

REGIS COLLEGE LIBRARY



3 1761 05810711 1

BDT-3605

A. M. D. G.
St. Teresa's Library
Loretto Convent

387 BRUNSWICK AVENUE
TORONTO, CAN.

PRESENTED BY

✓
COLL. CHRISTI. REGIS.

BIB. MAJ.

TORONTO

Loretto Convent

Lindsay 1882

COLL. CHURCHILL

BIB. MUSE.

COLL. CHRISTI. REGIS.
BIB. MAJ.
TORONTO
THE RELIGIOUS:

BX
2385
S2513
1882
v.1

A TREATISE ON THE VOWS AND VIRTUES

OF THE

RELIGIOUS STATE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

REV. J. B. SAINT-JURE, S.J.

BY

A SISTER OF MERCY.

VOLUME I.

"Thou wilt esteem thy Rules, Constitutions and Vows, in the same degree as I wish thee to esteem Myself."—*Words of Our Lord to St. M. M. de Pazzi.*"

NEW YORK:

P. O'SHEA, PUBLISHER

45 WARREN STREET

1882.

35970

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1881,
By SISTERS OF MERCY, ST LOUIS, MO.,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

6

LORETTO BRUNSVICK CONVENT

CONTENTS.

VOLUME I.

PREFACE,	VIII
INTRODUCTION,	XI

CHAPTER I.

ADVANTAGES OF THE RELIGIOUS STATE.	1
--	---

CHAPTER II.

THE RELIGIOUS STATE IS A STATE TENDING TO PERFECTION.	8
---	---

CHAPTER III.

THE RULES.	15
--------------------	----

SECTION I.—The importance of Rules both for Religion, and for Religious,	21
---	----

SECTION II.—All Religious should have at heart the ob- servance of their Rules,	28
--	----

SECTION III.—Against Transgressors of the Rules,	36
--	----

SECTION IV.—Of the manner of observing the Rules,	43
---	----

SECTION V.—Continuation of the same subject,	50
--	----

SECTION VI.—On the consideration and meditation of the Rules,	67
--	----

SECTION VII.—Of the practice of the Rules,	71
--	----

CHAPTER IV.

THE THREE VOWS OF RELIGION.	80
-------------------------------------	----

SECTION I.—Of the Profession of Vows,	87
---	----

SECTION II.—The Practice of the Vows,	91
---	----

SECTION III.—The Renewal of Vows,	98
---	----

CHAPTER V.

OF THE VOW OF POVERTY.	107
SECTION I.—To what the Vow of Poverty obliges,	111
SECTION II.—Of the Religious Proprietors,	123
SECTION III.—Of the degrees of Poverty—First and Second degrees,	128
SECTION IV.—Continuation of Second degree,	138
SECTION V.—Of the Third and Fourth Degrees of Poverty,	143
SECTION VI.—Of the Fifth Degree of Poverty,	154
SECTION VII.—Of the Sixth Degree of Poverty,	159
SECTION VII.—Continuation of the Sixth Degree of Poverty,	164
SECTION VIII.—Continuation of the same subject,	174
SECTION IX.—Motives to cause us to embrace Voluntary Poverty,	185
SECTION X.—Continuation of the same Motive,	198
SECTION XI.—Continuation of the same,	206
SECTION XII.—Last Motive,	227
SECTION XIII.—Practice of Poverty,	236
SECTION XIV.—Conclusion of the Chapter,	251

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE VOW OF CHASTITY—WHAT IS CHASTITY?—IN WHAT CONSISTS ITS PERFECTION	265
SECTION I.—Of the Vow of Chastity—To what it obliges,	275
SECTION II.—Excellence and precious advantages of the Vow of Chastity,	285
SECTION III.—Means of preserving Chastity—The first is Prayer,	291
SECTION IV.—Other means for preserving Chastity—humil- ity,	294
SECTION V.—Other means for preserving Chastity—guard- ing the heart—for the thoughts,	298
SECTION VI.—Guarding the heart in its sentiments—particu- larly in that of love,	311
SECTION VII.—The Parlors of Religieuses,	317
SECTION VIII.—Continuation of the same subject,	322
SECTION IX.—Other means for preserving Chastity—The flight of occasions,	326

SECTION X.—Continuation of the flight of occasions, . . .	327
SECTION XI.—Other means—the flight of idleness—and the mortification of the senses,	329
SECTION XII.—Other means—Abstinence,	332
SECTION XIII.—Continuation of the same,	332
SECTION XIV.—Temptations against Chastity,	348
SECTION XV.—Of the practice of Chastity,	352
CHAPTER VII.	
OF THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE,	367
SECTION I.—The inestimable advantages of Obedience, . . .	379
SECTION II.—Of the different degrees of Obedience—In- cluding the first two,	396
SECTION III.—Of the third degree of Obedience,	404
SECTION IV.—Of the First blindness of Perfect Obedience, . .	415
SECTION V.—Of the Second blindness of Perfect Obedi- ence,	425
SECTION VI.—Qualities and effects of blind Obedience, . . .	436
SECTION VII.—The qualities of Obedience continued—Its Integrity,	447
SECTION VIII.—Promptitude of Obedience,	452
SECTION IX.—Courage of Obedience,	463
SECTION X.—Of Murmurs against Obedience,	484
SECTION XI.—Continuation of the same subject,	495
SECTION XII.—Conclusion of the same subject,	509
SECTION XIII.—Practice of Obedience,	520
SECTION XIV.—Conclusion of the whole Chapter,	530
CHAPTER VIII.	
OF THE ABNEGATION AND ANNIHILATION OF ONE'S SELF. . . .	558
SECTION I.—Of self-denial, self-annihilation, and of their necessity,	569
SECTION II.—The best self-denial, and the most necessary annihilation—that of self-will,	577
SECTION III.—What God does to annihilate all that is im- perfect in a soul,	588
SECTION IV.—What Man should do to annihilate himself, . .	604
SECTION V.—The Felicity and the Paradise of an annihi- lated soul,	613

PREFACE.

WHILE it is to be regretted that a more practiced pen were not employed in rendering a translation of the admirable work of so celebrated an author, we still trust that these volumes will not prove unacceptable to the piety of the many who have hitherto been denied the perusal of the original.

The manner in which this version has been executed, and why undertaken, may require some explanation.

It presents, for the first time, to the English reader, "L'Homme Religieux" of Rev. J. B. Saint-Jure, S. J.

Among the works of this nature which our language contains, there are some that treat the same subject, but none so fully, particularly on the virtues to be practiced in community life ; so it appeared to us on reading this writer several years ago, when we were, consequently, induced to give a translation for the use merely of our own community. Thus, while we were satisfied of its practical advantages, we could but regret that comparatively *few* should be benefited by so copious a field of salutary and useful knowledge. At length, by request of other Religious, we placed our manuscript, about ten years ago, in the hands of the publisher. But unfortunately, it was destroyed by fire in the printing-office.

Since this time, indispensable occupations and varied occurrences have prevented any renewed efforts to extend the sphere of usefulness to so valuable a work.

In this second attempt to give an English version of "L'Homme Religieux"—not having had a duplicate copy

PREFACE.

WHILE it is to be regretted that a more practiced pen were not employed in rendering a translation of the admirable work of so celebrated an author, we still trust that these volumes will not prove unacceptable to the piety of the many who have hitherto been denied the perusal of the original.

The manner in which this version has been executed, and why undertaken, may require some explanation.

It presents, for the first time, to the English reader, "L'Homme Religieux" of Rev. J. B. Saint-Jure, S. J.

Among the works of this nature which our language contains, there are some that treat the same subject, but none so fully, particularly on the virtues to be practiced in community life ; so it appeared to us on reading this writer several years ago, when we were, consequently, induced to give a translation for the use merely of our own community. Thus, while we were satisfied of its practical advantages, we could but regret that comparatively *few* should be benefited by so copious a field of salutary and useful knowledge. At length, by request of other Religious, we placed our manuscript, about ten years ago, in the hands of the publisher. But unfortunately, it was destroyed by fire in the printing-office.

Since this time, indispensable occupations and varied occurrences have prevented any renewed efforts to extend the sphere of usefulness to so valuable a work.

In this second attempt to give an English version of "L'Homme Religieux"—not having had a duplicate copy

of the translation—it had to be undertaken *anew*, which, however, we were encouraged to do by recent enquiries from Superiors of other religious communities; and now we fondly trust its readers may not be disappointed. The pious and learned author being long and extensively known as a spiritual writer, they will derive instruction and pleasure regardless of all errors of an inexperienced pen, which has, nevertheless, been faithful in adhering to the sentiments, and, as far as possible, to the style of the original. Consequently, florid expressions and beautifully rounded periods have not been our aim, but simply the earnest, matter-of-fact, and even *quaint* diction of the author.

It has been no easy task to keep to this close and literal translation of a work, written upwards of two centuries ago—yet, we flatter ourselves that we have not failed in our first intention of giving a *faithful rendition*. However, it has been deemed expedient to take some little liberty with the original, in order to transfer it more happily into our language, and adapt it to a people of an entirely different temperament.

We have not alone curtailed redundancy and sameness of examples, but have also had to modify and abridge—sometimes to omit what was exuberant, or even useless repetition; and occasionally we had to supply an expression or sentence, calculated to give a fuller development to an idea—a more practical tendency to a simile.

Could we indulge the hope that these instructions would stimulate but one tepid soul in Religion—that they would cause a greater diligence and assiduity in the care of religious perfection—that the *true Spouse* of Christ, would be by them more enamored of her holy and exalted state—that the *holy* would become *holier still*—we should be more than repaid for the labor incurred in the execution of our

task. However, we earnestly hope to have contributed in some degree to the greater glory of God, for Whom alone we commenced, and to Whom we now offer our humblest efforts.

ST. JOSEPH'S CONVENT OF MERCY,
Morgan and 23d Sts., St. Louis. }
Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph, 1881. }

INTRODUCTION.

THE good Sisters of Mercy, of St. Louis, now offer to the religious public the greatest work of France's greatest theologian, "The Religious" of Father St. Jure. In presenting it they are neither ignorant nor unmindful of the many shortcomings of the translation; the French has lost much of its elegance, while the English makes no pretension to polish. The work has been undertaken as one of zeal, and the motive for thus placing the book within the reach of those who could not profit by it in the original tongue, was the hope, nay, the assurance, that it would do for these the deep and lasting good it has accomplished for them. In this, as in his other work, "The Knowledge and Love of Jesus Christ," which these same Sisters published many years ago, Father St. Jure strives to make our Blessed Lord better known, even to those chosen spouses who have cast their portion with Him, being assured that to be loved He needs but to be known. This work reads like a prose epic, and it clothes the life of the recluse with the beauty and light and loveliness of a transfiguration. We have ourselves read the work with pleasure and profit; sometimes we have felt a transport of soul when gazing on the wonderful and majestic pictures of spiritual grandeur which were presented to our mind's eye. We felt that to remove the veil of language that shut them off from the view of the English-speaking world were a service most acceptable to God and incalculably profitable to souls.

Spiritual reading is one of the most important exercises of the religious life. It should be under the direction of the spiritual director. Not every book is fit for spiritual reading ; nor is the same book at all times good. One reason why meditation is so difficult and beset with distractions, is that spiritual reading is poorly selected or poorly made. The conferences of the early fathers and the "collations" of the monks of the Middle Ages were the direct cause of the exceptional sanctity those ages developed. Spiritual reading is intended to supply the place of these spiritual communings. If done intelligently and well it will bear similar fruits of heroic endeavor.

Spiritual reading is to the Religious what constant study is to the professional man ; without it his zeal becomes stagnant, his acuteness blunted, and his whole field of vision clouded and drear. Prayer is the practice of perfection ; spiritual reading is its theory. Without a thorough training in the school of asceticism all progress in the spiritual life must be either pernicious fanaticism or spiritual knight-errantry. The faults of religious people are nearly always of the head. Their heart is prompt ; but ignorance of the conditions of its peace and over-confidence in its own methods lure it to its ruin. Perfection is a thing of flesh and bone, not a sentiment of the heart or a chimera of the brain. It has truths for its foundation, truths for its superstructure, and truths for its crown and covering. Christ is the mould into which we must fuse all the thoughts and feelings of our nature ; in the language of the Apostle, we must "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." A religious house is a tomb in which we bury ourselves "with Christ in God." If it happens that in that tomb we sometimes find only the grave clothes and the napkin, or in other words, the habit without the life and substance of religion, the reason is, our search has been in the night and we seek

Him among the dead resolves of our early zeal and not in the flourishing garden of the living, active, fervid present. The spiritual life is a journey across a vast and dangerous sea, and the charts that served yesterday will not do us to-day. We grow, and the garments that fitted us years ago hamper and impede us now. We learn, and the text-books of last year will not instruct us in this. Our Lord grew not only in age, but in grace and wisdom before God and man. Works like the one now offered to the English-speaking world are the advanced text-works for those who would pursue the science of God in the school of the saints.

Of the translation we need say little. We have revised it, without, however, altering much either in the style or language. People do not read spiritual works to study literature, and simplicity of diction best comports with the dignity of the truths discussed. The sense will be found clearly brought out, without straining after elegance or too servile following of the original text. The work will, we hope, accomplish all that the devoted translators expect of it, and an appreciative Catholic public will know how to reward their generous labors for the good of souls.

D. S. PHELAN.

ST LOUIS, Feast of St. Paul, First Hermit, 1882.

A TREATISE ON THE VOWS AND VIRTUES OF THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

OF THE RULES AND VOWS CHAPTER I.

ADVANTAGES OF THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

IT being my design to speak of the Religious State, it is necessary that I commence by showing its excellence and advantages. But as others have thoroughly treated of this matter, and have spoken of it, so well as to render it difficult to add anything thereto, I shall be brief and touch only lightly on the subject; contenting myself with imitating the geographers who, on their maps, represent by mere dots and small lines, great and powerful cities.

The forcible and eloquent words that the holy Fathers have used when speaking on this subject, should be here given in full. However, we shall cite but a few, for fear of being tedious; but these will speak for the remainder.

St. Augustine, ravished by the perfections of the Religious State, and dazzled by the rays of its

glory, avows frankly, that he has not words adequate to convey its merit. If I undertake, he says, to praise this order, this life, this institute, I shall be constrained to stop short, not having expressions in which to give it due praise—all language being far beneath that which it deserves. The choir of Religious and Virgins, says St. Jerome, is assuredly among the ornaments and the rarities of the Church: a beautiful flower and a precious pearl, that give to her great beauty. St. Gregory Nazianzen calls Religious the first fruits of religion, the crowns of faith, the brilliant pearls of the Church, the mystic stones of that temple, of which Our Lord is the foundation and the corner stone. Elsewhere he pays them this beautiful eulogy: “These noble and sublime souls place their riches in poverty, their glory in contempt, their power in weakness, their fecundity in celibacy; they make their pleasures consist in abstaining from the pleasures of earth; they are humble for the kingdom of heaven; they possess nothing in this world; being elevated above the world, they live in the flesh, despoiled of the flesh, and have God for their portion and their all.”

In his Apology, giving the reason why he has withdrawn from the world, into solitude, he says: “It is true, I left the world, and have retired to this distant spot, because it seemed to me that there was nothing more desirable than to raise one’s self above the world, to cast aside all human things, the more so when we are not forced thereto by pure necessity, and in this state of recollection, to com-

mune with one's heart and with God, and by this means to live a life superior to sensible things, to be continually exposing the soul as a pure and beautiful mirror, to the sun of the Divinity ; to receive its rays unsullied by earthly images." In the funeral oration he composed on St. Basil, he said much in a few words, in the following sentiments : " Our Nazarenes, that is, our Religious, form the choicest and wisest portion of the Church ; that is, if we hold as the wisest, those who remove from the world to approach to God, and to consecrate their entire life to His service." Eusebius, of Cesarea, says that in the Church of God, there are two conditions in which are comprised all the faithful living according to virtue. The first, is that of those who, following the inclinations of human nature, live with the fear of God in marriage and in divers exterior employments, and thus work out their salvation. The second, surpassing nature and the ordinary life of man ; without marriage, without posterity, and without solicitude for the goods of earth ; it applies itself entirely to the worship of God. Those who have embraced this kind of life are, as it were, withdrawn from this mortal life ; bearing no other mark of it than the body, and a body, so to say, without a body, dwelling ever in spirit and in thought, in heaven, as true inhabitants of heaven, and contemning the ordinary and abject life of other men. " Behold," concludes Eusebius, " the kind of perfect life to be found in the Christian religion."

Synesius, speaking of the monks of Egypt, says

in his "*Dion*"—"They are Gods clothed in flesh." Theodoret says of the same—"They lead a life superior to the body and to all the things of earth—a life much in keeping with that of the blessed." St. Chrysostom, in the third book he wrote against the "Calumniators of the Religious Life," says: "Religious are not to be blamed, but singularly esteemed, since they have chosen a kind of celestial life, and one very similar to that of the Angels."

Wherefore, the admirable, the most wise and invincible confessor of Jesus Christ, St. Theodoret, Abbot of the famous monastery of the "Studites" in Constantinople, on giving his last testament and profession of faith, says, among other things: "I confess that the monastic state is sublime, elevated and angelic; and that the perfection of its excellent life effaces all sin."

I shall finish with St. Bernard, who, in speaking of Religious, says: "I know not what name to give them that will be most suitable. Shall I call them celestial men, or terrestrial angels, living on earth as to the body, but having their conversation in Heaven?" In another place, inviting every one to listen to our Lord, when He says, that the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a man who would buy precious pearls, and who finding one, such as he desired, unhesitatingly gives all his wealth to possess it. This holy Father adds: "But what, I pray you, is this pearl of great value, for which we should give all our wealth? that is to say, ourselves. Is it not Religion, which is holy, pure, and immaculate? Re-

ligion, where man lives with more purity, falls more rarely, rises more promptly, walks more securely, is more frequently bedewed with celestial graces, sleeps more peaceably, dies with more assurance, passes more quickly through purgatory, and is more richly rewarded?" Then continuing, he adds: "O Religion, glorious and admirable! What mind can understand thee—what human tongue can praise thee worthily? O precious and brilliant pearl! O Religion brighter than gold, more resplendent than the sun! O manner of life most agreeable, and that merits to be desired and sought after with all possible care and affection! O Religion, dwelling place of God and His angels, blessed life, angelic life! Verily, Religion is a Paradise on earth. Wherefore, O man, fly men; make choice of Religion; embrace the religious life, and you will be saved."

I add to these magnificent eulogies, which St. Bernard and the other Fathers bestow on this life, that it alone possesses the incomparable honor and advantage of applying man entirely and forever to the worship and glory of God; that it binds him indissolubly to His service and His love by the three vows; it makes him give all that he has, and divests him of all absolutely and without reserve, for by the vow of poverty, he gives to God all his goods and all exterior things; by the vow of chastity, he gives to Him his body, and by that of obedience, he consecrates to Him his soul. Thus, he abandons to Him all, making Him a present both of the tree and its fruit.

Hence, may be applied to him with more justice than to the people of Israel, these words of Moses : “ *The Lord has chosen you this day to be His own people, and to consecrate you in all that you are, and in all that you have, to His praise and His glory, and that you may belong to Him entirely and forever.*” By the excellence of this perpetual and unchangeable consecration, which makes you belong in so special a manner to the infinite Majesty of God, and by the sublime perfection of the actions to which it obliges you, it raises you in dignity and in honor, above all the nations of the earth.

Let us further say, in praise of the religious life, that this state alone aims at the highest evangelical perfection; that it fulfils not only the commandments, but also the counsels. And if martyrdom is, in the judgment of all men, the grandest testimony of his love that man can give to God, and the most glorious and useful sacrifice he can make, the religious state enjoys this precious prerogative, as the Fathers teach; for if it does not compel one to die by the hand of the executioner, by violence and torments to shed one’s blood all at once, it makes him give it, in time, drop by drop, in the midst of the labors and the arduous exercises of the religious life.

Our Lord has made to no one so magnificent a promise as to Religious, since He secures them a hundred-fold in this life, and eternal glory in the next. Doubtless, it is great gain at very little cost; and whence comes it, that man here below abandons so great a recompense?

We must conclude from all this that the religious state is most excellent, most beneficial, and filled with admirable advantages; that it is the treasure designated by the Gospel, but a hidden treasure, inasmuch as its riches are unknown to men. God has so designed it, says the blessed Lawrence Justinian; for, as He wills the salvation of all, and desires to be honored and served by them in various conditions, if He did not hide the riches and advantages of this blessed life, but expose them indiscriminately to the view of all, doubtless, attracted by its charms, all would desire to embrace it—to become Religious.

CHAPTER II.

THE RELIGIOUS STATE IS A STATE TENDING TO PERFECTION.

SINCE the Religious has every reason to consider himself happy, in being called, by a special favor of God, to so noble, so rich, and so profitable a state: he should also, in order to be capable of enjoying its blessings, understand its nature and its obligations; otherwise, religion, far from being sweet and agreeable, would be very painful, and in place of finding therein his salvation, he would meet with destruction. He should know, then, that, in accordance with the opinion of all the Doctors, the religious state is a state of perfection; not of perfection acquired, but of perfection to be acquired: so that the Religious, to be a good Religious, to possess the advantages of his position, and to partake of its delights, is not obliged to be perfect, but only to endeavor to become so. The religious state is a school, says the Angelic Doctor, where one learns how to become perfect, and applies himself to exercises that conduct to perfection. Now it is evident, continues St. Thomas, that he who has received the command to tend to some end, is not obliged by the rigor of the command to have arrived at this end, but to tend thereunto, by the

way that leads to it: "Thus, the Religious," says he, "is not held to have attained perfection, but to make use of the means that conduct thereto;" citing these words of St. Paul: "*I do not count myself to be already perfect, and to have gained the victory, but I endeavor with toil and care, to ever advance in my way, and to carry off the palm, if I can.*" So that the Religious sins not when he has not acquired perfection; but he sins, if he employs not his endeavors to acquire it: if he neglects the necessary means for this end. In this manner must be understood the words of St. Jerome, when he writes to Heliodorus: "Thou hast promised to become perfect; for when thou didst leave the world thou didst renounce the delights of earth, and all sensual pleasures. Then by such a renunciation hast thou done else, than engage thyself, by intention, to a perfect life?" St. Bernard elucidates these words of St. Jerome by the following: 'The continual effort to arrive at perfection, is accounted perfection.'

Then, the perfection to which a Religious is obliged to tend, by his condition, is the perfection of charity. St. Thomas expressly affirms this. The religious state is devoted to exercises that dispose and tend to the perfection of charity: to this the Religious should apply himself. This is the end to which he should direct all his solicitude and all his occupations. And as all Christians who are animated with the true Spirit of Christianity must regard charity as the end of the law, so called by St. Paul, and having received as the first and greatest of all the commandments, that of loving God

with all their hearts ; yet the Religious does it, and should do it, quite differently. It is for this reason he is called Religious by excellence, as St. Thomas remarks : for when a thing belongs to several, it is attributed and belongs principally to the one who possesses it most perfectly. As fortitude is attributed to him who endures what is most difficult ; and temperance to him who knows how to conduct himself with moderation amidst the greatest pleasures. Therefore, as religion is a virtue that makes us give something to the service of God ; and as the Religious gives thereto more than any one else—since he gives all that he has, whilst he consecrates himself entirely to His service, and offers himself a holocaust to His glory, he deserves to bear the name *Religious* above all others, who only make some present to God. St. Bernard, in this same thought, says to Religious : The life you profess is most sublime—it transcends the heavens. and it resembles in purity that of the angels ; for you are not only pledged to acquire sanctity, but even the perfection of sanctity. You should not lead a weak, languishing life, considering only what God commands, but even accomplishing what He wills and counsels, as being most perfect ; other Christians content themselves with following God, but you should adhere to Him ; others may believe in God, know Him, love Him, and bear Him reverence, but you should go beyond this, by tasting Him with the gift of wisdom, knowing Him by the gift of understanding, and enjoying Him as much as may be here on earth. By these words, St.

Bernard teaches that the end of Religious is quite different in its excellence to that of Christians in general. In fact, what other distinction between them would there be, without this? The perfection of charity, and a close union with God, are, then, the end to which a Religious is by his state obliged to aspire. But by what means can he attain this end? The Doctors, with St. Thomas, reply that the rules and vows contain the necessary means to arrive at this end, and the road in which he must walk, in order to reach the goal. Abbot Moses, in the first conference of Cassian, makes an excellent discourse to his Religious, on this subject. He tells them that all arts and trades to which men apply themselves have ever an end in view, and particular exercises for achieving this end. He confirms this truth by the example of laborers, merchants, and soldiers, who all propose to themselves an end for which they must undergo, without relaxation, many toils and sufferings. Even so, continues this holy Abbot, the Religious life has its particular end, to arrive at which we endure, not only with patience, but even with pleasure, all the toils that accompany it. Fasts do not sadden us, long watches please us, reading and meditating over spiritual books do not disgust us; on the contrary, we ever hunger for these exercises—sigh for continual labor; the want and the scarcity of almost all necessaries, the horror of these dismal places, of this vast and dreary solitude, do not in the least affright us: to attain this end we have trampled under foot the affections and caresses of parents;

quitted our country, and despised the world, with all its delights. A little further on, he says what St. Thomas reiterates on this same subject: By our state, we should fly sin and practise virtue; that is, we should observe our vows and rules, and all that is prescribed by our state, and thus ascend by degrees to the perfection of charity.

This is what the Religious is bound to desire to attain, viz.: an intimate union with God, and to adopt the means that lead thereto. Now, these means are the exact observance of his rules and vows; and if he fails therein, he should believe he does wrong, and that he commits no little sin. Know, says Abbot Pinusius, in Cassian, that it is no light sin for him who has embraced a life that obliges him to tend to perfection, to perform imperfect actions. But one may ask what sin it is precisely, and how great?—is it mortal, or only venial, and in what does it consist? It is mortal, say the Doctors, if the Religious has not the intention to arrive at the perfection of his state, nor to seek out the means of acquiring it; for though he is not obliged to be effectually perfect, as we have said, he at least must not have a will to the contrary, and not declare himself an enemy to perfection; for otherwise he would turn directly against the end of his state; he would be a Religious, and still *not* be one.

The sin is but venial, if the Religious has a real intention to tend to the perfection of the religious state, avoiding all that could involve mortal sin, yet gives himself little trouble about what

obliges under no such penalty. It should, however, be added : provided it be without formal contempt, but only from a certain heedlessness and negligence of spirit, that he cares not to take the trouble to become perfect ; *in this consists the fault he commits*.—He should evince more ardor and zeal for his perfection, and not sadden the Holy Spirit, who urges him to advance constantly in virtue by striving to become better.

As to the other question, in what the sin consists ? I say, that some Doctors have taught it to be a special sin ; whilst others—whose opinion I embrace as more probable—suppose it to be only a sin mingled and absorbed in those which are committed by the infraction of the rules and vows, since all agree that the Religious is bound to tend to perfection, by the observance of his rules and vows. Thence it must be concluded that the sin we mention cannot be separated from that which he commits by the transgression of his rules and vows, but is one and the same. Besides, without the greatest and most urgent reasons, the sins of a Religious should not be multiplied, nor anything done to render him doubly criminal, for criminal he has been, and this *once* is too much already.

Then to conclude this subject, let the Religious understand well the essentials of his state. He must know that to acquit himself of his duty and not to belie his profession, he is obliged to offend God less, to wish to be perfect—to have this intention, and to endeavor to become so by the fulfilment of his rules and vows, and that, as he is

always, at all times, in all places, and on all occasions, a Religious, he is also at all times, in all places, and on all occasions, to keep his eyes on this term, to labor in this noble enterprise, doing nothing contrary thereto.

Since the rules and vows, as we have said, are for the Religious the means of arriving at perfection, we shall speak of both, beginning with the rules.

CHAPTER III.

THE RULES.

THE Religious, being as we have said, obliged by his state to tend to the perfection of Christianity which consists in the excellence of charity and in intimate union with God, he must necessarily have proper and efficacious means for this end, otherwise, it would be as impossible to attain it, as for a bird to fly without wings, or an animal to walk without feet.

Now, the Religious is provided with all necessary means in the rules and the three vows of his institute : The vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, which perfectly dispose him for acquiring an intimate union with God, and destroying its three greatest hinderances ; the desire of riches, by the vow of poverty ; sensual pleasures, by the vow of chastity ; and the love of our own excellence and liberty, by the vow of obedience.

The rules are aids for better keeping our vows ; for the vows constitute the essence of Religion, and its noblest part wherein consists its life ; and thence it comes that they are the same in all Religious orders. The rules, on the contrary, being different, as each order tends by different roads, to the accomplishment of the three vows, and proposes

besides the general end—which is perfect charity and the divine union—a particular end, as ours, embraces, besides the love of God, the *special love* of the neighbor ; thus, each order adjusts its rules to this *particular* end, which is embraced in the general end.

The most ancient Religious, the first who received from heaven the noble idea of abandoning all that the world esteems and admires, to give themselves entirely to God, made for themselves rules, that they agreed to observe, while in their pious exercises they followed their own lights. It is thus that the monks of the famous solitudes of Scete and of Nitria, in Egypt, lived, according to the remarks of Sozomen ; and St. Epiphanius calls this making to their own taste a mode of life, according to which some abstain from meat, others from eggs, still others from fish ; whilst others, again, afflict their bodies by sleeping on the bare ground ; and thus, all guide themselves in different ways—following their respective attractions.

Afterwards, such as embraced this life—from which it is easy to wander—when there is no other guide than self—took the directions and regulations of the eldest, which they observed with great exactness ; thus, Sozomen cites that St. Macairius of Alexandria, made some rules for himself, but that he observed others also that he had received from his masters.

As all things are perfected little by little, so in the course of time laws and constitutions were made for governing, regulating and conducting all in a

monastery. A superior was chosen who governed all the house, both in spirituals and temporals. The seniors were placed over the juniors; all the cells of the Religious were enclosed within the precinct of a surrounding wall, and penances were imposed for the violation of the rules. The author of this, by the express command of God, was St. Pachomius. One day, when at a distance from his cell, in a village called Tabenna, but which was uninhabited, he began to pray, persevering therein a long time, as was his custom, when he heard a voice from Heaven, saying, "Pachomius, make here thy dwelling; build here a monastery, for a great many persons inspired by God, will seek thee, desiring to profit by thy instructions, and thou wilt guide them according to the rule I shall give thee." Instantly an angel appeared to him, holding a tablet of copper, on which was written the entire mode of life to be observed by those who should place themselves under his government. Even to this day, says the historian, the Religious of Tabenna preserve this tablet, strictly observing all that is thereon inscribed, whether in regard to their food, their clothing, or to the rest of their discipline.

Then the angel gave instructions to St. Pachomius for the establishing of this monastery and for the community life to be there led by his Religious; directing him to make different cells, putting in each three Religious to dwell together; and to divide the number of Religious (who, says Cassian, were still in his time, that is, one hundred years

afterwards, more than five thousand, and of strict observance), into twenty-four classes, distinguishing each class by a letter of the Greek alphabet, commencing with Alpha, the first, to Omega the last. Then he had the discrimination to range the Religious, who were gentle, simple and submissive, in the class denoted by *Alpha* and *iota*, as being the simplest letters ; and the artful, the perverse, the intriguing in the class marked with the double letters *XI*, and the others.

I again find that St. Posthumous, a native of Memphis, and successor to St. Macairius of Alexandria, in the government of five thousand Religious, received from an angel three or four days after the death of St. Macairius, a rule containing nineteen articles regarding the most important and necessary points to be observed in the Religious life.

