your hand," Ezch. iii. In like manner, after giving several advices to Titus, he concludes, "These things speak and exhort, and rebuke with all authority," Titus ii. 15. (7.) To these strong and clear testimonies of Holy Writ add this reason, that if pastors of souls are known to overlook anything which is sinful in any of their people, this proves an encouragement to the delinquent to go on in his evil way, and to think that what he does is not so ill as it is said to be, or that he may do it with impunity, since his pastor takes no notice of it; and it proves also a great encouragement for others to follow the bad example given; and thus the evil
spreads, when those who ought to prevent it, neglect in time to apply the remedy.

Q. 38. What is it that makes men generally so backward in performing this duty?

A. The behaviour of some people in regard to this act of charity is most unchristian. What is it to me? they say; I have no charge of him; I have enough to do to take care of myself; it is his business, let him look to it, and the like. These behave like Cain, who, when God asked him, “Where is your brother Abel?” answered, “I know not; am I my brother’s keeper?” But should they not also fear lest the same sentence be passed on them that was passed on Cain; such behaviour shows, that they have neither the love of God, nor the love of their neighbour; neither zeal for God’s glory, nor concern for their neighbour’s salvation; nor indeed can they have any serious concern for their own soul, when they speak so slightly of a duty which the law of God so strictly enjoins. Others, again, do not show such open disregard of this duty; nay, they are even sensible of its obligation, but are kept back from performing it by various causes. (1.) The fear of displeasing, and losing the friendship and interest of their friend, and at the same time of not doing any good by their admonitions. But they ought to consider, that this fear alone is not an excuse, and that it is often groundless; for, a person may do ill through inadvertency, and when admonished, thinks himself obliged to his friend, and amends. Sometimes he may not know that his fault is known to others, and when this is told him, he is incited to correct it; and though he become a little hot at first, he may afterwards think on the admonition when he cools, and take it in good part, and profit by it. They ought also to reflect on the other danger of the loss of their friend’s soul, it not corrected, and consider whether that, or their own danger of losing his friendship should preponderate; and whether they ought to be directed by a mere human respect, or the command of God. (2.) A consciousness of their being equally guilty themselves of the same fault. But if their own guilt be unknown, though it should be a great confusion to them before God, it ought not to hinder them from this duty, but rather their performing this duty to their brother should be an inducement to them to correct themselves. If their own guilt be known, it ought to give them courage to speak to their neighbour, putting themselves in the same scale, and making their correction fall on themselves as well as on their neighbour at the same time, which will make
their neighbour take it in better part, hurt his pride less, and encourage him by their example. (3.) A certainty that it will do harm, and make their neighbour become worse. When this is really the case, it excuses from this duty, those who are not obliged to it by their office, nor have authority to punish obstinate offenders; because our Saviour says, "Give not that which is holy to dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you, tear you," Matt. vii. 6. And the wise man says,"He that teacheth a scorner, doth an injury to himself; and he that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth himself a blot. Rebuke not a scorner, lest he hate thee; rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee," Prov. ix. 7, 8.

Q. 39. But does not experience show that brotherly correction seldom does good, and often does harm?

A. This is too often seen indeed; but the reason is, because it is too often given in a very improper manner, which destroys all the good effects it might have had, and makes it be taken amiss. Men often reprove and rebuke their neighbour out of pride, showing a contempt of him, and exposing him to the contempt of others; or out of a discontented peevish disposition which takes a pleasure in carping and chiding at every thing: but this, however common in the world, does not deserve the name of fraternal correction.

Q. 40. In what manner then ought it to be given?

A. To do this properly, the following rules are to be observed. (1.) There ought to be a real fault committed, or a real danger incurred: nothing is more disgusting than one who is always chiding and fretting upon every little trifling occasion; admonition from such people can have little or no effect even when a real cause occurs; all they say will be attributed more to their fretful humour and peevishness, than to reason and charity. (2.) It must proceed from real charity, that is, from a real love for the person, and a desire for the good of his soul; for, as our Saviour says, "If he shall hear you, you shall gain your brother;" by this he clearly shows that the motive for correcting should only be with a view to gain him, who might be lost if not admonished. But if the correction arise either from any hatred to the person, or from anger or displeasure, it will always do mischief, and instead of brotherly correction, becomes a sinful vent of one's own passion. It will easily be perceived by the person corrected, whence the correction proceed; if he be convinced it arises from love it cannot fail to be taken well; but if otherwise, it will only provoke and irritate. (3.)
It must be done with meekness and humility, which will always be the case when it flows from real charity. "Brethren," says St. Paul, "if a man be overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual, instruct such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Gal. vi. 1. (4.) It must be done in season, when the person is disposed to receive it; not when in a passion, or obstinately engaged in dispute, or when it exposes him to humiliation before others; because then there is little room to hope for success. (5.) Whoever would correct others profitably, must never presume on himself, but confide in God alone for success, and therefore be earnest in recommending the whole affair to God, who alone can touch the heart, and give a blessing to our words. "Consider the works of God, that no man can correct whom he despiseth," Ecclus. vii. 14.

Q. 41. Are there any other particular rules for those who have the charge of others, in exercising this duty of correction?
A. Their correction ought never to proceed from any other motive than real charity, zeal for the glory of God, and the good of the soul of the person corrected, and from a consciousness of its being their duty; hence all anger and passion ought to be banished far from them, as well as from others, in exercising this duty; but it will be often necessary for them both to correct in public, and punish, where there are small hopes of amendment; for the sake of discipline, and for preventing the fall of others, and lest their silence should be interpreted an approbation.

§ 5. Scandal.

Q. 42. What is scandal?
A. Scandal is the spiritual murder of the soul. Now as the soul can only be spiritually murdered by sin, by scandal is understood any word, or action, or omission, which is either evil in itself, or has the appearance of evil, and on that account is the occasion of our neighbour falling into sin.

Q. 43. How many kinds of scandal are there?
A. Three kinds. (1.) Malicious scandal. (2.) Scandal of weak brethren; and (3.) Pharisaical scandal.

Q. 44. What is malicious scandal?
A. It is when one either directly or indirectly, either by words or actions, occasions others to sin; that is, when one does or says any thing evil, either with the design of causing others to sin, which is giving scandal directly, and intending it;
or when at least he knows, or ought to know that what he says or does will be an occasion for others to sin, though he does not design or intend it: and this is giving scandal indirectly.

Q. 45. Who are those who are guilty of this malicious scandal?

A. (1.) Those who give bad example to those under them, particularly parents to their children, and masters to their servants, by which both children and servants are taught and encouraged to evil; also servants who speak bad words, or do ill actions in presence of the children of the family, which is often a source of great mischief. (2.) Those, who by smooth speeches and alluring words, or by indecent dress or carriage, entice others to sin, or teach them the evil they knew not before, or engage them in dangerous diversions and conversations, which too, too often happens among young people, and is the great means by which impurity, drunkenness, and gaming are promoted. (3.) Those who ridicule and laugh at others on account of their piety and virtue. This is a most lamentable evil, and one of the chief instruments the devil makes use of to advance the reign of impiety and wickedness. (4.) Those who counsel others in their doubts to what is bad and contrary to their duty. (5.) Those who provoke others to anger and cursing, or the like, by insulting language, or to impurity by immodest discourse, unchaste songs and books, indecent actions, or the like. (6.) Those who encourage others in the ill they have done, by praise and flattery; thus, some are found who encourage children and servants to steal from their parents and masters, and bring to themselves, and then praise them for it, as good-natured, kind-hearted, charitable, and the like. (7.) Those who allow young people of different sexes to meet at their houses at untimely hours for drinking, or dancing, or gaming, which is often a source of innumerable crimes.

Q. 46. How great is the evil of this kind of scandal?

A. This will best appear from these considerations: (1.) It is a murder of their neighbour's soul, which is so much the more grievous in the sight of God, as the soul is more precious than the body, and as the death of the soul is more dreadful and fatal than the death of the body; now if the murder of the body cries to heaven for vengeance, what must the murder of the soul do? (2.) In those who do it on purpose, it generally rises from a most malignant envy. Thus, the holy scripture puts these words in the mouth of these unhappy sinners: "Let us lie in wait for the just, because he is not for our turn, and he is contrary to our doings, and upbraideth us with transgres-
sions of the law, and divulgeth against us the sins of our way
of life....He is become a censurer of our thoughts; he is
grievous unto us even to behold; for his life is not like other
men's, and his ways are very different," Wisd. ii. 12, &c. See here
the language of their heart, the secret springs of their conduct;
"His ways are contrary to our doings; he upbraided us; he is
grievous unto us even to behold." The piety of the just man
condemns their negligence; his virtues condemn their vices;
his devotion their irreligion; this galls them to the heart, this
stirs up their envy, and makes them fall upon every hellish
contrivance to make the just man as bad as themselves. Hence,
(3.) It is a diabolical vice, and shows those who are guilty of it
to be instruments and agents of the devil; for, "By the envy
of the devil, death came into the world, and they follow him
who are of his side," Wisd. ii. 14; which is the conclusion the
scripture draws in that chapter wherein the springs of their
conduct are related as above. Nay, Christ himself declares
them to be children of the devil; "You," says he, "are of your
father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do;
he was a murderer from the beginning," John viii. 44. And of
what was he a murderer but of souls? (4.) It is the highest
injury done to Jesus Christ, because it robs him of those souls
for which he shed the last drop of his precious blood; it defeats,
as far as possible, the business for which Christ came into the
world; it is an open and avowed espousing of the interests of
Satan in opposition to God. (5.) The most dreadful woes are
pronounced by Christ himself against those who are guilty of
it; "Woe to the world on account of scandals, for it must
needs be that scandals come; but nevertheless, wo to that man
by whom the scandal cometh," Matt. xviii. 7. How great this
wo is, he tells us in these words: "He that shall scandalize
one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for
him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he
were drowned in the depth of the sea," Matt. xviii. 6. Hear
again how pathetically he addresses them in the persons of the
Pharisees: "Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,
because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you
go not in yourselves, and those that are going in you suffer
not to enter," Matt. xxiii. 13. It is true, the effects of this wo
do not always come upon them visibly in this world; but
see what will be their fate at the great day: "The Son of man
shall send his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom
all scandals, and them that work iniquity, and shall cast them
into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of
teeth," Matt. xiii. 41.
Q. 47. How must innocent people behave to prevent their being corrupted by those who give scandal?

A. (1.) They ought above all things to fly from them, and avoid their company. The old inhabitants of Canaan were a most wicked people; when God brought his people out of Egypt to place them in Canaan, knowing the danger they would run if mixed with the old inhabitants, and at the same time to punish their crimes, he ordered his people to destroy them entirely, and not mix with them, lest they should be a scandal to them. "Thou shalt not enter into a league with them......let them not dwell in thy land, lest perhaps they make thee sin against me, if thou serve their gods, which undoubtedly will be a scandal to thee," Ex. xxiii. 33. And in fact, because they did not observe this order, it proved their ruin; for, "They did not destroy the nations of which the Lord spoke to them; and they were mingled among the heathens, and learned their works, and served their idols, and it became a stumbling-block to them," Ps. cv. 34. Behold the fatal consequences of bad company, and the necessity of flying from it; for, "evil communications corrupt good manners," 1 Cor. xv. 33. On this account the wise man says, "Be not a friend to an angry man, and do not walk with a furious man, lest perhaps thou learn his ways, and take a scandal to thy soul," Prov. xxii. 24. St. Paul also gives the same orders; "Mark those that cause dissensions and offences (that is, scandals) contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, and avoid them," Rom. xvi. 17. And Christ himself ordains the same: "If your right hand or right eye scandalise you;" that is, if the person who scandalises us, be as dear or useful to you as our right hand or right eye, no matter, "cut off the hand," says he, and "pluck out the eye, and throw it from you;" and he immediately adds the reason, "for it is better with one eye or one hand to enter into heaven, than having both to be cast into hell-fire," Matt. xviii. Happy would it be for many modest young women, if they observed this rule, and fled the company of those who should offer the least indecency, or speak an immodest word in their presence, looking upon them as imps of hell, as angels of Satan, and a scandal to their souls. (2.) They ought also to have a great love for the law of God, get themselves well instructed in it, and meditate upon it frequently. One great cause of the ruin of numbers of souls, is their being ignorant of their duty, and therefore, when they fall into bad company, are easily persuaded by them to transgress it, and to believe, from what they see and hear from them, that the evil is not so great as they thought. The only remedy
here, is to know well what the law of God requires of them; for, "Much peace have they that love thy law, and there is no stumbling-block to them," Ps. cxviii. 165. (3.) Fervent and frequent prayer to God is also most necessary for the preservation of their innocence; for as none but God can enable us to avoid and escape the numberless snares laid for our souls, so it is chiefly by prayer that we can obtain his protection against them. The royal prophet was very sensible of this, and therefore prayed thus: "The proud have hid a net for me, they have stretched out cords for a snare, they have laid for me a stumbling-block by the way-side. I said to the Lord, Thou art my God.....give me not up, O Lord, from my desire to the wicked: they have plotted against me, do not thou forsake me, lest they should triumph," Ps. cxxxix.

Q. 48. What is the scandal of weak brethren?

A. This happens when one has no design of drawing others into sin, and does nothing which is in itself sinful; but does what has the appearance of evil, which weak brethren, that is, ignorant and ill-instructed people, seeing, are scandalised at, and take occasion from thence to sin. Thus if a person, for just reasons, has permission to eat flesh in Lent; an ignorant person seeing it, and not knowing the cause, says, If this person eats flesh, why may not I? and upon this, follows the example he sees, without any cause or permission for doing so, and sins.

Q. 49. Is it a sin to give scandal of this kind?

A. When a person foresees that weak people will probably be scandalised at his doing any thing which has the appearance of evil, and though really lawful in itself, that they will it in a bad sense, and be induced by seeing it to commit sin and hurt their souls; in this case, both the love of God and the love of his neighbour oblige him either to abstain from doing what will have such bad effects, or to take such precautions, where it can be done, as will prevent them. And indeed we are commanded to "refrain from all appearance of evil," 1 Thess. v. 22; and to "provide good things not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men," Rom. xii. 17. St. Paul is particularly clear on this point: "Judge this rather," says he, "that you put not a stumbling-block, or a scandal in your brother's way.....for if because of thy meat, thy brother be grieved, thou walkest not now according to charity. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died.....keep the things that are of edification one towards another. Destroy not the work of God for meat. All things indeed are clean, but it is evil for that man who eateth
with offence. It is good not to eat flesh, and not to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother is offended, or scandalised, or made weak," Rom. xiv. 13. Again, writing to the Corinthians, he says, "Take heed lest perhaps this your liberty become a stumbling-block to the weak. For if a man see him that hath knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not his conscience, being weak, be emboldened to eat those things which are sacrificed to idols? and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? Now, when you sin thus against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Wherefore if meat (that is, if my eating flesh) scandalise my brother, I will never eat flesh lest I should scandalise my brother," 1 Cor. viii. 9. And that this was his constant practice on all occasions, appears from what follows: "Give no offence to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God; as I also in all things please all men, not seeking that which is profitable to myself, but to many, that they may be saved," 1 Cor. x. 32. In like manner our Saviour himself, when the tax-gatherers came to demand the tax from him, though he was not obliged to pay, yet wrought a miracle to provide wherewith to pay it, and gave this reason, "That we may not scandalise them," Matt. xvii. 26. Oh how different is this example of Christ and St. Paul, from that of many Christians, who, seeing their weak brethren scandalised at what they do, cry out, "What care I? I am doing no harm, let him look to it."

Q. 50. What is Pharisaical scandal?

A. It is when a person, from the malicious and evil disposition of his own heart, is scandalized even at the good he sees in others; putting the worst construction upon it, and in his own mind turning the virtues of his neighbour into vices. It is called pharisaical, because the Pharisees took this malicious scandal at Christ himself; and all those follow their example, who envy others, whom they see more devout and more pious than themselves or who fall into passion when the truth is told them, or when reproved for their faults, even though by lawful authority.

Q. 51. How must we behave with such people?

A. We must go on doing good, and never be hindered from our duty on that account, as Christ teaches us by his own example; for when his disciples told him the Pharisees were scandalized at some truth he had said, he answered thus, "Let them alone, they are blind, and leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the pit," Mat. xv. 14.
CHAPTER XVI.

THE SIXTH AND NINTH COMMANDS.

Q. 1. What is the sixth command?  

Q. 2. What is the ninth command?  
A. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife," Ex. xx. 17.
Now it is proper to treat of these two together, because they both relate to the same object, and have the same end.

Q. 3. What is the principal design or end of the sixth and ninth commandments?  
A. To direct us in our duty with regard to sensual pleasures.

Q. 4. What are the vices chiefly forbidden by these commands?  
A. Lust and intemperance, whether in eating or drinking.

Q. 5. What are the virtues chiefly enjoined by them?  
A. Chastity and temperance.

§ 1. Chastity.

Q. 6. Is the virtue of chastity or purity agreeable to God?  
A. It is one of those virtues which are most agreeable to God, as appears from several considerations: for, (1.) God calls us in a particular manner to the practice of this virtue, as being that in which our sanctification in a special manner consists. "This is the will of God, your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication, that everyone of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles that know not God......for God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness; therefore he that despiseth these things, despiseth not man, but God," 1 Thess. iv. 3. (2.) Jesus Christ while on earth, showed a particular love for this virtue, and for those who practised it. He would have none but the purest of virgins for his mother; he ever showed a particular love to his virgin disciple St. John, who on that account was called the beloved disciple, and at his death he recommended his virgin mother to none but his virgin disciple. (3.) It makes a person like to the angels themselves; for, as our Saviour says, "At the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married, but be like the angels of God in heaven," Matt. xxii. 30. Nay, as St. Chrysostom observes, it makes a person even
superior to the angels, by the victories gained over the temptations of impurity, of which the angels have no experience. Hence the scripture says, “A holy and shamefaced woman is a grace upon grace,” and, “no price is worthy of a continent soul,” Ecclus. xxvi. 19. (4.) They who practise this virtue have three singular rewards bestowed upon them in heaven above all other saints. The names of the Father and of the Lamb are written on their foreheads; they follow and attend the Lamb whithersoever he goes, and sing a new canticle of praise, which no other can sing but they alone. “And I beheld,” says St. John, “and lo a Lamb stood upon Mount Sion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads......and they sung as it were a new canticle before the throne......and no man could say the canticle but those hundred and forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women; for they are virgins: these follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; these were purchased from among men, the first-fruits to God and to the Lamb,” Rev. xiv. (5.) It is frequently recommended to us in the writings of the apostles; thus, “In all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God ..... in chastity,” 2 Cor. vi. 4, 6. “The fruit of the Spirit is charity......modesty, continency, chastity,” Gal. vi. 22. “Be thou an example to the faithful in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity,” 1 Tim. iv. 12. And the state of celibacy, in which this virtue is practised in the greatest perfection, is preferred to that of matrimony, as being much more convenient for sanctifying the soul, freeing us from many cares and avocations which attend the married state, and leaving the mind at liberty to attend freely to the service of God. “He that is without a wife, is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit. But she that is married, thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your profit, that you may have power to attend upon the Lord without impediment,” 1 Cor. vii. 32. Upon these grounds he concludes thus: “He that giveth his virgin in marriage doth well, but he that giveth her not doth better,” verse 33.
§ 2. Of Luxury, or Lust.

Q. 7. What is lust?
A. By lust is meant an inordinate desire of carnal pleasure, and it comprehends under it every unlawful violation of the virtue of chastity, whether in thought, word, or deed, or all kinds of impurity or uncleanness.

Q. 8. Is lust a grievous sin?
A. It is of its own nature a most grievous and mortal sin in all its different kinds and degrees; as appears both from its innate malice, as discovered to us by the word of God, and from the punishments inflicted on those who were guilty of it, and from its fatal effects.

Q. 9. In what consists the malice of this vice?
A. In several enormities; (1.) It is a grievous injury to God, because it pollutes his temple; “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? but if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which ye are,” 1 Cor. iii. 16. (2.) It is an injury to Jesus Christ, because it pollutes his members. “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid......or know you not that he who is joined to a harlot is made one body?......but he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Fly fornication,” 1 Cor. vi. 15. (3.) It is an injury done to our own body. “Fly fornication,” says the apostle; “every sin that a man doth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.” And he immediately shows wherein this sin against our body consists. “Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God? and you are not your own, for you are bought with a great price,” 1 Cor. vi. 18, 19. As therefore, our bodies are not our own, but belong to God who has bought them with a great price, and intends them for his dwelling-place, it is a grievous injury done them to pervert them from so noble a use, by defiling them with impurity. So also our Saviour says, “Out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, and these are the things which defile a man,” Matt. xv. 19. (4.) It is an injury to the Christian religion which we profess; hence, “But fornication and all uncleanness, let it not be so much as named among you, as becometh saints,” Eph. v. 3. (5.) It is of its own nature more grievous than many other
sins, for, "The fault is not so great when a man hath stolen; for he stealeth to fill his hungry soul, and if he be taken he shall restore seven-fold, and shall give up all the substance of his house; but he that is an adulterer for the folly of his heart, shall destroy his own soul: he gathereth to himself shame and dishonour, and his reproach shall not be blotted out," Prov. vi. 20.