Gregory, the Priest, relates in the life of St. Gregory Nazianzen, that this holy man, with his particular friend, St. Basil, went into solitude, where they both applied themselves to making regulations for the monks, and drew up some laws which he assures us were more effectual in calming their minds and giving them interior peace, than were those of Lycurgus ; that they were wiser and more beautiful than those of Solon, and more just than the laws of Minos.

St. Francis seeing his order already widely extended, his Religious most numerous, and the statutes he had made for their government approved by Pope Innocent wished to have them confirmed

by his successor, Pope Honorius, and this thought was strengthened by the following vision: It seemed to him that he had amassed the most minute crumbs of bread to distribute to innumerable famished Religious, who surrounded him, and as he was troubled about doing it, as such small crumbs, he feared, might slip through his fingers—he heard a voice from on high, saying: “Francis, make of all these crumbs a little loaf, giving it to be eaten by all who desire it.” He did so, and all who partook of it without affection or devotion, or who, after having eaten, thought little about it, appeared to be instantly struck with leprosy.

St. Francis related this vision to his companions, with sentiments of regret, however, that he could not understand what it implied; but the next day whilst in prayer all the mystery was cleared up and knowledge imparted to him by these words: Francis, the crumbs are the words of the Gospel, the little loaf is the rule, and the leprosy represents the sins committed by those who transgress it. After receiving this explanation, he resolved to abridge his first rule, and with this intention, he went with two of his companions upon a mountain. There fasting and in prayer, he dictated, says St. Bonaventure, according as the Holy Spirit suggested to him. He afterwards gave the rule to his Vicar General, who, on the Saint’s calling for it, declared that by some means or other, it had been lost. Then the Saint reascended the mountain, and in the same manner, to the same companions, and in the same words, he dictated it a second time. In pre-

senting it to Pope Honorius, he besought His Holiness to be pleased to confirm what he had accomplished. Thenceforth the Saint ardently entreated his Religious to put it strictly in practice and to encourage them thereto, he told them there was nothing in this rule of himself, or of his own spirit, but that he had had it written exactly as God had revealed it to him. In confirmation of which truth a few days afterwards, he received miraculously the impression of the Sacred Wounds of our Lord.

Though neither God nor His angels have given to other Founders in so visible a manner, the rules they have made, we can at the same time affirm that they have all in some measure been inspired and taught by God ; because God is most certainly the Author of all religious orders, they being His noblest productions, and master-pieces in His Church for promoting His glory, and for the more sublime and heroic practice of virtue. He has not only shown to them the end to which they should tend, but even the efficacy of the means to arrive thereat ; otherwise He would have but roughly sketched His design, and left his work unfinished. Wherefore, following the universally received maxim ; having fixed the end, He has prescribed the means to attain thereto , and these means are the rules, which He has inspired Founders to make for the general end of all Religious orders, and for the particular end of each. Thus He has acted towards them as He did formerly towards Beseleel and Oliab as regards the architecture of the tabernacle, of whom He said to Moses : “ *I have filled them*

with the spirit of God; with wisdom and understanding and knowledge in all manner of works, to devise whatsoever may be artificially made of gold and silver, and brass, and marble, and of precious stones, and variety of woods, and to do most excellent works, that pass for miracles of art."

Then knowing by this, that the rules of a religious order are the means, not of a purely human wisdom, but of the wisdom of God, and are so many rays of His light, with which He has illumined the mind of its Founder, to cause it to arrive at its end, we should therefore conclude that they are of great importance, both for the good of the order, and for that of each Religious in particular, and thus should they—even the smallest—be observed with exactness, for they all contribute to the common good, as well as to the good of each member of the order, and that they are necessary to it; as in the case of the Tabernacle, which has been mentioned, the largest as well as the smallest pieces contributed equally to its beauty and its perfection.

SECTION I.

Of the Importance of Rules both for Religion and for the Religious.

On the exact observance of the rules absolutely depends the preservation of all religious orders in their primitive fervor and vigor: they will not fall into ruin except by the infraction of these rules,

even though they oblige not under pain of sin.

Aristotle says, and experience shows it to us, that things are maintained in the possession of their being by the same principles and the same means by which they received it: the one channel conveys to them both their commencement and their continuance; they never lose this being if the things that gave them birth have not changed. The same philosopher, in the fifth book of his politics, treats in full the causes of the subsistence of republics; and he places in the first rank a great care not to transgress the laws even in things of the least moment.

This disposition to fail in small things is calculated to destroy a community, as much so, as small daily expenses, when neglected, are to ruin in time the best house. The Athenians, great politicians as they were, understood perfectly well this truth, and fearing the destruction of their republic by the contempt of the least laws, they condemned not only those who violated the whole law, but those even who changed or omitted a single syllable.

The rules are the props that sustain a religious institution; the columns that uphold this edifice, the nerves that give vigor and activity to this social body: if the rules are not observed, a religious community cannot but tend to evil. Like a building from which pillars and supports are taken, it will fall to utter ruin. The experience of so many communities deplorably destroyed clearly proves and makes it plain to us; for as long as they were careful in strictly observing their rules, they flour-

ished and were in the highest esteem, they embalmed the Church with a most agreeable odor, rendering to God great glory, and to men great service. But when they become relaxed and disorderly, they lose all their lustre and renown; they sink miserably into opprobrium; they dishonor God, scandalize the Church; becoming not only useless, but even hurtful to men

One day St. Francis was praying to God to appease His wrath, so justly irritated against Christians on account of their sins, when His Divine Majesty said to him: "Francis, if you wish to appease my wrath and turn aside the scourges with which I am on the point of punishing Christians on account of their bad lives, cause your order to keep its rule in the strict observance with which it was first established: then the prayers of your Religious will be effectual with me to the obtaining of what you ask for yourself and for them: I will show grace and mercy to my people."

It is, then, very easy to see the great importance of rules, and how much their observance contributes to preserve a religious society, and their transgression to work its destruction. Whence may be drawn this marked conclusion, and one of which all Religious should be well persuaded, that it is always the most orderly Religious who are the pillars, the columns, the ornaments, and the glory of their houses: it is they who bring them into approval and esteem, and who enrich them far more than all the others, no matter who they be. This consequence is too evident to admit of doubt, for it

is true, as we have already said, that religious orders cannot subsist except by the execution of their rules, and that the non-observance of these very rules ruins them entirely.

A lay brother of the order of Citeaux, named Herman, in a monastery of Brabant, was always either sick or an invalid, so as not to be able even to leave the infirmary, for which reason he was regarded with suspicion in the monastery, and even some—whom the historian calls "*false brothers*"—persecuted him, saying he was good for nothing in the convent, or rather, that he was a burthen to it. But this good brother very wisely replied: "Provided I keep my rule and do what my infirmities permit me; provided I keep myself in the infirmary possessing my soul and my body in patience, I believe that before God, I am more useful to the monastery, that I do more for its good, than if I had increased its revenues ten thousand pounds." The tepid and relaxed Religious in an order are its disturbers, its destroyers, and its scourges; it is they who lessen its glory, who impoverish it, who give it the death-blow and bring it down to the grave. Though seemingly they sustain it by their influence, defend it by their authority, and acquire for it reputation, nevertheless they injure it much, as God in punishment for their vices, public and secret, withdraws from it His graces, and often permits it to be embarrassed in temporals: they do at most what is done in palaces by those who gild the ceilings, who decorate the walls, but who, at the same time, sap the foundations.

The holy Abbot Orente, Superior of the monastery of Sina, acted most admirably one day in this regard : He went on a Sunday to the church with his robe wrong side out, and in this manner stood erect in choir. His being thus clothed and disguised excited great astonishment, and one of those who had charge of the choir said to him : “ How comes it, Father, that you enter the church in so extraordinary a garb, with your robe wrong side out, occasioning laughter to the seculars who come here, and causing them to mock us.” The holy Abbot replied : ‘ You have overturned the monastery of Sina by your irregularities and negligences, without any one correcting you ; and to show you your fault and our misfortune, you cannot endure that I thus turn my robe. Therefore, begin to repair the ruins that your disorders have occasioned our house, and then I will correct the fault you consider I have committed.’ Yes, it is the infraction of the rules that spoil, that engulph, that dishonor and ruin religious orders. As to the other leading points relating to Religious, we say that as the rules are the means God has given them to arrive at the end of their state, and the steps by which they are to attain the perfection to which they are called, it is evident that their perfection and their advancement depend absolutely on the observance of their rules, according to which they are more or less religious. That thus they should not make an accessory of the principal, and a principal of the accessory. Every Religious should know that the principal for him, for his

good and for his perfection, is his rule · and he should guard himself against one illusion, common enough in religion · many, placing their advancement where it is not, ask for devotions, penances, fasts. watches, disciplines, and other austerities, to which their rules do not oblige them, at the same time scrupling not to break silence, to enter the cell of another without permission, or to neglect to rise at the appointed time, through sloth, to acquit themselves negligently of their charge, and similar things exacted of them by their rule : these things, and not such as are not commanded, are the true means by which they will make great progress in virtue, and the assured way marked out by God for them to arrive at their perfection. It is by this that God wishes their perfection, and not by other means ; and therefore, they should not deceive themselves by taking one road for the other.

St. Paul, writing to the Romans about the true children of Abraham and Jacob, said : “ All who are born of Israel are not, for that, true Israelites ; nor are all those who are of Abraham, his legitimate children ; meaning that all who are born, according to the flesh, of these two patriarchs, are not their true and legitimate children, as Scripture requires them to be, in order to receive the promises and benedictions of God : it being more necessary that they be born of their spirit than of their body, and that they be imitators of their virtues ; those alone, then, are the true Israelites, and the true Isaacs, to whom the inheritance of Abraham is promised, and not to Ismael.” It can be said in the same sense, that all

Religious are not *true* Religious: those that have but the name, the habit, the appearance, or who acquit themselves merely of the exterior duties, are not Religious: it is only those who carefully observe the rules, who try to walk in the steps of their Founders, that are really Religious.

In the primitive Church, when any one became forgetful of his duties and no longer lived as a Christian, he was not called by that name, and ceased to be so regarded: as soon as he abandoned its ways he lost both its honor and its name. Some infidels complain to me, says Tertullian, that there are to be seen, even amongst us, persons who profess to follow Christianity, and yet live badly, and who do not observe the rules given them, but I reply, that from that time they cease to pass with us for Christians. We should form the same judgment of Religious.

A father does not recognize for his son a young man because he may dwell in the same house with himself, or because he eats of the same viands, and is clothed with the same material. In like manner, a Founder, a Patriarch of a religious order, does not recognize as a spiritual son a man who only dwells in his house, wears his habit, or bears only some other of his exterior qualities: to be his Father, according to the spirit, he must communicate to him his interior, and make him partake of his spirit, which consists in the observance of his rule.

The Religious of St. Dominic, of the convent of Bologna, lived in great relaxation, and in a notable disregard of their rule: one day in their office they

sang: "O St. Dominic, our Father, pray for us," when they heard a voice saying: "I am not your Father, and you are not my children." St. Francis wrote to the general chapter of his order, at which he could not assist on account of his infirmities, recommended to all his Religious the greatest zeal in observing their rule, and added: "As regards those who will not observe the rule, let them know that I do not consider them *Catholics*, as they should be, and that I do not recognize them as my brothers; that I do not even wish to see or speak to them, till they become changed and shall have done penance."

Every Religious should judge from these considerations the great obligation he is under, not only on account of the good of his order, but also on his own account, to keep strictly his rules, even though these same rules oblige not under pain of sin; and Superiors should watch to have them enforced, for if they fail in this, sooner or later both religion and the Religious must perish.

SECTION II.

All Religious Should Have at Heart the Observance of their Rules.

They should do so, first, because God wishes it, because He desires to be thus honored by them, and to receive from them this kind of service; because He has chosen these means to save them, to bring them to perfection, and to make them attain the end of religion to which He has called them, and

which He has established for His glory and the good of His Church. Consequently, it is clear they cannot transgress or change the rules, without opposing the designs of God, without setting aside His intentions, and violating His providence by restraining and checking His orders. As God contains within Himself innumerable models of the perfection and sanctity of which men are capable ; as He has drawn from this divine treasury for His honor, and for the particular end of men's salvation, at the time, and in the manner He deemed fitting, the great variety of religious orders that we see ; so also has He prescribed the most just and most efficacious means for arriving at these ends ; and these means are the constitutions and the rules. Hence, it follows that all who are called by God into religion should not only desire the end, but also the means ; for God being their sovereign Lord, they should not resist Him ; and, moreover, God being infinite wisdom and goodness, it is indisputable that all these means are most suitable to the end, and of great excellence. For this purpose we may give the example of our Lord. Being our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Model, through love of us, and to show us our duty, He kept the most rigorous law without retrenching an *iota* thereof, though He was not subject to it. It is truly admirable to see with what care and fidelity He observed all orders, even to the smallest, given Him by His Father. He failed not in the least circumstance of time, place, persons, or anything else. We cannot doubt that His love for man is infinite ;

that He ardently desires the salvation of all, and that He can but feel saddened and distressed—if we may so speak—when souls are lost, when the demon snatches them from His hands ; however, if there be no priest at the sinner's death-bed, if there be wanting a little water for baptizing the child, He prefers that they be lost, through the absence of such small things, than not to follow the will of His Father. Wherefore He said by the mouth of David : “ *In the head of the Book it is written of me, O my God, that I do Thy will, and I desire it : I have placed Thy laws and Thy orders in the midst of my heart,* ”—in my tenderest affections, so as to execute them all perfectly. In gratitude for such love and for so great a grace, and in imitation of so exalted a model, should not the Religious do his utmost to observe the rules of his order, which are so much easier and sweeter ? He should do so, secondly, because his stability and progress in virtue, his honor and his reputation before God and men, his repose and joy, are bound up in the observance of his rules. If he observes them, his heart shall ever be contented and joyous ; on the contrary, if he transgresses them, it will ever be filled with bitterness and trouble. “ The tepid and negligent Religious,” says the golden book of the “ *Imitation of Christ,* ” “ is exposed to the danger of great ruin ; he has trouble upon trouble, and on every side suffers anguish.” In fine, as order produces tranquillity and peace, and consequently all good, so disorder causes trouble and tumult, and is the mother of all evil.

The strength of a Religious lies as much in the accomplishment of his rules as did that of Sampson in his hair; this fidelity is his sword and his buckler against his enemies; it is his support and his defence at the hour of death.

It is related that a Religious of St. Francis, of the order of Capuchins, being sick and near his last end, was horribly tempted against his salvation by the demon who appeared in front of the crucifix which was shown to him, so as to obstruct the view and to cause him to despair: the monk found no better remedy for the evil, or no more powerful arms for the combat, than his rules; for no sooner had he taken the book in hand than the demon, affrighted by it, fled from him in confusion, leaving the good Religious in peace. But after death, and on the day of judgment, what support and what consolation! and on the other hand, what fear, what consternation, and what misgivings will not a Religious experience respecting his rules, accordingly as he has observed them with fidelity, or rashly violated them! St. John, in his Apocalypse, makes mention of certain books that will then be produced, saying that men will be judged according to what shall be found therein written in conformity to their works. When the Religious will be presented before that formidable tribunal he must expect that the book of his rules will be opened to him, and he be made to see the obligation he was under of observing them. He will be examined and judged according to the manner in which he acquitted himself of these obligations. Let him now

consider in time the attention necessary for observing his rules with fidelity.

St. Francis Borgia, the third General of our Company, according to our custom, on the occasion of a renovation of vows, having made an exhortation to a great number of our society at the Roman College, recommended to them the observance of the rules, and wishing to show them the utility of this, he uttered, among other things the following (which may well serve to animate all Religious in the performance of this duty): Let us place before our eyes a man attacked by several robbers in the midst of a forest, and on the point of being cruelly assassinated. If at this conjuncture, there come up unexpectedly, five or six gentlemen, who spurred on by their natural generosity, and still more by Christian charity, throw themselves sword in hand, upon these robbers, plucking out the eyes of one, tearing out the tongue of another, cutting off the ears of this one, the hands of that one, the feet of another, and so cripple them in different ways; should not he who has been rescued from such great peril, return a thousand thanks to these generous cavaliers, and whilst still traversing the forest, and still menaced by danger, should he not walk in their company, and assure himself of their escort? Yes, without doubt. Well, it is just the same with each one of us; we are all travelling through places which are strewn with very great perils; we are there assailed on all sides by brigands and assassins, who seek in every way to deprive us of life; our rules come to our assistance, and render us the same kind

and charitable services that these brave knights gave to this poor man; for one regulates our eyes, another our ears, another our hands and feet, all the members of our body, all the faculties of our soul, and they thus take from the enemies of our salvation the weapons they employ for our destruction, and by this means render them powerless to hurt us. Ah! are we not, then, obliged to love and faithfully observe them?

Moreover, we should have great respect, and great veneration for our rules; for just as he who receives from the hands of the Pope blest medals and Agnus Deis, values them not alone on account of their being blessed, and of the protection they give in danger, but also because of the hand that bestows them, which imparted to these things a special attraction and value; so also should we esteem, revere, and observe our rules, as much for the evil they deliver us from, as for the good they bestow on us; and besides, it is but just to do so with an ever-increasing zeal and affection because they come to us from the Infinite Majesty of the Creator of the Universe, and from the God of Sovereign Pontiffs.

3d. The Religious should have at heart the observance of his rules on account of the society of which he is a member: for without this observance it cannot subsist. Therefore we are most strictly and indispensably obliged to use our best efforts to preserve its honor, and its life. In fact, as a good mother she has borne us, nursed us, brought us up with great care, lodged us in her houses, fed us with her viands, clothed us, assisted us in the wants of

body and soul, and after death prepares for us a tomb, a place of repose, and the benefit of her prayers: and it would seem as if she, in some measure, repeats the words spoken by the mother of the "Machabees" to the youngest of her children to encourage him to hold firm to the law of God in spite of the rage of King Antiochus and all the torment he has resolved he shall suffer: "My son, have pity on me who gave you birth, who nursed you for three years, and brought you to your present age." My son! how sweet the appellation—how full of love and tenderness! What power it has to move a heart of ever so little feeling! "Have pity on me"—have compassion on your mother by observing the rules she has given you, believing that upon the care you take of them depend my life, my reputation, my glory, and my strength. If you love not your institute, and if you do not fulfil the laws that I have prescribed for you, I will pass for an object of contempt and shame in the Church, and you will cause my death. Place before your eyes, my son, all the toils I have undergone for you; how I carried you in my arms for one year, and even two, during your novitiate; with what care, during all that time, I nourished you with the milk of good instruction, how I disposed you for, and brought you to your profession, thus making you a member of my body and heir to all my goods; how I have spared nothing to form you to virtue and place you in the way of your salvation; be grateful for so much care and trouble, and be not so unnatural as to take the life of her

who gave it to you; be not the cause of your Mother's death!

What a sin and what a crime to kill one's mother! It is so great that legislators have made no law for its punishment, as there could be none adequate, or they thought no child could be guilty of such wickedness—could fall into so deep an abyss of sin. Moses, the most eminent of all legislators, prescribed that whoever should even curse his father, or his mother, should be put to death. For the same cause he enacted that most remarkable law, “that if a child became rebellious to the will of his father or mother, and did not improve by their warnings and corrections, they should bring him before the judge of the town, saying to him: ‘Our son, whom we here present to you, is a libertine, is self-willed and disobedient; he wishes to do nothing that we tell him; we no longer know what course to take to make him see his faults, and to cause him to amend.’ The judge on hearing this accusation, shall condemn to death this child so rebellious to his parents, and the populace shall stone him, in consequence of which death will ensue; thus you will remove evil from your midst, and all in Israel shall tremble on hearing of such an execution.”

Therefore, let the Religious weigh the force of all these reasons and resolve to apply himself efficaciously and constantly to the observance of his rules; let him hearken to what the Holy Ghost says by the mouth of the Wise Man: “*My son, observe the commandments that I give thee, and thou*

shalt live ; cherish and keep my law as the apple of thy eye ; bind it upon thy fingers and write it upon the tablet of thy heart ; try by such means to deserve the name of regular, still more by thy actions than by thy profession and thy state."

Listen also to the words of Baruch, speaking of the law of God : " All those who keep it will be certain of life ; .but those who transgress it will be condemned to death." Wherefore, be converted, O Jacob ! receive this law, and walk by its clear light in the way of thy salvation and of thy beatitude.

SECTION III.

Against the Transgressors of Rules.

We have shown the obligation of all Religious to observe their rules. It often happens, however, that they are transgressed, and there are *very few* who observe them perfectly. St. Bernard, speaking of Ecclesiastics in general, and the rules that the Apostle gave them for the direction of their conduct, said what we can take to ourselves : " Where is that manner of life ? Where that regularity, and that zeal for the constitutions and for religious observances ? We see this in books, but not practiced by men ; and yet, it is written of the just, that the law of his God is in his heart, and not in a book." Whence it comes also, that the same Father so bitterly deplores the small number of saints and the perfect. There are many who bear the name and wear the habit of Religious—the

world being full of them—but it is a rare thing to find one really such in heart and in effect.

The eloquent Salvian declaims against the former, saying: Those Religious, or to speak more properly, those persons who under a Religious exterior are true seculars in their interior and in their vices, having passed irregular lives in the world, retire to a state of sanctity of which they assume but the name and the appearance; thus they leave not their manner of acting, but only their profession; they change their name, but not their life; they show the excellency of the service they render to God much more by their habit than by their works; they lay aside only their worldly dress, and not its spirit, that makes them act in Religion *without religion*, regardless of their order and rule.

The Emperor Phocas says of them: I know not whether to call the “masks and phantoms of Religious,” those who by a change of dress think themselves well disposed for arriving at the perfection of their state; for they disappoint the expectations that others have of them, and belie their habit.

It may be said of this kind of Religious what was formerly said of false and ambitious spirits who wished to pass for philosophers without having their merit, that they were philosophers by their beard and cloak only, and *not* by their life. Herod, of Attica, jokes pleasantly about one of them, saying: “*I see in this man the beard and the cloak, but the philosopher I do not always see.*” In like manner can be said: “When I behold this

Father or this Brother, I readily perceive the habit and the appearance of a Religious; however, I do not there see the Religious; for he has not the spirit of his Institute, nor does he observe his rules, as would be the case if he were a *true Religious*."

Our Lord places at first on the shoulders of all who enter Religion the yoke of the rules, so that they may carry them all their life. He says to them, "*Carry my yoke*" and bear it willingly, since you have voluntarily charged yourself with it. But what happens? Many repent later on of what they have done, and finding themselves embarrassed by the weight—caused principally by their little courage and virtue—shake off the yoke and break it; wherefore our Lord tells them by Jeremias: "*Thou hast broken my yoke, thou hast burst my bonds, and thou saidst,*" by the infraction of the rules, "*I will not serve.*" I cannot live in such great constraint, nor be subject to so many things; nothing is to be seen but rules and regulations; this keeps one in too great captivity, and is wearisome. I wish to be more at liberty. Further on he repeats the same thing, and says: "*They have broken my yoke, they have burst my bonds.*" He says it not only of the people, but also of the great ones, of such as have authority and influence, and who hold the first places, consequently should serve as examples to others. And what happens subsequently? What he says soon after: "Wherefore our Lord punished all these rebels, all these infractors of rules;" "there came from the woods lions, wolves and leopards, who tore them to pieces."

To signify that the remorse of conscience, as sharp as the teeth of these ferocious beasts, troubled and disturbed them: fears of the future seize them, and thinking to escape a little trouble that sometimes, nay, always, if you wish, accompanies the execution of a rule—a trouble that ought to serve for their merit—they fall into a much greater, and one that will be useless to them. This is what our Lord says by the same prophet: “*Thou hast broken the chains that were only of wood and very easy to bear, and in their place thou forgest for thyself iron chains that are much heavier and harder;*” in place of the beautiful and honorable bonds of the rule, which were made to unite thee to God, and to thy salvation; thou hast disengaged thyself and become entangled in other bonds that are incommodious and dishonorable, of which the demon makes use to draw thee to himself and to thy ruin. Let those, then, who so easily violate the rules and who do not care to observe the religious discipline of a house, ponder well what has been said, and take the best counsel; let them decide to fulfil faithfully their duties and obligations; let them examine seriously the great wrong they do the designs of God, the immense injury they cause to religion, the great evil they do themselves, and for all these motives listen to the words of David: “*Observe, and observe with exactness, religious discipline, embrace strictly your rules and keep with care the order and holy government of your house for fear that failing therein God will be displeased with you, and will permit you to go astray, for your ruin and*

your condemnation, from the right road of your salvation."

God by the same prophet addresses them again thus: "Thou holdest in aversion the observance of the law; domestic order burthens thee, and the rules are insupportable to thee; thou transgresseth them without fear, and by thy negligences thou hast cast behind thy back, and even with contempt, the remembrance and the affection of things that I demand of thee: thou hast given by thy words and thy actions, great disedification to thy brother; and by thy wicked life thou hast scandalized the son of thy mother: thou knowest that thou hast done all this: that for a long time thou hast lived after this manner in religion, and that I have said nothing to thee about it, but have tolerated thee. Then know that if thou perseverest, I shall reprove thee severely one day. I shall place before thy eyes all thy disorders, and I will punish thee according to thy deserts." O ye, then, who forget God and your duty, listen to and understand well this threat, for fear that God may let it fall on you and make you feel the effects of His wrath, without any person being able to avert it. Add to all these threats of God, those addressed them by their Founders, who are justly indignant that they destroy their works by their irregular conduct, and that they overthrow what they had built up with so much care; doubtless they will be touched and become converted. Behold here some examples. St. Pachomius, returning one day to his monastery of Tabenna, accompanied by Theodore and several of his other

disciples, stopped suddenly on the road as if he wished to speak to some one of a secret affair; and he knew in spirit that they had neglected something he had given direction for in the monastery he had left, which was that the brothers who worked in the bakery should keep silence while making the altar-bread: that they should think of something good, and that they should meditate upon some words of Holy Scripture. Hereupon, he called Theodore, who had charge of this monastery, and said to him: "Inform yourself with care of what the brother bakers spoke last evening whilst making the altar-bread, and relate to me what you will have learned." Theodore obeyed, got his information, and having learned what had passed, went to disclose it to the Saint, who said: "Do the brothers think that the directions we have given them to observe are purely human traditions? Are they ignorant that for neglecting the least of these they expose themselves to very great misfortunes? Do they not know that the people of Israel, for having exactly observed silence during seven days, whilst they surrounded Jericho, as God had commanded them, though in this, as in other things, they received His commands from the mouth of a mere man, saw the walls of this city fall miraculously, of which they took possession at the very hour mentioned?" May the brothers be wiser for the future, and learn to observe punctually our directions which we ourselves are the first to observe with the greatest care, so that God may pardon them this sin of negligence. Behold now the conduct of

a holy Foundress. St. Teresa, after her death, appeared at the convent of “Villeneuve de la Xare” to a Religieuse who had permission to eat meat on account of certain infirmities she was laboring under, but which were not sufficient to dispense her from keeping the abstinence enjoined by her rule. One day whilst this Religieuse was at supper, and partaking of a boiled chicken, she heard the voice of some one calling her distinctly by her name, and who said to her: “Do you know me?” The Religieuse raising her eyes saw the holy Mother, who reproved her with great severity, and said: “What relaxation you are guilty of—whence comes it that you so freely abandon what it cost me so much to establish?” This poor Religieuse was so astonished, and seized with so much regret, that she instantly cast on the ground the contents of her plate. Never again did she eat meat except in serious maladies, and when constrained to do so by obedience. By this she lost nothing, for henceforward she had better health and strength. Such are the sentiments of the Saints relative to relaxation in their orders and upon the transgressions they behold in their rules—even the least. It is because they know that infidelity in small things, insensibly leads to the same in what is greater, and that a single deviation from the right road, that in the beginning is but a step, becomes in the end, ten thousand times more considerable. Wherefore it is necessary that watch should be kept from the commencement; this is what moved the Saints, and among others St. Ebechard, to reprove so severely even the slightest faults.

Let us conclude with the words of St. Francis, who, having wished great blessings and all manner of good to those of his Religious who kept his rule, fulminated terrible maledictions against those who did the contrary. It is said he gave God's malediction and his own, in these frightful terms, to all those who, by the vice of proprietorship, or for taking money, or by any other sin, sullied the purity of the rule—stained or infected his order by attachment to the dust and filth of earthly things, by scandalizing others by their bad example, and relaxing the rigor of his institute, which has taken for its greater honor and for its principal riches the profession of poverty: “Accursed be by *Thee, O Eternal Father*: by all Thy celestial court, and by me, miserable creature—all who, by the bad example of their undisciplined life, spoil and destroy what Thou hast built, and continuest to build up by the holy Brothers and good Religious of this order.”

SECTION IV.

Of the Manner of Observing the Rules.

First, the rules should be observed with punctuality and exactness, and as they were conceived by those who made them. There must be given them neither gloss nor wrong interpretation, but they are to be viewed in the thought and design of the legislator: otherwise, it will be no longer his rule nor his laws, inspired by God, nor the proper means for establishing religion for the good and for the

perfection of Religious. St. Francis, of whom we have spoken, has left on this subject in his testament these most remarkable words: “*Let the Generals, the Guardians, and all the Superiors of the Order, be obliged, in virtue of Obedience, to add nothing to, nor retrench from, the words of the rule. I command, by the same obedience, all my brothers not to give any interpretation to the contents of the rule, and not to say: ‘These words should be thus understood.’ As our Lord dictated to me the rule with purity and simplicity, I wish also that you always understand and observe it in the same way.*”

However, as this rule was found very severe in practice, several Religious, and Cardinal Ugolin—Protector of the Order—judged it proper, and even necessary, to make some mitigation therein. Accordingly, at the celebrated Chapter of Nantes, several learned Superiors became occupied with their Protector in finding out some modifications and ameliorations for the extreme poverty and rigor of the institute, which they finally moderated according to some more ancient rule, in order that their manner of life, by avoiding the extremes, would be supportable to those who embraced it. The Protector having related this to St. Francis, and trying by many reasons to make him condescend to this decision, the saint took him by the hand, conducted him to the Chapter, where the aforesaid Superiors were still assembled, and addressing them, said: “My beloved brothers, our Lord called me to Him by this road of simplicity, poverty, hu-

mility, and of most rigorous life, and with me, all those who wish to follow me. Let no one of you think to make me adopt a different rule, be it of St. Augustin, of St. Bernard, or any other : God showed me this one, called us to it, and He wishes that we pass for fools in this world, designing to conduct us to heaven by no other road : not by that of human reason, by your senseless prudence, by your ignorant science, with which you will remain confounded. I am certain, even, that God will punish you by His executioners, the demons, and that after that He will place you in your first state, from which you have now departed." The Cardinal, on hearing so positive and fearful a response, dared not reply by a single word to the Saint ; and the Religious, frightened and trembling, knelt at his feet, asking pardon for their vain enterprise.