Q. 10. How does the malice of the sin of impurity appear from the punishment inflicted upon those who were guilty of it?

A. From this obvious consideration, that God, being a God of infinite justice, can never punish a sin more than it deserves; and being also a God of infinite mercy, he generally punishes sin less than it deserves, especially in this world, where mercy is above justice. If, therefore, we see this God of Justice and mercy punishing any particular sin in a more dreadful manner than others, this must be a most convincing proof how abominable that sin must be in itself, and how detestable in the eyes of God. Now we find that God has punished those who were guilty of impurity, with the greatest severity even in this life, and threatens them with still more dreadful effects of his vengeance in the life to come.

Q. 11. What are the scripture examples of punishing the sin of impurity in this life?

A. Chiefly these following: (1.) When the angels fell in heaven, and our first parents in paradise, Almighty God punished them indeed, but he showed no regret for having created them; but "when the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were beautiful, and had gone in to them," and by this means the sin of impurity became universal, so that "the earth was corrupted before God, and defiled with wickedness;" to express his abhorrence of these abominations, the scripture says, that God "repented that he had made man upon the earth; and being touched inwardly with sorrow of heart, he said, I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth; from man even to beasts and from the creeping things even to the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them," Gen vi. 6. What a strange expression from Almighty God! But how strongly does it show how detestable these sins of lust must be in his eyes! Especially when we see that in order to cleanse the earth from these abominations, he sent the waters of the deluge, and drowned the whole world, eight persons only excepted, who were found just before him. (2.) When the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and other neigh-
bouring cities, had given themselves up to sins of impurity, the malice of their crime was so great, that the scripture says, "It cried to heaven for vengeance," Gen. xviii. 20.—xix. 13. In consequence of which Almighty God, to show his detestation of that vice, rained down fire and brimstone from heaven upon them; "And overthrew these cities, and destroyed all the country about, and all the inhabitants of these cities and all things that spring from the earth," Gen. xix. 24, 25. By which that country, which before was like the paradise of God, Gen. xiii. 10, was turned into a lake of stinking water, which remains to this day an eternal monument of the detestation God has to the sins of uncleanness. (3.) When Onias committed a sin of lust, by which he defiled the marriage bed, he was immediately struck dead, "because," says the scripture, "he had done a detestable thing," Gen. xxxvii. 9, 10. (4.) When the king of Moab sent a number of beautiful women into the camp of the people of Israel to seduce them, and the people had sinned with them, Almighty God was so enraged at their crime, that by his express command, no less than twenty-four thousand were put to death, in order to expiate their offence, Num. xxv. 9.

Q. 12. What punishments in the next life are threatened against those who are guilty of these crimes?

A. These, indeed, are dreadful beyond measure; for the scripture declares, (1.) that God himself will be their judge: "Fornicators and adulterers God will judge," Heb. xiii. 4. And the same scripture assures us, that "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. x. 31. (2.) That they shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven: "Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor liars with mankind...shall possess the Kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 9. "For know ye this, and understand, that no fornicator, or unclean, nor covetous person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God," Eph. v. 5. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury...of the which I foretel you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God," Gal. v. 19, 21. (3.) That they shall be reserved to be tormented in a special manner at the day of judgment, to wit by the dreadful shame and confusion with which they shall then be covered. "The Lord," says St. Peter, "knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation; but to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be tormented, and especially them who walk after the flesh in the lust of
uncleanness;” 2 Pet. ii. 9, 10. (4.) That they shall be condemned to hell-fire: “The unbelieving, and the abominable, and whoremongers, and sorcerers...shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death,” Rev. xxi. 8.

Q. 13. Does the scripture express the grievousness of this sin of uncleanness in any other manner?

A. Frequently; Thus, (1.) Almighty God, speaking of two false prophets, says, “I will deliver them up to the king of Babylon, and he shall kill them before your eyes; and of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Juda that are in Babylon, saying, The Lord make thee like Sedecias, and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon fried in the fire: because they have acted folly in Israel, and have committed adultery with the wives of their friends,” Jer. xxix. 22. And he immediately adds, “for I am Judge and witness, saith the Lord.” (2.) Speaking of the ruin of the city of Niniveh, on account of the sins of its inhabitants, Almighty God expresses himself thus, “Because of the multitude of thy fornications....behold I come against thee, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will discover thy shame to thy face, and will show thy nakedness to the nations, and thy shame to kingdoms; and I will cast abominations upon thee, and will disgrace thee and will make an example of thee,” Nahum iii. 4, 11. (3.) The scripture also, speaking of adultery, saith, “This is a heinous crime, and a most grievous iniquity; it is a fire that devoureth even to destruction, and rooteth up all things that spring,” Job xxxi. 11. “Every man that passeth beyond his own bed, despising his own soul, and saying, Who seeth me? Darkness encompasseth me about, and the walls cover me, and no man seeth me. Whom do I fear? The Most High will not remember my sin....And he knoweth not that the eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most secret parts....This man shall be punished in the streets of the city, and he shall be chased as a colt; and where he suspecteth not, he shall be taken. And he shall be in disgrace with all men, because he understood not the fear of the Lord. So every woman also that leaveth her husband, and bringeth an heir by another. For first, she hath been unfaithful to the law of the Most High; and secondly, she hath offended against her husband; thirdly, she hath played the whore in adultery, and hath gotten her children of another man....her children shall not take root, and her branches shall bring forth no fruit;
she shall leave her memory to be cursed, and her infamy shall not be blotted out," Ecclus. xxiii. 25.

Q. 14. How does the heinousness of lust appear from its effects?

A. Its effects are many and most deplorable. (1.) It occasions a blindness of the understanding, a hardness of heart, a thoughtlessness and insensibility with regard to the judgments of God, and the truths of eternity; a coldness and aversion to God and every thing that is good, a strong attachment to this world, and a horror and despair with regard to the life to come. (2.) It frequently leads to many other grievous sins; thus it hurried Joseph’s mistress to the blackest calumny and oppression of the innocent; David to adultery and murder; Solomon to idolatry: the two elders to calumny, perjury, and putting the innocent Susannah to death as far as lay in them. It hurries on many to murder their own child, both soul and body, by procuring abortion, or killing it when born; and it is one of those sins, which the devil most commonly makes a handle of to tempt those who fall into it, to conceal it in confession, and by this means throws them into a pit, out of which it is a miracle if ever they rise. (3.) If a person once become a slave to this vice, it is of such a pestiferous and bewitching nature, that there is scarce any hope left of his conversion: thus, the wise man, speaking of the unchaste woman, says, “Her house inclineth to death, and her paths to hell; none that go in to her shall return again, neither shall they take hold of the paths of life,” Prov. ii. 18. And the prophet Hosea declares that “they shall not set their thoughts to return to their God, for the spirit of fornication is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord,” Hos. v. 4. These are some of the fatal effects of impurity, which clearly show how dreadful and detestable a crime it is.

Q. 15. Are all the different degrees of this sin forbidden?

A. Such is the malignity of this vice, and so detestable is it in the sight of God, that every kind and degree of it is strictly forbidden; so that every voluntary and deliberate consent to the carnal pleasure of impurity, whether in the desires and thoughts of the heart, or in immodest words, songs, or books, or in unchaste embraces, looks, or touches, except in the lawful use of marriage, is highly criminal in the sight of God, as appears from several reasons: (1,) Because one of the Ten Commandments, to wit, the ninth, expressly forbids all desires of this fatal crime—“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife;” now, “If thou wilt enter entire into life, keep the command-
ments." If, therefore, the sixth command forbid the criminal action, and the ninth forbid the very desire of it, which is the first motion of the will towards it, of course all the intermediate degrees are strictly forbidden also; and as the keeping of these commands is a condition of salvation, the transgressing them is a grievous sin, destructive of salvation on this account. (2.) Our Saviour expressly says, "You have heard that it was said to them of old, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say to you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart," Matt. v. 27, 28. Where we see that the very lustful desires of the heart, and unchaste looks, bring the guilt of adultery itself upon the soul in the sight of God: how much more will any voluntary delight in the carnal pleasure of lust, whether from unchaste words or actions, render the soul criminal before him. (3.) Job says, "I have made a covenant with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin; for what part should God above have in me, and what inheritance the Almighty from on high?" Job xxxi. 1; that is, I have made a firm resolution with myself, not to admit any unchaste looks on a virgin, knowing that if I did so, I should lose my part with God, and his inheritance on high; and St. Peter, describing the impious, "who," he says, "shall perish in their corruption;" among other things says of them, "Having eyes full of adultery, and of sin that ceaseth not, alluring unstable souls... children of malediction," 2 Pet. ii. 14. (4.) The scripture expressly forbids all immodest words, as a thing inconsistent with the sanctity of a Christian. "But fornication and ALL UN-CLEANNESS, let it not be so much as named among you as becometh saints," Eph. v. 3. (5.) Because all these degrees of impurity are not only criminal in themselves, and contrary to the law of God, but from the peculiar malignity of this vice, are all incentives and snares to drag on the poor soul to greater degrees of guilt; and on this account also, all unchaste books, songs, conversations, and the like, are highly unlawful, from the danger to which they expose a person of falling into greater degrees of this sin, for, "evil communications corrupt good manners," and "he who loves the danger shall perish in it," Ecclus. iii. 27.

Q. 16. What ought a Christian to think of plays and promiscuous meetings of dancing?

A. We may judge of this from the following passages of scripture, and from reason. (1.) "Use not much the company of her that is a dancer, and hearken not to her, lest thou perish
by the force of her charms." Ecclus. ix. 4. Now, "he who loves the danger shall perish in it." (2.) Job, describing those who indulge themselves in these things, tells us also how they end at last. "Their little ones go out like a flock, and their children dance and play; they spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to hell," Job. xxxi. 13, 14. (3.) We see what judgment Almighty God passes on these things, from what he says in Isaiah, "And the Lord said, Because the daughters of Sion are haughty, and have walked with stretched out necks, and wanton glances of their eyes, and made a noise as they walked with their feet, and moved in a set pace; the Lord will make bald the crown of the head of the daughters of Sion, and the Lord will discover their hair. In that day the Lord will take away the ornaments of shoes and little moons, and chains and necklaces, and bracelets, and bonnets, and bodkins, and ornaments of the legs, and tablets, and sweet balls, and ear-rings, and rings, and jewels hanging on the forehead, and changes of apparel, and short cloaks, and fine linen, and crisping pins, and looking-glasses, and lawns, and head bands, and fine veils, and instead of a sweet smell, there shall be a stench, and instead of a girdle, there shall be a cord; and instead of curled hair, baldness; and instead of a stomacher, haircloth," Is. iii. (4.) In baptism we solemnly renounce the poms and vanities of the devil and the world; now, if promiscuous dancing, and stage plays, and extravagant dress, be not a part of these poms and vanities, what are such? (5.) It is remarkable that among the people of God in the old law, we read of no promiscuous dancing, much less of stage plays; we read indeed of companies of women dancing by themselves upon some solemn occasions of joy; as of Mary the Prophetess, the sister of Moses, who after the passage of the Red Sea, went out, and led a chorus of women singing praises to God; and of all the women in the reign of Saul, who after the defeat of Goliah, came out in singing and dancing, saying, "Saul hath killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands," but we no where read of men and women dancing together. Such promiscuous dancing and stage plays arose only from the heathens, and from them entered in among Christians. (6.) These entertainments are exceedingly dangerous, and apt to raise the strongest temptations of impurity in the mind. The holy scripture says, "Gaze not upon a maiden, lest her beauty be a stumbling-block to thee," Ecclus. ix. 5. "Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up, and gaze not about upon another's beauty, for many have perished by the beauty of a woman, and hereby lust is enkindled as a fire," verse 8.
Now what is to be met with on both these occasions, but people of both sexes dressed up in the most elegant manner, to set off their beauty or persons to the best advantage, by which they become a snare to one another? "There," says the famous Petrarch, Dial. 24, "all liberty given to the hands, to the eyes, to the voice, there the noise of the feet, and of different musical instruments, the running about, and often the darkness of the night, that enemy of all modesty, extinguish all fear and shame, and are the instruments to lust and impurity." Let every one who has frequented these things examine impartially his own heart, and he will be sensible of the danger that attends them; now, he that loves the danger shall perish in it. (7.) These entertainments dissipate the mind, cool all sense of devotion, extinguish the fervour of piety, fill the soul with a thousand distracting idle ideas, and the least that can be said of them is, that the time spent there is all lost for eternity; so that we may conclude, that these amusements are never useful, always dangerous, and for the most part pernicious to the soul. Those who fear God will therefore avoid them.

Q. 17. As this vice of impurity is so detestable, and withal so dangerous, what must one do to avoid and escape its snares?

A. The principal preservatives against it, are these three: I. To fly with horror all the dangerous occasions and inlets to it, that is, everything that can tend to excite any unchaste thought or idea in the mind. Thus, the eyes must be turned away from indecent and dangerous objects, the ears from hearing immodest discourse or obscene words, and the like; and if upon occasion, a person be so situated that he cannot avoid hearing such words, he ought by no means to seem pleased, or express any approbation of them, otherwise he is both exposed to the danger of going greater lengths, and by his approbation, becomes no less guilty than those who speak them. Without this precaution of avoiding these occasions, there is no security; everything else we can do will be to no purpose, if we do not fly from the danger. Of this the scripture speaks as follows, (1.) "Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up, and gaze not upon another’s beauty; for many have perished by another’s beauty, and hereby lust is enkindled as a fire," Ecclus. ix. 8, 9. (2.) "Many by admiring the beauty of another man’s wife, have become reprobate, for her conversation burneth as a fire," Ecclus. ix. 11. (3.) "Sit not at all with another man’s wife, nor repose upon the bed with her......lest thy heart incline towards her, and by thy
blood thou fall into destruction," Ecclus. ix. 12. (4.) "The lips of a harlot are like a honeycomb dropping, and her throat is smoother than oil. But her end is bitter as wormwood, and sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down into death, and her steps go as far as hell," Prov. v. 3. (5.) "I have found a woman more bitter than death, who is the hunter's snare, her heart is a net and her hands are bands," Ecclus. vii. 27. In which testimonies we see, how much we ought to fly all looking, conversing, being in company with, or touching dangerous objects, if we desire to save our souls from being ruined by this vice. And for the same reasons all other occasions that lead to it are equally to be avoided, such as immodest books, love songs, reading plays, romances, &c.

II. To resist with vigour and resolution the first attacks of the temptation. "Give not place to the devil," says the holy apostle St. Paul, Eph. iv. 27; but "resist the devil and he will fly from you," James iv. 7. This sin commonly proceeds by degrees. The devil seldom tempts a virtuous person with the greater degrees of this vice all at once; but if he succeed in a lower degree, this paves the way to a higher. Hence, our success depends in a great measure upon our vigorously resisting these first beginnings, which are more easily overcome, while the enemy is weak and we strong. "Blessed is he that shall take and dash these little ones against the rock," Ps. cxxxvii. 9. Now, these attacks may rise either from within ourselves, or from others. If bad thoughts begin to arise in our own minds, the most effectual remedy against them is, upon our first observing them, to beat them off with as much vigour as we would throw away a burning coal that should fall upon our clothes, and forcibly to turn our mind to some good object, such as death, judgment, heaven, or hell; for, as the scripture says, "In all thy works remember thy last things, and thou shalt never sin," Ecclus. vii. 40; or, which is the most effectual of any, to Jesus Christ dying upon the cross, and with an humble confidence in him, to beg his help and assistance. This is a shield which, when properly used, never fails to repel all the fiery darts of the enemy; or as those who were stung with the fiery serpent, in the wilderness, were effectually cured of the mortal bite when they turned their eyes to the brazen serpent, set up in the middle of the camp, as a figure of Christ upon the cross; so whosoever is stung by the infernal serpent with temptations to impurity, will find an immediate cure of his mortal bite, if he turn the eyes of his soul with humility and love to his blessed Saviour.
upon the cross, begging help and assistance from him. But if the temptation arise from others, who either by immodest discourse, or songs, or using indecent liberties of the touch, stir up impure temptations in the mind, the only remedy is, to consider all such as angels of Satan, and to fly from them with abhorrence; for there is no safety here but in flight.

III. The third remedy is fervent prayer to God, to be preserved from this detestable vice, accompanied with proper and discreet bodily mortification. "As I knew," says the wise man, "that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it, and this also was a point of wisdom to know whose gift it was: I went to the Lord, and besought him with my whole heart," Wisd. viii. 21. This is one of that kind of devils of which our Saviour says, that they "are not cast out but by prayer and fasting," Matt. xvii. 20. And St. Paul declares, "that he chastised his body, and kept it in subjection, lest while he preached to others he himself should become a castaway," 1 Cor. ix. 27. He knew from his own experience how much the flesh warred against the spirit," Rom. vii. and Gal. v. 17; and that the most effectual way to conquer the flesh in this dangerous battle, was to weaken its strength by proper chastisements, and to keep it under subjection; therefore he declares that those who belong to Christ "have crucified their flesh with its vices and lusts," Gal. v. 24. Now, under prayer as a necessary remedy against this vice, is contained all kinds of prayer, but particularly the daily practice of mental prayer, or meditation upon the great truths of eternity; and under mortification is included not only fasting and other corporal austerities, but also the practice of self-denial in the objects of all the senses, especially in vanity of dress, and seeking to make a show and appearance in the world, in curiosity, or the desire of knowing and meddling with things which do not concern us, in idleness, which is the mother and inlet to all vice, and what regards the pleasure of the taste, in eating and drinking which is done by the virtue of temperance.

Q. 18. Is it a sin to be tempted with immodest thoughts?

A. By no means; it is no sin to be tempted with any kind of evil thoughts; our Saviour himself, who was incapable of sin, was tempted for our consolation. The sin is only committed when we yield to these thoughts, or voluntarily entertain them, and consent to them.
§ 3. Temperance or Sobriety.

Q. 19. What is the virtue of temperance?

A. Temperance is a virtue which directs us to the right and lawful use of all sensual pleasures in general; but here we are to consider it only as it regards the pleasures of eating and drinking. In this light it is called sobriety, and teaches us to observe the due moderation in the use of meat and drink, so as never to exceed in quantity, nor be nice and delicate as to the quality nor give any signs of too great an attachment to those pleasures either by fondly speaking about them, or by an unseasonable or voracious use of them; and the vices opposite to this, are gluttony and drunkenness.

Q. 20. Is sobriety much recommended in scripture?

A. It is very much recommended to us, (1.) As a virtue proper to all true Christians. “You all are children of the light, and children of the day; we are not of the night nor of darkness, therefore let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch and be sober; for they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that are drunken, are drunken in the night; but let us who are of the day be sober, having on the breastplate of faith and charity, and for a helmet the hope of salvation,” 1 Thess. v. 5. And St. Paul, instructing his disciple Titus in the advices to be given to different states of people, both ecclesiastics, old men, women, and young men, always mentions sobriety as one necessary point to be recommended to them.—See Titus i. 7, 8; and ii. 2, 3, 5, 6. (2.) As one of the principal things which the Son of God came down from heaven to teach mankind: for, “The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us, that denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and piously, in this world,” Titus ii. 12. (3.) As a necessary qualification of the hope of a Christian: “Wherefore having the loins of your mind girt up, being sober, trust perfectly in the grace which is offered you,” 1 Pet. i. 13 (4.) As a most necessary means for avoiding the snares of the devil: “Be sober and watch, because your enemy the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour,” 1 Pet. v. 8. (5.) As a special gift from God. “God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of sobriety,” 2 Tim. i. 7. (6.) As a virtue necessary for salvation, especially in women; for “Adam was not seduced, but the woman being seduced was in the transgression; yet she shall be saved through childbearing, if she continue in faith, and love, and sanctification with sobriety,” 1 Tim. ii. 14. (7.) As greatly conducing to
health of body and long life. "Sound and wholesome sleep is with a moderate man: he shall sleep till morning, and his soul shall be delighted with him," Ecclus. xxxi. 24. "He that is temperate shall prolong life," Ecclus. xxxvii. 34.

§ 4. Gluttony and Drunkenness.

Q. 21. What is gluttony?
A. It is an inordinate love of the pleasure of eating; and shows itself either in eating to excess, or being nice and delicate as to the quality and dressing of one's meat, or in eating with voracity, or out of due season, or in speaking about meats and eating with fondness and affection.