The matter, however, was not thus decided ; for Honorius III., the sovereign Pontiff, wishing to confirm the rule by an express bull, and judging, nevertheless, that it contained some points too burdensome to the weakness of man, exhorted St. Francis to ameliorate some things, to change and even retrench other portions ; but the holy legislator replied : "It was not I, most Holy Father, who placed these commands and these words in the rule ; it was Jesus Christ, who knew better than we, all that is useful and necessary for the salvation of souls and of Religious, for the well-being and preservation of our Order, and who has ever before His eyes all that can happen to the Church

and to us. Thus I cannot and should not change anything, or retrench from the words of Jesus Christ." The same sentiments have ever been manifested at all the reforms made in this Order as to its perfection, and particularly in the reform of the "Capuchin Fathers." As Matthew de Bassy, reformer of this Order, was one day praying God for this great end, he heard very clearly and distinctly a voice from heaven saying: "Matthew, the will of God is, that you perfectly observe the rule, and that you observe it *to the letter, to the letter, to the letter.*" The same thing had been said to St. Francis at the birth of the Order.

The first obligation is to observe the rule in its primitive purity, and as it was drawn up by the founder, who, having been chosen by God for this work, and having received more lights than others for its execution, it should certainly be followed with the greatest fidelity, without making any innovation whatever, without changing in the slightest degree its design, or altering its construction, at least with respect to the intention for which it was formed.

This is not to find fault with, and to blame the mitigated Orders that do not observe the first rule in all its particulars, nor do we mean to say that one cannot live therein with virtue, and work out his salvation; for as all Orders, with their rules, derive their strength from the approbation of the Holy See, which has the power to construct or to destroy, to bind or to loose, to shorten or to prolong, to open or to close, when the Popes judge

proper for good reasons, arising from the weakness of the body, from the variety of dispositions, from the nature of places, and in order to render things more stable, and regularity of greater duration, to soften the rigor of the institute in some points, to render it more accessible and inviting ; it cannot be doubted that this institute, in its modifications authorized by the Sovereign Pontiffs, is good and holy, and that persons can live therein in all safety of conscience. It is nevertheless true that the rule is not as perfect as if preserved in its first state, as water is never so pure as at its source.

Secondly, the rules should be observed even to the smallest, as they are all useful and necessary for the good of religion and for that of the Religious. As in our body all parts are not equally noble and important, all, however, are of service, and have their particular use, and no one would wish to be deprived of a single one of them, small as it may be ; so, also, with the rules. It is true that their utility and necessity are quite different, but there is not one that does not serve and contribute in its own way to the common good of the institute, and to the particular good of him who has embraced it. Therefore, they should all be observed, and *well observed*. As the solidity, the strength, and the durability of an edifice require that the stones, great and small, should be well joined, well bound together, and that nothing separate and loosen them, in like manner should all the rules be practised, even to the least one ; that they be well bound together, without overlooking any ;

for from this does the structure of religion derive all its firmness, and the Religious his perfection. The principal ceremony observed by the Nazarites, who were the Religious of the old law, and the types—say St. Thomas and St. Gregory Nazianzen—of the Religious of the new law, was in respect to their hair. They tended it with great care, leaving it to grow without ever being cut. As long as they remained Religious, says the sacred text, the razor never touched the hair of their heads, to cut it. It was known they were Nazarites, and consecrated to the service of God, when they let their hair grow. What signified this care the Nazarites gave to their hair? Why did they preserve it without ever being cut? It signified the care that Religious should have for the perfect observance of their rules, even to the least, without retrenching from them. The hair, though it be so slight and weak, was, however, the sanctity, the glory, and the strength of the Nazarites, as appears in the person of Sampson; for so long as his was not touched, he was invincible: he performed prodigious feats of strength; but when it was cut, he became feeble, was captured, tied, fettered, blinded, and became the laughing stock of his enemies. This also happens to the Religious. Whilst he faithfully observes his rules, he is strong and vigorous; he performs decided works of virtue; on the contrary, when he pays no attention to them, he falls into miserable tepidity and a lamentable blindness; he becomes a captive to nature, a slave to his passions, the prey and the buffet of the enemies of his salvation.

Nature has given us hair, for the protection of the head, and when well kept and arranged, it serves as a pleasing ornament; but when neglected and left in disorder, as soldiers and robbers mostly keep theirs, it strikes terror in the beholder. In like manner, the small rules, when well observed, protect a Religious, ornament him, and give him a pleasing appearance; and on the contrary, he is looked upon with aversion and contempt, when he neglects them.

The ancients, who loved cleanliness, gave great attention to dressing their hair, so as to have it grow in great profusion.

Dion Chrysostom delivered a discourse in praise of the hair, saying that the ancients gave to it so much care and study, that they always carried, concealed, a small comb, to use whenever they had a spare moment; that when they lay on the ground, they took great pains not to allow their hair to touch it, or otherwise to expose it to the dust; therefore, they placed a piece of wood beneath their heads, preferring to keep their hair clean, than to sleep at their ease. Some, to make it more ornamental, sprinkled their hair with gold filings; some grains of this precious metal adhered to it, and glistened like so many little stars. This custom was in vigor at the time of Homer, as is related by Pliny; and Josephus says "that some women used gold dust, so that when exposed to the sun's rays their heads sparkled with light." St. Gregory of Nyssa remarks that the fashionable people of his time made their hair brilliant with gold. Our

spiritual Nazarites should take as much, and more care, to preserve and to ornament their hair; that is to say, to be vigilant in the observance of their rules, and if they find it troublesome, let them remember that to soften and practise it, they must throw gold powder on it, meaning true charity and the sincere love of God, which renders light the heaviest things, and overcomes all difficulties. As to small things, there being less labor for their observance, so there is the more shame, and *less love of God*, in their neglect.

SECTION V.

Continuation of the Same Subject.

Thirdly, a Religious should observe all his rules, though they do not bind under pain of sin. To engage him to bestow on them the greatest care, it is sufficient that they preserve and invigorate the body of which he is a member; for he should contribute all in his power to its good. But they are even for himself a most powerful means of salvation, and paths that conduct him to perfection. These motives should suffice to cause a man of mind and judgment to embrace the exercise of all his rules, though they be not binding under pain of sin. As, possibly, there may arise a certain evil from the fact, that these rules oblige not under pain of sin, something more should be added for the guidance of those whose rules have this freedom; as the Religious of St. Dominic, of St. Francis of Paul, and ourselves. In

fine, one may in speculation transgress them without offending God, excepting those, however, that relate to the vows ; for the intention of the legislator was not to attach sin to the infraction of them, and they can be transgressed effectively without sin; when this transgression has a good cause, as amongst us—and a like example is given by a Doctor—some one breaks silence at a time prescribed by the rule, and this is done in order to console a brother in the midst of some difficulty ; in such a case, instead of offending God, he may even please Him, for he does a good *work*—an act full of charity. It should be added also : first, that this Religious should be disposed to submit cheerfully to the penance the Superior may justly impose upon him, for having failed, even in this case, in domestic discipline ; for these penances can be imposed for faults purely exterior, and which, before God, are in no wise criminal.

2. I add that, it is nevertheless most difficult to break the rules thus freed from all sin in their institution, without committing some degree of sin—without offending God in something. Should you ask me in what, and how, I reply with St. Thomas that this takes place when a Religious commits such an infraction from negligence, from tepidity, and because of the little regard he has for his advancement and perfection, or even when he commits this fault through some inordinate affection, by impatience, by envy, by an eagerness to talk, or by any other unmortified passion, or still more, when he commits this fault through contempt ; but in this

last case, the fault is no light one—it is grave and mortal, as we are told by St. Thomas and all the Doctors, and for which they give the following reason: that the Religious, who treats so unworthily his rule, directly detracts from the promise he made at his profession to lead a regular life. Then, as he withdraws this subjection by the contempt he shows to his rule, it is evident that he destroys and annuls his promise. This fault cannot be light; all condemn it as a *mortal sin*.

It should be observed that this contempt may be for the Superior, inasmuch as he is Superior, and holds the place of God; or inasmuch as the Superior, being subject to the miseries of man, is wanting in prudence, or sweetness, or firmness, or in some other quality necessary to his government; or even because the inferior is not on good terms with him. Again, this contempt may be had, not for the Superior, but for the things he commands, or that the rule prescribes. Then, all the Doctors agree in saying, that the first contempt is always a mortal sin, because it attacks God when it tramples under foot authority in the person of the Superior, to whom He has confided it. The second contempt, is of itself venial; but it exposes to great danger—if care is not taken—of going much farther.

Thence it is a most salutary counsel, whereby we are recommended to always have esteem and affection for our Superiors, and to close the eyes to their defects. The third contempt is also only venial, as it is held neither for the authority of the Superior, nor for him personally, but only on account of what he commands.

But it should be moreover remarked, that even though the habit of transgressing the rule without fear and respect does not involve, absolutely speaking, any formal contempt, it is not always without mortal sin ; because there is, according to some Doctors, a tacit and hidden contempt, and according to others, this great facility, this daily habit of breaking the rules, readily disposes the mind to soon contemn them altogether, and to have no more esteem for them.

Moreover, they further say, that all persons, who with their consent, have embraced a religious state, are obliged, under pain of mortal sin, to live therein, in such a manner, that by their disorders and their bad examples, they do not cause others to lead a similar life, nor seriously disturb religious discipline, nor create disorder in the house. Finally, if anyone never wishes to keep silence, nor to pray at the appointed hours, nor to rise and to retire as the others, nor go to the refectory at the given signal, nor walk through the house with a certain recollection, nor abstain from entering the cells without permission, but persists in doing everything according to his own fancy, and, as it is termed, *helter-skelter*, he will certainly cause much trouble in the house, he will occasion great disorder ; a disorder that will be detrimental, and which will finally oblige the Superiors to rid themselves of him. As the pleasing symmetry and the perfection of an edifice consists in the arrangement and the beautiful distribution of the stones, so also, the beauty and ornament of a religious house consists in the exact observance of

domestic discipline, in the good order of all the actions of the day ; and, that all, in as much as they possibly can, will rise, retire, and do everything in the time, place and manner prescribed. On the contrary, disorder and confusion in these things, make the hideousness and deformity of a house.

Some other Doctors look at the thing in another light, and say that the Religious transgressor of his rules is always in mortal sin, and consequently in a state of perdition, for, by his disorderly life, he evidently sins in important things against the end of religion, of which he prevents the execution, since he does not observe the rules, which are the means established by the founder to arrive thereat.

Fourthly, he should observe all the rules, *great* and *small*, until death, and think that these words of St. Paul are addressed to us : “ *Observe the directions given to you, inviolably and entire, until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and till the day of your death ;*” for the Religious is religious till death, and in all times, in all places, in all circumstances, he cannot rid himself of, nor cast off such a quality. Thus, he is obliged to acquit himself of the duties of his profession till death without exception as to time and place. It is not for him, as for the Brachmanes, whom “Strabo” mentions, as observing most exactly regular discipline, and the manner of life they have embraced, for only thirty-seven years. Their successors, the Bramins—in the Kingdom of Nassinga—believe, that when they have refrained for a time from the pleasures of life, they may afterwards enjoy them freely, and

that they become impeccable, in whatever license they allow themselves. The Religious is always religious by his condition, he should be also *always*, so by his life.

Thus no one, whatever may be his age or his authority, can legitimately dispense himself from keeping the rules. This applies particularly to those who are most prominent, and who have the greatest authority; the seniors, to whom age has left sufficient strength, are more obliged to keep them than the others, because they should have acquired more virtue and zeal for the advancement of religion, and for their own perfection; as also, because their example has more weight for good or for evil, on the minds of the others, either for bringing them to their duty, or diverting them from it. Those who are in authority, and the seniors, would do well to place this consideration before their eyes.

Alas! this is not, however, what they always do. They often give in to relaxation under frivolous and bad pretexts, and their tepidity and their license exercise a most fatal influence on the younger members.

Anacharsis said of the laws of Solon, that they resembled spider-webs, none but the small flies are caught by them—large ones easily broke them, passing through without difficulty. It is sometimes the same with the rules, at least with some of them; you say that they were made to be observed by the novices and the junior members, and to be violated by the seniors. The spirit of a Religious, like his body, feels time and age; it is impaired with age:

like iron it rusts with time, though it was very polished and shining at the beginning. There are some elderly Religious, who by a deplorable fatal blindness, think themselves exempt from certain points of the rule that others observe ; they usurp rights not due them ; they require dispensations without reason and for slight causes ; they think nothing should be refused them ; they desire that deference be shown them, and they are disturbed, they complain if it is wanting to them ; they allow themselves the liberty of examining, of controlling, and blaming even that which is done by their Superiors ; and instead of serving as a beacon of light to others, as they should, to guide and conduct them to perfection, they are, instead, means to precipitate them into vice ; they serve as *stumbling-blocks* to cause their fall.

St. Bernard, instructing a Religious, and showing him how he should live in religion, says : “ Give attention only to this point, that you are a Religious, and must think of leading the life of a Religious ; imitate the best and most virtuous of all those with whom you live ; leave to me those old men, who are so impatient, choleric, audacious and self-willed, that I see in such numbers in these fearful times : do not take them for models ; on the contrary, put far from you their manner of acting ; fly from their way of life, for fear that it serve only as a snare to cause your loss. O how many old men and judges in Isreal, who, in religion, lead a lazy, sluggish life, unworthy of their state and of their age, are held in slavery by the King of Babylon,

the demon, in the land of a miserable servitude, and in shameful confusion !”

Abbot Moses says in Cassian, on the same subject : As in religious houses the young are not all of equal fervor, nor equally observant of discipline, so the same can be said of the old : the riches of the old should not be reckoned by the number of their white hairs, but by the multitude of the holy actions they have performed, and the virtues they have acquired. “For,” says the Holy Spirit, “old age is venerable and worthy of honor”—when reckoned *not* by *years* but by *good works* ; if in it is considered, not the length of days, but the excellence of habits, and that which gives even to a young man an honorable *old* age, is wisdom and prudence ; the glory of an advanced age, is a spotless life. Wherefore we should not propose to ourselves for models of conduct, all the old, whose age alone can recommend them ; for it is a deplorable truth, that the greater number grow old in the tepidity they have cherished from their youth, and who, in their inveterate negligence, take upon themselves authority, and assume ascendancy over others, not because of the maturity of their habits, but because of the number of their years. Thus the enemy adroitly working against our salvation, uses them to deceive the young : placing before their eyes the esteem that youth should have for age, and in consequence of this esteem, hastens, with a deceitful subtlety, to pervert and to destroy them by bad example.

It is of such old men that God complains, and of

whom He speaks by the mouth of the son of Sirac :
“ *There are three classes of men that I hate, and that I cannot endure : a proud man, a rich liar, and a silly, foolish, old man.*” This old man lives childishly ; he is undisciplined in the decline of age, and after passing many years in the care of spiritual things, he finishes his life in seeking corporal things. Thus St. Paul reproaches the Galatians : “ Have you reached to such a point of folly, that having commenced well by the exercises of the spirit, you finish unworthily by those of the flesh ?”

The seniors in religion should take heed of this, and endeavor to accomplish the prophecy of Isaia, regarding the law of grace : “ There should be no person in Jerusalem—that is to say, in religious houses—whose manner of acting be puerile ; nor old men in whom virtue and perfection do not keep pace with their age, and all those overgrown children of sixty, of seventy, eighty and one hundred years, will not be found there, because the liberties, the affections, and the passions of youth will be extinguished and dead in them ”

The ancients, preserving in their worn out bodies their first fervor, should continue uninterruptedly their exercises of piety, and endeavor to finish their career, as if they had but just commenced, saying with Job : “ I have resolved not to relax in my devotions, nor change the kind of life I have embraced.” Each one of them will do what is said by “ Osee .” “ He will practice humilty and obedience, he will observe silence, will be recollected, will

watch over his passions, practice mortification, and by such means, he will sing the songs of victory gained over self, as he did during his spiritual youth, and of his novitiate—when he was delivered from the captivity of Egypt, and withdrawn from the world.”

Thus grew—as related by his historian—St. Hermelan, in virtue and in age; he believed he had met with a considerable loss, if (contrary to the custom of many old men, who thought more of living than of living well and preparing themselves for death) he did not each day add something to his practices of devotion, and increase his merits. Thus St. Peter, martyr—already far advanced in age, gave himself in this spirit, to acts of humility, and to the exercises of the novices; and not long since I had it related to me, of a virtuous Religieuse, already aged—that she failed in none of the community observances, and specially at night for matins; and when she was told that she no longer was obliged to all this austerity, on account of her weakness, and that she might take her rest, she replied: “This body must go as long as it can: it will fall when strength fails it. I much prefer to be in choir praising God, than in my bed without sleeping: I should not leave off my good habits for the little while I am here: let us continue to the end!”

Theodoret in his *Philothea*, where he gives the lives of the “Fathers”—says, that in the monastery of St. Eusebius, near Antioch, he had seen old men, more than ninety years of age, who could not consent to yield anything to their age, nor to lighten in

any way their toils and the austerities of their life: they worked as the youngest, passed the days and nights in prayer, assisted at all the offices, and ate, only every other day, a little very coarse meat. It is related of B. Gregory, a disciple of St. Publicius—who though very aged, led as laborious and austere a life, as if he were in the flower of his youth; for he abstained from wine, used no vinegar, ate no grapes, nor partook of sweet or curdled milk.

Who would not be filled with admiration to see B. Romanus, the anchoret, weakened by age, wearing about his neck, waist and hands, heavy chains of iron—his only clothing consisting of one tunic of goat's skin, and his food a little bread, salt, and water, and these partaken of only in sufficient quantities to sustain life? The B Anthony, with a weakened body, and the B Antiochus, his companion, though far advanced in age, were both no less austere than when in possession of their primitive strength: they prayed and worked day and night, without the weakness of their body clashing with the constancy of their spirit, nor cooling the ardent desire they had to endure something for the love of God. Those who had the happiness of seeing St Trebin, says Theodoret, testify, that he continued till death his first austerities, without his extreme old age ever causing him to lessen one of them. We are assured that he surpassed all the men of his time in assiduity in prayer, for he employed therein entire days and nights, and not only did he not weary of this, but his affection for it constantly increased. So as not to distract his

thoughts from the contemplation of celestial things, he spoke but little to those who came to see him, and as soon as he had taken leave of them, he returned to prayer; but during the interruption of which, he did not appear to have lost sight of God. As his advanced age did not permit him to remain always erect without a support, he rested himself on his staff, and thus continually offered his praises and his prayers to God. St. John Climachus, having visited a famous monastery near Alexandria, relates of it, among other things, certain particulars, that suit perfectly our subject.

One may see, says he, in this holy house, old men—whose white beard and venerable countenances inspire at the same time respect and fear—placing all their glory in subjection, and who run like children to execute the commands given them. I there saw old men full of majesty, and much more resembling angels than men, who, with the help of God, and their constant labor, had acquired a surprising innocence and a most wise simplicity. In their exterior was evinced a great sweetness, a charming affability, an amiable gravity, without anything that was affected, nor too free in their actions. As to their interior, they were face to face with God and their Superiors, as little innocents, who alone thought of pleasing their fathers. But as to vice, and in their combats with the demon, they were valiant soldiers, who regarded their enemies with a bold, fierce and disdainful countenance. Behold the models that the *ancients* in religion should propose to themselves. If some-

times they are tempted to retract, let them remember the holy old man Eleazer, of whom mention is made in the second book of Machabees. "The officers of King Antiochus pressingly invited him, and under pain of death, to eat of the flesh of swine, which was prohibited by the law. To this he was also urged by the entreaties of his friends—to make pretense at least, to eat, and to save his life;—but he remained firm and immovable in the observance of the law, preferring to die, rather than to appear a dissembler. He then spoke these beautiful and memorable words: "It is unworthy one of my age to dissemble; for by so doing, many young persons might think that Eleazer, at the age of four score and ten years, had renounced the religion of the true God, to embrace that of the heathen; and by my dissimulation, and from a desire on my part of prolonging for a little while this corruptible life, I shall bring a stain and a curse upon my old age, even though, for the present time, I shall be delivered from the punishments of men, but I shall not escape the hand of the Almighty, in death or in life."

Fifthly, we should be *exact* and *punctual* in observing the rules, even though others should not be so. We should not live in religion, by example or by custom, but by reason, considering that to which our condition obliges us. If many emancipate themselves, and live disorderly, so much the worse; it is their fault and their misfortune—they will one day feel it but too keenly. Range yourself not on their side, but follow those whom you see doing well.

The holy Abbot Pynusius speaks to this effect in Cassian · “ You who have left the world to serve God in religion, be firm and constant in His fear, and prepare yourself, as holy Scripture warns you—*not for repose and delights, but for temptations and labors* ; for we cannot come to the kingdom of God, except by the road of tribulation. The door that closes the entrance is small ; the road that leads thereto is narrow. Alas ! very few take it and enter therein. Consider, then, that God has placed you among this small number of the elect ; thus, do not allow the example of a tepid and sluggish multitude to cool you in the ardor of your good works ; but live according to the *small number of the chosen ones*, that you may become worthy to have a place with them, in the kingdom of God ; “ *for many are called, but few are chosen.* ” the number of those to whom it pleases the Father to give His inheritance is *small*.

The same Saint says elsewhere, that to live with profit in religion, one must not look at the great multitude of imperfect souls, but at the small number of those who live orderly, and in the *exact* accomplishment of the rules. “ *Follow not the crowd* ” —says God by Moses—“ *to do evil ; and in your judgment, be not guided by the greater number, to be turned aside from the truth.* ” The great number of persons who do evil should be no excuse for your doing it, nor should you betray the truth to follow the majority, who favor falsehood. It is God—it is reason—it is the rule that should prevail, and *not* the multitude, nor bad customs. Our Lord says :

"I am the truth"—and not, as remarks St. Augustine—I am the custom, which so readily glides into religious houses, by the negligence of Superiors not sufficiently vigilant to have the rule observed, and by the tepidity of inferiors, who seek too much their convenience; not wishing to be restrained and hindered in anything: hence, evils come by the weakness and misery of one and the other. It is necessary that the Religious, who has zeal for his advancement and perfection, should be unbending, and in place of receiving detriment from the bad examples and irregularities he perceives in many, he should have the prudence to turn all to his profit: for instance, we often see a great quantity of apples on one tree: some are small, worm-eaten and withered, whilst those close to them are ripe, beautiful and sound: if the bad ones fall, the good ones do not become worse and fall for that reason; on the contrary, they grow still more beautiful and perfect, from being better nourished—having that portion of the sap which the others lost by falling.

Sixthly—though we must observe all the rules, great and small, and observe them exactly, till death, though others should fail therein, as we have said,—it should not, however, be with scruple and disquiet: there must be fidelity and exactness, but not worry and anxiety. There happened, in the year 1573, a dispute among our Religious, of the province of Andalusia, which it was feared would do much injury and cause considerable trouble. The Provincial, with some of the senior Fathers, burning with zeal for the rule, were too severe on

the others, in their efforts to make them observe it; so that there arose many complaints and murmurs against this extreme strictness. The majority of these Fathers, says the historian, being more than ordinarily good and virtuous, committed no sin in their manner of acting, though, at the same time, they were in fault; for by using too much zeal for the full observance of the rule and of religious discipline, they did not consider that, by exacting more than was in keeping with human weakness, they caused it to fall beneath the weight, and that, by wishing to draw too tightly the bonds of the rule, they slackened those of charity, that are of much greater consequence, and which in all communities, and in all good governments, should bind the members, one with the other, and with their head. But this evil did not progress, thanks be to God! because Father Everard, then General of the Society, perceived, by his authority and prudence, exactly the treatment needed, and thus calmed all minds.

The observance of the rules should be enforced without torture and without tyranny—with a strong, efficacious, and prudent sweetness. They are to be observed with great care, yet, without pain and scruple, being mindful not to fall into the vice, that St. Bernard reproves in some, who are conscientious as to violating the slightest observance; for instance, not to close a door, and who fear not to wound charity by murmuring against their Superiors and by committing other serious faults. Exteriorly, they are most exact and correct, but interiorly, are cor-

rupt and vitiated. They are most careful, says this Saint, of all that is exposed to the eyes of men, and which, after all, is no great thing when nothing else is to be added ; they omit not one iota, so punctual are they ; but whilst so closely inspecting the gnats, and other things of little consequence, they swallow camels ; they commit grievous sins in their hearts—they are enslaved to their own wills, attached to their convenience from a spirit of avarice, desirous of honors, ambitious of charges ; and provided their exterior goes well, they think all is right, and that they should pass for good Religious, but they greatly deceive themselves. St. Bernard recalls in this passage, the reproach that Our Lord formerly made to the scribes and pharisees, and which is well suited to these disguised Religious : “ *Woe to you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, that stop at practices of devotion, having more show than sanctity, because you pay tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin, and the other herbs of your gardens, and neglect what is more important in the law.* ” It commands you to be just in your judgments, and you trample it under foot ; it enjoins you to show mercy towards the poor and the afflicted, and you are harsh and pitiless in their regard ; it prescribes fidelity in your duties, and a sincere faith towards God, and you fail in one and the other. I condemn not what you do ; but forget not what is more important ; otherwise, you who guide others will guide them blindly, and it will be said of you with reason, what is given in your proverb, that you are like those who unceremoniously swallow

camels *whole*, and then become dainty, and strain and restrain, a hundred times, their drink, for fear of swallowing a gnat!" It is thus you act: you place all your care in small things—in what regards the exterior, and you neglect the more important care of your interior.

SECTION VI.

On the Consideration and Meditation of the Rules.

Behold a most useful and even necessary exercise for well observing the rules; it is advisable to practise this as often as once a week, or at least every month, and especially in the retreats of eight days.

This exercise consists in well considering and meditating the rules, so as to acquire a perfect knowledge of them, and to fulfil them afterwards, in all perfection. Moses, speaking to the children of Israel of the laws he had given them on the part of God, and recommending to them their exact observance, points out four things, wherein this observance must appear, and he tells them: "*Thou shalt engrave on thy heart the commandments I give thee:*" this is the first. "Thou shalt meditate them sitting in thy house, and thou shalt imprint them so deeply in thy mind, that thou wilt think on them in walking—that they will be present to thee in thy sleep, and that on awaking, they will be the first thought thou shalt have;" behold the second. "*And thou shalt bind them as a sign*

upon thy hand,” is the third. “*Thou shalt make lessons of them to teach to thy children:*” this the fourth. The second point, which is meditating on the things prescribed, relates to our subject. “*Thou shalt meditate them.*” It was thus David practised it, who said: “Thy law is the constant subject of my meditation:” which he repeats, and in such various ways in the 118th Psalm. “*Thy law is my meditation*”—it is the subject of my thoughts, the most ordinary entertainment of my mind; and he says of the just man, “*that he meditates on the laws of the Lord, day and night.*” A workman often handles his tools; he inspects them for fear they become rusted; and that he may not forget their use. The pilot who holds the rudder, looks from time to time at the compass and his marine chart, to learn where he is, so as to conduct his vessel towards the proposed point, to know whether he is going East or West, if he is not going to some enemy’s shore, or in some spot infested with pirates; also, to avoid rocks, sand-banks, and shipwreck. The rules are to Religious the instruments of their art; their marine chart in the voyage they are making on the stormy sea of life, and which will enable them to arrive at the port of salvation—the land of the blessed: wherefore it is necessary that they often cast their eyes thereon, and apply their mind to see and consider them. And they should do with all care what Moses directs, when he says: “Thou wilt meditate on the law of God, being seated;” because it is not customary to do things of consequence (and that require a long and serious appli-

plication of the mind) standing, but sitting. The Religious should in like manner conduct himself in the consideration of his rules: at first he should read them slowly, and then, after asking of God His grace and light, that he try to conceive their true sense; to understand them thoroughly, and to see the perfection they contain; the good that their observance may bring him, and the evils that their violation will cause him. In this consideration, he should not dwell on the exterior, and the *rind* only of the rule, but go beyond, and penetrate into the interior—to the spirit and end of the rule, which is paramount. For example, in the rule of silence, the *exterior* is to say nothing; but the marrow and soul of this rule, *for the retrenching of many sins*, is devotion, recollection, the spirit of prayer, the disposition for a union with God, and many other virtues, that flow from this proper observance of silence. Then it is to this we should particularly attend, and draw from it motives for resolving to keep it. We should again consider how Our Lord, the most holy Virgin, the Saints, and particularly those of our Order, have observed this rule, and exercised the virtues it prescribes. After this, examine how you yourself observe it; with what care, with what affection, with what constancy, and in what spirit you do it, and what are the causes of your violation of it, so as to apply to them a remedy. All this is necessary for whoever wishes to be an exact observer of his rules, otherwise he will not know them as he should, and by not knowing them, it is not possible that he observe them.

Hence the necessity he is under of keeping them, obliges him to their consideration ; and if he loves them, he will experience neither difficulty nor pain, but pleasure, in this consideration.

“The perfect love,” says David, “that I bear Thy commandments, causes me to meditate on them, that I may think on them always.” “The sweetest and the most agreeable occupation of my mind, is to meditate on Thy law” St. Augustine, for the explanation of this passage, says : “This meditation is the thought of a loving soul.” When David says in the first psalm, what we have already mentioned, that the just man considers the law of the Lord day and night, he gives as the reason for it, “*that he has for it an affection ;*” otherwise, he could not think of it. It is thus that the Religious should consider and meditate on his rules, and he may rest assured that he will draw from it great good. It will be with him, according to what the royal prophet says of the just man, who meditates continually on the law of God ; he will be like a beautiful tree, planted by the water, which is ever green and flourishing ; that bears without fail, its fruit in season ; he will succeed in all things.

Wherefore, he takes sometimes one and sometimes another, according to his necessity, or according to the bent of his mind, or to his most ordinary occasion ; sometimes, considering those that are most important, at other times, those he the oftenest fails in. Finally he will select some one of them each week for his study ; and in his retreats, he will see them, he will weigh them all

by taking five or six a day ; and particularly those that bear some relation to the day's meditation.

SECTION VII.

Of the Practice of the Rules.

This is the last and the principal thing on this subject ; that to which all the others relate : I mean, the effectual practice of the rules. But that this practice be what it should be, it is necessary, first, that the rules be in the heart. "*The laws that I give thee to day,*" says Moses, "*will be in thy heart.*" The heart in Sacred Scripture, and with other authors, signifies the understanding and the will-principles of our thoughts and affections ; and it is as if Moses said : thou wilt have thy rules in thy esteem and in thy love : you will esteem them as of the greatest value, and you will love them sincerely, as being the means for your salvation, the instruments of your perfection, the source of your peace and happiness, the certain marks of God's will for you. You cannot doubt, that by the execution of these things, thus regulated, He wishes only that you render Him honor, and that you give Him proofs of your love. Moreover, they will be the cause of your glory in the other life, and even in this ; for the glory and honor of a man is to do well whatever his condition requires of him ; to acquit himself worthily of his duties and charges.

David, the perfect model in this of the *true* Religious, says, when speaking of himself : "The

thing that is recommended with the most earnestness to Religious, and that is placed foremost of all others, is to accomplish the will of God ;” that is to say, to keep with exactness the rules of the religious house to which He has called him ; for, from the fact that He has called him there, it is clear that He wishes and demands this fidelity of him. Well, how does he correspond to this call ? My God, says he afterwards—I wish it. I have resolved to keep my rules, which are yours, since you gave them to me ; and wherefore, I have placed them not alone before my eyes to read them, but principally in my heart to esteem and to love them, and not in some corner of my heart, and carelessly, but in the *midst*, that is to say, in the most important and dearest place, to testify that I make great account of them ; that I have for them an extreme respect, a perfect love. After the esteem and affection that one should have for the rules, Moses designates the hand, for their practice. “ *Thou wilt bind them,*” he says, “ *on thy hands to put them in practice.*” It is thus St. Jerome explains these words : Let my commandments be in thy hands, so that thou mayest accomplish them by thy works—as if it was the heart that gave movement to the hand ; in like manner is it also the love of your rules that causes you to observe them. Thus David says : I have used my hands in the execution of your commandments, because I loved them. Our Lord, says also in the same : “ *If any one love me, he will observe my word*”—my commandments ;—and on the contrary, if he does not love me, he will do nothing : love will be the rule and the measure of his actions.