Q. 22. Is gluttony, especially eating to excess, a grievous sin?
A. On this head the scripture teaches as follows: (1.) As to its effects in the body and goods. "Be not greedy in any feasting, and pour not out thyself upon any meat; for in many meats there will be sickness, and greediness will turn to choler. By surfeiting many have perished, but he that is temperate shall prolong life," Ecclus. xxxvii. 34. "He that loveth good cheer shall be in want; but he that loveth wine and fat things, shall not be rich," Prov. xxi. 17. "Sleep is sweet to the labouring man, whether he eat little or much, but the fulness of the rich will not suffer him to sleep," Eccles. v. 11. (2.) As to the soul, our Saviour, after relating all the terrors of his second coming, concludes with this command, "Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly; for as a snare it shall come upon all that sit upon the earth," Luke xxi. 34. St. Paul also says, "Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; Let us walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness;" rioting, that is feasting, as in the original, Rom. xiii. 12, and Gal. v. He numbers gluttony among the works of the flesh, which exclude from the kingdom of heaven. The same holy apostle gives it as a sign of those who serve not Christ, but adhere to false doctrine. "Such as these," says he, "serve not Christ our Lord, but their own belly," Rom. xvi. 18. And he laments them in these moving words, "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame," Phil. iii. 18. (3.) As to the fatal consequences it produces; it was the sin of our first parents, and the original cause of all our
woe in this miserable valley of tears; by it Esau lost his birthright; it brought down the wrath of God upon his people in the wilderness. "As yet their meat was in their mouths, and the wrath of God came upon them, and he slew the fat ones among them, and brought down the chosen men of Israel," Ps. lxxvii. 30. It was one great part of the crime of the rich glutton, for which, when he died, his soul was buried in hell. It was part of the crime of those who were destroyed by the deluge; of which our Saviour says, "In the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, even till that day in which Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not, till the flood came and took them all away," Matt. xxiv. 38. It was also part of the sin of Sodom, which brought upon that people such swift destruction; "Behold," says Almighty God, "this was the sin of Sodom, pride, fulness of bread and abundance, and the idleness of her and of her daughters," Ezek. xvi. 49.

Q. 23. Is drunkenness a grievous sin?

A. Drunkenness is of its own nature a mortal sin, as appears from repeated testimonies of the holy scripture. (1.) As to the evil of it in general, "He that is delighted in passing his time over wine, leaveth a reproach in his strong-holds," Prov. xii. 11. "Wine is a luxurious thing, and drunkenness riotous; whosoever is delighted therewith shall not be wise," Prov. xx. 1. "Look not upon the wine when it is yellow, when the colour thereof shineth in the glass; it goeth in pleasantly, but in the end it will bite like a snake, and will spread abroad poison like a basilisk," Prov. xxiii. 31. "Wine drunken with excess is bitterness to the soul. The heat of drunkenness is the stumbling-block of the soul, lessening strength, and causing wounds," Ecclus. xxxi. 39. (2.) Many woes are pronounced against it. "Who hath woe? whose father hath woe? who hath contentions? who fall into pits? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? Surely they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink off their cups," Prov. xxiii. 29. "Woe to you that rise up early in the morning to follow drunkenness, and to drink till the evening to be inflamed with wine," Is. v. 11. And not only against those who get drunk, but also those who are strong to drink great quantities, the woe is equally pronounced. "Woe to you that are mighty to drink wine, and are stout men at drunkenness," Is. v. 22. "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkenness of Ephraim ......the drunkenness of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot," Is. xxviii. 1, 3. (3.) It excludes from the kingdom of heaven.
“Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers......nor drunkards......shall possess the kingdom of heaven,” 1 Cor. vi. 9. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness...drunkenness, revellings, and such like, of which I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of heaven,” Gal. v. 19. (4.) It leads and exposes one to the greatest crimes, and to the most fatal consequences. By it Noah was exposed to the ridicule of his son; which brought a fatal curse upon a large branch of his posterity. By it Lot was induced to commit a double incest: by it Holophernes lost his life; by it Herod was hurried on to murder St. John the Baptist. It changes men into brutes; robs them of their reason; destroys their health; brings on them many diseases; shortens their lives; consumes their substance; reduces them to poverty; destroys the peace of their families; reduces their children to want; foments their passions and lusts; makes them slaves to their sensual inclinations; renders them totally unfit for all spiritual duties; opens the door to all temptations; shuts up all access to the grace of God; and when once it is become a habit, it is seldom or ever cured, but drags down the poor soul to hell-fire.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON THE SEVENTH AND TENTH COMMANDS.

Q. 1. What is the seventh command?
A. “Thou shalt not steal,” Ex. xx. 15.

Q. 2. What is the tenth command?
A. “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s goods,” Ex. xx. 17.

Q. 3. What is the general end and design of these two commands?
A. To direct us in the duties we owe to our neighbour in regard to the temporal goods he possesses.

Q. 4. What are the sins forbidden by these commands?
A. All unjust taking away or retaining what belongs to another against his will. This may be done either (1.) By secret fraud, which is called theft, or (2.) By open violence, which is called rapine or robbery. These commands also forbid all unjust desires of our neighbour’s goods or profits: which is the vice of avarice or covetousness.
Q. 5. What are the virtues enjoined by these commands?
A. To render to every one his own, which is called restitution; and to pay our just and lawful debts.

§ 1. Theft.

Q. 6. What is theft?
A. Theft is the unjust taking away or retaining what belongs to another against his will, by secret fraud.

Q. 7. What do you understand by secret fraud?
A. All those hidden ways of taking our neighbour's goods from him by stealing, cheating, deceiving, or imposing upon him, which he is not sensible of himself when done to him.

Q. 8. Is theft a grievous sin?
A. It is of its own nature a very great and mortal sin, as is manifest from these following reasons. (1.) It is a breach of the law of nature, which forbids us to do to others what we would not have others to do to us; now if we examine our own heart, we shall clearly see that there is nothing that touches us more to the quick, than to be wronged of our goods, either by force or fraud. (2.) It is a breach of justice, which obliges us to wrong no man, but to render to every man what is his own. (3.) It is a great breach of charity; for it seldom fails to occasion great distress of mind to our neighbour, and frequently of body too; for from this source arise too, too often, anger, suspicions, rash judgments, quarrels, and enmity. (4.) It is a breach and violation of the positive law of God; for the seventh command of the law expressly forbids all unjust actions, and the tenth forbids all unjust desires of what belongs to our neighbour. Consequently every intermediate degree of wronging our neighbour in his goods, in thought, word, or deed, is strictly forbidden by this divine law. (5.) Besides the prohibition of the law, the word of God condemns it in the strongest manner, both in general, and in regard to the particular kinds of it.

Q. 9. What does the holy scripture say against this vice in general?
A. I. The word of God expressly forbids it, as a thing contrary to the will of God, and to the sanctification of our souls, and which therefore he will severely punish. "This is the will of God," says St. Paul, "your sanctification......that no man over-reach or deceive his brother in business; because the Lord is the avenger of all such things, as we have told you before, and we have testified," 1 Thess. v, 6. Hence we find several
dreadful punishments are threatened against those who are guilty of it, as (1.) Poverty; "some distribute their own goods and grow richer; some take away what is not their own, and are always in want," Prov. xi. 24. "Woe to him that heapeth together that which is not his own; how long also does he load himself with thick clay?" that is, ill-gotten goods, like mire, both burden and defile the soul. "Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee? and they be stirred up that shall tear thee, and thou shalt be a spoil to them?" Hab. ii. 6. "And I saw, and behold a roll flying......the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. And the angel said to me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the earth; for every thief shall be judged as is there written; ......and it shall come into the house of the thief, and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and it shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof," Zach. v. A dreadful curse indeed, long and broad! (2.) Short life, and very often untimely death. "He that hath gathered riches, and not by right, in the midst of his days, he shall leave them, and in his latter end he shall be a fool," Jer. xvii. 11. And how many are brought to disgrace when their dishonesty is discovered? how many brought to a shameful death in punishment of it? (3.) The ruin and misery of their children. Thus speaking of the unjust man, the scripture says, "His children shall be oppressed with want," Job xx. 10. "Woe to him that gathers together an evil, covetousness to his house, that his nest may be on high, and thinketh he may be delivered out of the hand of evil. Thou hast devised confusion to thy house...for the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the timber that is between the joints of the building shall answer," Hab. ii. 9. "He that buildeth his house at other men's charges, is as he that gathereth himself stones to build in the winter," Ecclus. xxi. 9; to wit, his house shall soon fall, because in winter the lime will not bind nor fix the stones, so that it can have no duration.

II. It makes our prayers and all our other good works hateful and detestable to God. "Do not offer me sacrifice any more," says he, "your incense is an abomination to me your feast days I will not bear; your solemnities, my sou. hates them; when you multiply prayer, I will not hear, because your hands are full of blood," Is. i. That is, of ill gotten goods by injustice and cheating; "for the bread of the needy is the life of the poor; he who cheats him is a man of blood," Ecclus. xxxiv. And a little after "He who sheds blood, and he who
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defrauds the labourer of his hire are brothers." Hence if such
an one lift up his hand in prayer, his prayer is rejected; if he
offer up sacrifice, it becomes an abomination from his hands.

III. It is expressly declared that it excludes for ever from
heaven. "But you do wrong and defraud, and that your
brethren. Know you not that the unjust shall not possess
the kingdom of heaven?" 1 Cor. vi. 8. Nor is it to be
wondered at, that God so severely punishes this sin of injustice,
and cheating our neighbour; for if those who do not give
alms out of what is their own, shall be condemned to hell-fire,
like the rich glutton, and have the sentence of eternal punish-
ment pronounced upon them at the last day, for this very
reason alone, Matt xxv.; what can they expect, who by fraud
and deceit take from others what is not their own? Can they
hope to be admitted into heaven? or to escape the flames of
hell? Besides our Lord has declared, that what we do to our
brethren, we do to him; consequently every act of injustice
done to our neighbour is set down to the account of Jesus
Christ; and can those expect favour from him, who by
cheating and stealing deprive him of his goods in the persons
of his brethren?

Q. 10. What does the scripture declare of any particular
kinds of theft?

A. The scripture takes notice (1.) Of children who steal
from their parents, and says, "He that stealtheth anything from
his father or from his mother, and saith, This is no sin, is the
partner of a murderer," Prov. xxviii. 24. (2.) Of those who
defraud labourers of their wages: "Behold the hire of the
labourers who have reaped down your fields, which by fraud
has been kept back by you, crieth; and the cry of them hath
entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth," James v. 4.
But (3.) As the sins of this kind are most commonly com-
mitted in buying and selling, by false weights and measures,
and putting off bad goods as sound, the scripture is particularly
severe against all such as cheat in this manner; thus, "Thou
shalt not have divers weights in thy bag, a greater and a less;
neither shall there be in thy house a greater bushel and a less.
Thou shalt have a just and true weight, and thy bushel shall
be equal and true, that thou mayest live a long time upon the
land which the Lord thy God shall give thee; for the Lord thy
God abhorreth him that doth these things, and he hateth
all injustice," Deut. xxv. 13. "A deceitful balance is an
abomination before the Lord, and a just weight is his will,"
Prov. xi. 1. "Diverse weights and diverse measures, both
are abominable before God," Prov. xx. 10. "As yet there is a fire in the house of the wicked, the treasures of iniquity, and a scant measure full of wrath. Shall I justify wicked balances, and the deceitful weights of the bag? by which her rich men are filled with iniquity, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue was deceitful in their mouth; and I therefore began to strike thee with desolation for thy sins. Thou shalt eat, but thou shalt not be filled...thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap......that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof a hissing, and you shall bear the reproach of my people," Mich. vi. 10. "Wo to you that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter," Is. v. 20. This sellers do who conceal the faults of bad goods, and put them off for sound; and buyers also who depreciate the goods they buy from ignorant people, and purchase them under value.

Q. 11. What are the most ordinary kinds of theft committed in the world, or who are most commonly guilty of it?

A. Besides those mentioned in the last question, the following are also most common in the world: (1.) Servants who waste their masters' goods, or steal meat and drink from them, or any other thing, either for their own use, or to give away to others; who sell what belongs to their masters, and put the money in their own pockets; who sell their masters' goods by their orders, but keep part of the price to themselves without their masters' knowledge; who, when buying goods for their masters, pretend they paid more than they did, and put the overplus in their own pockets, or the like. (2.) Labourers and workmen of all kinds, who do their work insufficiently and exact the whole price of sound work, or who being employed by the day, protract the work beyond measure, in order to get more by it. (3.) Those who have any trust or charge of other people's affairs, and embezzle them to their own advantage; in whom, besides the sin of injustice, there is also a grievous breach of trust. (4.) Those who are in any public office and take bribes, or administer their office unjustly or unfaithfully, and exact the whole reward. (5.) All those who, in any other circumstances, steal or embezzle what belongs to others.

§ 2. Rapine or Robbery.

Q. 12. What is rapine?

A. It is the unjust taking away, or retaining what belongs to another against his will by open violence.
Q. 13. Is rapine a grievous sin?
A. The word of God speaks of its mortal malice as follows, denouncing woes, destruction, and ruin to themselves and to their families, who are guilty of it: (1.) "Wo to thee that spoilest, shalt not thou thyself also be spoiled? When thou shalt have made an end of spoiling, thou shalt be spoiled," Is. xxxiii. 1. (2.) "Wo to you that devise that which is good for nothing, and work evil in your beds: in the morning light they execute it, because their hand is against God. And they have coveted fields, and taken them by violence, and houses they have forcibly taken away, and oppressed a man and his house—a man and his inheritance; therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I devise an evil against this family, from which you shall not withdraw your necks," Mich. ii. 1. (3.) "Wo to him that buildeth up his house by injustice, and his chambers not in judgment; that will oppress his friend without cause, and will not pay him his wages.....thy eyes and thy heart are set upon covetousness, and upon oppression, and running after evil works. Therefore.....he shall be buried with the burial of an ass, rotten, and cast forth without the gates of Jerusalem," Jer. xxii. 13. (4.) "Hear.....you that hate good and love evil, that violently pluck off their skins from them, and their flesh from their bones; who have eaten the flesh of my people.....and have flayed their skin from off them, and have broken and chopped their bones as for the kettle, and as flesh in the midst of the pot. Then shall they cry to the Lord, and he will not hear them; and he will hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved wickedly in their devices," Mich. ii. 2. (5.) "This is the portion of the wicked man with God, the inheritance of the VIOLENT, which they shall receive of the Almighty; if his sons be multiplied, they shall be for the sword, and his grandsons shall not be filled with bread; they that shall remain of him shall be buried in death, and his widow shall not weep......poverty, like water, shall take hold of him, and a tempest shall oppress him in the night," Job xxvii. 13. (6.) It was filling the cup of iniquity of Achab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, when he violently oppressed Naboth, and deprived him of his vineyard, 3 Kings xxi. (7.) "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters......nor extortioners, shall possess the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi.

Q. 14. Who are those who are guilty of rapine?
A. The most ordinary cases in common life are, (1.) Those who abuse their power and authority to deprive others unjustly
of their goods and possessions, as Jezabel did to Naboth, 3 Kings xxii. (2.) Those who by unjust vexations force others to sell them. (3.) Those who rob on the high-way. (4.) Those who go in debt with workmen and merchants, and afterwards refuse to pay; or who put off and delay payment, to the hurt and prejudice of their creditors. (5.) Those who oppress the orphans, the widow, or the poor, and take the advantage of their situation and necessities to squeeze money from them, which is of all others the most detestable kind of rapine in the sight of God, and against which he has expressed the greatest wrath and indignation in his holy scriptures.

Q. 15. What do the scriptures say against oppressing the poor and helpless?

A. (1.) "Touch not the bounds of little ones, and enter not into the field of the fatherless; for their near kinsman is strong, and he will judge their cause against thee," Prov. xxiii. 10. (2.) "He that offereth sacrifice of the goods of the poor is as one that sacrificeth the son in the presence of the father. The bread of the needy is the life of the poor; he that defraudeth them thereof is a man of blood. He that taketh away the bread gotten by sweat, is like him that killeth his neighbour," Ecclus. xxxiv. 24. (3.) "The Lord will not accept any person against a poor man, and he will hear the prayer of him that is wronged. He will not despise the prayers of the fatherless, nor the widow when she poureth out her complaint. Do not the widow's tears run down her cheek, and is not her cry against him that causeth them to fall? but from the cheek they go up even to heaven, and the Lord that heareth will not be delighted with them," Ecclus. xxxv. 16. (4.) "The praise of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment.....his children shall be oppressed with wants, and his hands shall render to him sorrow.....his bread in his belly shall be turned into the gall of asps within him. The riches which he hath swallowed he shall vomit up; God shall draw them out of his belly......because he broke in and stript the poor; he hath violently taken away a house which he did not build," Job xx. 5, 10, 14, 19. (5.) "The hinges of the temple shall shriek in that day, saith the Lord God; many shall die; silence shall be cast in every place. Hear this, you that crush the poor, and make the needy of the land to fail, saying, When will the month be over, and we shall sell our wares? and the sabbath, and we shall open the corn? that we may lessen the measure and increase the sickle, and may convey in deceitful balances, that we may possess the needy for money, and the poor for a pair
of shoes, and may sell the refuse of the corn? The Lord hath sworn against the pride of Jacob, Surely I will never forget all their works. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein?" Amos viii. 3. How dreadful are these testimonies of the word of God! How deeply do they concern those who are guilty of these crimes!

Q. 16. Is there any particular kind of this vice of oppressing the poor more wicked than others?
A. No doubt there are different degrees of it, according to the greatness of the extortion, and the malice of the circumstances in which it is committed; but the scripture speaks with a particular abhorrence against oppressing the poor by usury.

Q. 17. What is usury?
A. Usury is the taking any recompense or reward for the loan of money or of other goods for consumption, merely for the use of the thing lent, where no just cause subsists, extrinsical to the loan itself. For where such extrinsical grounds do actually exist, then a moderate interest is allowable; that is, an interest not exceeding what is determined by public authority. To take more than is so determined, whether in goods or works, is usury; and if this be taken from the poor for money lent them in their distress, it is not only usury in the strictest sense, but is also a grievous oppression of the poor, because it is taking the advantage of their straits to squeeze their goods or labour from them. The same thing is the case when meal or corn or any other goods, which are consumed in the using of them, are lent instead of money, and such unjust and illegal recompense demanded for the use of them.

Q. 18. Is usury a grievous sin?
A. Usury is of its own nature a mortal sin, whether taken from the rich or poor; but when taken from the poor, it has the additional malice joined to it, of oppressing them. The word of God speaks of it as follows: (1.) It expressly forbids it. "Thou shalt not lend to thy brother money to usury, nor corn, nor any other thing," Deut. xxiii. 19. "If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor, that dwelleth with thee, thou shalt not be hard upon him as an extortioner, nor oppress him with usuries," Ex. xxii. 25. And our Saviour in the gospel says, "Lend, hoping for nothing thereby," Luke vi. 35; that is, hoping for nothing merely as a recompense for the use of your money, which you give in loan; for what is allowable to be taken as interest for money lent, is not
considered as recompense or reward for the loan, but as a just compensation for the loss one's own interest sustains, or the danger it is exposed to, by the want of this money, while it remains in the borrower's hands; and which therefore requires that such loss or danger do actually exist, in order that the taking such interest be lawful in the sight of God, or can be done with a safe conscience. (2.) It is laid down in scripture as a condition of gaining heaven, that we avoid this crime of usury. “Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? or who shall rest in thy holy hill? He that walketh without a blemish and doeth justice...he that hath not put out his money to usury, nor taken bribes against the innocent,” Ps. xi. 6. “If a man be just, and do judgment and justice......and hath not wronged any man, but hath restored the pledge to the debtor, hath taken nothing away by violence....hath not lent upon usury, nor taken any increase...he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord,” Ezech. xviii. 5, 8. (3.) The scripture numbers it with murder and adultery and other such crimes, and declares it a detestable sin, bringing death to the soul. “He that is a robber, a shedder of blood......and defileth his neighbour's wife, that grieveth the needy and the poor, that taketh away by violence......that giveth upon usury, and taketh increase; shall such a one live? He shall not live; seeing he hath done all these detestable things, he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him,” Ezech. xviii. 11, &c. Also Almighty God, describing all the sins of Jerusalem, for which he condemns her, among others has this, “Thou hast taken usury and increase, and has covetously oppressed thy neighbours, and thou hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God. Behold I have clapped my hands at the covetousness which thou hast exercised ...I will deprive thee in the nations, I will scatter thee among the countries,” Ezech. xxii. 12.

§ 3. Avarice or Covetousness.

Q. 19. What is avarice?

A. It is an inordinate love, desire, or concern for money or other worldly goods and possessions, so as to have one's heart set upon them, as Judas's was; to be uneasy and solicitous about them, like the rich man in the gospel, to whom our Saviour said, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be demanded of thee, and then whose shall all those things be?” or to covet them eagerly when absent, as Achab did Naboth's vineyard; or to place one's happiness in them when present, as the rich glutton.
Q. 20. Are there more kinds than one of this vice?
A. We may consider chiefly two kinds of it; the one, when a man loves his money to such a degree as deliberately to use unjust means on purpose to procure it, such as deceit, fraud, robbing, stealing, oppressing the poor, lies, perjury, sacrilege, and the like. This at first sight is a mortal sin of the deepest dye; and of this kind is verified, in a particular manner, that of the wise man: "There is not a more wicked thing than to love money, for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale," Ecclus. x. 10. The other kind, is that which does not hurry on a man to such open acts of injustice, and in the eyes of the world appears more innocent, yet is also productive of the most pernicious consequences; and consists in this, that a man sets his heart too much on riches, pursues the acquisition of them too ardently, and adheres too tenaciously to what he possesses already. This kind is perhaps more dangerous than the former, in this respect, that it is more hidden, and covers itself under the mask of prudence and necessity; for nothing is more common in the world, than to see those who are guilty of it, applauding themselves as wise and prudent, while they are looked upon by all that know them, as mere misers.

Q. 21. By what signs shall a man know if he be guilty of this second kind of covetousness?
A. This may be known by the effects it produces in his conduct, in acquiring riches, in the possession of them, and in the loss of them. To understand this, we must remember, that the duty of a Christian is to love God above all things; and to seek for happiness only in him and from him; that we are come into this world only to save our souls, and that the goods of this world are only valuable so far as they are made conducive to that end; consequently if we love riches or other worldly goods more than God, or prefer them to our salvation, we are guilty of a very high degree of covetousness or avarice; and our Saviour expressly declares, that if we love any thing more than him, we are not worthy of him. Now, when our conduct in life is such, whether in the acquisition, possession, or loss of our worldly goods, as shows that we prefer them to God and to our salvation, this evidently shows that we are guilty of this vice of avarice. Thus, (1.) In acquiring riches; when a man lets his mind be continually occupied about them, even in time of his religious duties, and this not once or twice, but constantly and habitually, so as not to take the necessary care of putting these distracting thoughts away; this is a great sign of his too great attachment to them; for "where the treasure is, there
will the heart also be;" again, if he neglects his spiritual concerns when they interfere with his worldly interest, so as to transgress the commands of God out of worldly views, such as to omit his prayers, to neglect the public worship of God on days of obligation, to work on Sundays and holidays, and the like, for the thirst of worldly gain; this is still a greater sign of his inordinate attachment to riches, and that he prefers them before God. And if he goes a step farther, to use unjust and unlawful means for acquiring them, especially when he can do so without being discovered to the world, this is an evident proof of the great degree of this vice which fills his heart. (2.) In the possession of them; when a man becomes proud and haughty on account of his riches, despising others, and trusting so entirely in them, as if nothing could oppose him; this is a great sign of his love and attachment to them; hence St. Paul writes to Timothy, "Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded, nor to trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God," 1 Tim. iv. 17. Also when a man has riches, and makes no use of them, but denies both himself and his family even the necessaries of life, according to his station, rather than part with them; this is also an evident proof of his inordinate attachment to them. Of this Solomon says, "There is also another grievous evil which I have seen under the sun; riches kept to the hurt of the owner ... all the days of his life he eateth in darkness, and in many cares, and in misery and sorrow," Eccles. v. 12, 16. In like manner, when a man will not part with his riches even when charity requires it, so as to be hard-hearted and close-fisted towards the poor, like the rich glutton in the gospel; of this the scripture says, "He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him?" 1 John iii. 17. Lastly, when a man is backward and unwilling to part with his money, even when justice demands it, so as to refuse or delay paying his just debts, or his servants’ wages, or the like, this also is a very evident proof of his inordinate love of riches. (3.) In the loss of them; riches to a good man are like his clothes, he puts them off without pain: to a covetous man they are like his skin, he puts them off with exquisite torment; a good man, like Job, feels the loss when deprived of them, but immediately resigns himself to the will of heaven and blesses God with him, "The Lord gave, and the the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." But the covetous man, when any loss comes upon him, murmurs, repines, and complains, and becomes a prey to impatience and despair.
Q. 22. Is avarice of its own nature a grievous sin?

A. It is, and a sin against which the word of God expresses the greatest abhorrence. Thus, (1.) Woes are pronounced against it by Jesus Christ himself. “Woe to you that are rich, for you have your consolation,” Luke vi. 24. And when the rich glutton, in hell-fire, implored Abraham to send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue, for that he was tormented in these flames; the answer Abraham made him was, “Son, Remember that thou didst receive good things in thy life-time, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented,” Luke xvi. 25. Now, by the rich are understood not simply those who have riches, but those who love them and trust in them; for when our Saviour said, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! the disciples were astonished at his words.” But he explained his meaning to them, and said, “Children, how hard is it for them, that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God,” Mark x. 23. Now the trusting in riches is one of the least degrees of covetousness shown in the possession of them, as we have seen above; if then even this lesser degree of avarice makes it so difficult for the rich to be saved, what will become of those who are guilty of the higher degrees of covetousness? (2.) St. Paul condemns it as an idolatry, that excludes from heaven. “Be not deceived; neither fornicators...nor covetous...shall possess the kingdom of God,” 1 Cor. vi. 9. “Know ye this and understand, that no fornicator, nor unclean, nor covetous person, which is a serving of idols, hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God,” Eph. v. 5. Hence “The ways of every covetous man destroy the soul of the possessors,” Prov. i. 19. (3.) Great evils are threatened against it. “Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord...man and woman shall be taken, the ancient, and he that is full of days. And their houses shall be turned over to others, with their lands and their wives together...for from the least of them even to the greatest, all are given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, all are guilty of deceit,” Jer. vi. 13. “I saw the Lord standing upon the altar,” says the prophet Amos, “and he said, Strike the hinges, and let the lintels be shook, for there is covetousness in the head of them all, and I will slay the last of them with the sword; there shall be no flight for them; though they go down even to hell, thence will my hand bring them out; and though they climb up to heaven,
thence will I bring them down; and though they be hid in the
top of Carmel, I will search and take them away from thence;
and though they hide themselves from my eyes in the depth of
the sea, there will I command the serpent, and he shall bite
them; and if they go into captivity before their enemies, there
will I command the sword, and it shall kill them. And I will
set my eyes upon them for evil, and not for good," Amos ix. 1
How dreadful are these words of the Almighty! "Go now,
ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries which shall come
upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are
moth-eaten; your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of
them shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh
like fire," James v. 1. (4.) It is the cause of numberless crimes,
and exposes men to dreadful dangers. "They that will become
rich, fall into temptations, and into the snare of the devil, and
into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men
in destruction and perdition." For "the desire of money is the
root of all evils; which some coveting have erred from the
faith and have entangled themselves in many sorrows," 1 Tim.
vi. 9. Examples of this occur every day in common life, where
we see numberless crimes: cheating, lying, perjury, war, strife,
contention, anger, hatred, and the like, arise from this miserable
source, the love of money; and from the scripture we see how
it produced hard-heartedness to the poor in the rich glutton,
Luke xvi. Sacrilege, in Heliodorus, 2 Mach. iii. Oppression
of the poor by perjury and murder, as in Achab for Naboth's
vineyard; giving the lie to the Holy Ghost, in Ananias and
Sapphira; selling and betraying Jesus Christ, in Judas, &c.

§ 4. Restitution and paying of Debts.

Q. 23. What is meant by restitution?
A. By restitution is meant the restoring to the true owner
the goods that belong to him, either in kind or value, and the
making up the unjust loss sustained.

Q. 24. Is restitution a duty of strict obligation?
A. Whosoever has taken away any thing from another un-
justly, whether by force or fraud, or has been the guilty cause
of its being so taken away by others, or has in his possession,
against the owner's will or knowledge, the goods which he knows
belongs to him, is bound by the strictest laws of justice to
restore the said goods to the true owner, either in kind or value;
as also to make up the loss the owner has sustained for want of
them, through his fault, if he be able; otherwise he is incapable of receiving pardon for his own sins; also, whosoever has injured his neighbour, or unjustly occasioned any loss to him, whether in his person, goods, or reputation, is bound by the same laws of justice to make compensation for the said loss, as far as he is able, otherwise his sin will never be forgiven him.

Q. 25. How does this appear from the holy scripture?

A. From the following express law, made by Almighty God.

(1.) “If any man steal an ox or a sheep, and kill or sell it, he shall restore five oxen for one ox, and four sheep for one sheep,” Ex. xxii. 1. “If that which he stole be found alive with him, either ox, or ass, or sheep, he shall restore double,” verse 4. “To do any fraud, either in ox, or in ass, or sheep, or raiment, or any thing that may bring damage, the cause of both parties shall come to the gods (the judges), and if they give judgment, he shall restore double to his neighbour,” verse 9.

(2.) “Whosoever shall deny to his neighbour, the thing delivered to his keeping which was committed to his trust, or shall by force extort any thing, or commit oppression; or shall find a thing lost, and denying it, shall also swear falsely; or shall do any other of the many things wherein men are wont to sin; being convicted of the offence, he shall restore all that he would have gotten by the fraud, in the principal, and the fifth part besides, to the owner whom he has wronged,” Lev. vi. 2.

(3.) “If men quarrel and the one strike his neighbour with a stone or with his fist, and he die not, but keep his bed; if he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, he that struck him shall be quit, yet so that he make restitution for his work, and for his expenses upon the physicians,” Ex. xxii. 19.

“If men quarrel, and one strike a woman with child, and she miscarry indeed, but live herself; he shall be answerable for so much damage as the woman’s husband shall require, and as arbiters shall award,” Ex. xxii. 22.

(4.) “If any man hurt a field or a vineyard, and put in his beasts to feed upon that which is other men’s; he shall restore the best of whatsoever he hath in his own field and in his vineyard, according to the estimation of the damage,” Ex. xxii. 5.

Q. 26. Is the obligation of paying one’s debts included in the law of restitution?

A. It certainly is; since to refuse to pay one’s debts is to wrong another of his just due; and to delay paying them when due, and when the creditor needs them, is violently to retain what belongs to another, exposes the owner to great loss and
nconvenience for want of his own, often proves even the
ruin of trades-people and merchants, and brings the debtor
under the guilt of a very great crime before God.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE EIGHTH COMMAND.

Q. 1. What is the eighth command?
A. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neigh-
bour," Ex. xx. 16.

Q. 2. What is the principal end and design of this com-
mand?
A. To direct us in the use of our tongue with regard
to truth, and in the duties we owe to our neighbour's reputa-
tion.

Q. 2. What are the sins forbidden by this command?
A. Lies of all kinds, whether in words or actions, and al-
hurting of our neighbour's reputation, whether by backbiting,
detraction, or calumny.

Q. 4. What are the duties enjoined by this command?
A. To speak and witness the truth in all things, whether in
our conversation, or in our judgments, or in our compacts with
others; to defend the reputation of the absent, and to restore
his good name if we have hurt it.

§ 1. Lies.

Q. 5. What is a lie?
A. A lie is when a man, either by words or actions, shows
himself outwardly to others, what he is not inwardly in his
own mind.

Q. 6. How many kinds of lies are there?
A. There are several kinds of lies, the most ordinary of
which are these following: (1.) A jocose lie, which hurts
nobody, and is spoken to please those present, or for excuse;
such was the lie of Sarah when she said, she did not laugh,
Gen. xviii. 15. (2.) An officious lie, which hurts none, and is
intended to be of service to others: such was the lie of the
Egyptian midwives to Pharaoh, Ex. i. 19. (3.) A malicious
lie, which is injurious to God, or hurtful to our neighbour;
such was the lie of the devil to Eve, when he said, "You shall
not die," Gen. iii. 4. (4.) Dissembling, of which the scripture says, "The dissembler with his mouth deceiveth his friend," Prov. xi. 9. (5.) Hypocrisy, which is, when a man puts on the outward appearance of piety and holiness, which he has not in his heart; such was the vice of the Pharisees, for which Christ denounces so many woes upon them. (6.) Adulation or flattery, which is, when a man praises his neighbour beyond the truth; such was the flattery of the people to Herod, when they cried, "The voice of a god, and not of a man," Acts xii. (7.) Boasting, when a man goes beyond the truth in praising himself. (8.) Breaking one's promise to his neighbour.

Q. 7. Is every lie of its own nature a sin?

A. Yes, every lie is of its own nature a sin, because it is contrary to the truth, and therefore contrary to God, who is truth; it is an injury to our neighbour, by deceiving him.

Q. 8. Does this appear from the word of God?

A. Most manifestly; for (1.) All lies, without exception, are there expressly forbidden: "Thou shalt not lying," Ex. xxiii. 7. "You shall not lie, neither shall any man deceive his neighbour," Lev. xix. 11. "Be not willing to make any manner of lie, for the custom thereof is not good," Ecclus. vii. 14. "Wherefore, putting away lying, speak ye the truth every one with his neighbour," Eph. iv. 25. "Lie not one to another," Col. iii. 9. (2.) The scripture declares it to be infamous, and that the just man shall hate it: "A lie is a foul blot in a man, and yet it will be continually in the mouth of men without discipline," Ecclus. xx. 26. "The just shall hate a lying word," Prov. xiii. 5. "The manners of lying men are without honour, and their confusion is with them without ceasing," Ecclus. xx. 28. (3.) The scripture also assures us, that no liar can enter into heaven: "Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and unchaste, and murderers, and servers of idols, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie," Rev. xxii. 15. In all these testimonies it is plain, that all lies in general, without exception, are forbidden, and declared to be infamous, and that those who commit them cannot enter into heaven; and consequently that all lies, without exception, are sinful. Hence, our Saviour declares of lies in general, that they are from the devil, "who," says he, "is a liar and the father thereof," John viii. 44.

Q. 9. But do we not read in scripture, that the Egyptian midwives were rewarded for telling an officious lie to Pharaoh, when they saved the children of the Israelites: and some of the best servants of God told lies upon occasions for some good end, as Jacob did to gain his father's blessing?
A. The Egyptian midwives were indeed rewarded by God, not for telling a lie to Pharaoh, but for their humanity in saving the children, and because, as the scripture expressly says, "they feared God," Ex. i. 21, and refused to murder the innocent children, as the king had commanded them, for fear of offending God. As for any lies that may seem to have been made by holy people in scripture, some of the holy fathers have endeavoured to free some of them from the guilt of a lie, by explaining their words in a mystical and parabolical sense; but though they told a real lie, this does not prove that some lies are not sinful, but shows that even holy people are sometimes overseen, and do what is wrong, in which they are neither to be commended nor imitated. David was a man according to God's own heart, and a prophet, yet upon one occasion he committed adultery and murder, will it hence follow that adultery and murder are not sins?

Q. 10. Are all lies mortally sinful?

A. No, for jocose and officious lies, though they be in themselves really sinful, because contrary to the truth, and therefore expressly forbidden by the word of God, yet are so great an evil as to break our peace with God, and are therefore only venially sinful.

Q. 11. Is it in any case lawful to tell even a venial lie in order to procure some good end?

A. It never can be lawful to do a thing which is in itself unlawful; and no good end whatsoever can alter the nature of what is intrinsically evil; otherwise there is no crime, which would not find an excuse under that cover: besides, it can in no case be lawful to do what the law of nature and the positive law of God expressly forbid in all cases, without any exception; lastly, St. Paul expressly declares, "we must not do evil that good may come of it," Rom. iii. 8. And he says this when speaking of promoting the glory of God by telling a lie; he declares that it is a calumny on the Christians to say, they hold it lawful to do evil, that there may come good; and that the damnation of those who hold that maxim is just. For these reasons, it is the constant doctrine of the Catholic church, that, in no case, and for no good end whatever, not even to save the world from destruction, can it ever be lawful to tell the smallest lie. "No good end can, on any account, excuse the least lie; and to advance, that pious frauds, as some improperly call them, can ever be properly used, is no better than blasphemy....To tell any lie whatever, in the least point relating to religion, is always to lie in a matter of moment,
and can never be excused from a mortal sin, as Catholic divines teach. . . . Good men may sometimes be too credulous in things in which there appears no harm. Nay, sometimes, the more averse a person is from fraud himself, the more unwilling he is to suspect imposture in others. But no good man can countenance and abet a known fraud, for any purpose whatever." So the pious and learned Mr. Alban Butler, in the Introduction to the Saints' Lives, page 18, Edit. Dublin, 1779.

Q. 12. Are some lies mortally sinful?
A. Besides those texts above cited, which show that all lies are sinful, there are others which show directly that some kinds of them are mortally sinful; such as these following: (1.) "Six things there are which the Lord hateth," and two of these are, "a lying tongue, and a deceitful witness that uttereth lies," Prov. vi. 16, 17, 19. Also, "lying lips are an abomination to the Lord," Prov. xii. 22. (2.) "The mouth that lieth, killeth the soul," Wisd. i. 11. "A thief is better than a man that is always lying; but both of them shall inherit destruction," Ecclus. xx. 27. (3.) "Thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie. The bloody and deceitful man, the Lord will abhor," Ps. v. 7. "But the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, they shall have their portion in the lake burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death," Rev. xxi. 8.

Q. 13. How shall we know when a lie is mortally sinful?
A. A lie is then mortally sinful, when besides being contrary to the truth, it is also opposed to any of those virtues which are necessary to salvation, such as faith, hope, charity, justice, and religion; and when it is attended with scandal, or confirmed with an oath. Hence every lie with regard to the truths revealed by Jesus Christ, is a mortal sin contrary to faith; if either any of these truths be denied, or what is not revealed by God be affirmed to be so.

Flattery against any revealed truth, by which vice is praised as good, and virtue condemned or despised as evil, is mortally sinful, as contrary both to faith and charity. "Woe to you," says the word of God, "who call good evil, and evil good," Is. v.

Hypocrisy, by which a man puts on a cloak of piety, the better to conceal his wickedness, is mortally sinful, being contrary to the love both of God and our neighbour, and to religion also; of hypocrites St. Paul says, "They have an
appearance indeed of godliness, but deny the power thereof... they resist the truth, being men of corrupt minds, and repro-
bate concerning the faith," 2 Tim. iii. 5, 8.

So also, any lie that notably injures our neighbour either in his person, goods, or reputation, is mortally sinful, because contrary both to justice and charity.—Such was the false accusation of the elders against Susannah, which tended directly both to ruin her reputation, and take away her life. Such also was the lie of Joseph's mistress against him to her husband.

In like manner, any kind of a lie that occasions great scandal to others, is a mortal sin; and hence, lies in priests and religious people, even in small matters, are very often of a mortal guilt, when the people are emboldened, by their example, to make slight of lies, and commit them without restraint; and they are always dangerous, on account of the indignity done to their character by lying even in small matters.

Lastly, any lie, however small in itself, yet if confirmed by an oath, is always a mortal sin, because it is always a grievous insult to God Almighty, to call him by oath to wit-
ness a lie, whether in great or small matters.

Q. 14. What obligation does a promise bring upon one?
A. Every lawful promise brings on a strict obligation of veri-
fying what one has said, by fulfilling his promise. Because by a promise we give our neighbour a full right to the perfor-
mance of the thing promised in its proper time, and we engage our faith, and oblige ourselves to do it.

Q. 15. What kind of a crime is it to break one's faith or promise given to another?
A. It is a double sin, being both against justice and truth. It is against justice, because it deprives another of what he has a full right to; and it is against truth, because it falsifies the faith we plighted by promising; and if the promise had been confirmed by oath, the breach of it adds to these two the guilt of perjury also, and makes it a crime of triple malice, and therefore a most grievous mortal sin.

Q. 16. Are we obliged to keep our faith or promise with all mankind, though of a different religion from ourselves?
A. Difference of religion makes no difference in the nature of justice and truth between man and man; and therefore, it is the constant doctrine of the Catholic church, that a lawful promise made to any person, whether Turk, Jew, Heretic or Heathen, brings on a strict and absolute obligation of performance, if the promiser be able; and she has defined it in one of her general councils, that the promiser is then, and then
only, free from any further obligation, when he has done all in
his power to fulfil it.—Coun. Constance.

Q. 17. Is it lawful, at any time, to use mental restrictions
and equivocations?

A. The Catholic church has declared, that mental restrictions
and equivocations, properly such, are always lies, and therefore
always sinful; and if used when one is upon oath, are perjury,
and therefore never can be lawful for any end whatsoever;
especially when one is called upon to declare the truth by
public authority. To assert the contrary is condemned by
Pope Innocent IX., in the year 1679, among other such
scandalous antichristian propositions.

Q. 18. What is meant by mental restrictions and equivo-
cations, properly such?

A. When a person, in his own mind, puts a sense on the
words he says, contrary to or different from their plain, natural,
and usual meaning; and which the hearers cannot possibly
perceive, and have no grounds or occasion to suspect, because
then the speaker truly deceives the hearer.

Q. 19. What is meant by mental reservations and equivo-
cations, not properly such?

A. When the words used have, either in themselves, or from
the circumstances, two natural and plain significations, and the
speaker uses them in one sense, and the hearer takes them in the
other; or when they have both a literal and spiritual
meaning, as when our Saviour said of St. John the Baptist,
that "he was Elias;" and St. John himself said, "I am not
Elias." In such cases, if the hearers be deceived, it is their
own fault, not a lie in the speaker.

§ 2. Of Defaming our Neighbour.

Q. 20. How many ways may one defame his neighbour?

A. As by defaming any person, is meant the lessening the
esteem and good opinion others have of him, this may be done
two ways, either in our own minds, by suspicious and rash
judgments, or in the minds of others, by calumny and detrac-
tion.