So also the Religious, applying the heart and the hand to the practice of his rules, will observe them with great care, and cause this practice to be both interior and exterior :—exterior, for he will observe them all without exception, in their time, their place, with the activity and the moderation necessary, and all the other circumstances requisite :—*interior*—(and this is the most important point)—for he will observe them with esteem and affection, with zeal for the glory of God, with desire for the preservation and honor of religion, and with the intention of his neighbor's edification and his own perfection. Above all will he endeavor to observe them in a spirit of love for God, and not from a servile fear, or from other abject and imperfect motives : wherefore the reason that the founders, of whom we have spoken, did not wish to oblige their Religious to keep the rules under pain of sin ; and they expected by this means to have them observed with more freedom and liberty, and also with more love, and that the rules would be for them not a chain of iron, as for slaves, but silken cords and chains of gold, to hold them honorably bound as children and persons of quality

Therefore should the Religious, in the morning, in his first exercises, and during the day when occasion offers, say : I am determined to observe to-day my rules, and particularly the one that necessity requires at this moment, and all this for the love of Our Lord and for His glory. He should in the observance of his rule, have in view the imitation of the virtues of Our Lord ; His humility, charity, meekness, and

others that the rule prescribes, and by this means to render himself like to Him, which is the principal end of all his rules ; for according to St. Paul, his predestination, his salvation and perfection consist in this resemblance. Moreover, the Religious should often ask of Our Lord the grace to practise his rule in this spirit, and to apply to him, for that end, the merits of his precious Blood. It is this that Moses wished to signify, when after reading to the people the book of the law, he sprinkled both the book and the people with the blood of victims strangled, wishing to teach us thereby, that we and the book of our rules should be watered with the blood of the Lamb, and strengthened by His aid, if we wish to be in a state to keep them well. Finally, Moses adds. “Thou wilt speak of the law of God to thy children ; thou wilt teach it to them as their lesson”—that is to say, that you, who are the seniors in religion, will teach the juniors by your words, and still more, by your example, how to observe the rule : your life will be for them a continual and powerful exhortation ; all your actions will serve as so many beautiful precepts to induce them to embrace its observance.

Behold what a Religious should do to practice his rules. If sometimes he feels it a vexatious weight, and that, owing to his weakness and his little virtue, he complains and murmurs, as of a burden too great, let him consider that Our Lord well merits this labor and trial of him : that paradise is worth it all : that soldiers in war, and sailors in their vessels, observe laws much more difficult,

and are reduced to hardships incomparably greater; and that many others in religion, who are no stronger than he is, observe with much exactness and joy, the same rules against which he is so rebellious, and resists so fiercely. Let him be persuaded besides, that when he finds them heavy and troublesome, he should not attribute it so much to the rules, as to his ill-disposed spirit, and to his unmortified heart. “The tepid,” says Thomas à Kempis—“complain of the austerity of the rule, that the fervent embrace with cheerfulness and love.” You may say that you fear to fast, to watch, and that you have great difficulty in observing silence; and you do not fear to be burned; you do not shrink from being tormented by demons; you have no misgivings as to being excluded from the kingdom of God.

Salvian before him said also: “We complain of the difficulty of observing the law of God, as an impatient invalid allows himself to find fault with an excellent physician, after having caused his sickness by his own imprudence, and when he perceives all the bitterness of the remedy, he accuses his physician of ignorance.”

Jordain de Saxe, a Religious of St. Augustine, relates that he had in his Order a Prior who was most exact in having the rules observed in his house, and in correcting those who failed in them. One of his Religious—otherwise very devout to St. John the Baptist—finding things too difficult, and being altogether disheartened, resolved to go to live in another convent. But when on the point of execut-

ing his design, St. John the Baptist appeared to him, and said: "Do not leave your Prior; it is for your good that you continue living under his guidance."

Let not the Religious murmur, then, at the yoke of religion, and at the weight of his rules, since Our Lord tells us that "*His yoke is sweet, and His burden light.*" This he will experience, if he desires to shake off his tepidity and sloth, and to excite himself to courage and love; he will sing with the royal prophet: "*Thou causest me to walk to my salvation, through beautiful and spacious roads*"—by easy ways. "The road is narrow." "It is true," says St. Augustine, "the road is narrow for the tepid, who walk with difficulty, but it is broad for those who love;" it is narrow and vexatious to the one, it is wide and agreeable to the other, according to the disposition of each mind.

If the Religious makes a false step in this beautiful road, if he chance to break some point of the rule, it is for his virtue and zeal, to perform some penance in atonement. "*The impious,*" says the Wise Man—*hardens his face and assumes an emboldened look;*" but he who goes aright, corrects instantly his ways. The indevout Religious, when he fails in observance, and transgresses a rule, looks pleased, hardens his face, hides his fault, or denies it, if spoken to about it; and when he cannot deny it, he excuses and diminishes it; whereas, the Religious who is truly animated with the spirit of his state, who has a timorous conscience, who loves his vocation, thinks immediately of repairing his fault,

and of returning to his duty. He asks for penance of his Superior, imitating in this the ancient Religious, who were accustomed, after a fault, to throw themselves at the feet of their Abbot, saying: "Pardon me, Father." St. Dorotheus, speaking of the indolent Religious, says, in the ninth treatise, that when he commits some fault, he would prevaricate ten times rather than prostrate a single time before his Superior, and ask his pardon. When the good Religious, who has committed a fault, does not ask for a penance, but has it given him by his Superior, he receives it willingly, in a spirit of submission, humility and regret for his fault, and with the desire to make the requisite satisfaction: for, says St. Basil, it is a strange and most unreasonable thing, that we rank among our benefactors the physician who burns us, who cuts our members, who gives us the bitterest remedies, and we look upon him kindly, because he does it all to improve the health of the body, and that we grow displeased with our spiritual physician—our Superior—when he prescribes for the health of our soul something with ever so little bitterness.

When your Superior, says St. John Climachus, does you the favor to reprove you, recall to mind the terrible sentence that will be fulminated against the wicked by the sovereign Judge: "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." Such a remembrance will produce in your mind so much sweetness and patience, that it will serve as a cutting sword to drive from you all the sadness and bitterness which you will have unjustly conceived for these corrections.

The best remedy for a fault committed, is the correction received for it, and the performance of the penance enjoined ; for, as St. Bernard has very well and keenly remarked : All religious discipline is divided into two classes : the rules that command what should be done, and the punishments for the transgression of these rules. When some one happens to transgress a rule, and receives for it, as he should, the penance, he does not omit observing the rule in some measure ; for one portion of the rule is a positive correction for violation of the rule, which does not only give direction for doing good, but also for chastisements for doing evil ; so, even when failing in the rule, one does not withdraw from it, provided penance is done for the violation.

Even when the Religious, who has failed, does not ask of his Superior a penance, and his Superior imposes none on him, he must, of his own accord, being touched with regret for his fault, and animated with a holy zeal against himself, and with a desire for his perfection, perform some voluntary penance, with a true intention of amendment : but if by this he does not amend, let him try some more effectual, or severer penance, which he may feel more keenly, and as a greater punishment. In conclusion : Let the Religious, persuaded of all we have said, and desirous of his advancement and perfection, be determined to keep strictly his rules. For this end, let him regard them as the book of life, as the marrow of the Gospel, the hope of his salvation, the state of his perfection, the pledge of his glory, the key of paradise—as St. Francis said of his own :—

Let him bear them always in his heart to esteem and to love them; in his hand, to bring them into practice, to regulate all his actions, as the stonemason of a building always carries his rule and square, to settle and adjust the stones: let him preserve the remembrance of them everywhere, at all times; when seated, according to the expression of Moses—walking, retiring to rest, rising, eating, drinking, conversing, and all things else: let him remember on these particular occasions, the rules that shape and direct these actions: let him listen to St. Bernard, who says to him: “Watch, and use every effort to conform your whole life to the rule you have vowed, in order not to pass the limits that the founders of your Order, your Fathers in religion, have marked out for you, without turning aside one step, either to the right or left, from the beaten road of the regular exercises.” He should take also to himself, what the same Saint wrote to the Religious of the monastery of St. Anastasia: “I beseech you, my beloved brethren, and I implore you with much affection, to persevere in your strict observance; be careful to perform with exactness the established order, and to keep punctually your rules, so that the Order and the rules may keep you.”

Finally, let the Religious do as Joshua, of whom Sacred Scripture relates, that the same commands which God had given to Moses His servant, Moses gave to Joshua; and Joshua fulfilled all, without omitting anything of what God had prescribed to Moses—not excepting even a single syllable.

CHAPTER IV.

THREE VOWS OF RELIGION.

IN Sacred Scripture are mentioned two sorts of chains, which are quite different. The first are shameful and dishonorable bonds, as being the effects, the badges of crime, of opprobrium, and of a dishonorable servitude, such as those recorded by the Wise Man, in the book of Proverbs: "The iniquities of the impious," says he, "are to him in place of cords to bind him; and he is fettered by the chains of his sins." Isaias says to the daughter of Sion: "Arise, poor daughter of Sion: shake off the dust with which thou art covered: break the chains from off thy neck, that hold thee so miserably captive."

The second are honorable bonds—being tokens of liberty, of nobility, and of an exalted condition. "The cords," says David, "that have been cast upon me, have given me a noble and a very rich inheritance." Ecclesiasticus says of the bonds of wisdom, that he so forcibly entreats us to enter: "Its chains will become for you a strong protection and a firm support: its collars will render you glorious—its chains are ligatures and healthful bandages."

The cords with which criminals are bound, and the chains that fetter slaves, are the marks of

their captivity and of their bondage; and that the collars, on the other hand, that are worn by knights and great lords in the courts of knigs—the chains of gold that adorn great ladies, are insignia of their nobility, of their riches, and of their liberty. The bonds of the religious vows are far from being the first named; they have a higher degree of excellence than the second, and they surpass beyond compare, and under every aspect, those just mentioned, for they highly exalt those who wear them before God and in His celestial court. They should then be studied more closely, and fully recognized for all they are.

A *vow*, say the Doctors, is a promise made to God, with knowledge, with deliberation, with liberty, of something good in itself, and better than its opposite: according to this definition, neither things bad nor indifferent can serve as matter for a vow; neither can all good things: marriage, for example, cannot, because celibacy is better.

This definition shows us again the dignity of the vow, and the great advantages it bears with it, inasmuch as it takes for its object a good above what is common, and, as it promises God to give it to Him, it opens the door to great glory, and to marvellous rewards. St. Thomas treats this subject admirably: shows it to be much more praiseworthy, and much more meritorious to do a thing after being obliged thereto by vow, than to do it with the liberty of *not* doing it if we wish; and he gives three reasons. 1st. An act of perfect virtue, he says, is always of itself more excellent and meritorious than that of a

lesser virtue ; then a vow is an act of the noblest of all moral virtues, of the *virtue of religion*, which has for its end the worship and the service of God ; then it must be necessarily concluded that the vow elevates considerably in goodness, in dignity, and in merit, the acts of virtue inferior to it, when they are made by its impulse and direction. Thus, fasting, which is an act of the virtue of abstinence, and the cutting off of the pleasures of the flesh—that appertain to the virtue of chastity—is much better and more useful for being vowed than not ; because, says the Angelic Doctor, the vow withdraws them from their own nature, which is lower, and elevates them to one higher and more illustrious, as sacrifices made Him. It is in this sense that St. Augustine says : Virginité, which is so beautiful, so esteemed, and so honored among Christians, is not, however, esteemed and honored precisely for its being virginity, but because it is consecrated to God ; it is from that it derives its lustre and draws its glory.

2. He who does something for God by the obligation of his vow and promise, gives much more to God, subjects himself much more to Him, than he who does it without the promise, because the promise obliges him to do the thing, and by such means deprives him of the liberty he had of not doing it ; thus he gives to God the thing and his liberty—*the fruit and the tree*, as says St. Anselm. On the contrary, he who does not promise it, yet does it, retains always the power of not doing it, since he is not obliged thereto—he keeps the tree for himself and gives only the fruit.

3. A vow imparts to the will, constancy and firmness in doing good ; it binds and attaches it to good in an indissoluble manner, though free and voluntary in its origin ; it places it in an absolute necessity to practice it, and in a state of immutability, so as not to have the power to draw back. Then it is evident, that to do good and to exercise an act of virtue in these dispositions, is a much better thing than to do it with a will which is unsettled and capable of change : for it is not to be doubted, that among all the qualities of a good and virtuous will, its unshaken firmness and its enduring perseverance in good and in virtue, should pass for the most excellent. In fine, if it is well to do good once, or during a quarter of an hour, how much better is it to do it two or three times, or to do it for a great while, or still more, to do it always !

Wherefore, Aristotle required for the perfection of a virtue, that it should be immutably established in the will, and that it perform its actions constantly and without hesitation. The Angelic Doctor again explains this by its opposite : as a sin committed with a resolute will to sin, and with malice, is a much greater sin—the sign of a more wicked will, and of a more depraved soul, than one done merely through weakness, or by the sudden emotion of some passion ; so also, an act of virtue that proceeds from a firm and determined will, is greater than if it came from a weak and vacillating will. Behold the true nature of a vow and the good it effects ! Then, of all the vows that can be made, the three of the religious state are incontrovertibly the

noblest and best. The perfection of a Christian consists in renouncing the cupidities of life, in trampling on the world, in breaking all ties that hold him captive, and in being bound and united to God by the ties of perfect charity. But there are three great obstacles that prevent him from acquiring this perfection—three species of snares that hold him back and keep his soul from freely rising and flying towards God. These are, according to the explanation given by St. John, the concupiscence of the eyes for riches, the concupiscence of the flesh for the pleasures of the senses, and the pride of life for seeking after honors and for the disorderly affections of the will.

The three vows remove these three hindrances, and cut all these snares. The vow of poverty destroys the first, the vow of chastity the second, and that of obedience the third. Thus is the Religious at full liberty to soar upward, to fly towards God, and to be united to Him.

From this it may be seen to what a degree of excellence these three vows elevate man. They attach him entirely to God and His service, and He must derive from them the greatest glory. As a vase is honored and ennobled, when used for great and glorious purposes, and as on the contrary, it is degraded when employed for something vile and abject, so it is this which makes the difference, as St. Paul affirms. between vessels of honor and vessels of infamy: thus man is greatly honored, he rises to a point of sovereign glory, when his soul, his body, and all his goods, are consecrated to the infinite

majesty of God ; but he falls into an abyss of opprobrium, if he uses them to abandon himself to vice. Moreover, what treasures and benefits do not these three vows bring to a Religious? Should he not believe that, giving all that he is, all that he has, to God, who never permits Himself to be outdone in generosity, in goodness and in love, he will receive in return, many other presents, the greatest of which is, without doubt, the grace and strength He bestows on him to cause him thus to yield himself entirely to Him: for, as David says, in accordance with one version—“ *You will be good to those who are good, liberal with the liberal, and nothing of this will you be with him who has not been so with you.*”

Finally, these three vows overwhelm the soul with joy ; for though they may seem to be accompanied and followed by great difficulties, because they destroy nature—nevertheless, they fill the heart with pleasure, they open to the soul the door of its felicity, for they bind, unite, and attach it to God, in whom are found all its contentment and its happiness. The Angelic Doctor teaches that by these three vows, man makes of himself a most excellent sacrifice to God ; that he offers himself as a holocaust to His glory, that he gives Him absolutely all that he has, reserving to himself nothing in this world, where he possesses only exterior goods—his body and soul ; for by the vow of poverty he strips himself—giving to God all exterior goods—not only those that he has, but also those he may have ; by the vow of chastity, he consecrates to

Him his body, and by that of obedience, his soul; thus, nothing more is left him to give.

Moreover, by these three vows, he flies as much as possible both from sin and the occasion of sin; for, as St. Thomas most aptly remarks, such a one is very far from desiring and taking the goods of another, since he does not even wish to keep his own: he will not permit himself illicit pleasures, since he has resolved to abstain even from those that are legitimate · and he is most careful not to prefer his own will to that of God, since for the love of Him he has even vowed to subject it to that of a man.

He also places himself, by these three vows, in the happy necessity of serving God, and consequently of being happy; he imposes on himself an indispensable obligation to practice virtues, and especially the three principal ones: viz.—faith, hope and charity; for he must necessarily believe in God, and in a future beatitude, to thus renounce the world and all the inclinations of nature. He deprives himself of all the goods of earth, though many are needed for food, clothing, lodging, and for his whole subsistence; but he hopes for and expects them from God; and he loves Him, doubtless, with a great love, since to please Him he abandons to Him all that he has, and wishes to die to himself.

SECTION I.

Of the Profession of the Vows.

He who has resolved to consecrate himself to God by the vows of religion, to bind and attach himself to Him by these three indissoluble ties, to be nailed to the cross of His divine Son, and to be crucified with Him by these three nails, to make this sacrifice of himself; the greatest sacrifice that he could possibly make, since he immolates all that he has. And since it is the heart that ennobles and gives value to the gift, if we should give to God even the least thing with a generous heart, it is evident that it is more reasonable to give Him those of greater consequence in a like disposition. But as no one can give to God anything greater than that given by these vows, it is necessary to present Him this gift, in the sublimest and most perfect manner.

Now this manner consists first in knowing well what it is one wishes to give to God, and to what one obliges himself; and therefore, one should read with the greatest attention all the words of the formula of these vows, and well understand what they signify, as they contain the whole obligation contracted, so that there be nothing more or less than he intends. We see that in a contract where there is question only of a small sum of money, men consider with much care and exactness, all the words, syllables and points. Certainly then, it is much more reasonable to consider and to weigh all

that is enclosed in the contract made with God—all that is mentioned in the paper of the promise you make him by your vows; because the thing is of incomparably greater consequence. Secondly, you should give yourself to God, make Him your vows and your sacrifice, with the greatest affection possible, with a spirit of devotion, and a consecration of your person and of all your goods to His service, with the desire to belong to Him absolutely and forever, with a great zeal for His glory, with a recognition of, and gratitude for all you owe Him, to render to Him that which He has given to you, and which you may always keep with a great respect for His infinite Majesty. Above all, you should give yourself to Him in a spirit of love, saying to Him in all truth, and rather with the heart than with the mouth, that you offer to and give Him the little good that you have, by consecrating to Him your body and your soul; that did you possess treasures, kingdoms and empires, if you had ten thousand bodies and as many souls, you would give them as cheerfully, if not more so, for it would cause you greater joy to have more to give Him.

You should offer yourself to God and make Him your vows with the same sentiments and the same affection with which the most holy Virgin made Him that of her virginity, and offered to Him her divine Son and herself in the temple, on the day of her purification, and also on Calvary: again, they should be rendered with the same sentiments with which Our Lord offered Himself on the cross, and

from the time of His incarnation, when He made a vow to die. Thus should you join yourself to them in these actions—uniting your vows with theirs.

Some Doctors teach, as a thing most probable, that Our Lord made formal vows. First—the Evangelists say of Him that He was a “*Nazarite*.” “He was called Nazarite,” says St. Matthew. Now He was one in fact, not alone because after His return from Egypt He was nursed and raised at Nazareth, which is the most literal interpretation, but also, because, according to the opinion of some authors, He had embraced the institute of the Nazarites, who were the Religious of the old laws and the types of those of the new. At the same time He was not a Nazarite as to exterior ceremonies, but as to the spirit and interior—that is to say—in sanctity, purity, and exclusion from things profane: wherein Sampson and others were His imitators.

Secondly—Our Lord, to give more lustre and greater weight to His actions, to render them more agreeable and more glorious to God, and at the same time more capable of touching and winning the hearts of men, wished to oblige Himself thereto by vow.

Having received the command of His Father, to die for the salvation of mankind, He accepted this mandate cheerfully, as is taught by David and St. Paul: and not content with that, He even made a *vow* to that effect. It is thus the Greek and Latin Fathers, agreeing with the general opinion, understood these words of the twenty-first psalm: “*I will render my vows,*” etc.

Thus, from the moment of His conception, Our Lord consecrated Himself to God by express and formal vow ; He made profession of a laborious and painful life : He promised to shed His blood and die for men, and for you in particular, and to this end, He offered, by vow, all the actions and all the sufferings of His earthly career. The vows and the promises Our Lord made to God, says St. Jerome, are His birth, passion, death, and the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament of his Body. Thus, He vowed for you and for your imitation, poverty, chastity and obedience. He made a vow to be born in a stable, abandoned and rejected by all, to be circumcised with excessive pain to His delicate flesh, to fly to and live in Egypt with great inconvenience, to lead an unknown and laborious life, to be scourged, crowned with thorns, beaten, struck, outraged, and to yield up His last breath on a gibbet, in an abyss of all manner of grief and ignominy.

Although some have advanced, that Our Lord was incapable of a vow, as He had no need of establishing His will in good, since it was already confirmed therein, and though this be true for such reasons, He was, however, capable for the sake of others ; for instance, to consecrate Himself in a more excellent manner to the service of God—which is the principal motive of a vow—and to perform His actions with greater perfection.

Then, according to this doctor, Our Lord having vowed for you poverty, chastity and obedience, it follows, that you must make the same vows with Him, and for Him, and in proportion as He made

His. Therefore, He having made these vows with a most inflamed zeal for the glory of God, with an incomparable love for you, and with all the other dispositions that could possibly exalt a vow to the highest degree of perfection, you should use every care and all the energies of your mind, to render yours in the same dispositions, and pronounce the words of the formula, with similar sentiments

SECTION II.

Of the Practice of the Vows.

When a person has given and consecrated himself to God by the vows of religion, he should know and understand fully, that he no longer belongs to himself, but to Jesus Christ, and that he has no longer any power to dispose of his body and soul ; but that it is to Our Lord he belongs, who can do all He pleases with him for the divine service. When then you behold your body and think of your soul, you should say : these hands, these arms, this body, my understanding, my will, my soul, no longer belong to me, but to God : I have nothing more.

Wherefore, God said to Moses, with regard to the Levites : “Thou wilt gather Levites from among the children of Israel, and thou wilt offer them to me, to make them mine, and to devote them to my service ; afterwards, they will serve in the tabernacle ; thus, thou wilt purify them, and thou wilt consecrate them to me, for they have been given to me by the children

of Israel.” These words have still greater force, in regard to Religious, who have given themselves to God by vow ; therefore, they should think seriously of practising them, since they are obliged thereto. “*Pay thy vows to the Lord thy God,*” says David, and fulfil them. “If any man make a vow to the Lord, he shall not make his word void, but shall fulfil all that he has promised.” (*Numbers*, 30, iii.) So also David says of himself: “*I will pay my vows to the Lord, in sight of all His people.*”

Then the fulfilment of these vows should be both exterior and interior ; *exterior*, that is to say, men will see that they are made to the full extent of their obligations : *interior*, because made in a spirit, and through a motive of virtue. Otherwise, and it is well to remark it, the vow is not a vow ; it is not an act of religion, nor, consequently, an action agreeable to God, and meritorious for man. However, when one makes a vow, it is certain that he pretends to perform an action pleasing to the divine Majesty—for indifferent actions do not please God, and bad ones are displeasing to Him. But to render an action good, and to give it a tincture of virtue, it is absolutely necessary that it be not alone good and virtuous in appearance, and for that end, partaking of these exterior qualities, but that it be also in the soul ; produced by motives of virtue and with good intentions, which constitute the essence of virtue. Wherefore the Religious who observes his vows only exteriorly, does not make an act of virtue pleasing to God and useful for his salvation—consequently, he does not observe them in full, and does

not acquit himself of his promises. Then, let him observe them with the interior dispositions mentioned in the preceding section.

David refers to these two conditions of the vow, when he says: "I have acquitted myself of the vows I made to the Lord," etc.—as above quoted—this much for the exterior. The *interior* follows in these words: "*The death of the saints is precious before God;*" because the soul and true spirit of the vows of religion, is to live continually in a state of mortification, of death and annihilation, regarding the goods of this earth, the pleasures of the senses, and the inclinations of one's own will, in the presence of God, who is in our interior. It is this that a truly holy man does—which causes the prophet to cry out, and to say with reason: "*O Lord, being consecrated to Thee by vows, and fulfilling them both interiorly and exteriorly, I presume to call myself Thy servant.*"

Yes, appropriated thus to Thy service, I am Thy servant, and the son of Thy *handmaid*, the *Church* and *Religion*. You have, by these vows, broken the bonds that attached me to earth, to the flesh, to myself, and you have enabled me to sacrifice to you *hosts of praise*.

The Religious makes of himself by these vows, a *host of praise* to the Lord: and in order to fulfil them, he should live in a spirit of sacrifice, after the example of our Lord, of whom St. Paul said: that being sovereign Pontiff—"He offered Himself as an immaculate victim to be sacrificed to God, His Father." And in another place: "Jesus Christ

has loved us; and in testimony of His love, He offered himself for us to His Father, as an odor of sweetness." So that He was in this great action, both the priest and victim—the offerer and the oblation; as is said of Him by St. Augustine. Then, during His whole life, He bore this character of victim, and He performed all His actions in this spirit.

The Religious should form himself on this excellent model, regarding himself as a victim, consecrated by his vows to the service of God and His honor. He should act in this view—exercise all his works with this impression and intention of sacrifice, rendering himself by love, like Our Lord, priest and sacrificer of self—to sacrifice to God, his thoughts, opinions, will, desires, satisfactions, conveniences, and everything generally; acting no longer but as a victim destined to die for the glory of God—and dying actually to all, according to the mystic words of St. Paul: "*I die daily.*"

To animate oneself thereto, it is only necessary to consider first: that he has promised it, pledged to it his word, which a man of virtue and honor would never retract. You have promised it with your free will; you were not forced thereto; now then, you must redeem your promise. St. Ambrose, speaking of the promise one makes at baptism, to renounce the devil and his works, says: that we should apply it, after a certain manner, and even with more force, to the vows of religion. Bear in mind your word, says he; and may it never escape your memory. If you have made a written promise

with a man you will be obliged to keep it with him, and if you fail to do so, he can cite you before the judge, and then showing your obligation, made in good form, constrain you to pay him. Consider where, and to whom, you have promised to renounce the world! Your promise will be preserved, not on earth, but in heaven. You are obliged to renounce the world, to observe poverty, chastity and obedience; remember this, and be faithful to put it into execution. He who has promised a sum of money, always thinks of his debt and of his obligation. You have promised to Jesus Christ, faith, which is of much greater value than money; you have engaged yourself to observe vows for Him—remember then your promise and pay your debt.

2. Let the Religious consider to whom he has promised and made his vows; for, though the obligation of a promise rises essentially from the will of him who thus binds himself, yet the quality of the person to whom the promise is made renders it greater and more indispensable.

To fail in your word to a villager is assuredly to be wanting in your duty, and to become blameworthy: but not to keep your promise with a king, is to be much more guilty, and to completely violate your duty: for, to a king there is due much more respect; and greater also should be the fear to offend him. He to whom the Religious pays his vows and gives his word, is God, whose majesty is infinite: it is God, before whom all the kings of the earth are but as atoms. Let the Religious then judge by that, how great his obligation is to acquit himself well of his promises.

Again, he should reflect on the importance of his promises—on the greatness of the thing he has promised, and that he must never forget that he is bound under pain of mortal sin and eternal perdition to satisfy them. St. Thomas asks if there could be a vow or a promise to God that would not oblige under pain of sin, and he replies there could not: because if you are obliged to keep faith with a man, when it has been pledged him, you are under still greater obligations to keep it with God: it is a species of infidelity to fail therein, says this holy Doctor. Moreover, when one promises something to God, a right is given Him over the thing pledged, so that it cannot afterwards be taken from Him without doing Him wrong and without offending Him. “*When thou hast made a vow to the Lord, thou shalt not delay to pay it,*” says Moses, “*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.*”

The Wise Man says, in the same respect: “*If thou hast vowed anything to God, defer not to pay it: for an unfaithful and foolish promise displeaseth Him: but whatsoever thou hast vowed, pay it.*” far better is it not to make a vow, than to fail in its fulfilment.

The sin that one commits in the transgression of vows, is mortal in its nature, and it is only the unimportance or smallness of the thing that excuses, and renders it venial. “*It is ruin to a man to devour holy ones*”—says the Wise Man—“*and after*

vows to retract:” it is criminal for a man to eat in his house the sheep and lambs consecrated to God : to make Him vows, and afterwards to gainsay them.

St. Albert, a Carmelite friar, having been vowed by his parents to the most holy Virgin, and afterwards—chiefly his father--wishing to give him to the world, in marriage, the holy Virgin appeared to them during the night, saying, with great severity : You promised me your son, and you do not give him to me ; you thus retain to yourself, unjustly, the goods of another : your son was truly born of you, formed from your flesh, but he is mine by the vow you made me. If you do not wish to yield him to me, be assured that you will soon experience the chastisement due your offence, and that you will die a miserable death. Thereupon, the father and mother awaked, sorely affrighted by such a threat, and the ensuing morning conducted their son to the monastery. All the Doctors agree in saying, that to steal one shilling from a very poor man is a mortal sin, deserving forever the privation of Paradise, and the endurance of eternal punishment. This being so, who can doubt that to take from God the goods promised Him by the vow of poverty ; to steal the body and soul—incomparably more precious than all the gold and silver of the entire universe—that were consecrated to Him by the vows of chastity and obedience, for His service and glory ; to reclaim the understanding and thoughts, the will, heart and affections, that have been given Him by the vows, and which He solicits with such entreaties ; who can doubt, we say, but that it is a sin much

more heinous, an enormous theft, a horrible sacrilege, that merits the sharpest flames and most rigorous tortures of hell—torments that should seize with fright the soul of the Religious, and prevent him from ever committing so great a sin.

Let the Religious represent to himself the example of Our Lord, who, for him, made a vow to lead a poor, painful life, separated from all the pleasures of the senses, to obey every one, to submit to all without resistance, and to undergo a cruel and ignominious death on the Cross; the Religious should endeavor to keep his vows for Him, in the same manner, both as to the interior and the exterior, and that he say with Him, and as He said: I will fulfil exactly, in the presence of the whole world, the vows I made to the Lord.

SECTION III.

Of the Renewal of Vows.

This exercise, that St. Ignatius prescribed for his Order, and which is common now in many others, is most useful when well made. It consists of two parts: the first, is to enter into oneself, to see the sins committed against one's vows, to conceive for these sins a sincere regret, to ask God's pardon for them, and to propose to oneself an efficacious amendment.

The second is, to reiterate one's vows with renewed devotion and fresh courage.

As to the first, it must be remarked that one renews not, properly speaking, a thing preserved in

its newness and freshness, but only something that has become old ; we cannot remake what is still in its first state, but that which is decayed and in some degree defective. For instance, to rewhiten a wall, it must first lose some degree of its whiteness. Thus, to renew one's vows, denotes that they are not in the same vigor, but have become weakened. Alas ! it is so easy for vitiated nature, that ever tends downward by the weight of its corruption, to fall away and become enfeebled in the effecting of what is good.