Q. 21. What is rash judgment?

A. It is the judging evil of our neighbour without a reason-
able cause. The Pharisee in the gospel is an example of this
vice; for, full of the vain idea he had conceived of his own
excellency, he despised the poor publican, and condemned him
in his own mind, in a most unjust and uncharitable manner;
(1.) Without any other grounds, but merely because he saw he was a publican; (2.) Contrary even to all the signs of a sincere repentance which appeared in him; (3.) Without any condescension to the frailty of human nature, and the violence of passion and temptation; and (4.) Pushed on to it, through the blindness of his own pride and self-conceit.

Q. 22. How many ways may this vice be committed?

A. Several different ways; the most ordinary of which are these: (1.) When we form an ill opinion, and conceive a dislike of any one at first sight, from his looks or words, and upon no other grounds, judge him guilty of any vice. (2.) When we attribute to a bad intention any good or indifferent action of his, which may equally arise from a good intention, and to which justice and charity require us to attribute it. (3.) When upon seeing him commit any thing sinful, we immediately, and without any other reason, judge him addicted to that sin. (4.) When we judge his virtues or good dispositions to be vices, his humility to be mean-spiritedness, his meekness and patience to be cowardice, his equanimity in bearing crosses, to be natural and constitutional, and the like; thus our Saviour says to the Pharisees: "John came neither eating nor drinking; and they say he hath a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man that is a glutton, and a wine-drinker, a friend to publicans and sinners," Matt. xi. 18. (5.) When we presume rashly to judge of another, even with regard to the time to come; as when we see an habitual sinner, and judge he is a reprobate and abandoned by God, that he will never be converted, and the like. (6.) When we rashly pronounce our neighbour, guilty of what he is accused of, without hearing himself.

Q. 23. Is it a grievous sin to judge evil of our neighbour rashly?

A. If the evil we judge of him be grievously sinful, it is certainly a grievous sin to judge it of him rashly; for (1.) Rash judgments are expressly forbidden by Christ, under the penalty of being severely judged ourselves. "Judge not, that you may not be judged; for with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged," Matt. viii. 1. St. Paul repeats the same prohibition: "Judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness," 1 Cor. iv. 5. (2.) It shows a great corruption of one's own heart; for none are more ready to judge rashly of others than those who are guilty themselves, according to that of the wise man: "The fool when he walketh in the way, whereas he himself is a fool, esteemeth all
men fools,” Eccles. x. 3; and this is what renders him inexcusable: “Wherefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself; for thou dost the same thing which thou judgest,” Rom. ii. 1. “Thou hypocrite,” says Jesus Christ to all such, “cast out first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast the mote out of thy brother’s eye,” Matt. vii. 5. (3.) It commonly rises from a great degree of pride, which makes a man usurp an authority that does not belong to him, but to God alone; hence, “He that judgeth his brother judgeth the law; but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver and judge, who is able to destroy and deliver; but who art thou that judgest thy neighbour?” James iv. 11. Who gave you authority to do what belongs to God alone? “Who art thou,” says St. Paul also, “that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth,” Rom. xiv. 4. “But thou, why judgest thou thy brother? or why dost thou despise thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ......so then every one of us shall render an account to God for himself; let us not therefore judge one another any more,” verse 10. It is only pride that makes us usurp this authority from the false idea we have of our own penetration; it is pride that makes us attribute to ourselves the knowledge of our neighbour’s heart and intentions, which belongs to God alone, who says, “I am the Lord who search the heart and try the reins,” Jer. xvii. It is pride that makes us take pleasure in thinking worse of others than of ourselves; it is pride that makes us blind to our own faults, and clear-sighted to spy faults in others. In this we imitate the proud Pharisee, who was condemned for it, notwithstanding all the other good things he did. (4.) It most frequently arises from envy and hatred, which make us always take in a bad sense what we see in our neighbour. In this we imitate the Pharisees in their behaviour to Christ himself, for which so many woes were pronounced against them in the gospel. (5.) It is most injurious to our neighbour, depriving him of his good name in our own mind unjustly. (6.) It produces the most fatal effects; it nourishes pride, increases hatred, feeds envy, occasions slander, and extinguishes clarity and brotherly love in the soul.

Q. 24. But when we see strong proofs of guilt, is it not lawful to judge another guilty?

A. It is lawful to judge according to the proofs, when accompanied with these two conditions; to wit, provided they
be well founded, and the accused person be heard in his own defence; but in the ordinary actions of men, what appear strong proofs are often upon examination found very fallacious, especially when the accused person comes to be heard himself in his own defence. The proud Pharisee thought he had proof to judge the publican a sinner, and yet he was a saint; the other Pharisee thought Mary Magdalen a great sinner, and yet she also at that time was a saint. He also judged our Saviour could not be a prophet, because he allowed her, whom he judged a sinner, to touch him, and yet how widely was he mistaken. Joseph's master thought his wife's accusation a good proof of Joseph's guilt, especially when she showed him Joseph's garment in her hand, and yet Joseph was innocent. The accusation and testimony of the two elders were thought a sufficient proof of Susannah's guilt, and yet it was most fallacious; and what stronger proof could there be in appearance against the Blessed Virgin, than when St. Joseph found her with child, and yet she was the immaculate mother of God? These and such like examples show how little trust can be put in appearances, however strong they may seem; and therefore how cautious we ought to be never to judge our neighbour guilty without a thorough examination, and without hearing what he has to say in his own defence. Indeed the wickedness of the world is so great, that judgments even upon slight grounds, to the prejudice of our neighbour, are too often true at the bottom; but it is much better to judge well of a thousand undeserving people, than to judge evil unjustly of one who does not deserve it. In the former case we run no hazard for our souls; nay, it is an act of charity "which thinketh no evil," I Cor. xiii. But in the latter case we bring upon our souls the guilt of grievous sin; and in all cases where we judge rashly, we at least run the risk of being deceived besides the sin of rash judgment.

Q. 25. What is detraction and calumny?

A. For the full understanding the nature of this sin, we must consider three kinds of it: (1.) Calumny or slander, which is, when one says any evil of his neighbour which he knows to be false, as did the two elders, when they accused Susannah of adultery. (2.) Detraction, which is, when one tells any ill of his neighbour, which though it be true, yet is secret, or known only to a few; because by it we detract, or derogate from our neighbour's character unjustly and uncharitably. (3.) Back-biting, which is, when one speaks with a malicious pleasure of the known faults of his neighbour. To which may be added, (4.) The telling hearsays and reports to the prejudice of his
neighbour, which he does not know whether they be true or false, secret or known; and this kind always partakes of the malice of some or other, and generally of all the other three.

Q. 26. What kind of sins are these vices?
A. If the crime of our neighbour be true; if we be certain of it, and if we speak of it only to those whose business it is to remedy it, and only with an intention of getting it remedied; this, instead of being a sin, is an act of charity, and what our Saviour commands us to do, if private admonitions to the guilty person have no effect, or where private admonitions might do harm; for then, he says, "tell the church," Matt. xviii. 17.

(2.) If the fault of our neighbour be certainly known to us, but not public, or at least not known to those to whom we tell it; but it be necessary for them to know it, in order to prevent their being hurt by it, either as to soul or body, which they would be, were they not apprised of it; in this case if we tell it to them alone, purely from the motive of preventing their hurt, and only as far as may be requisite for that purpose, this also is not detraction; for we must not save the reputation of the guilty to the prejudice of the innocent. (3.) If the thing be certain and public, and we speak of it, not out of hatred to the person, nor taking pleasure in what has happened, but merely as an accident that has happened among us, and rather feel sorrow for it, and compassion for the offender, and endeavour to excuse and extenuate it; this also may be done without sin; but such is the malignity of our nature, that it is very difficult in such cases, not to offend charity, by despising the guilty person, condemning him harshly, preferring ourselves before him, making sport of his misfortune, or the like, and therefore much caution is required on such occasions. (4.) If the thing said, be doubtful, or certain, but of so trifling a nature, as to be of little or no hurt to our neighbour's character, and rather a matter of jest than a crime; then our speaking of it as such, may also be done without great fault, especially as we may reasonably suppose our neighbour would not take it amiss, though it should come to his ears. But (5.) If the ill said be a notable hurt to our neighbour's reputation; if we know it to be false, or are not certain that it is true; or, if being certain it is true, we know it is yet a secret; or if it be public and true, but we speak of it out of malice and hatred, despising him, and exposing him to the contempt of others; in all these cases we are guilty of a very grievous sin.

Q. 27. How does this appear?
A. From several reasons. (1.) If what we say, to the notable
detriment of our neighbour's fame, be false, it is a grievous
breach of charity, justice, and truth. (2.) If it be true indeed,
but secret, our telling it is a grievous breach of charity and
justice. (3.) If it be true and public, but we speak of it out
of hatred and ill will, and so as to expose him to the contempt
of others, it is a grievous breach of charity.

Q. 28. How is it a breach of justice?
A. Because when the ill we say is either false, or though
ture, is yet secret, our telling it robs the absent of his reputation,
and of the favour of others, which is doing him a great injustice,
for if the robbing one of his goods be a grievous breach of
justice, the robbing him of his good name, and the favour of others,
is much more so, because the scripture says, “A good name is
better than great riches, and good favour is above silver and
gold,” Prov. xxii. 1.

Q. 29. But if the thing said be true, has not the person lost
all title of his good name?
A. To this it is answered: (1.) Allowing that he has lost all
title to it, by what authority can you take it from him? If you
knew a person had goods in his possession to which he had
lost all title, can you or any private person in justice take them
from him? If you knew a person had murdered his neighbour,
and by that means lost all right to his own life, could you in
justice take his life from him? Certainly no; the punishing
for crimes of any sort does not belong to private persons, nor
to any other, till the guilty person be properly tried and con-
victed, and his crime legally known; consequently, though your
neighbour had done any ill thing, for which he loses his title to
his good name, if this be known only to you or to a few, you
have no title to publish it to others, and deprive him of the
good opinion they may still have of him, and therefore it is
injustice in you to do so. But, (2.) On what grounds do you say
he has lost all title to his good name? Is it because he has
done some evil action? Let him who has never done any ill be
his accuser. Who is there that has not done some such
action? Or rather that does not too frequently do so? Does
every one then lose all title to his good name by such means?
Certainly no; one may be a very good man, and very justly
esteemed, though in some things he fails; and therefore, while
his failings are secret, or known to a few, it is a cruel injustice
to publish them, and thereby rob him of the esteem that others
have for him. (3.) With regard even to the ill itself he has
done, which is known in secret to you; how do you know but
he has sincerely repented of it, and made his peace with God?
And that, sensible of his error, he regrets it, and is determined never to fall into any such fault again? In this case he certainly has as full a right as ever to his good name, and therefore it would be the highest injustice, by publishing his secret faults, of which he has repented, to deprive him of it.

Q. 30. How are the sins of calumny, and detraction, and backbiting, a breach of charity?

A. In several respects. (1.) It is a breach of charity to exercise any act of hatred or contempt of our neighbour, and on this account the speaking of the known and certain faults of others out of hatred, or with contempt of him, is a breach of charity. (2.) It is a breach of charity to expose our neighbour to the contempt and ridicule of others, because we certainly would not wish others should do this to us; and we feel from experience that nothing gives us more sensible pain than to hear our name has been taken to pieces in any company, even though all they said was true. (3.) What you say against your neighbour may come to his knowledge, and raise anger, and hatred, and displeasure, and much afflict him; now to give occasion to this without necessity is a great breach of charity, even though what you say be true; but much more if false and dubious. (4.) It is also a breach of charity towards those who hear you; because it makes them lose their esteem for their neighbour, and excites temptations of suspicious and rash judgments against him; of all which the detractor becomes the guilty cause.

Q. 31. What does the word of God say of these sins?

A. It speaks of them with the greatest horror: for, (1.) It gives the following description of those who are guilty of them: "Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips, their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness," Rom. iii. 13. Also, "They have whetted their tongues like a sword, they have bent their bow, a bitter thing, to shoot in secret the undefiled," Ps. lxxiii. 4. "If a serpent bite in silence, he is nothing better that backbiteth secretly," Ecclus. x. 11. (2.) It frequently prohibits them in the strongest terms. "Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbour? Let it die within thee, trusting that it will not burst thee," Ecclus. xix. 10. "Refrain your tongue from detraction, for an obscure speech shall not go for nought, and the mouth that lieth, kills the soul," Wisd. ii. 11. "My son......have nothing to do with detractors, for their destruction shall rise suddenly: and who knoweth the ruin of both?" Prov. xxiv. 21. (3.) It declares them hateful to God and man. "Thy mouth hath abounded with evil, and thy tongue hath
framed deceits; sitting thou didst speak against thy brother and didst lay a scandal against thy mother's son; these things thou hast done and I was silent; thou thoughtest unjustly, that I should be like to thee; but I will reprove thee, and set before thy face," Ps. xlix 19. "Six things there are which the Lord hateth, and the seventh his soul detesteth. Haughty ayes; a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood; a heart that deviseth wicked plots; feet that are swift to run into mischief; a deceitful witness that uttereth lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren," Prov. vi. 16. And therefore, "a false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape," Prov. xix. 5. Among the sad list of crimes, of which the heathens were guilty, as declared by St. Paul, Rom. i., detraction is particularly mentioned, and immediately after is declared hateful to God; and the wise man declares "that the detractor is the abomination of men," Prov. xxiv. 9. On all which accounts, St. Paul gives this general rule, which he commands the pastors of souls, in the person of Titus, to instil into their people: "Admonish them......to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, not to be litigious, but gentle, showing all meekness towards all men," Tit. iii. 1. St. James also gives this command, "Detract not one another, my brethren; he that detracteth his brother, or he that judgeth his brother, detracteth the law, and judgeth the law," James iv. 11. Besides these declarations of holy scripture, we may observe (4.) to speak ill of our neighbour is quite contrary to the example of Jesus Christ, who was so tender of the reputation of others, that he would not discover who it was that was to betray him, though it gave him so much pain, but allowed even Judas to receive the holy communion unworthily, rather than discover his crime to the other apostles, and though he knew that a few hours after he would be discovered to the whole people, yet for our instruction he would not be the one to discover it. (5.) It is a base and cowardly vice, stabbing our neighbour's reputation behind his back, when he has not the opportunity of defending himself; of this Job particularly complains, when he says, "Even fools despise me, and when I was gone away from them, they spoke against me," Job xix. 18. (6.) It often produces the most fatal consequences, as in Joseph's imprisonment, Susannah's condemnation, and the murder of the eighty-five innocent priests, by king Saul, from the calumny of Doeg. (7.) It is often thrown back on the calumniators, in their severe punishment, as in the elders that accused Susannah, and
in the enemies of Daniel. (8.) It is the source of numberless quarrels, dissensions, and animosities, especially in that kind of it which is called whispering, and which consists in tale-bearing, or telling in one place, all that was said or done in another; and telling to one all that others said of him, often magnifying and aggravating it, and putting it, when rehearsed, in a very different light from what it was when first said. Against this species of it, God has expressed a particular detestation. "Thou shalt not be a detractor nor a whisperer among thy people," Lev. xix. 16. "Be not called a whisperer, and be not taken in thy tongue and confounded, for confusion and repentance is upon a thief, and an evil mark of disgrace upon the double-tongued, but to the whisperer hatred, enmity, and reproach," Eccles. v. 16. "The tale-bearer shall defile his own soul, and shall be hated by all, and he that shall abide with him shall be hateful; but the silent and wise man shall be honoured," Ecclus. xxi. 31. "The whisperer and the double-tongued is accursed, for he hath troubled many that were at peace. The tongue of a third person hath disquieted many, and scattered them from nation to nation. It hath destroyed the strong cities of the rich, and hath overthrown the houses of great men. It hath cut in pieces the forces of people, and undone strong nations. The tongue of a third person hath cast out valiant women, and deprived them of their labours. He that hearkeneth to it shall never have rest, neither shall he have a friend on whom he may repose," Ecclus. xxviii. 15.

Q. 32. Is it a sin to give ear to calumnies and detractions?
A. It is a sin to give ear to ill spoken of the absent in two cases; (1.) When one induces another to speak ill of the absent, either by commanding, exhorting, questioning, or otherwise exciting or encouraging him to it. (2.) When one consents to, and takes pleasure in hearing ill spoken of his neighbour; for St. Paul relating the crimes of the heathens, among which detraction bears a distinguished place, adds after all, that, "not only they who do such things are worthy of death, but they also who consent to them that do them," Rom. i. 32.

Q. 33. How then ought one to behave when he hears his neighbour spoken ill of?
A. (1.) He ought to fly such company as far as he can, for the scripture says, "Let detracting lips be far from thee," Prov. iv. 24. And, "My son, fear the Lord and the king, and have nothing to do with detractors," Prov. xxiv. 21. "Hedge thy ears with thorns, and hear not a wicked tongue," Ecclus.
xxviii. 28. This was the practice of the royal prophet, who says, "The man that in private detracted his neighbour, him did I persecute; with him that had a proud eye, and an insatiable heart, I would not eat." Ps. c. 5. (2.) Make it a constant rule when you hear ill spoken of the absent in company, always to take the absent's part, accusing and defending them, and telling any good you know of them. It is but too true indeed, that few are to be found who have not some faults, but it is no less true, that few are so bad as not to have some good qualities. The pride and malice of our heart make us take a pleasure in speaking of the faults of others, and overlooking their good qualities; but true Christian charity, as it "thinketh no evil," so it speaketh none; as it moves us to do to others what we wish others should do to us, so it enjoins us to oppose the good we know of our neighbour, as a counterbalance to the ill which we hear spoken against him. The one is just as easily done as the other, and whoever wishes to preserve the innocency of his own soul, will surely follow the laws of charity, rather than the suggestions of pride and malice. (3.) Where it can be done with prudence, reprove the detractor, and admonish him of the evil he does. Where this is thought improper, show a displeasure in your looks at the conversation, keep silence, and turn your eyes another way. "The north wind driveth away rain, so doth a sad countenance a backbiting tongue," Prov. xxv. 23. One great encouragement to backbiting is the pleasure the hearers seem to take in hearing it; remove this, and it will soon end. (4.) Turn the conversation, even abruptly, to some other subject, without seeming to take notice of what was saying against any one. (5.) Never be rash in believing what you hear against the absent, till at least you hear what they have to say for themselves.

Q. 34. When one has hurt his neighbour's reputation by any of these sins, what is he obliged to do?

A. He is obliged to do all he can to restore his good name again, for if one that wrongs his neighbour in his riches is obliged to restitution, how much more when he takes away his good name unjustly? for "a good name is better than riches." Now this is a most difficult thing to do on many accounts, for it requires great humility indeed to retract what one has said; and though done, few will believe the retraction; the ill soon spreads, the retraction not so easily; and this consideration shows in a particular manner how dangerous a sin detraction is for those who are guilty of it.
CHAPTER XIX.

THE NINTH AND TENTH COMMANDS.

Q. 1. What are the ninth and tenth commands?

Q. 2. What is the end and design of these commands?
A. We have already seen that these two commands principally regard sins of lust and injustice, and we have considered them in that view, along with the sixth and seventh commands. But besides this, they are also designed to direct us in the care we ought to have over our hearts, by avoiding all evil thoughts, and employing our minds on good objects.

Q. 3. May one grievously offend God by evil thoughts.
A. There is no doubt of it; for whatever is a sin to do or to speak is likewise a sin to consent to it in thought; and our Saviour says, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies; these are the things which defile a man," Matt. xv. 19; that is, these different sins have their seat properly speaking in the heart, and their malice, as sins, consists precisely in the consent of the will to them; and when this consent is given, the sin is immediately committed before God, and the soul defiled by them; Hence our Saviour says again, "I say to you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart," Matt. v. 28. And the scripture says, "Evil thoughts are an abomination to the Lord," Prov. xv. 26. And "Perverse thoughts separate from God," Wisd. i. 3. The sin of the angels was a sin of thought only, and indeed many of the most grievous sins men commit are of their own nature sins of thought, and completed there, such as pride, envy, hatred and the like, the outward actions flowing from them being the effects they produce, and which very often contain a distinct malice from what passes in the thought, on account of the injury actually done to others.