Then this weakening and ~~this oldness~~ of the vows consists in a diminution of care, of devotion, of fervor, of zeal and love, in keeping them, and in the sins that this diminution and this languor have caused to be committed against them. The Religious should examine and try himself thereon ; see, by meditations tending to this end, where he is in their regard, and to this effect, make some days' retreat, previous to his renewal. During this time he will employ many hours in considering this important research ; he will apply himself seriously to know the disposition of his mind regarding his vows, and by sounding it, ascertain if he has not done like the children of Israel, who, after being brought out of Egypt, with an extraordinary mark of the goodness and power of God, adored the golden calf in the desert ; so also, after having been drawn from the world by a most special grace and mercy, he may not adore some idol in religion, either contrary to poverty, by a desire for his convenience and ease, or against chastity, by an inordinate affection to some

creature, and by seeking after some sensual gratification ; or, as opposed to obedience, by a too great attachment to his own will and judgment ; also, to consider the other faults he might have committed in the observance of his vows ; he will thus notice the number of his faults, weigh their magnitude, and endeavor to discover the cause and remedy ; after which, being truly contrite, he will prepare to make a good confession. For this, he will place before his eyes the exalted condition to which God has called him, the holiness of the place wherein he dwells, the consecration of his soul and body and of all his being to the service of God, the profusion of graces and the multitude of means that God has given him to live well and to fulfil perfectly his vows ; and in this retrospection he should consider his faults.

“Son of Man”—said God one day to the prophet Ezechiel—“show the temple to the children of Israel, and make them see the symmetry of its structure ; its dimensions, its height, depth, length and width, so that they may be abashed and confused for the sins they have committed therein, and that they correct themselves.” It is most important, remarks St. Jerome, on these words, for him who has offended God, to feel also a sincere regret, and so as not to offend Him more, to consider His temple, and to acquaint himself with the order and proportions of its structure. It is very useful to the Religious, who is relaxed in the practice and observance of his vows—to confirm himself anew therein, and renew his courage—to contemplate the

temple of God, meaning his body and soul, consecrated to the worship and glory of his divine Majesty; to behold the greatness of the benefits and graces he has bestowed on him in religion, to conceive confusion for his numerous faults, and so, to have his heart filled with grief and repentance, then to take a firm resolution to correct himself, and to live henceforward with more care and exactness. To this end, let him often reflect on these words of St. Paul: "*The earth drinketh in the rain that cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is tilled; receiveth blessings from God, and yieldeth more and more. But that which bringeth forth thorns and briers is reprobate, and very near unto a curse, whose end is to be burnt.*" Let him also recall the similitude of the fig-tree in the Gospel. After having been cultivated with care, and pruned three or four times, it still produced no fruit, was abandoned, the ax laid to the root, and it was levelled.

Then, let the Religious fear these punishments, and to avoid them, let him turn to profit the many graces God has bestowed on him, and endeavor to employ the means with which he has been furnished to observe well his vows; let him remember that he was not constrained to make them, but that he obliged himself thereto of his own free will and consent; let him also hearken, and take to himself these words of admonition, that St. Bernard wrote to Fulco: It is necessary, he says to him, that you fulfil these vows to which you have engaged yourself by the words your lips distinctly pro-

nounced. The execution of a vow is required with justice from him who was not constrained to make it; for even so as I did not repulse you when you knocked at the door, neither did I force you to enter. You cannot then, without offence, fail in what you have promised with your own free will; neither is it permitted you to seek after what you have left, nor to reserve the things of which you have willingly deprived yourself by your vows.

The Religious should recall and fear at the same time, the chastisement of Ananias and Sapphira, who, for having retained a part of the goods they had vowed to God, were punished with a sudden death, by the word of St. Peter. "Ananias," said this Apostle—"why hast thou given entrance in thy heart to the temptation of the demon, to lie to the Holy Ghost, and keep back from God a portion of the goods you promised Him? Before you promised it, and after you sold the land, was not this money at your disposal, and could you not do with it what you pleased? But having promised it to God, how could you have conceived the unjust and miserable intention to commit a fraud by retaining a part thereof? It is not to man but to God you have lied." These words struck the poor sinner like a thunderbolt, and he fell down dead at the feet of the Apostle. Three hours afterwards, the same thing happened to his wife. The example of Ananias and Sapphira, says St. Fulgentius on the subject—should make us see how great is the evil of sacrilege, and how carefully we should avoid reclaiming the goods we have vowed to God, or of

even reserving the least portion of them. God speaks by Isaias: "*I am the Lord, who loves justice and hates rapine in a holocaust,*" which is no longer entire, when something of it has been reserved.

Let the Religious enter attentively into all these considerations, that he may afterwards conceive a great sorrow for the faults he has committed against his vows, do penance, being penetrated with grief and animated with a true desire for his amendment, he will go to confession, making then a general review since the last renewal of vows.

For the second part, which relates to the actual renewal of vows, he should be reminded of what St. Ignatius says: That to renew one's vows, is not to contract a new obligation, but to *refresh* his memory in what he has already contracted; and to ratify it, is not to make new bonds, but to draw more tightly those already made. Besides this, continues St. Ignatius, it is for promoting an increase of devotion, for the better remembering of one's obligations, and for the strengthening yet more of one's vocation; it is to testify to God, that far from being repentant and sorrowful for having once consecrated and vowed ourselves to Him and His service, we again do the same thing, (supposing it had not been done; we thank Him for the graces He has given us to accomplish it, and that with love and joy we devote ourselves anew to Him, to be sacrificed as a holocaust to His glory, in a spirit of religion, adoration and gratitude.) The religious life is, by the vows, a perpetual holocaust and a

sacrifice ever enduring ; for life is something that cannot be sacrificed all at once, since it ebbs insensibly away. Then the strength of this sacrifice can often be weakened by divers accidents ; therefore, it is necessary to renew the vows, and to reiterate them frequently.

It is in such dispositions that the renewal of vows should be made, as also, to imitate Our Lord ; for we may believe of Him, with great probability, that, having made vows for us, as we have mentioned, He reiterated them often—and even daily—by reason of the incomprehensible greatness of His love and zeal for our salvation, according to these words of David : “ *I will pay my vows from day to day ;* ” thereby will I give to men so many testimonies of the perfect love I bear them, and of the keen and burning desire I have to die for them. Therefore, take in this, as in all other things, Our Lord for a model.

Since He made vows for love of you, make yours also, for love of Him ; and as He made His vows with an inconceivable affection towards you, with an ardent desire for your salvation and your beatitude, make yours for the same end, and with all the love for Him of which your heart is capable, together with the greatest possible zeal for His glory. As our divine Model observed most perfectly the vows made for you, without ever failing in the least thing, whatever difficulty occurred, observe, in like manner, yours for Him, regardless of the obstacles presented, for your vows are not, by an immeasurable distance, either so difficult or so repugnant as

were His. Finally, renew your vows according to His spirit and intentions; renew them with gratitude for the honor He has conferred on you, to wish you to be all His; thus, you can but conceive regret for the faults you have committed in the observance of your obligations, with an efficacious purpose of amendment, and a fervent prayer to obtain this grace.

A renewal made after this manner will be most agreeable to God, and most useful to the Religious. St. Francis Xavier, giving instructions to one of our Fathers, made *this* one of the principal: I counsel you to renew every morning, at the close of your meditation, your three vows, because men who are consecrated to God have scarcely a more powerful means against the assaults of the demon, and that of all their domestic enemies. He spoke thus from experience, for it is related by his historian, that, by this frequent renewal, he really felt his soul growing young again, like the eagle, when it sheds its plumage to have them renewed.

Moreover, this renewal of one's consecration to God, will be most honorable for the Religious. Our Lord, as related by St. Paul, said: "*It is a more blessed thing*"—that is, as explained by St. Jerome—a more excellent, a more perfect thing, and one in which there is much more honor, greater love, and even greater joy—"to give than to receive." Then, he who gives acts much more nobly than he who receives; for, according to St. Thomas, the *donor* holds the place of the acting cause; and besides, in giving, one approaches nearer to God, whose

property is to give, to communicate Himself, to diffuse Himself in quality of sovereign Good, of light essential.

A man of mean extraction is greatly honored, when a powerful monarch, who can give to all, and who has need of nothing, deigns, nevertheless, to receive something from him; and it is a real pleasure, an untold satisfaction for the person who loves ardently, to be able to give to the beloved.

The Religious soul that gives herself often and entirely to Our Lord, and who consecrates herself, absolutely and forever, to His service by the renewal of vows, has all these precious advantages in the highest degree of excellence. It is for this reason, that, touched by so beautiful an offering—this holocaust of most sweet odor, Our Lord thus speaks in the canticle: “*You have wounded my heart*”—gained my love—“*O my sister, my spouse, you have wounded my heart with a hair of your head*”—a tissue of three cords—meaning with the cords of your three vows, when you have made them and when you give yourself to me without reserve: and you have wounded me anew—you have redoubled your strokes as many times as you have ratified them. Often wound Our Lord after this manner: renewing your vows at least every Sunday at Holy Communion, when you have the supreme happiness to possess Him within you; when He gives Himself so lovingly and so fully to you: ask Him then, with all possible fervor, for the abundant and efficacious graces, of which you have need, to observe them in all the perfection that he requires.

CHAPTER V.

THE VOW OF POVERTY.

In what Consists the Vow of Poverty.

The vow of poverty is a voluntary renunciation of all goods here below, with a promise to God, of never possessing anything as one's own, and never to claim anything: such is the language of theologians. To understand this well, it should be known in what consists the matter of a vow of poverty, and what goods are renounced when made.

First, inasmuch as, properly speaking, man is not master of his own life, since he cannot voluntarily either wound or kill himself, without offending God, considering that God alone has given it to him, and also preserves it; he has, however, the right to enjoy it for as long a time as it pleases God to leave it to him. Thus, by the vow of poverty he does not renounce this right he has over his life; he cannot even renounce it to transfer it to another, as he would thereby do an injustice to the sovereign power of God; and he would dispose of, contrary to the will of Our Lord, a thing that he holds but in fief. Though a man can sell himself as a servant or slave, he cannot, however, sell his life, nor dispossess himself of it.

Secondly, by the vow of poverty, man does not

deprive himself of spiritual goods, such as virtue and grace ; because he should not either desire or seek for the dearth of these goods, but on the contrary, their abundance ; and one should impoverish himself in the other goods, only to be enriched in these. By this vow, one does not deprive himself either of the use of the goods that consist in producing acts of virtue. The Superior cannot prohibit this exercise to his inferior ; he cannot prevent him from making, for example, an act of the love of God, of faith, or of hope ; the Religious can freely, and independently of any one soever, practice all such interior acts, and give a share of his merits to whomsoever he pleases ; of this should also be understood, of the use of his memory, of his understanding, his will, and the other faculties of his soul, which, however, the Superior can in some manner moderate, or even suspend for a time their employ, not by the right that the vow of poverty gives him over his Religious, but by that of obedience which authorizes him to thus regulate the movement of the actions of his subject, who is thereby enabled to produce these same actions with more profit and perfection.

Thirdly, honor and reputation are not included, according to the doctrine of St. Thomas, in the matter for the vow of poverty. There are, says Aristotle, two sorts of reputation and honor : the one which is due to virtue, and follows it as its true and legitimate recompense in this life ; the other, with which worldly and vulgar souls nourish themselves, and which is founded on riches and

exterior dignities. The first kind cannot be contained in the vow of poverty, for then it would have to renounce virtue, to which it serves as a most efficacious disposition; but if the vow of poverty does not renounce this honor, neither does it seek it, as it would sully the purity of intention, and from a virtue it would become a vice. It rejects the second, and all esteem in keeping with it, as it ruins the foundation and subject of virtue.

Fourthly, the proper matter for the vow of poverty is riches, and all that this word implies; that is to say, all that can be purchased with money—or that has the value of money—and which St. Augustine explains in these terms: All that which men acquire as property and possess in quality of lords of the earth, as a servant, a vase, a field, a tree, an animal, and other things of this nature, and called in Latin, ‘*pecunia*,’ and which we name *riches*, in our language. Give heed to these words: *All that they possess as their own, on the earth*: the vow of poverty renounces these things and the right to them; it places the Religious in a state of possessing personally none of these things, either in their substance, or even in their use. If you ask me what is this right, I will answer that the Latins call it *dominium*, and it is an absolute power to dispose of, as one wishes, a thing to his own advantage, if the laws place no impediment thereto. This is called an *absolute* power, to distinguish it from the use and the usufruct; for it gives an entire and independent authority over a thing taken in its substance, to be used or disposed

of, as one desires, without wronging any one; so that it may be destroyed, broken, torn, given away, sold, or otherwise gotten rid of, without cause of complaint to any one. The use and the usufruct do not go so far; they cannot retain the substance of a thing to dispose of it; the *use* only gives the right to use the thing simply for your benefit; the *usufruct* gives a similar right for yourself, with the advantage to be able to share it with others, if desired: for instance, if you have the use of an orchard, you can pull the fruit for yourself and your family; if you have the usufruct, more is permitted you; for besides your own use, you can give it, sell it, even rent out the whole orchard, or gratify some one with the right you have to it. There is added in the definition—to *your advantage*—to exclude the rights that bishops and other ecclesiastical superiors have over their inferiors, kings over their subjects, and fathers over their children, which rights do not refer to the interest of the fathers, the kings and of the bishops, but to the interest of those over whom they have authority.

Finally, there is added: “*if the laws place no obstacle thereto,*” and this, of wards or minors—and similar persons, who are truly masters and lords of their goods, yet, by the regulations of the laws, and the directions of princes, cannot dispose of them till having attained a certain age; thus, as St. Paul himself mentions it in his epistle to the Galatians. Agreeable to this, we say with all the Doctors, that the vow of poverty strips a Religious

of all his goods, whether acquired or to be acquired ; it deprives him of them in the manner above mentioned ; and so fully deprives him, that he does not and cannot possess as his own, one single thing—be it ever so small—and he cannot say that it belongs to him in any way whatever.

This vow extends so far, that like a *two edged sword*, to use the expression of St. Paul, it penetrates to the soul and to the marrow of the spirit ; for it despoils him who takes this vow, not only of the possession, but also of the affection for all goods of this world, rendering him poor exteriorly and interiorly of the riches of earth, to make him richer with those of heaven, and to admit him to the first beatitude and to the treasures it promises.

SECTION I.

To what the Vow of Poverty Obliges.

The foregoing explanation of the vow of poverty shows to what it obliges, and permits us to draw the following consequences : since the Religious renounces by this vow all the goods of earth, and deprives himself of the power of possessing even the smallest thing as his own, it should be concluded that he can perform no action as possessor or as proprietor towards anything whatever. Such a conclusion necessarily follows from its principle, and as universally taught by the Doctors. Let us endeavor to understand it perfectly ; for it clears up and does away with all difficulties that can arise on this sub-

ject. Thus, the Religious can no longer, according to his vow, take, nor retain, nor sell, nor lend, nor change anything, without the permission of his Superior, who unbinds the hands that his vow had bound, and gives to him the power that it had taken from him. But in order to better develop this—to cause it to be seen in a clearer light, and more in order, we will reduce the sins that the Religious can commit against this vow into three classes: first of which is to acquire a thing, the second to retain it, and the third to dispose of it. As to the first, it is a general rule that the Religious, who without the permission of his Superior, takes, receives, acquires by gift or by labor, or in any other manner whatsoever, acts against his vow of poverty, commits a mortal sin and a sacrilege, that merits eternal punishment, although, at the same time, the smallness of the thing possessed diminishes the malice and reduces it to only a venial sin. That which in quality of theft considered in itself, and without regard to any person, constitutes a mortal sin, the Doctors agree in saying, has its parallel in guilt, against the vow of poverty, when one disposes of something without the permission of the Superior.

But to thoroughly understand this rule—to render it both instructive and calming, and not to embarrass or disquiet the mind, it should be known what permission of the Superior is necessary so that a Religious can take a thing in safety of conscience, and in perfect keeping with his vow. There are three kinds of permission; the first is called *express*, and it is when the Superior gives clearly and in for-

mal terms, by word of mouth or in writing, the permission that his inferior asks. The second is termed *interpretive*, and it is contained not openly, but in a somewhat hidden manner, within the express permission ; it is drawn from a reasonable interpretation that it might be given to him. Behold some examples of this permission, given by the Doctors: When a Superior permits his inferior to make a pilgrimage of devotion, without furnishing him with the necessary means to make it, it is accounted right, for many reasons, to permit him to ask and to receive this means in virtue of the primary permission accorded him. So also, a Superior giving charges to his Religious, it is supposed that he desires and means that his Religious shall acquit themselves worthily of them, for the general good of the house, and for their own in particular ; it is thought that, if it happens he is absent, or cannot be spoken with to ask for a permission to take or to give something reasonable for his office, and if the delay for this permission should cause an injury, it is accounted, under such circumstances, to be given, and it can be made use of without fear. Again : If a Superior permits one of his inferiors to receive pictures, medals, and other trifles of devotion, knowing he has no need of them all, at least for his own use, and not designing him to store them up, it is evident that by this permission he therein gives him tacitly another ; that is to say, he may share them with whom he judges proper, either with those in the house, or with strangers, without his having need to ask for a new permission.

The third species of permission, is that called *presumed*, or *understood*. It is to be used when a Religious has cause to feel persuaded and believes, on well founded conjectures, and on probable reasons, that, although he asks not of his Superior the desired permission, he yet finds himself so placed, and in such a conjuncture, that he knows it would not be refused if he did ask for it.

These three permissions supposed, let us come to the decision, and say, in the first place, that the surest and most perfect way is for the Religious to have always the express permission of his Superior, when he can have it, to do all that he cannot execute independent of him. That if he has not the means to have it, or if it would be very difficult for him to obtain it, because the Superior is prevented from attending to him, or cannot be readily approached, and besides, the thing will suffer by delay, we say, in this second case, that the interpretive permission, or even the *presumed* permission suffices. At the same time, in order to do the thing with subordination and the requisite dependence, a certain reserve should be used—that is—we should have the intention of telling it afterwards to the Superior, of wishing him to see that he could not be approached at the time to ask for the permission, so that he may either ratify or amend what has been effected.

Thirdly, to satisfy fully the essence of the vow, but not its perfection, it should be remarked, that the presumed permission of the superior suffices, even when he could be asked for an express per-

mission, but is not, through want of courage, owing to some human respect, or from some shame or other difficulty. Such is the common opinion of theologians. However, the question is sufficiently delicate, and if care is not observed, it can be readily abused, as has been remarked by Father Francis Suarez, S.J. The principal reason of the Doctors on this question being that it is customary for the Superior in similar cases to grant permission, and to refuse it to no one, consequently, it is concluded that, if it be actually asked, the assent would be readily given.

But it is objected, that often Superiors take it ill, that these suppositions are so acted upon without their knowledge, when access could readily be had to them for obtaining the permission; this is what causes Gerson to say, that when it is thought that did the Superior know the thing as it is, he would not probably approve of it, but condemn it at once; then the Religious sins against his vow by using this pretended permission.

Navarre avows and advances that, when the objection of the Superior lies in granting the thing considered in itself, then the permission is null and falsely presumed, and that sin is committed in using it; but he avers that, if this objection is only for the manner employed in using this permission, that he blames and takes it ill, because one acts without consulting him; then, if sin is committed, it cannot be great, since the Religious does not act—neither giving nor taking—in his own name, and consequently, with a spirit of proprietor-

ship, but in the name of the Superior, even inasmuch as he acts in a spirit of dependence, doing it only in virtue of the persuasion that the Superior would have granted it, had it been asked.

But some will say, a Religious who, with reason, and as he should, asks of his Superior a permission regarding poverty, if his Superior, without cause and from passion, refuse it, can he in conscience, and without injury to his vow, *take* the permission and do what he desired? I reply that he *cannot*, because he would then be doing the thing of himself, and without dependence on his Superior; he would be acting even against his express will. By supposing that a thing is contrary to the will of the Superior, and disagreeable to him, the vow of poverty holds the inferior bound, and prevents him from doing anything against this vow. The inferior is ever within the bonds of his jurisdiction, and there is nothing but the permission of his Superior that can draw him thence.

Furthermore, if such liberties were permitted, it would be to weaken and even to destroy the vow of poverty, as also the good of religion; for the inferior who asks for a permission of his Superior, and who greatly desires it, will readily persuade himself that the Superior does him wrong and treats him unjustly by refusing him; besides, it should be considered, that the unjust and unreasonable refusal of a Superior, of a permission justly and reasonably requested, is *not* prejudicial to the salvation or perfection of the inferior, but on the contrary is most useful to him, because it affords

him an opportunity of observing his vow with more exactness and perfection. Finally, to be brief, and to reply in a few words to the many questions advanced hereupon, let us say, that the *express*, the *interpretive* and the *presumed* permission of the Superior obviates the sin of the inferior—prevents him from acting against the vow of poverty.

As to the second class, which regards possession, it is an universally received opinion, that a Religious *cannot* possess anything without sin—as we have already said—unless he has the permission of his Superior: otherwise, he would possess it and use it as if it belonged to him, which is not the case; and, as a necessary consequence, he violates his vow, commits a sacrilege, and even a theft, because he retains the goods of another against the will of his true and legitimate master, *Religion*.

Then, the consent of the Superior suffices for the inferior not to offend against the essence of the vow of poverty; but it does not prevent faults contrary to another virtue. For example; if with the permission of his Superior he keeps superfluities in his dormitory or cell, he commits, without doubt, a sin, and one which may be even mortal, if these things that he retains are in quantity or value. This sin is one of scandal, as it causes others, by such example, to do likewise. He sins if he importunately solicits his Superior to grant this permission, which ought to be refused him—since it is so fatal, both to religion, on account of the relaxation of poverty, to the inferior for a similar reason, and to the house, where the goods

are in common and cannot be applied to the service of one, without wronging all the others. However, in this a reasonable exception should be made in favor of the infirm and the old Religious.

This permission is fatal to the Superior himself, since he acts with infidelity in his charge, against the good of religion in general, and against his own in particular.

He offends against distributive justice, for he dispenses things with a vicious inequality, and contrary to legal justice, since he is not careful to have the laws and regulations observed. He fails in commutative justice, by abusing his power, and extending it beyond prescribed limits. This is also a sin of avarice, for it manifests that this Religious has a heart too much attached to the goods of earth, as well as to act with vanity, which is opposed to the modesty of the religious state, proving thereby that he takes pleasure in rarities, curiosities and valuables, like a secular.

The Religious offends God against this second class, when he conceals a thing that he has permission to use and to retain—hiding it in such a manner that the Superior, after a reasonable and sufficiently careful search, cannot find it. In a word, whatever permission a Religious may have to possess a thing, he can never hold it as his own, but solely for his use, "*as animals that have but the use of their harness and their stables.*" this being the comparison employed by the Doctors.

Thus, as the thing belongs always in quality of goods inalienably to the monastery, and it being

irrevocably in the power of the Superior, to be disposed of as he wishes, it may be taken from one to be given to another: when he disposes of it in this manner, he does no wrong to this Religious: for he does not take from him his goods, but simply a thing lent—something that was given him for the time being, so to speak. Therefore, so as not to wound his conscience, the Religious should always be disposed to yield up to his Superior all that he has, when required to do so, and if he complains or murmurs when he sees himself thus despoiled, or if by his complaints he takes from the Superior the liberty of depriving him of it, let him know that he acts contrary to his vow, and this grievously or lightly, according to the value of the thing secreted, and the length of time of its concealment.

By a necessary consequence of these principles, the Superior cannot give to his inferior an irrevocable permission, and assure him that he will *never* re-demand a thing that he will have given him permission to keep; for such a permission would shatter and ruin the vow of poverty. Finally, a thing possessed in this manner, with the right to retain it always, and without ever being obliged to yield it up, is to possess it as one's own.

The third class refers to the use, which regards both the Superior and inferior. It regards the Superior, who, having simply the administration of the goods of the house, and not their proprietorship, of which he is incapable, since he is a Religious, bound like the others by the vow of poverty, he

cannot, consequently, distribute them but in keeping with his power and the intention with which religion has confided them to him, and which is only for the common good of the house, and the particular good of the Religious. Therefore, if he fails therein, by distributing these goods injudiciously, he offends against his vow—he commits a sin, the enormity of which is in proportion to the greatness of the thing badly dispensed, for by this gift he surpasses the power limited by religion, in permitting him to give to such persons and not to some others, in such a manner, and not contrariwise: hence, when a Superior does not keep this order, it is evident that he gives in his own name, and not as *deputy*, as commissioned by religion. Then all distribution of the goods of others, when done without just reason, is not only unjust, but even *null*, for it exceeds the power of the distributer, and is in keeping with the maxim: *the greatest offence is that of power*—therefore, this distribution being null, he who receives these goods is obliged to restore them.

With Superiors should also be included the Procurators and other subordinate Superiors, in charge of the goods of the house, and which goods they cannot dispense, excepting, according to the extent of their power and the will of their Superior; so that they cannot of their own accord by inclination, or to gratify any one, give more nor less than they judge in conscience and before God, to be His will: for inasmuch as they lay aside the will of their Superior in the dispensation of the things

of which they have charge, so much do they remove themselves from their vow—act for themselves, and consequently commit the sin of proprietorship.

The immediate Superiors, who, in their difficulties, cannot have recourse to the mediate and chief Superiors, as the Provincial and General, and to know of them their *express* will, as to the matter in hand, may resolve on their will being wisely presumed, and act accordingly as they consider best, and more conformable with reason and virtue, for they should presume such to be the will of their Superior and religion itself.

Let us now return to the inferior. We may say that he cannot make use of anything in religion, except according to the will of his Superior; for the things are not his own: and to dispose of them otherwise, would be to dispose of them as master and possessor of property. However, there is less evil in taking than in giving: to give to those in the house, than to strangers: for it is reasonable to believe that the Superior, who holds the goods of the house, would more readily consent to the first than to the second.

But it is asked, if an inferior can freely dispose of the things that religion furnishes him with for his use, by giving them to whomsoever he wishes? as for example: to send a part of his dinner to some one: to bestow in alms the money given him for his travelling expenses, for seemingly he has a right over such things, and would wrong no one by consuming this allowance entirely. It is replied, he *cannot*, if he judges it not probable that

his Superior intended it so, because, when a thing is given to a Religious, it is not given to him absolutely to do with it as he would wish, inasmuch as he is not capable of such a right, which bears a mark of proprietorship and of dominion. The use only is allowed to him for himself, for such and such of his wants. thus, he cannot of himself use it for another, and if he does so, he acts as master of the thing, and he does wrong. When there is given to a Religious some bread and meat, it is for his nourishment, to be partaken of to this end, in the quantity needed, and even all of it, if desired. Wherefore, though he has not need of the entire portion, or though, in his need, he deprives himself of a part, he is not at liberty to dispose of the remainder, since it does not belong to him. In like manner, he cannot of his own authority, give or lend a book, the use of which is permitted him, and only permitted for himself.

The force of this reason is so conclusive, that he has not even the right to employ the things in his use for any other purpose than that for which they were given to him ; thus, he cannot devote to purchasing books, that money which was furnished him for his support ; he cannot buy books of philosophy or histories, with the money sent him for theological works, and if he does it, he acts contrary to his vow—at least, if he does not reasonably presume that if his Superior knew it, he would be pleased with the act. As a conclusion to this subject, we will cite the teaching given us by Navarre, regarding the possession and use of things among Religious.

The goods of the monastery, says this learned Doctor, are common to the Religious of the house, but not in such a manner that each could appropriate to himself a portion, as belonging to him, or something positive ; for example : this book, this habit, or even such a use, as a fund that is common to several co-heirs, instituted in equality of portions, or to purchasers in partnership, who have each furnished a like sum to buy it, but these goods are common to them all in general, as composing one body, and to each one as members of this body. They have all a right of usage, for their general wants, on the entire mass of these goods, in virtue of their quality of brothers and children of a family ; again, this right of usage extends only to necessary things, and not to superfluities, and *always*, and in every particular, with dependence on their Superiors. They are in this quite different from the secular Canons, of whom each possesses as his own a portion of the common goods, and the chapter another. So teaches Navarre.

SECTION II.

Of Religious Proprietors.

The sin of propriety consists in taking a thing, whatever it may be, of the goods of this world, to give or to dispose of it according to one's desire—and above all to retain it as one's own—without the permission of the Superior ; so that the *Religious proprietor* is he who, of his own authority, and in-

dependent of the will of his Superior, takes something, or gives it, or uses it in quite a different manner, and in a word, *he who retains it*.

This sin is the mortal enemy, the poison, the scourge of the vow of poverty. All true Religious should hold it in abomination. The ancient Religious had such an abhorrence for it, that not only did they not possess anything as their own, but they could not even endure to say that it was theirs. Whence it comes, that they often used to say: "*what is mine is thine*." These two great causes, as St. Chrysostom affirms, of all the quarrels and of all the evils of men, are not heard of among Religious, and are banished from monasteries. This fear of proprietorship was so general, that in monasteries where there was less rigor, and some indulgence permitted, we see, say Cassian, this rule most strictly observed, even at the present time. Not a monk dares to say that such a thing is his, nor to pronounce the word *mine*; and he is held criminal, if he chances to say: my book, my tablet, my habit, etc. * * * ; that if from inadvertence, by stealth, or from ignorance, this word escapes him, he has to do penance. Also, as a mark of the hatred it merits, this sin is punished with very great chastisements. Without speaking of those with which the wrath of God strikes it in this world and in the next, I notice three in the canons. The first is that the Religious proprietor, who dies without repenting of his crime, shall not be buried in consecrated ground, but in the *mire*; and that all his money, or at least a part of it, if the sum be great, is

to be interred with him. That if it should happen, he has already been buried in a sacred place, he shall be disinterred—if this can be done without great scandal—and thrown into the sewer. The second chastisement is that he be shamefully driven from the monastery ; but this latter punishment is not put into execution, for fear that, from proprietor he will become a vagabond and wanderer who will abandon himself to many other sins.

The third has been newly prescribed by the holy council of Trent, and consists in depriving, for two years, the Religious proprietor of his vote, both active and passive. Moreover, he should be punished according to the particular constitutions of his own Order. Now, it must be remarked, that these punishments are not for the Religious who act contrary to their vow of poverty, by giving or wasting something, but only when they retain things as their own. Let us now exemplify : first, by that famous example, which is related by St. Gregory the Great : One of his Religious, named Justin, having by sacrilegious means amassed three crowns, kept them carefully concealed. At the hour of death, wishing to give them to one of his brothers, he could not execute this design so secretly but that St. Gregory came to the knowledge of it. The Saint, desiring to apply a remedy, which would at once serve for the salvation of the delinquent, and for that of all the household, directed Pretiosus, at that time Superior of the Monastery, to forbid his Religious visiting and consoling the sick man in his extremity, and when, astonished at this isolation,

he enquired the cause, and besought that he might be visited—his own brother declared to him, that the three crowns he had secreted had rendered him odious and execrable to the whole community. He was thus treated, in order that shame and grief for his sin would dispose him to obtain the pardon of God. The Saint directed besides that after death his body should not be interred in the cemetery of the monastery, but that a trench be made in the dung-hill—where he should be thrown, together with his money, and that all should cry out: “*May your money perish with you!*” and that they then should cover the body with ordure: all of which was faithfully executed, though the poor Religious died bitterly regretting his fault. The other Religious were so touched and so affrighted, that each brought to their Superior the smallest and most trifling things they had—which their rule had always permitted them to possess, but they wished now to be rid of, fearing extremely to keep anything that they could dispense with.