Q. 4. In what manner are sins of thought committed?
A. We must here carefully observe the difference between the temptation of evil thoughts, and the sin committed by them. When evil thoughts of whatever kind come into our mind, without our giving occasion to them, though they remain however so obstinately against our will, yet considered in them-
selves they are no sin; they are the temptations by which the devil endeavours to draw us to sin, but they are not sins in themselves, because they are not our own; for though they be in our mind, they are there against our will, forced in upon us by the malice of our spiritual enemies. Nay, if we behave as we ought under them, rejecting and opposing them, instead of being a hurt to the soul, they will be of great profit; because the fidelity we show to God in resisting them, will both increase his grace in our soul, obtain a more ample reward for us in heaven, and serve to implant the contrary virtues more deeply in our hearts. The sin committed by evil thoughts arises from our making these thoughts our own. While they intrude into the mind against our will, and we continue to abhor and reject them, they are not ours, but the darts of the enemy seeking to ruin us, and we are not accountable for them; but when we admit them by an act of our will, then they become our own, and we commit sin by them. Now this may be done several different ways: Thus, (1.) If we love the evil object, and willingly take pleasure in thinking on it. Of this the scripture says, "He that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul," Ps. x. 6. "They become abominable, as those things were which they loved," Hos. ix. 10. And therefore, "Be not delighted in the paths of the wicked, neither let the way of evil men please thee," Prov. iv. 14; for, "If I have looked at iniquity," says David, "in my heart the Lord will not hear me," Ps. lxxv. 18. (2.) If we consent to any evil thing with our will, though we go no further in committing it, or if we consent to its being done by others; by that consent we immediately become guilty before God. Hence the scripture says, "Take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord thy God," Tob. iv. 6. For, "They who do such things are worthy of death; and not only they that do them, but they also that consent to them that do them," Rom. i. 32. And our Saviour pronounces a wo upon the Pharisees for consenting to the evil deeds of their forefathers; "Wo to you who build the monuments of the prophets, and your fathers killed them; truly you bear witness that you consent to the doings of your fathers," Luke xi. 47. (3.) The sin becomes still greater if we go a step further, and desire the evil object; and this is what is expressly and directly forbidden by the ninth and tenth commandments. (4.) We also sin by thought, if we are glad and rejoice at any evil, whether done or intended to be done by ourselves or others. Thus the scripture describing wicked men, says, they "leave the right way, and walk in dark ways; they are glad when
they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things; whose ways are perverse, and their steps infamous,” Prov. ii 13.

Q. 5. What are the means by which we may be preserved from sins of thought?

A. Chiefly the following; (1.) A constant vigilance or guard over our heart, that no evil may enter there to hurry us away before we are aware. “With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out from it,” Prov. iv. 23. (2.) Resolutely to throw away all evil thoughts upon our first observing them, as we throw off a spark of fire that falleth on our clothes. (3.) Immediately to turn our thoughts to Jesus Christ upon the cross, and with humble and fervent prayer beg his help against them, if they prove obstinate. (4.) To renounce them with contempt and disregard, and make acts of the contrary virtues. (5.) But the most effectual preservative against them is to walk in the presence of God, and employ our thoughts as much as possible upon pious and good objects, which will both shut the door against evil thoughts, and bring down a great blessing from God. “My son,” says he, “give me thy heart, and let thy eyes keep my ways.” Prov. xxii. 26. “Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not upon thy own prudence. In all thy ways think on him, and he will direct thy steps,” Prov. iii. 5.

CHAPTER XX.

OF THE SEVEN CAPITAL AND DEADLY SINS.

Q. 1. What are the seven capital or deadly sins?

A. They are pride, covetousness, envy, lust, gluttony, anger, and sloth. They are called capital sins, because they are the roots or springs from whence all the other sins men commit take their rise; and they are called deadly sins, because they are all of their own nature mortal sins, which banish the grace of God from the soul, though occasionally their acts may be only venial, either from the smallness of the matter, the imperfection of the acts themselves, or from the circumstances attending them. We have already seen and considered five of them, when explaining the commands to which they belong; to wit, covetousness, envy, lust, gluttony, and anger; where we also had occasion to speak of their opposite virtues. There
remain to be explained here the other two, pride and sloth, with their opposite virtues, humility and fervour of spirit.

§ 1. Of Pride.

Q. 2. What is pride?
A. Pride is commonly defined to be, an inordinate esteem and love of our own excellency, or more clearly, a false esteem of our own excellence, accompanied with a pleasure in thinking ourselves above what God has made us, and a desire of being thought by others above what we really are; according to St. Paul, "If any man thinks himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself," Gal. vi. 3. It may be divided into four different branches, which are diametrically opposite to the four distinguishing characters of true humility.

(1.) Humility enlightened by divine faith teaches us, that of ourselves we are nothing, that our very being, and every qualification or good thing which we possess, is all the gift of God, wholly dependent upon him, and essentially subjected to his good pleasure, for "every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights," James i. 17; that of course we have no right nor title in ourselves to any esteem or praise, on account of any good thing we possess, but that all the praise and glory belongs to God alone, according to that, "to the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever," 1 Tim. i. 17: and again, "What hast thou that thou hast not received? and if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" 1 Cor. iv. 7. In opposition to this, pride blinds a man to these truths, falsely persuading him that the qualifications and good things he possesses are his own, and therefore makes him attribute them to himself, value himself upon them, and seek to be esteemed and praised and honoured on that account; such were those of whom the scripture says, "who have said, We will magnify our tongue, our lips are our own; who is lord over us?" Ps. xi. 5. Such was the pride of Pharaoh, who, when Moses first went to him and said, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may sacrifice to me in the desert," answered, "Who is the Lord, that I should hear his voice, and let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go," Ex. v. 1. Such was the pride of Nabuchodonosor, who, when the three holy children refused to worship his golden statue, threatened to throw them into the fiery furnace, and said, "And who is the God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" Dan. iii. 15. Such was the pride of
Lucifer, who, dazzled with his own beauty and high perfections, forgot that he had received them from God, and presumed to set himself upon an equality with the Most High, saying in his heart, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God......I will ascend above the height of the clouds. I will be like to the Most High," Is. xiv. 13. Such, in fine, is the pride of all those who value themselves upon their beauty, their nobility, their riches, their valour, their power, their strength, &c., and who, forgetful of God, to whom all these things belong, though not perhaps in express words, yet in the pride of their heart, and in their whole conduct, look on these things as their own property, and seek that praise and esteem on their account, which is due to God alone.

(2.) Humility teaches us not only that all the good things we possess are from God, and not from ourselves, but also that they are all the pure gifts of God, bestowed on us out of his mere goodness and liberality, without any merit, right or title on our part to any one of them; that we depend wholly upon the goodness of God, not only for having first bestowed them on us, but also for his continuing to preserve them with us; and that whatever endeavours we use to procure or preserve any good, can never succeed without God's assistance and benediction; nay, that we are so far from deserving any good thing from God, that of ourselves we deserve nothing but punishment and stripes on account of our sins. See above, Chap. viii., Q. 4. In consequence of these truths, humility teaches us to confide only in God, and not in ourselves, nor in any ability of our own; to attribute all success to God alone, and to give him all the praise and glory. See Chap. viii., Q. 14. In opposition to this, even when by the light of revelation a man is forced to acknowledge God to be the author of all good, pride endeavours to persuade him that the success he acquires, or the good things he enjoys, are due to his own merit, to his own industry, to his own prudence, study, labour, or power, or other such desert, and makes him on that account glory in himself, and seek esteem, approbation, and praise from others, instead of referring all to God, and giving glory to him. Such was the pride of Nabuchodonosor, when "walking in his palace of Babylon, he said, Is not this the great Babylon, which I have built to be the seat of my kingdom, by the strength of my power, and by the glory of my excellency?" Dan. iv. 27. Such is the pride of those who attribute their knowledge to their own genius and study, their riches to their industry and good management, their victories in war to their own courage and conduct, &c., glorying in themselves, and forgetful of the Almighty.
(3.) Humility thus convincing a man of his own nothingness, incapacity, misery, and sin, teaches him carefully to separate in his own mind what belongs to God, and what is properly his own; and this separation being made, humility makes him afraid of making any show or ostentation of the good that is in him, as he knows it is the pure gift of God, and belongs only to him, which therefore he endeavours rather to hide from the eyes of men, least otherwise he should be exposed to the danger of vanity, and rob God of that glory which is due only to him; and the more favours he receives from God, the more he humbles himself in the view of his own unworthiness, fearing lest he should abuse them, and dreading the strict account he will have one day to make of them, knowing that "he to whom much is given, much will be required of him." Thus, St. John Baptist, when the Pharisees sent to inquire of him if he was the Christ, or a prophet, not only denied that he was the Christ, but even passed over in silence his being a prophet, though he could have acknowledged it with all truth, Christ himself having declared him to be "a prophet, and more than a prophet;" but of this he said nothing, out of humility; and when they pressed him for an answer, all he would acknowledge of himself was, that he was a voice: "I am the voice," says he, "of one crying in the wilderness." In opposition to this, pride having nothing in view but self-exaltation, and that all others should have the same high idea of us, that through this unhappy pride we have of ourselves, makes us both conceive a much higher opinion of any good that is in us than it really deserves, and even persuades us that we have many good things and valuable qualities which we have not, and pushes us on to publish and boast to others our pretended excellence, in order to inspire them with the same exalted idea which we ourselves have of them. Now this is a most universal branch of pride in some degree or other, for few are to be found who have not a much better opinion of themselves and of their own qualifications, than they really deserve, and who do not seek to set them off in the best light to others.

(4.) Finally; humility fixing one's attention upon what is only his own; that is, on his being a mere nothing and sin; and considering in other men the gifts and graces with which Almighty God has been pleased to adorn them, makes him subject himself in his own heart to all others, and upon every proper occasion show them all respect and esteem, according to that of the apostle: "In humility let each esteem others better than themselves, each one not considering the things that are
his own (that is, the gifts of God that are in him) "but those that are other men's; for let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," Phil. ii. 3. And again: in honour preferring one another," Rom. xii. 10; being "subject one to another in the fear of Christ," Eph. v. 21. Or, as St. Peter expresses it: Be ye subject therefore to every human creature for God's sake," I Pet. ii. 13; that is, considering in them what they have of God, and respecting God in them. Hence, the truly humble man endeavours to shut his eyes to the failings and imperfections of others, finding enough in himself whereon to occupy his attention, and to humble him in his own mind below all others; he considers the conduct of others in the most favourable light it can bear, carefully avoiding all rash judgments of them; and where the evil of their conduct is manifest, and can admit of no excuse, he still humbles himself below them in his own mind, reflecting, that if he had been in their situation, with the same temptations they had, he would perhaps have been much worse than they, attributing it solely to the goodness of God that he is not worse than the worst of the human race. In opposition to this, pride fixing one's attention only on the good qualities he has, or falsely imagines he has, and considering them as his own, and exulting in the fumes of his supposed excellency, makes him blind to all the good qualities of others, which he considers as a diminution of his own excellency; but he is clear-sighted to spy all their failings and imperfections, which his pride magnifies in his eyes, as by this means his vanity is gratified, seeing them so much inferior to himself, as he imagines, and exults in his own supposed superiority over them; hence rash judgments, unjust suspicions, jealousies, contempt, and disregard for others, and the like. Such was the pride of the proud Pharisee, who, drunk with the fumes of his own supposed perfections, despised the humble publican as one unworthy of his regard, though in the sight of God he was far more worthy than he.

From this description of pride, it appears (1.) That the very essence of this most detestable vice consists in withdrawing one's self in his own idea from the subjection he owes to God, and from the essential dependence which he has upon him, standing upon his own bottom, as if he had no need of God, and could do without him; thus, "The beginning of the pride of man is to fall from God, because his heart is departed from him that made him," Ecclus. x. 14. (2.) That the direct and immediate tendency of it, is to rob the Almighty of that
glory which essentially belongs to him, and of which he is so jealous, that he declares: "I the Lord, this is my name, I will not give my glory to another," Is. xlii. 8. And he repeats it again, chap. xlviii. 11. (3.) That as, in every sin a man commits, he withdraws himself from his subjection to God in that point, and prefers his own will to the will of the Almighty; so pride enters into every sin, and makes an essential ingredient of its malice. Hence (4.) Pride is a universal sin, the parent and root of all sin; has an infinite and universal opposition to God above all other sins, and hence is, of all other crimes, the most detestable in his eyes, and, of course, the most dangerous enemy of our souls. "Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind," says the venerable old man Tobias to his son, "or in thy words, for from it all perdition took its beginning," Tob. iv. 15. "Pride is hateful before God," Ecolus. x. 7. "Pride is the beginning of all sin; he that holdeth it shall be filled with maledictions, and it shall ruin him in the end," Ecclus. x. 15. "I hate arrogance and pride," says the wisdom of God, "and every wicked way," Prov. viii. 13. "Six things there are," says Solomon, which the Lord hateth, and the first of them are haughty eyes," Prov. vi. 16.

Q. 3. How does the great evil of pride appear from scripture?

A. Besides what we have just seen of the hatred which God has of it, we find also the most dreadful judgments denounced against it in scripture. Thus, (1.) "The soul that committeth any thing through pride, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, because he hath been rebellious against the Lord, shall be cut off from amongst his people; for he hath condemned the word of the Lord," Num. xv. 30. (2.) "The Lord God hath sworn by his own soul, saith the Lord, the God of hosts; I detest the pride of Jacob, and I hate his houses, and I will deliver up the city with the inhabitants thereof; and if there remain ten men in one house, they also shall die," Amos vi. 8. "The Lord hath sworn against the pride of Jacob: surely I will never forget all their works. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein?" Amos viii. 7. (3.) "Behold I come against thee, O proud one, saith the Lord, the God of hosts; for the day is come, the time of thy visitation; and the proud one shall fall, he shall fall down, and there shall be none to lift him up; and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him," Jer. i. 31. (4.) "Behold the day shall come, kindled as a furnace; and all the proud, and all they that do wickedly
shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall set them on fire, saith the Lord of hosts, it shall not leave them root nor branch,” Mal. iv. 1. (5.) “Pride goeth before destruction, and the spirit is lifted up before a fall; it is better to be humbled with the meek, than to divide the spoils with the proud,” Prov. xv. 18. “The house that is very rich, shall be brought to nothing by pride,” Ecclus. xxi. 5. “The lofty eyes of man are humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be made to stoop, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. Because the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and high-minded, and upon every one that is arrogant, and he shall be humbled,” Is. ii. 11. “Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled,” as Christ himself assures us, Luke, xiv. 11. For, “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble,” 1 Pet. v. 5. (6.) “The Lord will destroy the house of the proud,” Prov. xv. 25. “The congregation of the proud shall not be healed, for the plant of wickedness shall take root in them, and it shall not be perceived,” Ecclus. iii. 30. “God hath overturned the thrones of proud princes, and hath set up the meek in their stead. God hath made the roots of proud nations to wither, and hath planted the humble of these nations......God hath abolished the memory of the proud, and hath preserved the memory of them that are humble in mind,” Ecclus. x. 17.

Q. 4. What are the sins that immediately rise from pride, as branches of that fatal root?

A. There are several sins that are immediately produced by pride, and are called the daughters of pride; and are, properly speaking, nothing else but the several ways in which pride shows itself, according to the circumstances one is in. The principal sins of this kind are the following: and a view of the dreadful punishments which God has inflicted upon them, will still more fully show us the malice of this sin: To understand these various branches of pride, we must keep in view what it precisely consists in, to wit, “in looking upon the good qualifications we possess, of whatever kind they be, as our own; in esteeming ourselves, and exalting ourselves in our own mind, on account of these qualities, and desiring that others should do the same.

(1.) This disposition of heart, as we have seen above, makes a man blind to his own faults, or think lightly of them; but acute and sharp-sighted in spying and magnifying those of others; hence he prefers himself to others, despises them,
judges them rashly, and condemns them unjustly. This was the case with the proud Pharisee in the parable, which our Saviour expressly applies to all those "who trust in themselves as just, and despise others," Luke xviii. 9. And it shows how detestable they are to God, and that their pride hinders them from getting pardon for their own sins, and destroys all the merit of their good works.

(2.) It makes the proud take a vain complacency in themselves, and in every thing that belongs to them; in their beauty, in their riches, in their family, in their children, and in their good works themselves; often thinking upon them, and taking pleasure in them—resting in them as in the object of their happiness, instead of referring all to God, and placing their happiness in him. This was the unhappy fault of David in numbering his people; in punishment of which God sent him a pestilence, which in three days' time, destroyed no less than seventy thousand of their number; thus punishing him in the very object of his sin.

(3.) It makes a man presume on his own parts and abilities, and trust to himself; it makes him ready to expose himself to dangerous occasions, and promise great things of himself and his own abilities. This was the case with St. Peter, when he said to his Master, that "though all the rest should be scandalized at him, he would not," which contained a plain acknowledgment of the opinion he had of himself, above his brethren; and when our Saviour, to repress this vain idea he had of himself, forewarned him of his being that night to deny him, he replied with great presumption, "though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." But when the time came, and he was in the occasion, how did he fall! Almighty God, in punishment of his pride, left him a little to himself, that he might learn, by experience, to know his own weakness. And this very often is the way in which this branch of pride is punished.

(4.) It makes a man ambitious of raising himself in the world, above the station in which Providence has placed him, in order to be the more honoured and esteemed by others. This was the pride of our first parents: "You shall be as gods," said the serpent to Eve; and the desire of this induced her to commit the fatal crime which brought upon us all our woe. And how many crimes has the same unhappy ambition plunged her posterity into, who, to raise themselves in the world, and get, themselves a name and power over others, stick at nothing which they think can forward their views? Calumny, intrigue,
pride.

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cabal, injustice, perjury, and what not? All is swallowed
down by this detestable branch of pride.

(5.) It makes a man attribute to himself and to his own
address and abilities, all the success of his affairs, and all the
good things he performs. Thus Nabuchodonosor, when he was
"walking in his palace of Baylon, said Is not this the great
Babylon which I have built, to be the seat of the kingdom, by
the strength of my power, and the glory of my excellence?"
Dan. iv. 27. But see how this branch of pride is punished by
God! "And while the word was yet in the king’s mouth, a
voice came down from heaven—To thee, O king Nabuchodo-
nosor, it is said, Thy kingdom shall pass from thee, and they
shall cast thee out from among men, and thy dwelling shall be
with cattle and wild beasts; thou shalt eat grass like an ox,
and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the
Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to
whomsoever he will. The same hour the word was fulfilled
upon Nabuchodonosor, and he was driven away from among
men, and did eat grass like an ox, and his body was wet with
the dew of heaven, till his hairs grew like the feathers of eagles,
and his nails like birds’ claws," Dan. iv. 27.

(6.) From the high esteem that proud people have of them-
selves, and its attendant, an ardent desire to be equally
esteemed and praised by others, which is the vice of vanity, or
vain glory, it follows, that in order to procure this esteem and
praise, they are always boasting of their own parts; take every
occasion of speaking about themselves, what they have done,
what they can do, what they are resolved to do, and the like;
setting of their own real or supposed qualifications, in the
strongest light, and are often so far blinded by their pride, and
the pleasure they take in extolling themselves, as to talk the
greatest nonsense, and expose themselves to contempt and
derision: the Divine justice so punishing them in the very
thing in which they sin. What greater folly than the boast of
Lucifer, as related by Isaiah, (see above, Q. 2, No. 1.) and of
the others there mentioned? but how were they confounded
afterwards? and especially Lucifer, of whom the prophet adds,
"But yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, into the depth of
the pit," Is. xiv. 15. What can be more ridiculous, as well as
impious, than the vain boasting of Sennacherib king of Assyria,
when he came with a great army against Jerusalem? Thus he
speaks in his letter to king Ezechias, "Let not thy God
deceive thee, in whom thou trustest, saying Jerusalem shall not
be given into the hands of the king of the Assyrians. Behold
thou hast heard all that the kings of the Assyrians have done to all countries which they have destroyed; and canst thou be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered them whom my fathers have destroyed?” &c., Is. xxxvii. 10. But in punishment of his pride, God sent his destroying angel, who in one night slew in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and eighty-five thousand. And when they arose in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses. And Sennacherib went out and departed, and returned and dwelt in Ninive; and it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the temple of Nersoch his god, that Adramelech and Sarasor his sons slew him with the sword,” verse 36.

(7.) As their heart is so set upon the esteem of others, this lays them open to all kinds of flattery, and they take great pleasure and self-complacency in being praised by others, even though they are sensible in their own mind that they do not deserve it. How hateful this is to Almighty God, and how severely punished by him, appears from the fate of king Herod Agrippa; for being to receive the Tyrian ambassadors to a public audience, “Upon a day appointed, Herod being arrayed in kingly apparel, sat in the judgment-seat, and made an oration to them. And the people made acclamation, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And forthwith an angel of the Lord struck him, because he had not given the honour to God; and being eaten up by worms he gave up the ghost,” Acts xii. 21.

(8.) If they see others preferred before them, or possessing, any qualifications for which they are more esteemed and honoured than themselves, their hearts are immediately filled with envy, bitterness, and gall against them, which often hurry them on to the greatest crimes. In this they imitate the pride and malice of Satan, and show how much they belong to him; for “by the envy of the devil death came into the world, and they follow him that are of his side,” Wisd. ii. 24. From this invidious pride it was, that Cain was pushed on to murder his brother, for which he himself became a reprobate; and from the same source arose Saul’s hatred against David, whom he so violently persecuted, and on his account killed eighty-five innocent priests of God in cold blood, merely because he suspected the chief priest had favoured David.

(9.) If they commit any fault, they cannot bear to be reproved for it, not even by their lawful superiors, but either run out into vain excuses, or telling lies, or defend the evil they have done, and become obstinate in their sin. In this
they imitate the pride of our first parents, who, by pretending to excuse their fall, seemed even to throw the blame on God himself, and rather increased their guilt than moved him to mercy. They imitate also the pride of Corah and his companions, who, becoming obstinate in their fault, were swallowed up alive, the earth opening under their feet; "And they went down alive into hell, the ground closing upon them, and they perished from among the people," Num. xvi. 33.

(10.) If contradicted in any of their views, or neglected, or if any kind of disrespect be shown them, though but in appearance only, they immediately lose all patience, are inflamed with passion against the offenders, and breathe nothing but vengeance. In this they imitate the unhappy Haman, in his rage against Mordecai and all the nation of Jews; but sooner or later the vengeance of God turns their malice upon their own head, and pursues them, as it did Haman, with the same evils, or worse than those which they intended for, or inflicted on others.

(11.) Attributing to themselves any good that is in them, they forget the hand from which they receive it, are ungrateful to God, and neglect to thank him for it; and by this means they draw upon themselves the most dreadful of all the punishments with which the Divine justice pursues pride; which is, the withdrawing his graces from those who are guilty of it, leaving them to themselves, and giving them up at last to a reprobate sense; and most justly—for, as they refuse to give God the glory which is due to him, on account of the good things he bestows upon them, and impiously take to themselves what belongs to God; it is just he should withdraw himself from them who so ungratefully withdraw themselves from him, and deprive them of those graces which they so grievously abuse. Thus we are told, that the heathen philosophers, "When they knew God, have not glorified him as God, or given thanks, but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened......wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, to uncleanness......for this cause God delivered them up to shameful affections......and as they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them up to a reprobate sense," Rom. i. 21.

(12.) Hypocrisy is another child of the same unhappy mother, Pride, by which a person puts on an outward appearance of sanctity and piety, in order to draw to himself the esteem and praise of men. This was one great vice of the Pharisees, for which our blessed Saviour pronounces so many
woes against them in the gospel. From the same root also proceeds obstinacy in one's own opinion, from the idea one has of his superior judgment, and more solid way of thinking than other men; and also the spirit of contradiction and disputing, which pushes on a man, out of vanity, to appear more knowing and better informed of things than others; and this is very often done at the expensne of truth itself, to which people of this character are generally no slaves.

Q. 5. Is pride then a pernicious evil to man?

A. It is perhaps of all other vices the most pernicious, as appears from all we have seen above, and also because, (1.) Wherever it enters, even in our most virtuous works, it destroys all their value and worth in the sight of God; for as the dead body without the soul is but a mere carcase, an appearance of a man, but not a real man; so wherever pride enters into any virtuous action, it kills it in the eyes of God; so that whatever appearance it may have of being good and virtuous before men, yet before God it is but a mere carcase, an appearance of virtue, but no virtue. This our blessed Saviour declares in plain terms, when he assures us, that if we fast or pray, or give alms to be seen by men, that is, to gain their esteem and praise, we need expect no reward from our heavenly Father. (2.) It has this pestiferous malignity above all other vices, that it draws fuel and nourishment to itself, not only from things that are indifferent in themselves as to any moral goodness, but even from our very virtues, yea, even from humility, the virtue of all others which is most opposite to it. There is no other vice to which our nature is subject, but has some opposite virtue by which it is totally subdued. Thus, lust is subdued by chastity, anger by meekness, avarice by liberality, envy by charity, sloth by devotion; and the perfect practice of these virtues effectually destroys their opposite vices: but that branch of pride which seeks the praise and esteem of men, and is called vain glory, has no other opposite virtue by which it can be securely overcome, since it takes a handle to nourish itself from all our other virtues, and even from our very humiliations themselves; and the reason is, because every other vice has something evil for its object, but pride and vain glory rise chiefly from objects that are good. Hence all other vices are the vices of sinners, but vain glory rises up against its very conquerors; and from the victories they gain over it, draws new strength to assault them, and rises from these very acts of virtue and humiliation to a virtuous life, and it is the last that leaves him. (3.) It
not only rises from our virtuous actions, but even from things the most indifferent or trifling, yea, even from our very vices themselves; thus some are proud of their beauty, some of their hair, some of their new clothes, some of their knowledge, some of their riches, some, as St. Francis of Sales justly observes, think more of themselves, and imagine that others more admire them when on horseback than when on foot; finally, some glory even in their wickedness, and boast of their vices of their drunkenness and debaucheries, seeking praise and a name from those things of which they ought to be ashamed. Of such the scripture says, "They are glad when they have done evil, and rejoice in most wicked things," Prov. ii. 14. And St. Paul thus pathetically describes and declares them, "Many walk, of whom I have told you often (and now weeping tell you) that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame," Philip. iii. 18. Such is the subtle poison of this unhappy vice, and such the immense hurt it does to the soul of man!

Q. 6. What are the remedies against pride?

A. (1.) The first and most necessary remedy against pride is fervent, humble, and perseverant prayer; and even from this pride will take an occasion to nourish itself, if the soul be not exceedingly upon its guard; which clearly shows, that nothing but the Almighty hand of God can root out this unhappy vice from the soul. And this divine assistance cannot be obtained without humble, fervent, and perseverant prayer. (2.) Often to meditate upon the great evils of pride, and how opposite it is to the spirit and example of Jesus Christ, in order to excite in the soul an earnest desire of being delivered from it, that so our prayers against it may be the more fervent. (3.) Often to meditate also upon the grounds of humility, to wit, our own nothingness, weakness, misery, and unworthiness, in order to make our prayers humble, and force us to fly to God with the greater confidence, as to the one who alone can cure us. (4.) To force ourselves frequently, or rather continually, to make interior acts of those lessons of humility which we have described above, as the proper characters of that virtue. See above Q. 2. (5.) To accustom ourselves in every thing we do to protest against all self-sufficiency and self-complacency, and to do every thing with the express intention of seeking only to please God, and to obey his holy will. (6.) To embrace with readiness every opportunity of practising any act of which they perform on purpose to conquer it. Hence it is the
first vice, which generally attacks a person who applies himself to humility; that comes in our way, and to bear in silence, in patience and resignation, any humiliation which God in his goodness may be pleased to send us. (7.) Often to meditate on the necessity of true humility, in order to be saved.

§ 2. Humility.

Q. 7. What is humility?

A. It is a virtue which resides partly in the understanding, and partly in the will; partly in the spirit, and partly in the heart. In the understanding the spirit convinces a man that of himself he is nothing, has nothing, can do no good, and deserves nothing but punishment on account of his sins. The grounds of which conviction see above, Chap. VIII. Quests. 4, 14. No. 1. In the heart and will it makes a man condemn and despise himself, as having nothing of himself but misery and sin, and hence he is not only willing but desirous of being despised by others, and of suffering humiliations as being his due; of flying all praise and esteem of the world, to which he has no title; of giving the glory of every thing to God, to whom alone it belongs; and of confiding wholly in God alone. See above, Q. 2. of this Chapter, for the true character of this virtue.

Q. 8. Is humility necessary for salvation?

A. No virtue is more necessary for obtaining salvation than humility; for (1.) Pride drove the fallen angels out of heaven. If, therefore, pride could not permit those to remain in heaven, who were there, much less can those be admitted to heaven, who are not there, if they be not humble. (2.) Without the grace of God we cannot take one step towards our salvation; now, “God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble,” James iv. 6. “To whom shall I have respect,” says Almighty God, “but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words?” Is. lxvi. 2. “The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God,” Ecclus. iii. 20. See above, Chap. VIII. Q. 6. (3.) Without true humility there can be no Christian hope, and without hope we cannot be saved. See Chap. VIII. through the whole. (4.) Without humility there can be no true repentance, and consequently no pardon of our sins; witness the proud Pharisee: but an humble and contrite heart God will not despise, Ps. 1. 19. (5.) All we have seen above of the evil of pride, and the abhorrence which God has to it,
and the rigour with which he pursues it, is a most convincing proof of the necessity of humility. (6.) All Christians are convinced of the necessity of baptism and repentance for salvation; and this conviction is founded on these express and formal declarations of the son of God, "Amen, amen I say unto you, except a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," John iii. 5. And again, "I say unto you, except you be penitent, you shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 5. These strong expressions contain the most unequivocal declaration of the necessity of these two means of salvation. Now the same son of God uses the same mode of expression to show the necessity of humility; for when the disciples asked him, saying, "Who thinkest thou is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus calling to him a little child, set him in the midst of them, and said, Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as the child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xviii. 1.

Q. 9. What are the motives to the practice of humility?

A. There are several strong motives to the practice of this virtue, of which the absolute necessity of it, in order to be saved, is surely one of the strongest; but besides this, we have also these following:

I. The excellency of it; for it is one of the greatest and most excellent of all virtues, as appears from these reasons. (1.) It is the most difficult to our nature, being quite opposite to that unhappy pride which is the deepest wound our nature has received from sin; consequently it is the more glorious in the sight of God, when we effectually overcome that difficulty for his sake, and in order to render him that true homage of praise and glory which belongs only to him. (2.) True humility can never arise from any interest of self-love, it being diametrically opposite to all its views: it can therefore arise only from the pure and sincere love of God, and nothing else can support the soul in the painful and difficult task of acquiring it. Now, the more difficult any virtue is to self love, and the more pure and holy the motive is from which it arises, it is always the more excellent in itself, and the more valuable in the eyes of God. (3.) It is the groundwork and foundation of all other virtues, insomuch that without humility no virtue whatever can be of any value before God, nor be anything else but a mere appearance of virtue, without any substance; for as we have seen above, wherever pride enters into any of our virtuous actions, it corrupts
and destroys the whole merit of it entirely. And hence the more one advances in humility the more he advances in real virtue, and no further. (4.) It is that virtue from which prayer draws all its wonderful power and efficacy in obtaining from God whatever we ask, as we have seen above, Chap. X. § 1. (5.) It disarms the anger and indignation of God, provoked by our sins, and moves him to mercy; witness the wicked king Achab. For though Almighty God had sent his prophet Elias to denounce to him the dreadful judgments that he was to send upon him for his crimes, yet when Achab humbled himself exceedingly before God on that account, God, as it were in surprise mixed with pleasure, called upon Elias, and said, “Hast thou seen Achab humbled before me, therefore, because he hath humbled himself for my sake I will not bring the evil in his days,” 3 Kings xx i. (6.) It is the root from which all Christian virtue springs, and by means of which it is nourished and increases; just as the plant or tree springs from its root, and draws all its juice and nourishment from it. And as the root lies under ground, hid from the eyes of men, and is trampled upon by men; and for the most part has neither beauty nor smell, and yet is the principle of the life, and of all the virtues of the plant; so humility hides itself from the sight of others, and is despised and trampled upon by the world, and has no beauty nor appearance to recommend it to their esteem, yet it is the principal source from which all other Christian virtues draw their highest merit and excellency in the eyes of God. And as the deeper the root is in the ground, the higher the tree grows, insomuch that the largest and most lofty trees have always the deepest roots, so the more profound humility is, the more exalted all other virtues are which flow from it.

II. Another powerful motive for this virtue, is the example of Jesus Christ; for he came from heaven on purpose to teach us humility by his example, as well as by his doctrine. Thus he says, “Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart and you shall find rest to your souls,” Matt. xi. 29. And when James and John asked, by their mother’s interposition, to sit, one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom, the other apostles “hearing it, were moved with indignation against the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him, and said, You know that the princes of the Gentiles lord it over them, and they that are greater exercise power upon them. It shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister; and he that will be first among you, shall be your servant. Even so as the Son of man
came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister,” Matt. xx. 24. And when on another occasion, “There was a strife among them, which of them should seem to be greater; he said to them The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them......but you not so, but he that is greater among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is the leader as he that serveth. For which is greater, he that sitteth at table, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at table? But I am in the midst of you as he that serveth, Luke. xxii. 24. In a still more striking manner, he inculcates the practice of humility from his own example, when at the last supper. “He riseth from supper and layeth aside his garments, and having taken a towel, he girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with a towel wherewith he was girded. And after he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, being set down again he said to them, Know ye what I have done to you? You call me master, and Lord; and you say well, for so I am. If then I being your Lord and master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet; for I have giving you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also,” John xiii. 4, 12. Now unless we resemble Jesus Christ, we can have no part with him, for, “whom God foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son, Rom. viii. 29.; that is, God Almighty has decreed that all such as he foreknew, would by perseverance in faith and good works be saved, should arrive at that happiness, only by being conformable to the image of Jesus Christ.

Q. 10. In what manner did our Saviour exercise this holy virtue?

A. By practising the most excellent and heroic acts of it on all occasions, as recorded in the gospel for our instruction. Thus (1.) He made choice of those things which were mean and low in the eyes of the world for his portion. Before he was born he would be rejected by all the Jews of Bethlehem, and in consequence of that was born in a stable, and laid in a manger, in the poor destitute condition to which his virgin mother and St. Joseph were reduced. He lived for the greatest part of his life in a mean station, unknown to the world, and labouring at a mean employment; and in his public life, made choice of twelve poor fishermen for his intimate friends and companions. He then practised so rigorous a poverty as to be maintained by charity, and could say of himself, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of
man hath not where to lay his head,” Matt. viii. 20. (2.) He was extremely modest and meek in his whole behaviour, was never seen to contend, nor make any clamour or noise, but always showed such gentle mildness, as to verify what was foretold of him by the prophet, “He shall not contend nor cry out, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets: the bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not extinguish,” Matt. xii. 19. (3.) He was always ready to do the lowliest offices of charity, to help and serve any one. In this his whole private life was spent, serving his blessed mother and St. Joseph, in their mean station and employment; and he afterwards declared that he was come not to be served himself, but to serve others; “not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” And with this view he washed his disciples’ feet, as we have seen above. (4.) He never sought his own glory, or the praise of men, but did all his glorious works with the most pure intention for the glory of his heavenly Father. “I seek not my own glory,” said he, “I honour my Father......If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing,” John viii. 49, 54. (5.) He sometimes desires to conceal his miracles, to teach us how much we should avoid seeking the praise of men for any good we do. Thus, when he raised Jarius’s daughter from death to life, “He charged them strictly that no one should know it,” Mark v. 43. When he cured the leper he said to him, “See thou tell no man,” Matt. vii. 4. When he cured two blind men, he “strictly charged them, saying, See that no man know this,” Matt. ix. 30. After his glorious transfiguration before his three disciples, “As they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of man be risen from the dead,” Matt. xvii. 9. Not that he was in any danger of vain glory himself, had these things been known, but he did it for our example. (6.) When honours were offered him, he fled from them, for after the miraculous feeding of five-thousand men with five loaves and two small fishes; “When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come to take him by force, and make him king, he fled again into the mountain himself alone,” John vi. 15. (7.) When he was pleased, on his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, to receive the loudest acclamations and honours from the people, he was so far from being elated with them, that in the midst of this triumph he wept over Jerusalem, foreseeing her reprobation, and the dreadful miseries that were soon to come upon her. (8.) He suffered the most unparalleled injuries and affronts during the course of his passion, without the least
complaint, or murmur, and without doing or saying the least word, either to defend his injured honour, or to free himself from such insults. "Who, when he was reviled, did not revile; when he suffered, he threatened not," 1 Pet. ii. 23; "leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps," verse 21. (9.) But above all these things, he showed his profound humility of heart, and love of abjection, in his perfect obedience not only to his blessed mother and St. Joseph, as we read "that he went down to Nazareth, and was subject to them," but even to the will of his enemies, when he delivered himself up to their hands, of which the scripture says, "He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the ignominious death of the cross," Phil. ii. 8. These are the admirable lessons of humility, which Jesus Christ the Son of God gives us in his own example, and which all his followers ought carefully to imitate, in order to practise and acquire this divine virtue.

Q. 11. What other practices of humility are particularly recommended in scripture?

A. Chiefly these following: (1.) Never to say any thing to our own praise, or that can tend to gain the esteem of others, and above all never to say or do any thing with the intention of being esteemed or praised by men. "Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind nor in thy words; for from it all perdition took its beginning," Tob. iv. 14. If it appears in the words, it is a sure sign that it reigns in the heart, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and therefore, "Boast not for to-morrow, for thou knowest not what the day to come may bring forth. Let another praise thee, and not thy own mouth; a stranger and not thy own lips," Prov. xxvii. 1. (2.) To rejoice in our own abjection; that is, to be pleased in our own mind, and content, when any thing happens which may tend to give others a mean opinion of us, when our natural infirmities, whether of mind or body, are made known, or when any humiliation comes upon us from without. The apostles when scourged, went away "rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus," Acts xvi. 41. "Gladly," says St. Paul, "will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I take pleasure in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake," 2 Cor. xii. 9. (3.) Readily to yield to the judgment of others, where the honour of God and religion is not concerned, never being obstinate in defending our own opinion, but avoiding all debates and contentions. "Be not wise in your own conceits,"
Rom. xii. 16. "Avoid foolish and unlearned questions; knowing that they beget strifes," 2 Tim. ii. 23. "Let nothing be done through strife, nor by vain-glory; but in humility, let each esteem others better than themselves," Phil. ii. 3. And even where the cause of God and of truth is in question, though we must never betray that sacred cause by a base compliance, yet we must avoid all wrangling and bitterness in defending it, declaring the truth, and "the ground of the hope that is in us," with humility and sincerity, and leaving the rest in the hand of God, praying to him for those who oppose his truth; for "The servant of God must not wrangle, but be mild towards all men, apt to teach, patient, with modesty admonishing them that resist the truth; if peradventure God may give them repentance to know the truth," 2 Tim. ii. 24. Other exercises of humility may be learned from what we have seen above, Q. 4, on the different branches of pride; for to avoid all those, and act in opposition to them, is to practise the most perfect humility.

§ 3. Spiritual Sloth.

Q. 12. What is spiritual sloth?
A. Sloth is a mean and contemptible vice, but the greatness of its malice does not appear at first sight. It is, however, justly counted to be of its own nature a mortal sin, because our blessed Saviour with his own mouth condemns the slothful and unprofitable servant, for no other reason but because he was slothful and unprofitable, to be bound hand and foot and cast into outer darkness, "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt. xxv. 30. It is also one of the capital sins, on account of the many other sins that arise from it. Now spiritual sloth is a feebleness and languor of the soul, which gives one a distaste and aversion for the exercises of virtue and piety, on account of the pain and difficulty one finds in practising them. On this we must observe, (1.) That there are two different classes of spiritual exercises; some are strictly commanded, and necessary for salvation, but are very profitable to the soul, and great helps to salvation. (2.) These last, which are not enjoined to all by a general command, and therefore are not of their own nature necessary for salvation, yet may in particular circumstances become so to some, at least as necessary precautions and means for enabling them to fulfill their other duties of strict obligation. (3.) Spiritual sloth, which gives one such a distaste for duties of obligation,
and makes him neglect the performance of them, is then a mortal sin, whether these duties be necessary for salvation of themselves, or only such with regard to the particular circumstances of the person concerned. (4.) Spiritual sloth, which makes a person neglect and have an aversion for such exercises of virtue as are not indeed absolutely necessary, but greatly conducive to secure his salvation, is a very dangerous disposition, and constitutes a great part of the state of tepidity, which is acknowledged by all to be most pernicious to those who are in it. (5.) It must, however, be observed, that the repugnance and difficulty which one feels in the exercises of virtue and piety, is not of itself the vice of spiritual sloth, even though the will should be somewhat disheartened by it, provided they do not neglect these duties when obliged to perform them, notwithstanding that repugnance. This is rather the revolt of the flesh against the spirit, which the greatest saints have experienced; and if the person do his best in such a case, humble himself before God in the sight of this his weakness, use the proper means for overcoming it, and persevere in doing his duty to the best of his ability, instead of being a hurt, it will be of great advantage to him. But if the will yield to this repugnance, and become negligent in performing her duties on account of the difficulty, she then becomes more or less culpable, in proportion to the degree of this neglect; and if it go so far that the will omits her duties entirely, and gives up the cause rather than persist in her endeavours to conquer this repugnance, then the vice of spiritual sloth is completed.

Q. 13. Wherein consists the malice of spiritual sloth?

A. Its principal malice consists in this, that it destroys the principle of spiritual life in the soul. This principle is charity, or the love of God, to which sloth has the most distinguished opposition. Charity makes a man take pleasure in the service of God, and makes all the difficulty of a virtuous life easy, and even delightful; sloth makes every thing in the service of God appear painful and burthensome, and gives one a distaste and aversion for it; charity makes us embrace with gladness every occasion of pleasing God and giving testimony of our love for him, whom we love above all things; sloth gives us an aversion and unwilligness to do any thing that is disagreeable or painful to self-love, even though to please God, and prefers our own satisfaction, ease, or convenience, to the giving God those testimonies of our love which he requires from us. Charity cannot subsist in a soul without some degree of zeal for the glory of God and one's own sanctification; sloth begets
a coldness and insensibility in the soul towards God and eternal happiness, which are incompatible with that zeal which the love of God inspires. Hence, therefore, this spiritual sloth is, of its own nature, an enemy of virtue and piety, by the disgust and aversion it raises in the soul against them; it is an enemy of our salvation, which as our Saviour expressly declares, essentially requires that we do violence to ourselves; for, "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent carry it away," it is an enemy to the cross of Christ and to his gospel, all whose sacred maxims excite us to self-denial, mortification, and penance, under the pain of eternal damnation; and these are what sloth detests and abhors.