Prior to St. Gregory, the author of the book addressed to the “Brother Hermits,” which is found in the tenth volume of St. Augustine’s works, cites a much more fearful account of one Januarius, who passed in the monastery for a model of virtue, especially in regard to poverty and obedience: nevertheless, he kept, for the space of eleven years and more, one hundred and eleven shekels, secreted in his cell, and which he bequeathed at his death, to his son, whom he had left in the world; thus he expired, without confessing his crime: but, the

money being discovered, it was buried with him. During the funeral ceremony, while lowering the corpse into the grave, the Religious sang out, with tear-dimmed eyes—"May your money perish with you; it is not permitted us to use it, either for our personal wants, or for any necessity of the monastery." *So let perish this accursed money!*

Ruffin in a writing, anterior to the occurrence of either the aforesaid examples, relates as follows: A monk of Nitria, not reflecting on the fact that Our Lord had been betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, had amassed, much more from economy than from avarice, one hundred shillings, and which were found in his cell after his death. This circumstance caused the anchorets of this locality to assemble, in order to advise among themselves as to what should be done with this money. Some were for distributing it among the poor: others wished to give it to the Church, and a few were for sending it to the parents of the deceased. But Macairius, Pambo, and the other more ancient Fathers of the desert, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and who spoke by their mouths, directed the money should be buried with the deceased—the Religious saying at the time: "Let thy money perish with thee!" This advice and its fulfilment caused such consternation among the solitaries of Egypt—impressing them with such fear, that they ever regarded it as a great crime for a Religious to leave but one shilling after death.

SECTION III.

Of the Degrees of Poverty—First and Second Degrees.

The first degree of poverty is the renunciation of all one's goods for the love of God, and by vow ; so that a person deprives himself, as we have already said, of all the goods he actually possesses, and of all those he might possess, and to which he may be entitled by birth, favor, intellect, capacity and industry. Thus, a man renders himself absolutely incapable of possessing anything whatsoever ; placing himself in a state of entire inability to have or claim anything as his own.

Such an act is infinitely noble, and the sacrifice truly heroic. In truth, riches are considered necessary to enjoy the good things of this life, to taste its sweetness, to be exempt from its ills and its trials ; they furnish us with all our wants, which caused them to be called, among the Greeks and Latins by names that signified their and the conveniences they afford. Thence, it is a great act to deprive oneself, by his own free will, of so useful an accessory. Wherefore, the Wise Man cries out : “Where is the man that has not set his heart on riches, and that has not sought his stay in gold and silver ? If we could find him, we would esteem him highly—we would consider him as a hero, and we would sing his praises ; for he has done admirable things in his life.” It is verily a species of martyrdom—as

admitted by the Saints—this voluntary poverty: for what is there more admirable—what martyrdom more severe, than to be hungry where food abounds, to suffer cold surrounded by comfortable clothing—to experience all the inconveniences of poverty in sight of the riches that the world displays to you, that the demon presents you with, and that your concupiscence desires? Is it not a wonderful thing to touch fire without being burnt, to gather thorns without getting pricked, and to carry stones without falling? It is this that caused a philosopher to say: “*What fire is to gold to test it, gold is to man to sound the purity of his heart.*” Theophylacteus writing on this same subject, has likened gold to the river Rhine; for the ancient Germans, according to a custom of their country, tried their offspring and judged of the hopes to be entertained of their future greatness, if when put into this stream, they resisted and struggled against its waters, or, if they evinced fear. In like manner, the nobility or baseness of the heart of a man, is proved by the esteem or the contempt he has for gold. “He to whom gold serves as a touch-stone, for the trial of his virtue,” adds the Wise Man, “and who finds himself invulnerable to its attractions and its utility, *merits eternal glory.*” The second degree of poverty is to renounce affection for all earthly goods, and to be poor in spirit. This degree is higher and more important than the first, to which it is as the soul and life. It consists in the Religious not alone being stripped of his goods, as to the exterior, but also, interiorly, by banishing them

from his heart—not cleaving to them with affection. The proofs of this poverty of spirit are, if one possesses something without disquiet and attachment; if it is lent readily and willingly; if no pain is felt when deprived of it, and this last mark is the surest of tests; for one may say or think: It seems to me that I do not love such a thing, or think of it—I look upon it with indifference. Do not trust your own sentiments: it is the *deprivation* that should be the judge. You are never as conscious of your teeth being so firmly rooted in your gums, as when having them extracted—as this causes you great pain: also the surest indications of a heart fettered by attachments, is when you think of, desire, seek after something with eagerness; when it is possessed with considerable pleasure, with fear and apprehension of losing it, and murmurings caused when it is effectively lost. St. Ignatius teaches, that poverty of spirit renders a Religious like a statue, which has no affection for the drapery or ornaments placed upon it, however beautiful or costly they may be—leaving them to be removed or not, at pleasure.

Seneca treats this subject quite philosophically, but, in his case, much more imaginary than real and effective—saying: I condemn equally, riches present or absent; when I see them elsewhere than in my possession, it does not sadden me—nor, did I behold them filling my house and sparkling on every side of me, I would not be more joyous nor more proud. I am insensible to fortune, whether it comes or goes. I regard the possessions of others

as my own, and mine as if they belonged to others. Subsequently, he addresses the following words to a miser, apparently, to demonstrate the vast difference existing between the covetous man and the philosopher, in the use of riches. "Do you wish to know the esteem with which we respectively hold riches? Listen! When riches leave me, they go alone—carry nothing away with them but themselves; when you lose them, on the contrary, you are astonished and quite confounded; you seem to be destitute of yourself. I value riches but for their worth and their utility; you make them the height of your beatitude: in truth—I am the master of riches, while you are their slave."

We will here give an example of an attached spirit and one wholly disinterested. A monk of olden times, on finding he was defrauded of a small piece of property—the sole remnant of his former wealth—went to seek a holy anchoret, to make to him his complaint, and so induce him to use his influence to have this property restored to him. But this saintly hermit, being as much detached from the things of this earth, as the other one was attached to them, would not heed the lamentations nor entreaties of his visitor—till weary of his importunities, finally wrote him the following: "The monk becomes a monk, so as to have *nothing*—how can he receive damage? If he holds property, he can meet with wrong and injury—and in this, he does not what should be done by a monk."

This poverty of spirit is absolutely necessary to

whoever wishes to be truly poor—*truly Religious*; for the vow that the Religious makes, is not a vow of poverty in *general*, but in *particular*: of evangelic poverty, which Our Lord constituted the first beatitude. This vow does not so much deprive us of the exterior goods of the earth, as it takes from the interior the affection for all these goods: it is for this reason called poverty of spirit.

Then, since the vow of poverty, to which the Religious obliges himself, contains essentially poverty of spirit, the Religious does not fulfil his vow, and is not truly *religious*, if to the exterior deprivation he makes of all the goods of the world he does not add also the *interior renunciation*.

Secondly—we speak thus of poverty, not as an indigence, but as a virtue, and a most illustrious virtue—such as the vow is: a virtue, in consequence of wishing to be exercised by a motive of virtue and of vow, which is always interior and is produced by some faculty of the soul. Without this motive, poverty is neither a vow nor a virtue, but rather a vice and a miserable indigence. Wherefore, a man is not poor before God, and in a condition to be recompensed by Him, if, notwithstanding the exterior abandonment he makes of his goods, he still reserves for them an affection and desire. On the contrary, he will pass for poor, in God's presence, if, possessing great riches, he but keeps it in his coffers, and *not in his heart*.

The truly poor before God, says St. Augustine, are those who are poor by the disposition of their mind, and not by their goods. To judge if a man

be poor or not, God does not consider if he has riches, but if he is covetous. Those who ask daily alms are poorer as to the exterior—they suffer greater want in their food, their clothing, and in their dwellings, than the Religious, and yet, their poverty is not as much esteemed by God or men, if it is not supported with patience, and accompanied with that of the spirit. We should in this, says St. Gregory, consider much more the affection than the revenue.

John Diacre, the author of the life of St. Gregory—relates of a hermit of great virtue, that, having abandoned all his wealth for the love of God—reserving nothing but a *cat*—prayed to God to be pleased to show him what recompense, and what place he would receive one day in heaven, for having thus forsaken all for Him. God favorably heard his prayer, and revealed to him one night, during sleep, that he would be seated in the same rank as Pope Gregory. The hermit, awaking much astonished, and at the same time grieved, to learn that the voluntary poverty he had embraced was of so little use to him—not meriting for him a higher degree of glory in heaven than a Pope enjoyed, who had so much wealth. As he was truly afflicted, and could not reconcile such equality of recompense in so great inequality of life, God said to him: “Since it is not the possession of riches, but the eagerness of gain, which renders a man rich—nor the abandoning of the exterior goods that causes him to be considered truly poor; how have you the boldness to compare your

poverty to the riches of St. Gregory? You, who evince more love for your cat, in fondling and caressing it—fearing to lose it or permit it to be out of your sight—than Gregory ever manifested for his wealth; for, so far from being attached to it, he despised it, giving it bountifully to whoever needed.”

Thirdly, the Religious has embraced poverty as an efficacious means to work out his salvation unimpeded—to rise to God with greater liberty—to obtain that purity of heart which disposes to the divine union and to one’s perfection. Hence it is evident, that this cannot be obtained without poverty of spirit, and without detachment from things of this world, for there are none of which, but from their proximity and their connection, if at all close—that do not in some manner sully the heart. It is impossible, says the blessed Lawrence Justinian, for him who has the affections engaged in temporal things, to rise to God with purity of heart.

The serious consideration of all these motives has elevated the Saints and the truly Religious to a very eminent degree of poverty, as it is called by St. Paul—inspiring them with a supreme contempt for riches. Voluntary poverty, says St. John Climachus, is a casting off of all the cares of earth, and the symbol of a traveller, who, to proceed more speedily, carries nothing that could encumber him. Present transitory things no more affect the truly poor Religious, than if they did not exist; and from the day on which he pronounced his vows, he has looked upon all things of the world as vanity, and in no wise deserving his attention.

A person of wealth and position wishing to distribute his means where he was unknown, came to Scete, bringing with him a quantity of gold, which he begged the resident priest of this desert to take for the benefit of the hermits. The priest replied, that the hermits had no use or desire for money. This kind-hearted person, ardently desiring to leave his means among these holy solitaries, again entreated the priest to accept his offering, but with no better success—so he threw the proffered gold into a basket at the church door. Then the priest made known to the hermits, that this gold had been left for their use, and should any of them wish it they were at liberty to take as much as they needed ; but not one of them would touch it, nor even deign to look at it in passing. Therefore, the priest wisely remarked to this benevolent man : Sir, God is satisfied with your pious intention—so return home in peace with your gold, and give it to the poor in your midst.

St. Speridion, Archbishop of Cyprus—the same who in the Council of Nice answered in a few, simple, but conclusive words, the objections of an insolent sophist—having been called to Antioch by the Emperor Constance, to cure an inveterate ulcer, that endangered his life, healed it by the mere touch of his hand. The Emperor, in gratitude, wished to bestow on him a large sum of money, but the Saint replied most graciously : Ah ! Sire, is it thus that your majesty acknowledges the friendship borne you, by this testimony of hatred ? What I have done for you is a token of true, dis-

interested friendship : I have left my house, crossed the sea, have endured the rigors of winter, and exposed myself to many dangers in seeking you at such a distance, and now, in recompense, you offer me gold, that source of evil ; for it corrupts all that is good. The Emperor, smiling at this repartee, urged him, nevertheless, to accept his offering ; and the Saint, after many earnest entreaties, finally took it, but distributed it immediately to such of the courtiers as needed it—to show them the esteem in which riches should be held. The Emperor, on hearing this action said : that he was no longer surprised at the great miracles wrought by the Saint ; for a man so disengaged in affection from all things on earth, must be very near and dear to God.

When Melania the elder went to visit the Fathers of the Desert, having heard mention made of the eminent virtues of Abbot Pambo, she carried to him six hundred marks of silver, entreating him thus to allow her to share with him some portion of the wealth that God had given her. The holy man, who was making rope, with palm-branches, replied to her, without discontinuing his work, and in an audible tone : I pray God to reward your charity. Then turning towards the brother Origen, who served him and took care of his little domestic affairs, bid him take this money and to distribute it to all the monks in Sybia and in the islands, for these Religious were the most destitute ; but be careful, he enjoined, not to give any to those in Egypt, for this province is richer—having a greater

abundance of goods than the other. I was standing near him, added this lady, waiting to receive his blessing, or at least some testimony of the esteem in which I thought he should hold so great a present: but, as he spoke not a word to me, I said: Father, you do not perhaps know, that there is here, *six hundred marks of silver*. Thereupon, without giving me a single look, and without casting his eyes upon the case that contained this silver, he replied: My daughter, the one to whom you made this present has no need of knowing how much it weighs: He Himself poises the mountains and the forests that cover them, and you cannot doubt but that He knows the full value of your gift. If it was to me you had given it, you would have done well to apprise me of its weight, but He who disdains not to receive two obulus from the hand of the poor widow, and who even prized them more than the great presents of the rich, He will not overlook your generous offering to him: so go, and speak no more about it.

St. Francis, who so excelled in voluntary and evangelical poverty, was equally as remarkable for his contempt of gold and silver. He says in the eighth chapter of his first rule: We should place no more support in silver than in rocks; nor value it more than pebbles. Those who prize it and covet it, are miserably deceived and blinded by the demon. "If by chance we find money somewhere, pay no more attention to it than the dust you trample upon." He even repeated this latter clause, in his second conference. St. Bonaventure says of

this Saint: “Never was there a man so desirous to possess gold as St. Francis was *not* to have it, and to be poor: nor could there be found any one who would be as careful in guarding a treasure, as he was to preserve the precious gem of evangelical poverty.”

Then should we not, according to these instructions and incentives of the Saints, use every effort to be truly poor in spirit, for otherwise, as we have said, we do not acquit ourselves of the vow we have made—our poverty will not be a virtue, but a shameful and miserable indigence, that will be useless to us.

Wherefore, poverty should not and cannot be preferred to riches, but, inasmuch as it deprives us of the goods of earth, it brings us the goods of heaven: that, by taking from us the trifling and inconstant riches of nature, it gives us the inestimable and permanent treasures of grace and glory: it conducts us to purity of soul, to liberty of spirit, to peace of heart, and to union with God. Our Lord does not counsel poverty but in this sense; and He does not condemn riches, except as impediments to salvation and perfection, and as an attraction to vice.

SECTION IV.

Continuation of the Second Degree of Poverty.

There should be noticed three dangers and three *rocks*, whereon poverty of spirit may be shipwrecked.

The first is, that the Religious, to fully observe his vow, and to guarantee himself against the falls with which he is threatened, should observe great care that his poverty of spirit extends to all things; that there be nothing to which his heart be viciously bound, because the affections are a bad leaven, the source of many evils. This is why the ancient Religious—according to Cassian—were so extremely careful, that whoever entered religion reserved none of his goods—not even a penny—in *deed* or in *affection*: as they knew that otherwise he would not persevere long in the observance of the rule, and that he would always be even incapable of acquiring the virtues of humility and obedience: for a little money or anything else that he would keep concealed through love of it, in his heart, he would never be able to endure the poverty and austerity of the house. At the first temptation with which he would be attacked, drawn, as by a cord, by the charms of the money reserved, and thrown as in a sling, he will soon go out of the monastery to engage himself anew in the world.

The second observation is, that if the Religious has no more affection for what he has left, he watches carefully, so that—as nature is feeble, inconstant, and ever tending downward—(as the weight of a clock) this affection does not return, and that the fire of the love of wealth in some measure extinguished, is not relighted by a breath of necessity, or by some other occasion. The spirit of covetousness has something of its own, says Cassian, that excites the Religious and urges him on with

violence to desire anew, and to resume what he had abandoned on his entrance into religion. He afterwards gives the example of Judas, who wishing to possess again, in some manner, the goods he had left to follow Our Lord, became a thief, betrayed his Master, and committed suicide. Then take care, says he elsewhere, never to resume what you have once abandoned forever ; and contrary to the prohibition of Our Lord, to return from the field—from your evangelical functions, to replace on your shoulders the coat of which you despoiled yourself :—beware of descending from the height of perfection to take up some one of the things you have solemnly renounced.

St. Jerome, exhorting to perseverance a certain Licinius, employs the same comparisons, and says to him : “ I pray you, and warn you with the affection of a father, that, after leaving Sodom, that is all on fire, and walking with rapid strides towards the mountain, you look not back as did the wife of Lot—descend not from the roof of virtue—and return not from the field to your house, to take your coat that you had put off :—thus, to be in keeping with the sacred text, which says : *‘ And he that is on the housetop, let him not come down to take anything out of his house : and he that is in the field, let him not go back to take his coat.’* ”

Venerable Bede relates that St. Felix of Nola was entreated by his friends, when the smiles of peace again gladdened the church, to demand in the name of justice, the wealth of which the persecution had illegally deprived him, giving as a reason

for making this demand—that if he desired to remain poor for the love of God, and would not use these riches for himself, he could nevertheless assist with it many persons who were in want and in indigence; but he would never consent to such an act of injustice to his spiritual well being. Ah! may it please God, he replied—that I may never think of having again that which I lost for confessing the name of Jesus Christ, now that I may demand in any manner the goods of the earth, which the esteem and love for the goods of heaven have caused me once to condemn—as if these were not sufficient for me. I much prefer to be poor in spirit, following Jesus Christ—so as to possess in greater abundance, the riches of the kingdom of heaven—the *treasures of grace and glory*.

Then the Religious, who by his vow of poverty, has renounced, for the love of our Lord, all his wealth, should walk in the footsteps of this Saint above quoted—that he may say with the spouse: “I have left my robe and all that I had, for my Spouse, how can I now take it up again?”

The third remark is that, the Religious, having no affection for the goods he has left, and doing all in his power to keep himself disengaged, may at the same time have attachment for the small things that are given him for his use, and are incomparably less than those he renounced. Cassian speaks of this incongruity in three different places and circumstances—expressing himself justly surprised at this misfortune; and again in derision says; How can we express ourselves as to the conduct of some

whom we see enter religion—it is truly laughable ! After the first fervor of their vocation—that caused them to abandon all their goods, and sometimes even great riches—to cast themselves into a monastery—dies out little by little, they become attached to small things, to a degree that surpasses understanding ; and they display a care for retaining contemptible *nothings*, much beyond that which they had for all their former wealth ; consequently their renunciation of all their goods serves them little, since they have transferred their affection to trifles. It is immaterial to what object covetousness is applied—be it great or small—precious or worthless—it makes no difference as to the thing, for, from the time that there is cupidity, it can be said that the heart is sullied, and it is all the more to be blamed, when the objects it places itself upon are small and contemptible. Wherefore, such poverty cannot raise the Religious to perfection ; for if he has the needs of a *poor man*, he retains the will of a rich one.

Elsewhere, the same Saint says : In religion, we see persons, who, after having contemned great riches, immense wealth of gold and silver, and valuable lands, become fond of a knife, a pen, pencil, or needle, so as to grow angry or sullen, if deprived of these trifles. Again he says : The inordinate affection that we have sometimes for worthless things, moves and excites us against such persons as dare to touch them. If the affections were not there, and if one was truly poor in spirit, he would not experience such emotions, which are the more

shameful and the more criminal, as their causes are the more unworthy. A man of sense and virtue, has left great wealth, and he attaches himself to a knife, to a pen—what an evidence of good will! he has given up a magnificent residence, most richly furnished—and he is passionately attached to a cell: what fine judgment! It was with violence that he tore himself from parents and relations, to whom God and nature had so strictly bound him, and he becomes captivated with a person who is nothing to him: is this wise?

St. Dorotheus says on this same subject: We can only attribute to great folly the disorders we see amongst us. We have left of our own accord, on retiring from the world, great and precious things, and often, we place our affections in religion, on the veriest trifles, and this to an extent that troubles us. This is a strange and pitiable irregularity: since we have renounced the world and all its goods, should we not also renounce its cupidity? And St. Macairius facetiously remarks, that the Religious often goes out of the world by a large door, and re-enters it by a *very small* one—who after leaving fondly loved parents and friends in the world attaches himself anew to some one or *something* in religion.

SECTION V.

Of the Third and Fourth Degree of poverty.

The third degree of poverty does not so much regard the essence of this virtue, as it does its ex-

cellence and its perfection. Then it is not of such rigorous obligation; and it consists in being content with necessary things—and in abstaining from such as are superfluous. To understand this more clearly, it should be remarked, that things can be necessary or superfluous in two ways: for instance—bread and water alone are sufficient for life, and all other things superfluous. The second, is in considering them morally, and in a manner more congenial, more condescending to human weakness. By superfluous things here mentioned is not to be understood of the first, or *absolute sense*—that goes to the utmost rigor, and with which the Saints even were not content; but of the second, or *moral sense* they are to be judged superfluous or not—which good Religious, who have a delicate conscience, and who keep their rules with exactness—have been accustomed to observe.

In keeping with this principle, a Religious may, without fear of a superfluity, have one or many things; but he cannot go beyond this, without *sin*, and the sin will be greater or less, according to the value and the multitude of the superfluities. He will not be excusable, even when his Superior permits him to have them, and if he himself is disposed to give them up should he be required so to do; because this superfluity, in some degree, wounds poverty. If it is extremely difficult, and almost impossible, as we have said—to transgress the rules, without some sin, even though they oblige not to such extent—with how much greater reason will it not be so, if they injure poverty, which has been

authentically promised by vow, by keeping for their use something with which they could easily dispense. In a word—it is evident that the obligation of the vows is much stricter than that of the rules. Therefore, the inferior cannot, without sin, retain superfluous things; neither can the Superior, according to the opinion of the Doctors, permit him to do so : for this permission is prejudicial to the good of religion as well as to that of the Religious, by giving a blemish to their perfection, while the Superior goes beyond his power, which is not to destroy, but to preserve and perfect the things that God has confided to him. If St. Paul wrote to his dear disciple Timothy : “ *Having wherewith for our food and clothing, let us be content* ”—are not Religious, who have vowed poverty, more obliged to enter into these sentiments, and to fulfil these words ?

Animated with this spirit, St. Epiphanius replied to a rich man who offered him five thousand shillings : My son, I thank you : one simple robe suffices for my clothing, and a little bread and water for my food. Why do you wish to burden me with superfluities ? I seek, I sigh to attain my perfection as quickly as possible, and now you would that I loiter on my way, by giving me the things of earth.

Theodoret relates of St. Aphreates, hermit, that on leaving Persia, his native country, he became a solitary, beyond the precincts of the town of Edessa, in Syria. A great lord, named Anthemeus, who afterwards became consul and governor of the province, came to visit him, on returning from his

embassy in Persia, and to offer him a habit, saying : Father, knowing that there is no one who has not some affection for his own country, and who does not find its fruits most delightful and pleasing, so I thought to bring you this habit, manufactured in your native land. May I not humbly entreat you to accept it at my hands, and to give me in exchange your blessing ? The Saint quietly took this kindly-meant gift, to place it on a table near by ; then, after some few words of civility, said to Anthemeus, that there was but one thing that gave any trouble. If permitted to become acquainted with the subject of your distress, replied Anthemeus, perhaps I could alleviate it : when the Saint answered : I have made a resolution, never to have but one person living with me. I have had now, for sixteen years, the same faithful companion, with whom I am most content ; yet there has come to me, one of my own countrymen, who greatly desires and solicits me to take him to dwell with me. Behold in this my perplexity ! for I cannot, after my first resolve, have two companions at the same time ; and while I entertain an affection—*as is natural*—for this new-comer, fresh from my country, I cannot without difficulty and injustice dismiss my first friend, who has ever given me entire satisfaction. Certainly, Father, you are right ; for what reason could there be for sending away one who has served you so long and faithfully, as if he was not needed, or to give place to a stranger, under the frivolous pretext that he is a countryman. Then, said the Saint, you will not take it amiss, sir, that

I do not accept your present, for I have resolved not to possess two habits, and I love the one I wear, on account of its long rendered service. Do you not see, that by my own inclination and your judgment, I should prefer it to the one you now wish to give me. Anthemeus, finding himself so ingeniously defeated, and admiring alike the subtlety of the Saints' mind and his virtue, urged him no further.

The holy Abbot Agatho, having, with his disciples, built a small monastery, and perceiving on first occupying it that there was a portion of the building not absolutely necessary, said to his disciples: Come, let us go hence! This sudden change and abrupt order much afflicted and astonished his poor Religious, who replied: Ah! Father after taking so much pains and employing so much time to build a convent, do you now wish us to leave it? And what will the world say? but that we are inconstant, fickle spirits, not long content anywhere; and thus we will give great disedification. To this the Saint wisely replied: What you predict may be verified; but also, there will be many, who perceiving will admit that the love of God made us abandon it, as we would not wish to live in a house where there were superfluities. Therefore, follow me or remain here, all who wish; as for myself, I go. His disciples, seeing his resolution, at once abandoned the house, and followed him. Let the Religious, who is zealous for the perfection of his vow, give up, after the example of these Saints, all he has that is superfluous. Why have in your cell, pray tell me, so many use-

less fixtures—so many vain curiosities, so many singular trifles? Could you not easily dispense with such things? which, after all, are but amusements that occupy you—ties to embarrass—weights to encumber—and thorns to prick you? If you have a delicate conscience, you must abandon superfluities—give them to Our Lord, and content yourself with necessities. The less you have the richer you will be: “*To possess all, you must leave all,*” is the Saints’ maxim:—the fewer the superfluities—the more empty your cell, the more peace will you have, and the more will your heart be filled with liberty of spirit, and disposed for union with God.

It is in conformity with this spirit, that many Saints and some Founders of Religious Orders have desired that, according to the spirit of their institute, the buildings of their Orders should be very simple—that they be stamped with poverty; therefore they could not bear that they be too spacious, nor in the least degree ornamental.

As St. Francis was from the town of Assisi, a gentleman of that place wished to build there a monastery for his Religious. He mentioned his design to the Saint, who permitted him to build, as it is related in the account, “a small house, or a very poor monastery;” and he added: that he wished his brothers to have their houses constructed according to poverty—of wood and earth.

St. Teresa also desired that her monasteries should be built plainly. In those she established, she was careful even to have the crosses made of cane or of some common, unpolished wood; and

recommended to her Religious of both sexes this poverty in building, saying: she considered it most unsuitable to see poor persons, bare-foot, residing in spacious and costly edifices. Then, will it not be exceeding folly that our houses, on the day of judgment, make a great noise in falling? Elsewhere, she adds: For the love of our Lord, I beg you, my Fathers and my Sisters, to show yourselves most circumspect as to what relates to large and sumptuous buildings. In the second chapter of her "*Way of Perfection*," she speaks more fully on this subject, as follows: Beware, my daughters, for the love of God and his precious Blood, of handsome edifices! Were it permitted me, I would pray God that the day my Religious would build such, they may fall into ruins, and crush all beneath them: as I consider it most unbecoming and even sinful, that we erect large, costly buildings, at the expense of the substance of the poor. Ah! may it please God never to permit us this violation of holy rule. Let us remember then, that we are poor Religious, who should imitate their King, who had no other house than the stable of Bethlehem for his nativity, and the Cross, upon which He died.

Theodoret relates that St. Julian, surnamed "*Sabas*," had given directions to his disciples to build a small and commodious monastery, during his temporary absence from the community—On his return he found the building completed, but on a larger scale than he designed, and which caused him to remark: "I fear much, my children, that toiling thus to enlarge our houses on earth, we

will only render very small and narrow those that God is preparing for us in heaven."

St. Volstan, a Religious, on becoming bishop of Wigorne, in England, seeing they were demolishing his Cathedral Church, built by St. Oswald—and that, on its ruins was erected one much larger and more magnificent, commenced to weep; and when gently reprov'd for these tears, and told that, in lieu of being afflicted, he should rather rejoice to behold such a happy change and so much glory for his church. Alas! he replied, you understand not the cause of my tears. I weep, that the work of the Saints should be overturned by us miserable sinners, and this in order to acquire honor and praise among men. His historian adds: The men of those times knew not what it was to build churches otherwise than magnificently, but neglected not in whatever house, poor as it may be, to make sacrifices of themselves to the divine Majesty, and to attract others to virtue by their example. Whereas, we neglect the salvation of souls, and think but of placing stone upon stone.

Hugh of St. Victor speaks well on this subject: Stone is useful in building—but of what use are engravings on stone? Such histories as thereon represented may be read in Holy Scripture—Eve is skilfully figured on the wall, and some poor homeless wanderer is left to sleep beneath it.

The fourth degree of poverty rises yet higher: it concerns necessary things, which should be used without attachment, and with a requisite moderation. Religious are to be found, who do not de-

sire superfluities, but are passionately attached to necessary things. For instance: to have an inordinate love for their room or cell, their books and other things that religion has given them for their use, so that they grow displeased, murmur, etc., if anyone takes them for a few moments, or soils them ever so little; and to prevent their being used by others will conceal them, or if asked to lend, will equivocate, make excuses, or resort to some selfish means, rather than have others to use and enjoy what is for their own private use, or if they lend, it will be with such bad grace and in so disobliging a manner, that it will evidently appear they lend but with constraint, and that pleasure will be afforded them by not asking for what they have. Do they not by this say, that these things belong to them, as if they did not equally belong to those who asked for them, and were not the sole property of Religion? It does not suffice that a Religious retrench all that is not necessary to him—he should still, in the acquisition and the use of things necessary, observe moderation, and bear reasonable disengagement of spirit thereto. Wherefore, in all well regulated communities, keys are prohibited to simple Religious, to prevent their keeping anything hidden, or of which others, when it is permitted by the Superior, cannot dispose.

Let no one, says one of our rules, so close his chamber that it cannot be opened from without; and let him not have a box or anything else locked, without permission.

The seventy hermits whom St. Gerasima governed,

lived in such a manner that they had each but a single habit, and very few things in their cells. When they went out, they left them open, so that any one could go in freely, and take whatever he wished, or as suited his convenience. I find also, in Gerontius, that robbers having entered the cell of an aged Father, told him their intention was to pillage and they meant to carry away all that he had. The holy man replied: "My children, take all that you wish." After having made their search, and were departing, the Saint perceiving that they had left by chance a purse of money, took it, and running after them, cried out: My children, take also this purse that you have forgotten. The robbers, astounded at this, and admiring such great disinterestedness for the most necessary things, did not want his purse, but returned to him all that they had taken, and made a resolve to do penance for their sins, and to think more seriously of their salvation. There should, however, be mentioned here, an abuse that glides sometimes into religion. As the chambers are open, and there is nothing within locked up, some will not hesitate to enter, and take whatever pleases them, under pretext that the things belong to no one in particular, because of their vow of poverty, and that all the goods of the house are common. It is to be remarked that such persons do wrong: 1. Because they commit theft, and should pass for domestic robbers: in a word, they take what is not theirs against the will of the legitimate possessor, which is *Religion*, and who does not give them permission to take anything in this manner,

but on the contrary, she forbids their so doing by express rules. 2. If the things thus taken do not belong to the persons who occupy these chambers, on account of the vow of poverty, they have at least the use of them, and employ them with the legitimate permission of their Superior; whereas, those who allow themselves thus to take, have no right to these things, on account of the same vow, since they are also Religious, not even to use them for want of permission on the part of their Superior. 3. They do wrong, since they usurp things over which they have no right, and make use of them without permission; they take them unjustly from those to whom they are given, and who possess them rightfully, and to whom, in taking, they do great wrong; for they deprive them of the things of which they have need. Finally, these persons are reprehensible, for by acting in this manner they disturb general confidence and domestic peace—occasion inferiors to conceal things which they need, and to force, in some degree, the Superiors to permit them to be locked up.