Q. 14. What description does the scripture give us of this vice?

A. The scripture gives us a strong and affecting description of the slothful man in his temporal affairs, and the fatal consequences which his sloth occasions in them, which in the spiritual sense are all literally verified in what concerns the soul. Thus, "the soul of the sluggard willeth and willeth not, but the soul of them that work shall be made fat," Prov. xiii. 4. "Desires kill the slothful for his hands refused to work at all. He longeth and desireth all the day," Prov. xxi. 25. "As the door turneth upon its hinges, so doth the slothful, upon his bed. The slothful hideth his hand under his arm-pit, and it grieveth him to turn it to his mouth," Prov. xxvi. 14. See here the behaviour of the spiritually slothful man; he is full of desires, but he has no resolution to take any step to accomplish them; he has a will to besaved, but it is a weak, inconstant, irresolute will, which never was the means of salvation. He is afraid of the labour, he imagines a thousand difficulties in the way of virtue, which have no existence but in his own fancy; which delusion the scripture thus describes, with its fatal consequences: "Because of the cold the sluggard would not plough: he shall beg therefore in the summer, and it shall not be given him," Prov. xx. 4. "Fear casteth down the slothful, and the souls of the effeminate shall be hungry," Prov. xxii. 8. The slothful man saith, "There is a lion in the way, I shall be slain in the midst of the streets," Prov. xxii. 13. "The way of the slothful is a hedge of thorns; the way of the just is without offence," Prov. v. 19. "I passed by the field of the slothful man, and by the vineyard of the foolish man, and behold it was all filled up with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down; which when I had seen, I laid it up in my heart, and
by the example I received instruction. Thou wilt sleep a little said I, thou wilt slumber a little, thou wilt fold thy hands a little to rest; and poverty shall come upon thee as a runner, and beggary as an armed man," Prov. xxiv. 30.

Q. 15. Who are those who are guilty of spiritual sloth?

A. To understand this, we must keep before our eyes the following gospel truths: (1.) We are come into this world only to work out our salvation; this is the great end of our being; this is our proper business,—this is the one thing necessary, without which all things else are to no purpose, as we have seen at large, Chap. V. § 3. (2.) To work out our salvation is a work of great difficulty to our corrupt nature, and requires great labour and industry on our part. See Chap. V. § 4. It is not enough we do no ill in order to obtain salvation; we must also do good, discharge the duties God requires of us, and overcome all the enemies that oppose it. Hence we are commanded, "With fear and trembling to work out our salvation," Phil. ii. 12; and "to labour the more, that by good works we may make our calling and election sure," 2 Pet. 10; and it is upon these terms that "an entrance shall be ministered to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," verse 11. (3.) Our time in this world is given us only for this purpose, that we may employ it in such good works, according to our state and condition in the world, as may effectually secure this great end of our being; and therefore to this great end, and no other, are we commanded to employ it. "Yet a little while," says Jesus Christ, "the light is among you. Walk while you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not," John xii. 35. "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work," John ix. 4. "We do exhort you," says St. Paul, "that you receive not the grace of God in vain...... Behold now is the acceptable time—behold now is the day of salvation," 1 Cor. vi. 1. "See, therefore, brethren, that you walk circumspectly, not as the unwise, but as the wise, redeeming the time, for the days are evil," Eph. v. 15. And "in doing good let us not fail, for in due time we shall reap, not failing; therefore, whilst we have time, let us do good to all men," Gal. vi. 9; and "exhort one another every day, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," Heb. iii. 13. (4.) To enable us to perform this great work and secure our salvation, Almighty God has given to every one a portion of his goods and graces; "to one he gives five talents, to another two, and to another
one; to every one according to his proper ability," Matt. xxv. 15; that is, to every one he gives such a portion of his graces, as he sees fitting and proper for him; and these graces are all the good things which God bestows on us in this life, whether of grace or of nature—of mind or body—of person or of fortune: health, wit, knowledge, riches, friends, &c., are all included here; as well as those spiritual graces which Jesus Christ obtained for us by his passion and death, and they are all given us as means by which to work out our salvation. Moreover, we are assured that we shall give a most strict account of the use we make of these talents; and the more we have received of them, the more good fruit will be expected from us, and the stricter our account will be; and if we have been unprofitable and slothful, Christ himself declares to us that eternal misery shall be our doom: "And the unprofitable servant that had not abused his talent, but only had neglected to improve it, cast ye," says Christ, "into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt. xxv. 30. The same most important truth is strongly set before our eyes, in what happened to the barren fig-tree; "And Jesus was hungry, and when he had seen afar off a fig-tree having leaves, he came, if, perhaps, he might find any thing on it; and when he was come to it, he found nothing but leaves; for it was not the time for figs. And answering he said, May no man hereafter eat fruit of thee any more for ever! And his disciples heard it—and when they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots. And Peter remembering, said to him, Rabbi, behold the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away," Mark xi. 12, 20. See here the dreadful fate of those who do not bring forth good fruit from those graces which God bestows upon them; and who shall be found empty of good works, when God calls upon them to give an account! It is true, the goodness of God bears with such for a time; and though justice demands their immediate punishment, yet mercy often interposes for a little respite; but if they still continue to be fruitless and unprofitable, at last they will feel the weight of Divine vengeance in the flames of hell. This our Saviour beautifully expresses to us in the parable of the barren tree "A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it, and he found none. And he said to the dresser of the vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none. Cut it down therefore; why cumbereth it the ground? But he answering
said to him, Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig about it and dung it. And if haply it bear fruit; but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down,” Luke xiii. 6. (5.) But if the very neglect of improving the talents which God gives to us, be so severely punished by his justice, if the being only unprofitable servants bring only upon us so great a guilt before him, what will be the case with those who abuse his talents? Who squander them away! Who turn them into instruments of offending him! Hear what our Saviour himself says of such: First, he assures us, that the unjust steward who wasted his master’s goods, was called to account, and put out of his stewardship; Luke xvi. 1. Then he says in another place, “If the servant shall say in his heart, My lord is long a-coming, and shall begin to strike the men-servants and maid-servants, and to eat and drink, and be drunk: the lord of that servant will come in the day that he looketh not for him, and at the hour that he knoweth not, and shall separate him, and shall appoint him his portion with unbelievers,” Luke xii. 45. “And with the hypocrites, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” Matt. xxiv. 51. “And that servant who knew the will of his Lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes......and unto whosoever much is given, of him much shall be required: and to whom they have committed much, of him they will demand more,” Luke xii. 47.

From these clear and solid scripture truths, it is easy to see who those are who are guilty of spiritual sloth, of whom the following are the most observable: (1.) Those who lead an idle, useless life, without applying their talents, whether of nature, fortune, or grace, to any good purpose at all. Although a life of this kind be not sullied with crimes, and may be, in the eyes of men, accompanied with innocent morals, yet it is certainly very far from being innocent in the eyes of God, as all the above truths show, for to them it bears a direct opposition; to which we must also add, that such an idle, useless life, is contrary to the very end of our being in another view; for we are all born to labour and toil, and not to idleness; we are condemned to labour by God himself, in punishment of sin—“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,” Gen. iii. 19. And though a person by his affluence in the world, be free from the necessity of bodily toil for procuring bread, yet, he is not for that exempted from the general law, that, “Man is born to labour,” Job v. 7; and ought therefore, to be the more diligent in applying his talents and the opportunities
God has given him, to promote the glory of God and his own salvation. To those, in a particular manner, may be applied the command of our Saviour, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life," John vi. 27. And St. Paul reprobates a life of idleness in these strong terms: "We entreat you, brethren, that you use your endeavour to be quiet, and that you do your own business, and work with your own hands, as we command you," I Thess. iv. 11. "For also when we were with you we declared this to you, that if any man will not work, neither let him eat. For we have heard that there are some among you who walk disorderly, working not at all but curiously meddling. Now we charge them that are such, and beseech them by the Lord Jesus Christ, that working with silence, they would eat their own bread. But you, brethren, be not weary in well-doing," 2 Thess. iii. 10. And no wonder, for idleness, besides its being in itself so great a sin, is also the mother of many other crimes, especially in those who have the means of gratifying their passions; for as the scripture declares, "idleness hath thought much evil," Ecclus. xxxiii. 29. For "being idle they learn to go about from house to house, not only idle but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not," 1 Tim. v. 13; and therefore, "He that pursueth idleness is a very fool," Prov xii. 11. But,

(2) If those are so criminal in the eyes of God, only for being unprofitable and slothful, and for not improving the talents bestowed on them, nor applying them to those good purposes for which they are intended by the giver, in what light must those appear before him, who abuses his talents? whose life is spent in a continual pursuit after the pomps and vanities of the world? who abuse those gifts which God has given them as means to work out their salvation, and turn them into instruments of gratifying their passions? who think of no other happiness but what is found in indulging their self-love, that enemy to God and their own souls, in all its branches? whose precious time is spent in a continual round of dissipation, dressing, gaming, gallantry, and still more criminal occupations? who are so wedded to these unhappy pleasures of sensuality, as to have an aversion at every spiritual duty relating to God and their own salvation, which they either entirely neglect, or if they perform any of them, it is only by constraint, and to save appearances in the eye of the world? How diametrically opposite is such a conduct to all the above sacred and divine truths? And yet how common, even to a very criminal degree, is it in the
world? What account will these be able to give, when called before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, of their time, of their money, of their knowledge, of their health, of their power and authority in the world, and of all the other advantages God has bestowed upon them? Compare their conduct with the above truths, and the answer will easily appear.

(3.) Those also are guilty of this unhappy spiritual sloth, who live in the state of tepidity or lukewarmness in the service of God. The lukewarm Christian, is one whose outward conduct is in the main Christian, who performs his duties of strict obligation and who endeavours to avoid what he knows to be a mortal crime. In the eye of the world he appears even edifying and regular in his general conduct; but he stops there; he flatters himself that by this means he will persevere and die in the grace of God and so escape his avenging justice for all eternity; and for any thing further, he does not aim at it; to restrain himself in lesser matters is too painful for him to think of; to deny his own will in lesser offences, is a restraint he will not submit to; such exercises of piety as are not of strict obligation, he despises and has an aversion to them, as too constraining his own honour; he makes light of venial sins, and commits them without remorse; he indulges his self-love in every thing where he imagines no mortal guilt appears; his mind is full of worldly ideas, his heart wedded to worldly objects; such Christian duties as he knows to be of strict obligation he performs, as to the exterior action; but he performs them without spirit, without vigour, in a cold, dissipated, distracted manner; he feels himself sometimes checked in conscience on this account, and moved by the inspirations of God to greater devotion? but the difficulties frighten him, his courage fails him, and he immediately falls back to his habitual tepidity; he dares not aspire to the perfection of virtue, but contents himself with a kind of good will towards it; he lives without any vigilance over himself; he has an aversion at looking into his own interior, he counts for nothing such failings as he thinks unessential, and any external good work he does, is performed with so much negligence, that it is fulfilled with a thousand imperfections, which exceeding diminish, if not entirely destroy all the merit or value of it. Now there is not perhaps a more dangerous state that a soul can be in than this. The scripture says, “Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord negligently,” Jer. xlviii. 10; and our Lord himself speaks to all such, as follows, “Thus saith the faithful and true witness......I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot;
but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth; because though sayest, I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing; and thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable and poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel thee to buy of me gold fire-tried, that thou mayest be made rich; and mayest be clothed in white garments, and the shame of thy nakedness may not appear; and anoint thy eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see,” Rev. iii. 14. In what striking colours do these words show the guilt and danger of the state of tepidity? Those who are in it, disgust Almighty God by their carelessness; they cool his love and affection for them; their exterior good works become loathsome to him from the many imperfections which are mixed with them; they provoke him to withdraw his more abundant graces from them; their self-love, by frequent indulgence in lesser matters, becomes stronger and more craving upon them; their repeated transgressions in smaller sins, make the transgressing the law familiar to them; They easily imagine things are of little consequence which are constraining to them; they grasp at the most frivolous pretext to dispense themselves from them; and thus, deluded by a false conscience, they fall into greater sins, whilst they flatter themselves they are but venial; and all this time, because they perform some exterior good works, they imagine themselves rich and wealthy, while in the eyes of God, they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked! See more fully on this subject in the Sincere Christian, Chap. XVI. § 2. On Venial sin.

§ 4. Spiritual Fervour.

Q. 16. What is understood by spiritual fervour?

A. We have seen above, Chap. XIII. § 3., that we may love ourselves with two very different kinds of love; to wit, the love of charity, and self-love; and that these two kinds of love are diametrically opposite to, and subversive of, one another. The love of charity teaches us to love ourselves for God’s sake, and to seek our happiness only in God; self love teaches us to love ourselves for ourselves alone, and to seek our happiness in gratifying our own humours and natural appetites. Charity teaches us “to use this world as if we used it not,” that is to consider the good things of this present life only as means to support us in our pilgrimage through this world, and enable us to perform those duties which God requires from us in order to be saved, which is the great end of our being; and in consequence of this, to use them only
as means, without desiring more of them than what is unnecessary for the end proposed, or setting our hearts upon them further than as helps to our weakness in pursuing the great object of the goods of this world as desirable in themselves, and as objects of happiness; and in consequence of this, to seek them with ardour, and to rest in the enjoyment of them as our chief good. These then being so very opposite to one another, it is manifest, that the more one yields to the suggestion of self-love, the more the love of charity must be extinguished in his heart; the more he sets his heart on the pleasures of sensuality, the more he will have a disgust and aversion for those of the Spirit; the more his mind is taken up with the objects of his senses, the more he must become insensible to those that regard the soul. For here it is in a particular manner true what our Saviour says, that "No man can serve two masters......you cannot serve God and mammon," Matt. vi. 24. Hence it is plain that spiritual sloth is nothing else at the bottom but the natural consequence of the dominion which self-love has in the soul; by which the holy spiritual love of charity is extinguished, and a distaste and loathing is produced in the heart, towards all those sacred duties which charity prescribes. And on the other hand, that spiritual fervour, which is the virtue opposite to spiritual sloth, is the love of charity, triumphing in the soul over self-love, which makes a man zealous and fervent in the service of God and in the care of his soul, and diligent in performing all those duties which the law of God requires from him.

Q. 17. What are the grounds on which this spiritual fervour is founded?

A. All those strong and powerful motives, which, as we have seen above, engage us to a perfect obedience to the commandments of God, do, at the same time, engage us equally to spiritual fervour, which is nothing else but a diligent and solicitous attention to obey the commandments of God, and to please him. His supreme dominion over us—his infinite love towards us—our real happiness in this present life—our eternal happiness in the life to come—the vast importance of our salvation—the dreadful consequences of losing our souls. All these truths, and others such, convince us beyond reply, that we can never do in the service God, what can bear any proportion to what we owe him; and that we can never do, for securing our salvation, more than what it deserves, and consequently that it is the height of folly to be negligent in a business of such main importance, or to prefer any present satisfaction, and worldly consideration before it. But our great misfortune is, that we
do not meditate and think on these great truths as we ought. Bewitched with the objects around us, which flatter our desire, our eternal salvation. Self-love impels us to consider our senses, we tamely allow ourselves to be wholly carried away by their delusions; and being by this means occupied with a thousand impertinent trifles, superfluous cares, or vain amusements, we cannot find time, or rather will not allow ourselves a moment’s time, to think on the solid truths of eternity. By this means our idea and esteem of eternal goods becomes weaker and weaker, and those of the present time seem only worth the minding, and this is the radical source of all our woe; hence the numberless crimes that overflow the world like a deluge; hence the principal cause why hell is filled with souls. “They have destroyed my vineyard,” says God by the prophet Jeremias, “they have trodden my portion under foot; they have changed my delightful portion into a wilderness, they have laid it waste, and it hath mourned for me. With desolation is all the land made desolate; because there is none that considereth in the heart,” Jer. xii. 10. “The harp, and the lyre, and the timbrel, and the pipe and wine, are in your feasts; and the work of the Lord you regard not, nor do you consider the works of his hands. Therefore hath hell enlarged her soul, and opened her mouth without any bounds, and their strong ones, and their people and their high and glorious ones shall go down into it,” Is. v. 12.

CONCLUSION.

We cannot conclude this most important subject in a more proper manner, than by earnestly conjuring our pious readers frequently and seriously to reflect on their latter end, and on the immense difference, when time shall be no more, between the fate of those who, with fervour of spirit, keep the commandments of God, and of those who, slaves to their self-love and to Satan, spend their precious time in an utter forgetfulness of God and of eternity: Nor can we set before their eyes a more affecting description of that vast difference, than what the Holy Ghost himself has given us by the mouth of the wise man, which deserves our most serious consideration: “The souls of the just,” says he, “are in the hands of God, and the torment of death shall not touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seem to die: and their departure was taken for misery; and their going away from us, for utter destruction, but they are in peace. And though in the sight of men they suffered torments, their hope is full of immortality. Afflicted
CONCLUSION.

In a few things, in many they shall be well rewarded; because God hath tried them, and found them worthy of himself. As gold in the furnace he hath proved them, and as a victim of a holocaust he hath received them, and in time there shall be respect had to them. The just shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among reeds. They shall judge nations, and rule over people, and their Lord shall reign for ever. They that trust in him shall understand the truth; and they that are faithful in love shall rest in him; for grace and peace is to his elect. But the wicked shall be punished according to their own devices, who have neglected the just, and have revolted from the Lord. For he that rejecteth wisdom and discipline is unhappy; and their hope is vain, and their labour, without fruit, and their works unprofitable,” Wisd. iii. 1. “The just man, if he be prevented with death, shall be in rest. For venerable old age is not that of long time nor counted by the number of years; but the understanding of a man is grey hairs, and a spotless life is old age. He pleased God, and was beloved, and living among sinners, he was translated. He was taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul. For the bewitching of vanity obscureth good things, and the wandering of concupiscence overturneth the innocent mind. Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time, for his soul pleased God; therefore he hastened to bring him out of the midst of his iniquities; but the people see this and understand not, nor lay such things in their hearts; that the grace of God and his mercy is with the saints, and that he hath respect to his chosen. But the just that is dead condemneth the wicked that are living, and youth soon ended, the long life of the unjust. For they shall see the end of the wise man, and shall not understand what God hath designed for him, and why the Lord hath set him in safety. They shall see him, and shall despise him; but the Lord shall laugh them to scorn, and they shall fall after this without honour, and be a reproach among the dead for ever; for he shall burst them puffed up and speechless, and shall shake them from the foundations, and they shall be utterly laid waste; they shall be in sorrow, and their memory shall perish. They shall come with fear (to the judgment-seat of God) at the thought of their sins, and their iniquities shall stand against them to convict them. Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them, and taken away their labours. These seeing it, shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be
amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation; saying within themselves, repenting, and groaning for anguish of spirit: These are they, whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We, fools, esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold, how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us. We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known. What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on, and as a ship that passeth through the waves; whereof, when it is gone by, the trace cannot be found, nor the path of its keel in the waters; or as when a bird flieth through the air, of the passage of which no mark can be found, but only the sound of the wings beating the light air, and parting it by the force of her flight; she moved her wings, and hath flown through, and there is no mark found afterwards of her way; or as when an arrow is shot at a mark, the divided air cometh presently together again, so that the passage thereof is not known; so we also being born forthwith cease to be, and have been able to show no mark of virtue; but are consumed in our wickedness. Such things as these the sinners said in hell; for the hope of the wicked is as dust, which is blown away with the wind, and as a thin froth which is dispersed by the storm: and a smoke that is scattered abroad by the wind; and as the remembrance of a guest of one day that passeth by. But the just shall live for evermore; and their reward is with the Lord, and the care of them with the Most High. Therefore shall they receive a kingdom of glory, and a crown of beauty at the hand of the Lord; for with his right hand he will cover them, and with holy arm he will defend them. And his zeal will take armour, and he will arm the creature for the revenge of his enemies. He will put on justice as a breastplate, and will take true judgment instead of a helmet; he will take equity for an invincible shield; and he will sharpen his severe wrath for a spear, and the whole world shall fight with him against the unwise. The shafts of lightning shall go directly from the clouds, as from a bow well bent, they shall be shot out, and shall fly to the mark. And thick hail be cast upon them from the stone-casting wrath; the water of the sea shall rage
against them, and the rivers shall run together in a terrible manner. A mighty wind shall stand up against them, and as a whirlwind shall divide them; and their iniquity shall bring all the earth to a desert, and wickedness shall overthrow the thrones of the mighty,” Wisd. iv. 7—v. Wherefore, Let us all hear together the conclusion of the discourse: “FEAR GOD, AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS; for this is all man; and all things that are done God will bring into judgment,” Ecclus. xii. 13.

THE END.