The pagans put a key in the hand of the statue Janus, because, some say, he invented, for the safety and honor of houses, the use of keys, locks and doors, which were for this reason called after him, "*Janua*," but others think it was given him to show and to praise the good faith of those times, for the houses needed no other key to guard them than the probity of the inhabitants, which placed all they had within doors in perfect security. If the infidels possessed so much probity and upright-

ness, is it not a strange and most shameful thing that Religious should be wanting in these virtues?

SECTION VI.

Of the Fifth Degree of Poverty.

If poverty rested here, and was not raised to the fifth degree, it would be deprived of its chief beauty—of its grandest and richest features; it would even appear in some measure coarse and uninviting. Then this degree consists in truly wanting the things that are necessary, and of experiencing the real effects of poverty; it seems that this is requisite for its perfection. It is for this reason called *indigence*—that is to say, *needing*, because it causes want of something. And in truth, he who has all he should have, who wants for nothing in his food, his clothing, his lodging, and in his other necessities, I say, such a one is a comfortable poor person, one who bears the name at his ease. Seculars even, who are rich, and masters of their goods, possess not this advantage.

Do you think that Religious truly *poor*, and acquitting himself worthily of his vow, who complains and murmurs when his food needs seasoning, when a sufficient quantity is not given him, and at the proper time? When his habit is worn, or too short, or when something is wanting in his chamber? The Religious, says St. John Climachus, who loves poverty, is exempt from all these complaints that arise from one's discontent. If anything terrestrial

is capable of afflicting him, and of giving him pain, he cannot say that he is really poor.

To be poor, says St. Vincent Ferrer, is not a thing to be praised; but to love poverty and the inconveniences it entails, is what is above all praise. Many glory in the name of poverty, but how? provided that nothing is wanting to them."

St. Bernard had previously said: "We see poor persons who, if they had the spirit of poverty, would not be so cast down, nor so sad, when they feel some of its effects. These are they who desire much to be poor, provided they suffer no privation; behold, a poverty most agreeable, and poor persons much to be pitied!"

That which is most ridiculous, and more extravagant still, is that there are sometimes to be found Religious who complain of not having what their birth and their condition in the world never have given them. Ah! there you were poorly fed and lodged, most simply dressed, and you dare to complain that in religion, where you entered to be mortified, to practice virtue, and where you engaged yourself by vow to observe poverty, some of these things are wanting to you! Are you, I pray—I do not say good Religious—but only reasonable men? Is it just, that having been badly off in the world, you should come into religion, and enter into the service of a poor God, to be there more comfortable? St. Jerome, assuming to himself for a moment the place of this kind of persons, says in his letter to Nepotion: "I, who am of low birth, born in a poor cottage, and who had great difficulty in obtain-

ing the wherewith to appease my hunger, with vegetables and brown bread, now that I am in religion, am not content with white bread and good meat, and when I find something wanting, I at once murmur." St. Augustine, to prevent this strange want of mortification and this great disorder, warns his Religious in his rule, not to seek in the monastery that which they could not have procured in the world.

Therefore, a Religious should suffer voluntarily, and in a spirit of poverty, some privation in necessary things, be it in drinking and eating, in clothing, in the cell, during winter from the cold, and in summer from the heat, etc. And if he does not experience absolutely any of these wants, if he has nothing to suffer, he should, if he desires to be truly *poor*, and to bear worthily that quality, deprive himself of some convenience, and always experience some of the effects of poverty. What would be said of a soldier who would never draw his sword, of a writer who would refuse to handle his pen, and of an artisan who would reject the instruments of his art? In like manner, what can be said and judged of a Religious who will practice none of the exercises of his state; for instance, of poverty, of which he has made profession by an express vow? Hence, the Blessed Laurence Justinian, assuming a cheerful countenance and a calm tone, said to his saddened Religious, when that part of the monastery was burnt in which were all the provisions: Well, my children, what harm has been done us? have we not made a vow of poverty? Blessed be God!

that this conflagration and this loss give us an opportunity of fulfilling our vow. The Apostles were journeying with Our Lord one Sabbath day, and being hungry, the Evangelist relates, that passing through the cornfields they plucked the ears and began to eat." St. Paul says of himself, that necessity had reduced him to hunger and thirst, to fasting often, to cold and to nakedness. In truth, when I consider on one side, what the Saints have done, the scarcity of even necessities they desired to endure for the love of God ; and on the other, when I see how great our eagerness is to satisfy all our wants, our trouble in enduring their absence, I cannot help saying that we have great reason to be confounded, and to blush for ourselves.

Theodoret relates of St. Zenon, disciple of St. Basil, that, from being a very rich and illustrious courtier in the world, became a poor hermit, and made choice, as a dwelling, of one of those sepulchres that are found in great numbers on the mountain of Antioch. He there shut himself up, without either bed, lamp, fire, pan, oil-cruet, box or books, or anything whatever. He wore none but old clothes, and shoes so worn that they could not even be tied. He received from one of his friends the necessary food to sustain life—namely, a loaf, that lasted him two days ; and for the water he drank, he had to go for it himself a great distance off. Thereupon, a very remarkable circumstance occurred to him one day. Some person thinking of what labor it must be for one of his advanced age to go so far for water, begged him to allow another

to perform this little service. The Saint at first would not consent, saying he could not be satisfied to drink water that another had brought him; but finding that this person continued his entreaty, he at length gave the two vessels for the water. This person most gladly and promptly acquitted himself of his charitable office, but he no sooner arrived at the Saint's dwelling with the full jugs, than all the water flowed out. God made it evident by this, that he approved of the Saint's labor—and that He desired him to go for the water he drank.

The same Theodoret relates of the Saints Thalassus and Lymnia, hermits, that they lived without shelter, exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather, having neither cells, huts, nor roof; and in addition to these he gives the example of females: he writes of two sisters, named Marania and Cyrie, who despising the nobility of their birth and the great wealth they possessed, retired to a small place near the town of Beria, led a similar life without house or other shelter, and deprived of every comfort. But what shall be said of the Saints, Simons, Daniels, and other *Stylites*, who passed days and nights, whole months and years, standing upon their pillars? What is to be said of the Saints Mary of Egypt and Theodista, a virgin of Sesbos, who passed their lives in the depths of the wilderness, deprived of all the necessities of life, without seeing or speaking to any one—without fire, bread, roof or clothes? What privation! what poverty! . . .

I find, in the account of miracles by St. Bernard, something very remarkable on this subject, concern-

ing a certain Scoulin, a most holy man of the diocese of Treves. Acard, a wise Religious whom St. Bernard sent to this diocese to build there a monastery of his Order, cites, as an eye-witness, what ensues. "I do not think," he says, "that there can be found in our times a person comparable to this man of God, for his love of poverty, for his contempt of all visible things, and for corporal mortifications. It could be well said of him that he died daily for the love of God ; that he endured many martyrdoms, and that he bore numberless crosses. Who is the man that can live without any of the food of man, without roof and without clothing? However, Scoulin lived ten years without any of these : he wandered alone and naked, for Jesus Christ, on mountains and in woods, having the heavens for a roof, the air for clothes, and the food of beasts for his aliment ; for he ate only wild herbs and roots, and occasionally the acorn for his greatest delicacy. After ten years of so extraordinary a life, he mitigated a little the extreme austerity, the four years previous to his death ; for in mid-winter, and during the heaviest snows, as, on account of his debility, he could no longer find herbs nor dig roots, being all but dead with cold and hunger, and quite emaciated, he sought some deserted village, some lonely house in the midst of a field, and choosing, in preference, that one he knew from divine revelation to belong to some poor, good man, and going there at night-fall, so as not to be seen, he would sleep on the ground in the stable, and oftentimes in the yard. Then, after

some hours of such repose, he would return before day to his former haunts. Those who were happy enough to lodge him, bore him great respect—would not speak to him, at least, if he showed any unwillingness, for they feared he would not return. Sometimes they would leave near their door a little straw or an old sack for him to lie on, as also some pieces of bread, of oatmeal or bran, knowing well that he would take nothing better. He would eat but a small portion of this bread at the time, and carry away the remainder of it, which would serve him for several days.

When he came to these houses, he wore no other clothing than modesty required; carrying about his neck a small bag, in which he received the food given him.

Behold, says this author, all the wealth of this *rich* man! behold the glorious inheritance, and the opulent patrimony of this servant of Jesus Christ, to whom his fidelity had changed the whole world into a source of riches! because desiring nothing, and possessing nothing, he possessed in this *nothingness* all things: he enclosed the whole world in this poor garment, since, of the entire world, and in lieu of all things, he chose only this.

St. Bernard upon hearing of the wonderful sanctity of this extraordinary man, directed Acard and his companions to visit him—to salute him in his behalf, and to present him also, with a habit, shoes, etc.—as a pledge of his affection; begging him to make use of them for love of the giver. Acard, having come to the place, went with his companions

to the house where the Saint came to pass the night ; but he arrived too late. Seeing he was not there at his usual time, they made enquiry of the master of the house, about this delay. The man replied : that the Saint had been there that night, but had left sooner than usual, and on being questioned as to the reason of his early departure said : ' I go because some Religious will be here soon to see me, and I do not desire that they should find me here, or see me at present.' He often did the same thing with regard to other persons who wished to see him : God revealing to him both the persons and their intentions. Acard implored this good man to entreat the Saint, out of consideration for the one who sent them, to be kind enough to afford them the gratification of seeing him and speaking to him. Accordingly, this favor being granted, we repaired to the place at the appointed time : we saw this heavenly man : we offered him the presents and the greetings of our Father. He received them with great humility and reverence—put on the clothes, but quickly took them off, saying : God be blessed ! for having inspired this apostolic man with the kindly remembrance of a sinner, and most wretched creature. I receive for love of him, and with submission, the clothes he has had the goodness to send me, making use of them as you saw ; he will approve of my not wearing them any longer, inasmuch as they are not necessary to me, and as he has not commanded me to wear them. The historian continuing, relates as follows : though it has no bearing on poverty and on our present subject—

however, it is worthy of being mentioned—"As we found him so gentle and affable, we were emboldened to put him some questions ; and among others we asked, if in such great austerity of life, he was ever troubled with stings of the flesh, or molested by suggestions of the demon? He replied with a sweet smile : It has been a great while that, by the grace of God, I have been quite free from such temptations and the attacks of vice, but as the life of man is a perpetual temptation and combat, who can glory in having a chaste heart? For if we say even. according to the words of the Apostle, 'that we are without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' Walking everywhere in the midst of snares, surrounded on all sides by the swords of our enemies, we cannot ward off their blows without the buckler of God's special protection. But we hope that God, ever good and faithful, will not permit us to be tempted beyond our strength." He then related to them one of his temptations, and one of his faults ; by which we could perceive to what a degree of purity and innocence this holy man had arrived. He said : "One day that it was intensely cold, and snowing heavily, I was lying on the ground, with my limbs stiffened and pierced with cold, God covering me completely with snow—as with a spread of white wool—excepting my mouth, where he made a small opening for me to breathe. A little rabbit, trying to save himself as best he could from the snow, and seeking a retreat, came on me, upon my face, and close to this breathing spot. There finding a gentle heat, he

stopped, and rested on my head. The novelty of so extraordinary a thing caused me to smile, and to relax, by a movement of levity, something of the constancy of my mind—to taste a trifling joy, as I had even the thought of taking hold of this little animal, which would have been very easy for me, not to kill or to retain it, but to have the satisfaction of viewing it at leisure, and to feel it in my hand. I did not do so, however; but keeping my body motionless, and in the same position, this timid creature was permitted to sleep in safety, after which it went off of its own accord. Behold in this, one of the greatest temptations I remember to have suffered for a long time. I have related this to you with more gayety, perhaps, than I should, but I did so for your diversion, whilst I am filled with shame and regret, to see myself, against my will, disquieted sometimes—as by flies that swarm around me—by these vain and useless thoughts.” After this discourse, the holy man begged us to salute our Father for him, and to recommend him to his holy prayers; then, on our bidding him adieu, he returned to the woods.

Acard finished this recital by the following instructive words: ‘After having seen such admirable things, and by the greatness of our admiration rendered powerless to speak, we could but feel that all our efforts, and all our virtues, compared with such eminent perfection, were but as dust and ashes; and we, who previously thought ourselves *something*, whilst truly we are nothing, found that all our good works viewed beside those of this great

Saint, were but as filthy rags, and thus profoundly humbled and filled with confusion, we wended our way homeward.”

SECTION VII.

Of the Sixth Degree of Poverty.

The sixth and last degree of poverty, that St. Bonaventure preferred to all others, as being that which gives the finishing touch, the most beautiful and the brightest colors to this virtue—consequently, rendering it more agreeable to God, and more admirable to men—is when, in infirmities and sickness, one suffers patiently, and even cheerfully, the want of necessary things. Indeed, if to bear in this spirit, during health, is a signal act of poverty, because it is something difficult, assuredly will it be much more so, and poverty be raised to a higher degree, if so endured in time of sickness: for then it is, without question, much more difficult, and to be successful much greater effort is required. In truth, it is often enough seen in religious communities, even among the more virtuous members, that these, for the love of God, usually bear with patience and courage all privations in their little needs, when sick, degenerate, show weakness of mind, and even yield to impatience. Superiors of communities should doubtless give all the care and succor that true, paternal affection and perfect charity can render to their sick, but when these sick, either from some forgetfulness on the part of their Superior, or from the negligence of the infirmarians,

or from the poverty of the house, or from some secret design of God, want for something necessary they should not allow themselves to be disturbed and grow impatient, but rather recall to mind that they are Religious, that they have made a vow of poverty, and consequently, that they cannot have always all that is needful, but must sometimes be in want—also, that the vow obliges in sickness as well as in health. If by the renunciation and disappropriation they thereby made of themselves, their body is not theirs, but belongs to God and to religion, they should not give undue attention to their health—should care neither for medicines nor remedies, nor for aught else respecting their cure, but with a spirit of disengagement from themselves, and of great confidence in the care and in the paternal providence of God, they should receive and take whatever is given them, do as they are told, and fulfil all other directions with a holy indifference.

Abbot John Mosc relates in the “Spiritual Meadow,” something remarkable of the monastery of Scete, regarding the want of necessaries in sickness. He says, he went with Sophronius—the dear and inseparable companion of his travels—to visit Abbot John of the Rock, and that conjointly, they besought him to tell them something edifying for their entertainment. This good Abbot said to them: “*Be well satisfied to be deprived of all things.*” Hereupon he adds: I wish to relate a remarkable and perfectly truthful incident. When I was yet young and was living in the monastery of Scete, one of the oldest Religious falling sick, needed for his

cure a little vinegar, which was sought for in the four monasteries of this desert, but none could be found, so great was their poverty and their abstemiousness, and yet, there were near three thousand five hundred Religious in these monasteries.

Then, if those who are actually sick should, in order to be true Religious, suffer their maladies in a spirit of poverty, with how much greater reason should those who are only in feeble health, or have some of the ordinary indispositions common to man, feel obliged to hold to the like principle, and to observe the same moderation. They should evince considerable discretion in receiving the visits of physicians—great reserve in answering questions—often useless and importunate—and be particularly discreet in choosing from the multiplicity of remedies prescribed; which remedies, far from being salutary, are often hurtful to them : ever guarding against the sensual craving for numberless alleviations, and over-niceness in the choice of food, etc.

This evil sometimes greatly impairs religious communities—causing serious injury to such persons as are too much attached to their body, and too careful of their health; who spare no pains to preserve it, and use a thousand precautions to prevent sickness. This over-solicitude for physical health—this inordinate attachment to sensual comforts, has caused the Saints to declaim against the evil with much vehemence, and ever to speak of it in a voice of great emotion and warning “What say you to this,” cries out St. Bernard—“you who have taken such great care as to the different qualities of your

food, and who neglect your morals? Hypocrates and his sectaries taught how to save life in this world; Jesus Christ and his disciples, to lose it: which of the two do you intend to choose for your master, and to follow in his regimen? That man makes known the master he follows who reasons on the property of the food he eats, saying: such a thing hurts the eyes; that the head; this other, the breast and stomach, etc. Have you ever read of these differences in the Gospel? or in the Prophets, or Apostles? It is assuredly flesh and blood, and not the spirit of the Father, that has revealed to you such wisdom, which is verily the wisdom of the flesh, and which, according to the doctrine of *our physicians is mortal*, and an enemy to God. Should I propose to you the opinions of Hypocrates, of Galen, or of Epicurus? I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, and I address the followers of Christ. Wherefore, I should be culpable if I taught you other maxims than His. Hypocrates directs his doctrine and his care to the health of the body; Epicurus to voluptuousness; but Jesus Christ, *my Master*, directs me to condemn one and the other. Hypocrates employs himself entirely in preserving the life of the soul in the body; Epicurus joins thereto its delights; and Our Saviour warns us to lose it, in saying: 'He who loves his life, and desires to preserve it, shall lose it.' Thus, to save it, we should lose it, by abandoning it to punishment, as the martyr—or by afflicting it, as the penitent. You perceive how this sentence of *my Master* condemns the wisdom of the flesh which causes it to

seek its pleasures, or to give too great care to health. But it is not sufficient to refrain from seeking delights, if one seeks and studies with much care the diversity of temperaments and the qualities of food. There are some Religious who say: vegetables are not healthy, cheese produces indigestion, milk causes headache, etc.—ever fault-finding with all that is served them, and not in keeping with their fastidious taste. Ah! can it be, that in the fields, in the garden, in the cellars and larders, there is such difficulty to find something that you can eat? Consider, I beg you, that you are a Religious, and *not a physician*, and that you are to be judged, not by your complexion, but by your profession—upon the life you have led in religion.

“Have some regard for your peace of mind: it is not a little disturbed, when you have to seek after and require so many things for health’s sake. Spare trouble to those who have to serve you—make some account of the injury you thus do the house, and contribute something to the public edification.” Behold the sentiments, as hereon expressed by St. Bernard! When writing to the Religious of his Order in the monastery of St. Anastasia, or of the “Three Fountains,” near Rome—this Saint speaks more copiously on the same subject, as follows: “Your venerable Abbot (it was ‘Bernard,’ who was subsequently Pope Eugenius III) sent me information on one subject, that I can but find good; and I think in this I have the spirit of God, therefore, the counsel I give you comes from Him. I know that you are in a country, where the air is

unhealthy, and that many among you are infirm. Well then! remember the words of St. Paul: 'I willingly glory in my infirmities, so that the virtue of Jesus Christ dwell within me, and when *I am the weakest, then am I strongest.*'

"I compassionate greatly the infirmities, the pains, and the miseries of the body; but much more should we fear the maladies of the soul, and bestow greater care on them. Wherefore, it is not expedient, either for your religious state, or for your salvation, to seek after medicines and remedies for your body. You may sometimes, for this purpose, make use of simple, common herbs, such as are used by the poor; but to buy drugs, to consult physicians, and to take medicines, is unbecoming the religious profession, as also contrary to purity—for such is the custom of pagans and seculars. Besides, we know that those who take so much care of their body, and who lead a life attached to the senses, can never be pleasing to God."

These words of St. Bernard should doubtless have great weight, and lead us, if not to the eminent perfection they contain, at least to the mortification of importunate solicitude, useless inquiries, unnecessary dieting, and vain fears, in all that regards our health. But lest it be imagined that this is only intended for men, who are naturally more robust than women, we give here what is said by a *woman* on the same subject, to her own sex. St. Teresa says to her Religieuses: "The first thing we should banish from our hearts is the love of our body. There are to be found amongst us some who

naturally love much their ease and their convenience, who are so careful of their health that there is not a little to be done where they are. You might readily suppose that they came into religion so as *not to die*, such is the solicitude they have for their health; but believe firmly, my Sisters, that you came here *only to die* for Jesus Christ, and not to treat yourselves *well* for Him. The demon seeks to delude you, when he suggests that you require physical strength to keep the rule, and to observe well the established order of the house—and consequently, that nothing should be done to injure the health.

“Whereas, in truth, when one does everything for his health, in order to keep the regulations better, it very often happens that such a one dies without having observed these regulations an entire month, nor perhaps one single day. God help us! if once the demon commences to intimidate us, and make us fear the loss of health, we shall never do anything more.

“It seems to me, my Sisters, that it is a great imperfection to complain of certain little ailments; if you can endure them, say nothing about them; you will merit much by suffering silently. If you cause self-love to die, you will experience mortification in all the attention and care bestowed on you; you will only accept the same from necessity, and you will not complain without reason. Avoid ever mentioning certain weaknesses and little ailments—it is often the demon who represents them to us—filling our imagination thus to disturb us, and you

can never vanquish him, if you do not determine to speak and complain of them to God *alone*.

“I have dwelt at length on this subject, believing it to be a point of great importance, which, if not guarded against, causes fearful relaxation in religious communities. Moreover, our body has this inclination, that the more it is indulged, the more it seems to require. In return for a little attention paid it, numberless things will be required, under the specious pretext of *necessity*; and when thinking them permitted, will be employed as being useful to health. But this prevents the soul from making progress in virtue. Remember, that to be poor, and to be treated *well*, are two things scarcely compatible. Believe, my daughters, if we labor to reduce and to check these small bodies, they will give us but little more trouble; and on the contrary, if we are not resolute to anticipate death, to reject the vain apprehensions of losing our health, we will do nothing. Try then to disabuse yourself of all those vain, cowardly fears. Cast yourself entirely into the arms of God—confide yourself to His keeping, and then let come what will. What matters it, if we die thus? Shall we not, my Sisters, mock for once this body, that has so often mocked us? Take this resolution, and believe that it is more important than we can imagine: it is by such means that we shall become, little by little, the masters of our bodies.”

Elsewhere, the same Saint again says: “We have such narrow hearts, that it seems to us as if the earth would fail us as often as we wish to re-

trench some little of the care that we take of our body, to bestow it on the culture of our soul. We believe that in order not be troubled in our prayers, we should have all necessities, and that this helps greatly to recollection. I grieve to think of our want of confidence in God, and our excessive self-love, that causes this solicitude. When the soul has advanced little in true virtue—trifles, worthless things, are capable of occupying and paining us as much as great and important things can effect others. And with all this we think ourselves spiritual; but we deceive ourselves in supposing we advance thereby in the way of perfection, and ever to arrive at a true liberty of spirit.

“After the example of the Saints, we should practice the virtues that subdue the body, which so often revolts, troubles the spirit, and causes the loss of the soul. When the demon sees that one fears to attack him—to wage war against him, he increases this cowardice for his own profit, by making us believe that all we do tends to the ruin of our health, to cripple us, to render us useless, and to cause our death. As I am very infirm, I noticed that, inasmuch as this fear had ascendancy over me, I could accomplish nothing of any account, and the little that I do at present, I have only done since I resolved to give no more attention to my body and my health.”

Brother James d’Yepes, Bishop of Tarasconia, after relating, in the life that he wrote of St. Teresa, the greater part of what we have quoted, adds, most wisely: “It can be seen by this how great an enemy this holy Mother was to an inordi-

nate care of the physical health of the body, and how much she feared that relaxation would glide into her monasteries by the door of *small ailments* and habitual infirmities badly accepted, by making them a sufficient excuse for the indulgence of the body, and for dispensation from regular observances. We do nothing less than to ruin the Order, and to extinguish its spirit. In a word, as women are naturally more or less delicate and weak, in proportion to the amount of indulgence they bestow upon themselves, and do not bear with strength and courage their little sufferings, or ordinary ailments, they will soon cause great relaxations in religion; for thus, as is remarked by the Saint herself, there will never be wanting indulgent physicians, who foretell serious illness, if the *lesser* ills are not cured, and who, to effect this, prescribe numberless remedies, and exceptions as to food, rest, prayer, and everything else; and while thinking thereby to cure the ills of one person, they cause many other ailments to the community."

In truth, the many practices and observances in religion, so contrary to nature, must necessarily cause some change to health; and if we wish to cure all the indispositions resulting therefrom, in conformity to the rules of Galen and Hypocrates, we will soon ruin the order established in religion, and thus the infirm, making no more prayers, and failing in the exercises of piety, would neglect, insensibly, the care of their salvation, lose the spirit of their vocation, render themselves most onerous to others, and by their indolence and criminal del-

icacy disturb the order and regularity of the house.

SECTION VIII.

Continuation of the Same Subject.

All that has been said shows that the Religious should not make himself the slave of his body and of his health ; that he should, on the contrary, treat it with a wise contempt, abandoning it to God, in its sickness and infirmities, and not confide it to physicians and their remedies. St. Ambrose, explaining these words of David : “ *Lord, I have desired there Thy salvation,*” and exhorting us to give greater care to the health of the soul than to that of the body, says : There are some persons who would like to live always in an unalterable health, and without the least pain ; others, again, who, when sick, grow discouraged and impatient, and therefore cannot say, with St. Paul : “ *When I am infirm, it is then I am strong.*” They prefer to obey physicians, to follow their directions, than to conform themselves to the teachings of Holy Scripture. Now, in this they err greatly ; for, in accordance with St. Ambrose, the precepts of physicians are contrary to the knowledge of things divine, and to the practice of virtue : for instance, they prohibit fasting, and he who is willing to rely on physicians would never keep Lent, nor watch, nor labor : they would soon set aside meditation, and all mental efforts regarding the affairs of salvation. Nor should these prescriptions and prohibi-

tions create much astonishment, since the physician has for the end of all his science and all his solicitude, but the health of the body, without tormenting and disquieting himself about that of the soul. Consequently—at least, if he is not truly a Christian, and animated by the fear of God—he thinks absolutely of nothing but the health of the body—how to preserve it, at all costs, or to restore it, when it has been lost. Wherefore, since this is his sole aim, and he places therein all his skill and glory, it is not astonishing that he does so much for the good of the body to the prejudice of the soul: thus, to be in keeping with an old adage: “Whilst physicians live, misery will live,” whoever subjects himself to the rules of medicine leads a miserable life; nay, furthermore, he leads a most imperfect life—one disposed to all manner of vices.

The chronicles of Friars Minors relate that the demon, one day, assuming the form and title of a physician, came to request the habit of St. Francis, at the monastery of Alenquez in Portugal, and that he was received. On being admitted into the house, he comported himself with great edification exteriorly, as also with much adroitness; for he tried to insinuate himself into the minds of others, and by his influence causing them to take better care of their health, to use certain lotions and remedies: saying to one that he should allow himself to be bled; to another, that he should take some medicine; to another again, that he should not rise so early; and to others, that they worked *too much* for health, etc.; and by thus rendering them

sensual and delicate, he disposed them, little by little, to relaxation and to ruin. But he was soon recognized and driven out, before any serious detriment had been received from such evil influence.

After all, medical science is very imperfect, being founded on little else than conjecture; in consequence of which, the skill of the physician is very limited. They cannot, then, be of any great assistance to us. Do they always succeed in the cure of diseases? Alas! they are more frequently deceived; and *we* deceive ourselves. "*The number of physicians has killed the king,*" said the Emperor Adrian, at the hour of death (as is cited in a Greek verse of Menandria). These words need not be understood literally of the number of physicians, but rather to the diversity of their opinions, and to the quantity of remedies with which they overwhelmed this Emperor. It is known what happened to St. Ignatius of Loyola: a physician was near killing him, from having prescribed, in a sickness produced by an excess of heat, *warm* remedies, in place of refreshing and cold ones, as he should have ordered. And did not St. Sturmen, first Abbot of Fulda, die from taking a medicine that "Uvintar" (the skilful physician of Charlemagne) gave him, thinking it would effect his cure? Wherefore, it is wisest to dispense with their services as much as possible, and only to employ them in evident necessity. By this means you will enjoy better health. This was experienced by St. Charles, who, notwithstanding all the attention of physicians and their remedies, continued in feeble health; so

he resolved, in accordance with the advice of some of his virtuous and prudent friends, to bid adieu to all physicians and medicines, and to lead a common life, regardless of the dieting usual for the sick. Soon he perceived his ailments diminish, and gradually recovered his former health ; thus, feeling as if freed from a vexatious slavery and restored to the enjoyment of liberty, he readily resumed all the austerities he had previously practiced.

St. Teresa says the same of herself: "I recognize in many circumstances that such constant drugging, such ceaseless attention to health, was a temptation of the demon, or the effects of my tepidity and weakness ; for since I have given less care to my body and its ailments, I have enjoyed much better health."

If desired to pursue this subject yet further, we may listen to the complaints of Pliny against physicians and medicines, who, to justify his expostulations, relates that the Romans were the first who dispensed with them, in the year six hundred of the foundation of Rome, and that they were never healthier.

Let Religious, then, consider attentively all these reasons ; and may they, moreover, be persuaded that maladies are not always the work of nature. God often permits or sends them in chastisement for some sin, in this world, in place of reserving the punishment for eternity. This was most judiciously remarked by St. Basil, in a discourse, wherein he proposed the following question : Do virtue and the design of perfection permit us to make use of phy-

sicians and medicines? To this he replies, first, that God, having provided us with numberless arts and inventions to aid us in our divers necessities, He has furnished us with physicians and remedies, for the relief of our corporal infirmities; and consequently, we may employ them, provided it is with the requisite moderation, and from true necessity; but he adds, that Christians, and with greater reason, Religious, should renounce all curious and eager seeking after such remedies as require importunate and troublesome care, that keep the mind occupied in thinking of the means for preserving or restoring corporal health; that we should guard well against placing all our hopes of cure in the aid of physicians and medicines, and avoid designating them, as some do, their *liberators* and *saviors*. Returning to our subject, he says that there are some maladies wherein neither physicians nor their remedies should be employed, inasmuch as they do not proceed from any indisposition of the body, or interference of the humors, or other cause purely corporal, but from some disorder of the soul, and from sin; for diseases are often scourges and chastisements for sins we have committed, and sent us by God, to cause us to change our life. Thus, in these ills, we should avoid having recourse to physicians and to natural remedies, nor cherish a hope of their cure: it is much better to consider the source of these evils, and to endure them in silence, imitating the prophet Michaeus, and say, like him: "*I bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have offended Him.*" Then, being awakened as to the

cause of our sufferings, serious thought should be given to the correction of our lives, and to the remembrance of these words of Our Lord to the paralytic: "Behold you are cured; take heed not to sin again, lest some worse evil befall you." "God," says St. Basil, "renders certain persons sick and infirm, so as to place them, as it were, on a field of battle, where they shall fight and gain glorious victories; also, amass rich crowns."

St. Syncletica, first Abbess and Superior of Religeuses in the Church of God, said to her daughters, as is related by St. Athanasius, who wrote her life: "When our bodies suffer violent pains, when a burning fever consumes us, and we are parched with thirst, let us remember, so as not to lose courage in our sufferings, that we are sinners, as also, to represent to ourselves the fires of the other life, and the torments there prepared for us, if we live not holily. Let us, then, rejoice that it pleases God to thus remember us—to have always in our mouth these words of David: '*The Lord visits me with chastisements, and He doth not abandon me to the power of death.*'"

If you are of iron, the fire of your maladies will consume your rust; if you are just, and since your justice likens you to gold, you will become purer, and will pass from a lesser to a greater perfection. Besides, bear your infirmities with patience, to testify to God, by this means, your thankfulness and gratitude for the good He does you by working at your salvation, and by withdrawing you from occasions of offending Him; for if you become blind,

or deaf, or lose the use of your hands, you are deprived of instruments of much sin. Finally, if there is no part of our body that is not sick, let us endeavor to make this contribute to the sanctification of our soul. In truth, it is much more to our advantage that diseases gnaw and destroy our bodies, than rottenness and worms!

St. Macairius of Egypt wished that Religious should act with great faith in their maladies, so as to obtain the cure of them from Our Lord, and he says: If you believed firmly that Jesus Christ could cure the wounds and infirmities of your soul, you would believe also that He has sufficient power to heal those of your body; and in this belief, when you are thus afflicted, you would have recourse to Him alone, without thinking of physicians and their remedies. Possessing the power to heal wounds deep and seemingly incurable, as are those of the soul, He will not be unmindful of those of the body, which are incomparably easier. You may say, perhaps, that God, having given virtue to simple things, as roots, to cure our maladies, and communicated to physicians the science and industry to afford us relief, He wishes that we make use of them, when necessary. I agree to this; but consider for whom God has thus done: it is for infidels, who know Him not; for secular Christians and ordinary persons, who are weak, not having sufficient strength to cast themselves into His arms, and to abandon themselves entirely to His providence. But you, Religious! you, who have quite other ties with Jesus Christ; you, who desire to be,

the children of God, animated with a spirit superior to that of nature ; you, who regard yourselves as travellers and passengers in this world ; you should have a more lively faith, more elevated thoughts, than others ; you should lead a life altogether spiritual and disengaged from the body and the senses, much more completely than the rest of mankind.

It is thus that St. Macairius expresses himself—teaching us, also, how we should, in our maladies, exercise the acts of a lively faith, of a firm hope, and other signal virtues, by dispensing with physicians and medicines. For myself, I say that we should practice all these acts, even when making use of remedies ; for we must see God in these means, since it is from Him, who acts in us, and with us, as first and principal cause, that they receive all efficacy. Hence, we should expect from Him, and not from *them*, cure and health, according to these words of Ecclesiasticus : “ *Honor the physician* for the need you have of him in your infirmities ; but know that it is God, who has created him, and who gives to him all the science he possesses ; that it is He also who has produced the medicines and given to them their virtue for healing ; and, therefore, it is from Him that all cures emanate—that they cannot be hoped for, but from Him alone.”

Sometimes, God renders a person sick and infirm, not so much in punishment for sin as to enable him to acquire more merit, to draw from it His glory : thus, Our Lord says to the man born blind, that

the cause of his blindness was no sin of his own, nor of his parents, but to make manifest, by his cure, the power and the works of God, and to procure for Him, by such means, both honor and praise.

It was principally for this reason that God afflicted Job. In fine, a man who is patient in his ills, who bears them with sweetness, with strength, and a perfectly submissive spirit, is a great instrument of God's glory. "What trophy," says Tertullian, in speaking of Job, "has not God raised up, in the person of Job, against the demon! What a victory has He not gained in him, and by him, over the enemy of His glory! when to all the bad news that was announced to him, and to all the evils he suffered, he said nothing more than, 'BLESSED BE GOD!'"

What honor and what praise for God, in beholding St. Stephen, the hermit! Palladius relates of him, that whilst the surgeon was making deep incisions, in order to extract a cancer, he ceased not to speak to all present, and to made baskets of palm-leaves: suffering these cruel operations and these violent pains with as much firmness and composure as if his body was another's, and his flesh as insensible as his hair, so extraordinary and admirable was the patience with which God had endowed him.

What honor and glory did not God also derive from another anchoret named Benjamin! After having passed eighty years of a holy and irreproachable life; after having received from God the

grace of curing all kinds of maladies, he was himself taken sick ; he became dropsical, eight months before his death, and suffered such excessive pains that he, in fact, might be considered the “Job” of his age. So prodigiously swollen did he become, by his disease, that his little finger could not be enclosed by a person’s two hands. Hence, it was necessary to make him a very large cell, wherein he lived, during eight months, bearing all his sufferings with an invincible patience—giving thanks to God for having thus afflicted him, and saying to those who visited and expressed compassion for him : “Pray for me, my children, that my interior may not become diseased ; because, as to this body that you behold, it was of no use to me when it was well, nor is it troublesome to me now that it is sick.” However, whilst this new “Job” was himself so cruelly tormented by a strange and incurable malady, he healed other persons of diseases of every kind. A man thus laden with evils and so uncomplaining in his sufferings, is, without doubt, a marvellous spectacle, and capable of affording great honor to God.

When God sends infirmities and sickness for such an end, physicians and their remedies can effect but little. It is needless, therefore, to seek in them much aid. It is God who wounds, and it is He also who should cure. I knew two persons of great virtue—conducted by the way of high perfection—who, from time to time, were attacked with maladies, of which the physicians were ignorant, and their remedies were of no avail. They would suffer

some days, or some weeks, till God had executed His design. Then, on a sudden, they recovered their health, without anything being perceived of their late illness. For this reason, the Religiueuses of the famous monastery that lay in the depths of the Thebaida, and where St. Euphrasia, a near relative of the "Emperor Theodosius," the younger, took the habit, when they fell ill, sought no relief or help from medicines, but received their illness as a precious gift, and a signal favor from God—enduring it without applying any human remedy, and until it pleased Our Lord to heal them.

St. Eustychius, patriarch of Constantinople (the same whom "St. Gregory the Great" withdrew from an error regarding the body), being confined to his bed with the disease of which he died, was visited by the Emperor Tiberius, who commended his own physicians to prescribe for the Saint, and to give him great attention; but the holy bishop did not wish to be treated by them: using these words of David: "God has commanded the fever to torment my body, and it will only go as far, or where, He desires it." Then he added: I have a physician, who knows well how to cure me, whenever it may so please Him. He was four months sick with this fever, remaining in these happy dispositions, then died a holy death.

SECTION IX.

Motives to Cause us to Embrace Voluntary Poverty.

The first motive that should engage us to embrace voluntary poverty is, that Our Lord, speaking of poverty, made it the first beatitude of the new law. Whence, we must necessarily conclude, He spoke the truth, since He is Truth itself. "Jesus, opening His mouth, taught His disciples, saying to them: '*Blessed are the poor in spirit.*'" St. Bernard, pouring forth the sweetness and piety of his style on these words, utters the following: "Verily, was opened the mouth of Him, in whom are enclosed all the treasures of wisdom and science; and in truth, it is the doctrine of Him, who says in the Apocalypse: '*Behold! how I make all things new.*'" Our Lord said previously, by His prophet: "I will open my mouth. I will make you understand mysteries hidden from the commencement of the world; for what is there more hidden than that poverty is blessed?" This is extremely hidden, and nevertheless, the *Truth*, which cannot deceive nor be deceived, tells us so "Itself"—assuring us that the poor in spirit are blessed, so as even to place poverty in the first rank of the beatitudes. Thereupon, the blessed Laurence Justinian says, most applicably: "In the judgment of God, beatitude commences where, in the judgment of men, there is met but affliction and trouble."

If you now ask why the poor in spirit are

blessed, I answer, that Our Lord gave this reason Himself, in these words : “They are blessed, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.” St. Augustine says : Christians are most blessed in being able to make of poverty a sufficient price with which to purchase the kingdom of heaven. Then, let not your poverty displease you : there is nothing richer than it. Do you have to be convinced ? it purchases heaven. What treasures are comparable to poverty, since a rich man can never enter heaven with an affection for his riches, whereas, he will arrive thereat by contemning them, and by having poverty of spirit.

Moreover, I say, that the happiness of poverty is shown inasmuch as it destroys and uproots all cupidity—which, according to St. Paul, is the principle and the source of all evil. It frees the heart from a thousand distractions and cares ; it withdraws it from all affection to things of earth, and reduces it to the most happy necessity of placing all its hopes, and all its love, in God. But this will be seen more at length in the following motives, though, to conclude this first one, I will add a word from St. Bernard : “There are a great many poor, whose poverty does not render them happy, but miserable, because the beatitude is not promised to any but *voluntary* poverty, received and borne for the love of God ; whereas, misery and anguish always accompany *forced* poverty.” In fine, Our Lord beatified and declared blessed, not poverty of goods, but *poverty of spirit*.

The second motive to make us love voluntary

poverty is, that it is the foundation of perfection. So, whoever wishes to be perfect, shall necessarily attain to it thereby. Our Lord declared it Himself, when He said to the young man, that since he had observed the commandments of God—something absolutely necessary for his salvation—if he wished to do more, and to become perfect, he must sell his goods and become poor.

At the same time, it is not in reality that perfection consists in poverty, as is thus most wisely remarked by St. Thomas ; for it is certain, according to the Apostle St. Paul, that this glory is due solely to the *love of God and of the neighbor* ; but this is said of poverty, and this honor is rendered it, in the sense that, by cutting off riches, it retrenches by the same stroke the source of gluttony, luxury, excesses, and the greater number of vices which are barriers to perfection ; whereas, on the contrary, it opens the door to the opposite virtues, which are the means for attaining to it. This caused St. Ambrose to say : “Poverty walks at the head of virtues, of which she is as the mother.” Also, St. Francis said to his Religious, in a conference he gave them : “My brothers, know that poverty is a special and most certain road for arriving at salvation ; for it is the food of humility and the root of perfection.” St. Bonaventure, imitating his holy patriarch, in explaining the first of the beatitudes, says, that Our Lord commenced them with poverty, wishing, doubtless, to have it understood that poverty is the basis of the whole spiritual life, and of the design thereby entertained of

perfection, because a man can scarcely follow with real vigor our Lord Jesus Christ—*the true mirror of poverty*—if he be embarrassed by temporals.

The learned and pious William of Paris says on this subject : “The emptiness and nothingness of poverty are the foundation and support of perfect men ; for, as misers, and all worldly persons, take riches for their stay, so, also, spiritual men—those who excel in virtue and sanctity—establish themselves on poverty.” Wherefore, holy Job says : “God stretched out the north over the empty spaces and hangeth the earth upon nothing.” By the north, is to be understood the Church of the Gentiles—the greater part of whom, when converted to the faith, were the northern and septentrional nations, in comparison to Judea. By the earth, as mentioned by the same prophet, should also be understood the same church, upon which God poured out His benedictions. Then God stretched out the north over the empty space, and hung the earth upon nothing, when He made poverty the foundation of the Christian religion, by these words ; “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*” It is explained even more fully by these : “Place not your care in amassing here below—in treasuring up goods on earth.” It is thus He founded, also, the Church of the Jews on the Apostles ; He established it on this void. In a word, this nothingness of poverty is so truly the foundation of all religious orders, that no one can enter any of them, if he is not previously founded upon this nothingness of poverty, and if

he does not oblige himself, by vow, to be yet more given to it, and ever persevere therein. The rich who enter religion are like those hunch-backed camels of the Gospel that pass through the eye of a needle: to pass religion, they should necessarily lay off the hump of their purse, and the tumor of their riches; otherwise, they will never pass through. Such is the language of the holy bishop of Paris, who has taken it in part from St. Bernard—this Saint saying, in a like sense: “We have to pass through a very small aperture.” If we desire to reach that which we follow, we must try to enter by the small and low door. What means this hump of the camel, O man of wealth? Why carry you the purse, like the traitor Judas? It is not thus that you will enter the eye of the needle, through which you must pass: it does not permit a man burthened as you to pass through it.

Established on this foundation and animated with this spirit, the first Christians placed their riches, not in the hands, but at the feet of the Apostles, showing thereby, says St. Jerome, that the true Christian should trample under foot the riches and all the goods of earth.

The third motive for poverty is its own excellence, which is great and truly admirable. The dignity of holy poverty is exalted, says St. Bernard: its glory is very brilliant, and it ennoble greatly the mind of man, since it makes him abandon and condemn riches, and all that riches bear along with them, such as honors, charges, pleasures; in a word, all that men esteem, admire, and seek after with avidity.

Thus, it elevates him above all this, and so, doubtless, he is raised very high. The Roman Orator had also good reason for saying: "There is nothing more grand, nothing more sublime, nothing more magnificent, than to despise money." Finally, it was then that God fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaias: "I will exalt you above the mountains of the earth." By the mountains is to be understood the honors, the grandeurs, the dignities, so esteemed by men, and which elevate them above others. St. Francis, praying Our Lord to give him the love of poverty, said to Him, among other things: "O Jesus! my Lord, show me the way by which I may arrive at Thy well beloved and most dear poverty. I know that the old law was the type of the new, and that Thou hast made to those who lived under the old law this promise: 'All places that you trample upon are yours.' " To trample upon them will be your *title of possession*. Then, to trample upon anything, is to condemn it; and as voluntary poverty treads all under foot, it must be concluded that it is a universal queen.

It is for a like reason that, speaking of the rule of poverty, the same Saint bestows upon it these honorable titles: "It is the sublimity of eminent poverty, my very dear brothers, that has made you inheritors and kings of the kingdom of heaven; it is she who, by disengaging you from the goods of earth, has so gloriously filled you with virtue." In the rule he made for the "nuns of St. Clare," he repeated the same thing.

St. Bernard, writing to Roger, King of Sicily, to recommend to him the Religious he sent him, said : I beg your majesty to receive them as travellers and strangers, who are, however, fellow-citizens of the Saints, and servants of God : I have said too little in calling them citizens, for they are *Kings* : the kingdom of heaven belongs to them by the right and the merit of poverty, which they profess.

The Spouse says to His spouse, in the Canticles : "The hair of thy head is beautiful and precious as the purple of kings." Instead of the hair, another version has it, "*the poor*," to signify that the poor are like Our Lord's hair, that clung to His head, and are its ornaments ; and that the poor are ennobled and ornamented by poverty, askings are by their purple. St. Catharine, Princess of Sweden, and daughter of St. Bridget, went to Rome with her mother, and there lived most holily : among the virtues she practiced, she loved most singularly the poverty of Jesus Christ, her Spouse. To give evidence of it, she wore no other than a miserably torn habit, slept upon a bed of straw, with a poor pillow and a patched covering. During a time of illness she was visited by persons of note. One day, a great Roman lord came to see her ; the daughters of St. Catharine were much mortified and confused that a person of such high rank should see their mother on such a poor bed. But Our Lord made the lowly bed of His spouse appear to this nobleman as if it were draped in purple, embroidered with gold. Another time, this princess, whilst in the flower of youth, and endowed

with rare beauty, wearing, in imitation of Our Lord's poverty, a thread-bare and well-patched habit, appeared in this attire, without the least confusion, before some Roman ladies; but these ladies beheld her clothed in a most precious purple suit, which caused them to express surprise, saying: How comes it that Madam Catharine, living in such a great reform, and so withdrawn from all things of the world, wears such costly clothing?

The Royal Prophet, speaking of the poor, says: "He will save them, and He will protect them against their oppressors, because their name is great and honorable before Him." Thus, Our Lord, relating the history of the bad rich man and of the poor Lazarus, does not call the first by his name, whereas, he designates the latter by his: as at court, and among persons of quality, remarks Cajetan, villagers and porters are not known by their names, and when mention is made of them, it is only by calling them a certain villager, one of the porters, etc.; whilst princes and rich men are known—are named and spoken of with honor. The Hebrew text, followed by the version of Aquila, seems to signify much more; for it does not say only that their name is honorable before God, but that they are accounted as most noble, and as descendants of illustrious blood.

After all these considerations, St. Francis said to his Religious that they should not feel ashamed to ask for alms; in fact, they thus performed a most glorious act in doing what Our Lord Himself had

done. Accordingly, this Saint was himself accustomed to beg, previous to great feastings, saying that the bread thus collected from door to door was the *bread of angels*—agreeable to the words of David: “Man has eaten the bread of angels,” inasmuch as this bread possessed excellent qualities that all other bread had not; and this was, that it was asked and given by an inspiration of the angels and for the love of God. Also, whenever he was invited out to dinner or supper, he took care to go first to ask alms, and he carried with joy, and even with feelings of honor, the bread that would be thus given him—eating it, and sharing it with his host and other guests, saying to them: “I do not wish to forget, or to lay aside my royal dignity, nor my inheritance, nor my revenue, nor my profession, which is to ask alms from door to door.” St. Arsenius was of the same opinion; for when falling sick in the solitude of Scete, and needing for his relief and cure a little money, he received it in alms from some charitable persons; and he said: “I thank Thee, my God! for having rendered me worthy of the grace and the honor to become reduced to the necessity of asking alms in Thy name.”

I knew a man of high position, and rich, but who had so great a desire for poverty, being convinced of its honor, that he was finally reduced to want, in answer to a prayer he made Our Lord, from the beginning of his conversion; and also, to be able to go to some strange country, where, not understanding the language, he would experience the

greatest effects of poverty. Alas! he felt this effectually; for he died of hunger and cold. He said to me: Our Lord, who is our wisdom, tells us: "If you wish to be perfect, go, abandon all thy wealth, and give it to the poor." What means this? We see very few who follow exactly this counsel of Our Lord, and become poor for His sake. There are many who are reduced every day to beggary from divers accidents: such as these are not spoken of, nor are they blamed by the world; but when some one impoverishes himself for God, he is said to have done a senseless thing, or that he is rash and indiscreet in his devotions. If those are praised who ruin themselves in the service of their prince, and of their king, certainly we should not blame, but rather esteem, those who abandon their wealth and become poor for the love of the King of kings, Jesus Christ, whose doctrine they carry into execution.

The fourth motive that should imprint in us a love of poverty is the pleasure it produces. Since the rose-bush, which is so thorny, can, by the aid of nature, produce so great a beauty and so sweet a perfume as that of the rose, we should believe that, however much poverty appears hedged with thorns and difficulties, it may, at the same time, with God's blessing, possess much sweetness, and fill with contentment and pleasure the soul of him who embraces it. "O God," says the Royal Prophet, "*Thou hast, in the abundance of Thy sweetness, prepared very great goods and solid pleasures for the poor who have become such voluntarily for*

Thy love." These pleasures are to be possessed at present, according to the word of Our Lord, the kingdom of heaven ; that is to say, the kingdom of grace in this world, which consists, as St. Paul pronounces it, in the justice, joy, and peace of the Holy Spirit, expecting that we shall one day possess that of glory, in the very bosom of God. These pleasures are the likeness of Our Lord, and it is this resemblance that, according to the doctrine of the same Apostle, makes also the foundation of our predestination, and of all our happiness ; such as liberty of spirit, the annihilation of the desires we may have for the things of earth, and freedom from the care produced by these goods, which are perfect torments to men. Wherefore, Our Lord styles them thorns, because the care and anxiety necessary to acquire, to preserve, or to recover them, prick and tear a poor soul so deeply as often to make it bleed. St. John Chrysostom says : "If you could see the soul of a man who is attached to the goods of this world, you would perceive that it is gnawed by every species of care, of vexation and annoyance, as a garment consumed by a thousand moths. The soul of the voluntary poor is quite different : it glitters like gold, having all the brilliancy of the purest diamond : it is a genuine ruby, a beautiful rose. It is sheltered from every attack of the solitudes of life, being provided for by God."

Does not this poor man seem to you very rich ? says St. Ambrose ; for, desiring nothing, and not being agitated by any eagerness for gain, he pos-

sesses peace of mind, tranquillity of soul, and repose of heart. In truth, this peace is a rich peace, for it surpasses all the peace and all the pleasures of the senses: it is so rich as not to be conceived by our thoughts, nor expressed by words.

Elsewhere, the same Saint says, in speaking of a man attached to wealth: "Who would not have pity on this man? His possessions do not furnish him with as much of revenue as they do of vexations, sadness, and bitter complaints: the earth produces for him, not fruits, but cutting cares and piercing thorns." St. Cyprian remarks on the same subject: "He sighs in the midst of festivity; he is sleepless on down, and he does not understand—miserable man that he is!—that all his glory is a glory which torments him—that his gold is a chain that holds him captive, and that he is much more the *slave* than the master of his riches.

St. Anthony told one of his Religious, who was enamored with the goods of this world, and consequently not truly poor, that he should go to buy meat in a certain village, and carry it home on his naked back. The Religious obeyed, and in returning thus laden, the dogs and the birds of prey made an attack on the meat, and often, in place of the meat, bit his flesh, causing it to bleed. Arriving at the monastery, St. Anthony asked him if he had done as he had been directed. The Religious replied in the affirmative, in proof of which he added: "My back, in consequence, is all torn," showing it at the same time, and saying: Behold how the dogs and birds have served me! The

Saint then said to him : That which the dogs and birds have done with their teeth and bills to your body, covetousness for the goods of this world, and the demon of this covetousness, do to your soul.

We find this beautifully exemplified in the conduct of "Nabuchodonoser," when he took possession of the city of Jerusalem, which means "*vision of peace.*" He caused Joakim, his mother, and his wife, the princes, the great lords, and those who had wealth, to leave the city ; and he suffered none to remain but the poor. God wished to teach us thereby that peace and repose are the inheritance of poverty, when persons know how to turn it to good use ; whereas, trouble, anxiety and bitterness are the portion of the rich.

Voluntary poverty, says St. John Climachus, is a disengagement from all the cares of life, and a freedom from all kinds of trouble. The poor in spirit are exempt from all uneasiness, enjoying the greatest tranquillity ; whilst they who love the goods of earth can no more be free from anger and vexation than the sea can be without water : they are ever disputing for mere trifles ; whereas, he who contemns riches knows not the meaning of *contest*. For this reason, even a pagan (it was Seneca) wrote to his friend, Lucilius : " If you wish to have freedom of spirit, and to possess your soul in peace, you must be like the poor ; *that is to say*, you must be poor in effect and in spirit (or at least you should be so in spirit)."

I will conclude this motive with what St. Syncletica said to her Religieuses, as cited by St. Atha-

nasius, in her life : "Poverty is a perfect work ; but to bear it well, and to taste its sweetness, strength is needed." Those who bear it with strength and courage, though they should experience some resistance on the part of nature—some trouble in the senses—will have, however, a tranquil mind ; for as cloth is bleached by continued rubbing, so also a generous soul fortifies itself more and more by acts of voluntary poverty. The contrary happens to those who are weak-minded ; for the least necessity they experience, the first affliction they encounter, discourages them : they break their resolutions, and cannot endure the exercise of virtue, any more than worn-out cloth can stand to be beaten. Though the fuller labors in a good deal the same manner upon one and the other of these cloths, only one comes from his hands all torn and tattered, whilst the other becomes very white and beautiful. Wherefore, it has been said that voluntary poverty is a precious treasure for a strong and courageous soul.

SECTION X.

The fifth motive to induce us to embrace poverty is its utility—the wonderful advantages it procures ; but to give some light thereupon, I say, first, that voluntary poverty, in its renunciation of the goods of earth, is the very plenitude of all riches—an immense treasure ; hence, there should be applied to it these words of St. Paul : "That having nothing, it possesses all things."

We have learned how St. Syncletica calls it a *precious treasure*. The holy Abbot Hyperichie, in the "Lives of the Fathers," said, also: The treasure of the Religious is voluntary poverty. St. Francis, whilst travelling through France with the blessed brother Massé, found, in a solitude, a beautiful spring, and near it a large stone, like a table. They placed upon it the scraps of bread they had begged, when St. Francis said to his companion: "We are not deserving so great a treasure;" and as he repeated several times these same words, his companion remarked: "Ah! Father, how can you call a treasure that which you see to be extreme poverty? Where are the waiters? where the servants? where are the glasses and cups? where the costly wines, the exquisite food?" Then St. Francis replied: "I call our poverty a great treasure; the care and industry of men add nothing to it, but divine Providence does all."

Another time, entering a church with the same companion, in order to beg of God for himself and his Religious the love of holy poverty, he did it with so much fervor that fire appeared to dart out from his face. Then turning, all inflamed, towards the brother, with his arms extended, he called him with a strong voice to come to him. The good brother cast himself into the Saint's arms, felt himself raised in the air several feet by the sole strength of the heat proceeding from the Saint, experiencing at the same time so exquisite a pleasure that he often said afterwards that in all his life he had never tasted so great sweetness. At this

moment St. Francis said to him: "Let us go to Rome to visit and pray the holy Apostles Peter and Paul to teach us to possess, as we should, the excellent treasure of poverty, and to make good use of it."

I will here add the remark of a very learned man. "In pious language," he says, "the words poverty and poor bear, by a singular mystery, the names from which we have drawn into our language that of *stingy*: these nouns are derived from a root that signifies *to be useful*, and from thence the *treasurer* has derived his appellation." Now, you will ask me, Why is poverty a *treasure*? To this I will reply, first, that the poverty of which we speak enriches—and this even in the judgment of pagans. In a word, "Seneca" says: "He who is on good terms with poverty merits to be esteemed rich; for that man should not be accounted poor who has little, but he who desires more than he has." Whence, we are told by St. Basil that Diogenes the cynic esteemed himself richer than Alexander the Great; for this monarch, to sustain his dignity and his state, had need of innumerable things that he could not always have to suit him; whereas, Diogenes was contented with very little, both for his condition and his support.

Secondly, voluntary poverty is a true treasure, because the kingdom of heaven is promised and is due to poverty. There is nothing richer, says St. Ambrose, than the affection and will of a wise man, and nothing poorer than that of a senseless man; for since the kingdom of heaven belongs to the

poor, who could there be richer than they? Then by the kingdom of heaven is to be understood the kingdom of grace, which they already possess in this world, and the kingdom of glory eternal, which they will enjoy hereafter. St. Francis speaks thus of the kingdom of grace and of the virtues: "The treasure of rich and blessed poverty is so great, so divine, that we are not worthy to hold it in our contemptible vases." Then continuing, he says: Poverty is that admirable virtue that makes us despise and trample upon all the goods of earth; that removes all the impediments that we meet with on the road to our salvation and our perfection; and finally, that disposes our souls to a union with God. It is that which makes our souls converse with the angels of heaven, though we be still on earth; it is that which binds them to Our Lord on the Cross—that places them with Him in the tomb, and brings them out triumphant with Him, and makes them ascend gloriously to heaven in His company. It is holy poverty that communicates to our souls the gift of agility; that gives them wings and causes them to rise from base things to those that are sublime—from earth to heaven, whither it makes them fly by ardent desires, sighs of love, and a holy life.

It would appear that St. Francis has taken this latter sentiment from St. Bernard, who says: "Poverty is strong of wing, since it flies so swiftly from earth to the kingdom of heaven."

St. Gregory Nazianzen, testifying the joy of his heart for having left all, to be no longer impeded

by anything in his flight to heaven, elegantly styles poverty “a bird of lofty flight,” that, disengaged from all things, takes wing to soar upward to heaven, whither Elias could not mount till after he had cast aside his mantle, though he was borne in a chariot of fire. No one, says Seneca, can swim with his baggage and clothes; and he who wishes to walk at his ease, to make much speed, or, what is yet more, to bear away the prize of the race, burthens himself as little as possible.

Since poverty puts us in possession of the kingdom of heaven, as we have seen, it is much to be feared that a love of the goods of this world will deprive us of so great a bliss. Hence, Our Lord said: “Woe to you rich! I say to you in truth, a rich man will have difficulty in saving himself: he will not easily enter 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 heaven.” St. Paul, writing to his disciple Timothy, tells him that those who wish to acquire means and to become rich are easily tempted—fall into the snares of the demon, and permit themselves to be drawn by innumerable useless and hurtful desires that cast them adrift and cause their loss. Aristotle says that it is an impertinent and ridiculous thing to call *riches* that with which a man can die of hunger. Wherefore, we must further say that it is a yet more extravagant thing to qualify by the name of riches and wealth those things the enjoyment of which can reduce us to extreme and eternal misery.

St. Francis, travelling one day in Pouille, his companion found on the way a purse that seemed to be full. The Saint had no thought of touching it, but his companion, on picking it up, saw issue from the ground, at the same instant, a snake, that quickly disappeared with the purse. Then the Saint remarked : Brother, for the servants of God, money is but a demon and a venomous serpent. We read, in the life of St. Antonius—Archbishop of Florence—that this holy man, passing one day through the town, perceived angels on the roof of a house. Quite surprised at such a spectacle, he entered the dwelling, and there saw a poor widow with her three daughters, all in tattered garments and bare feet, occupied with sewing, to gain their livelihood. The Saint gave them the wherewith to relieve their wants, and some time afterwards, passing again by the same street, he saw on the roof of this house, not angels, but demons. Greatly astonished at this change, and not doubting but that there was some mystery, entered the house at once, where he found the mother and daughters very comfortable by the alms they had received ; being well clothed and not working. The Saint reproved them for idleness, and exhorted them to return to their duty, from which they had been drawn by money, while poverty had forced them to industry.

When the Emperor Constantine the Great gave the City of Rome and its territory to the Roman Church, in the person of Pope St. Sylvester, it is said that a voice in the air was heard, and a hand was seen writing on the wall, these words :

"This day poison has been given to the Church." Others again relate this, with more probability, as of a donation made in the will of the Princess Matilda to the Church, in the pontificate of Gregory VII.—of the lands known as the "Patrimony of St. Peter." There was then heard a mysterious voice saying: "A woman has given the Christians to drink, poison, sweetened with honey."

St. Thomas Aquinas, seeking an audience with Pope Innocent IV., on entering saw on a table a large sum of minted gold. The Pope said to him: You see, brother Thomas, that the Church is not obliged to say now, what It was forced to acknowledge at its birth: viz. "I have neither gold nor silver." This is true, Holy Father, modestly replied the Saint; but also the Church cannot say now as then, to the lame: "*Rise up and walk.*"

This is not to say that on many reasonable accounts, and for very just necessities, the Church has not a legal right to receive, to possess gold and silver, and even great wealth in safety of conscience; but after all if she could dispense with it and conduct us without it to heaven, it would be infinitely better, and so she is obliged to esteem and regard her riches, not as desirable goods; but as necessary evils.

Also the holy and eloquent Bishop of Marseilles, Salvian, said: "Riches are impediments and not helps;" burthens and not reliefs. Religion is not consolidated, but rather destroyed, by the possession and the use of riches. The true riches of the Church is expressed in what St. Peter said to the

lame, as mentioned above : “ I have neither gold nor silver, but will give you what I have : in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk :” by His merits, of which I have the key, and with His graces, of which I am appointed, in some manner, the distributor, arise from your sins, from your vices, and your bad habits, and walk to virtue, to perfection, to felicity.

Thirdly, voluntary poverty is a treasure, because our Lord promised to it, besides eternal life, made certain in the other world, a hundred-fold in this life. This should be understood both spiritually and materially : spiritually, according to this explanation of St. Bernard : The hundred-fold that our Lord promises to those who renounce all, and become poor for Him, are their adoption as children of God, the sweets and the fruits of the liberty of spirit, the delights of charity, the glory of a good conscience, and that kingdom of God that we bear within us, and that does not consist in eating or drinking, but in justice, in peace, and in the joy of the Holy Ghost. St. Gregory gives an explanation somewhat similar ; he says : “ The number ten multiplied by itself, produces the number one hundred—and the hundred-fold signifies the great perfection promised to the elect, who abandon all for the love of God.” The hundred-fold that God promises to those who impoverish themselves for His love, is also to be understood materially : for he who abandons a house, and other things, has the use of all the houses of the Order, these being often numerous.

Hereupon Hugh of St. Victor makes this remark: that brothers according to nature divide among themselves that which is theirs in common, as the inheritance of their father, and each one of them, by this division, has a part or share for himself; but brothers according to grace—that is to say—“Religious,” unite on the other hand what was divided, by placing in common what had been their own. Thus, nature leads incessantly to division, and to its own interest, whereas grace, by causing us to leave ourselves, tends ever to union, to unity—to God, who is *One*.

SECTION XI.

Continuation of the Same Motive.

I say, moreover, that voluntary poverty is a treasure, for it makes the poor possess God, who is the “Treasure of treasures,” and the Supreme good. He is, as says our Lord: “Rich in God, and of God:” as it is said of a man that he is rich in gold, in silver, in precious stones, in flocks, etc.; also the voluntary poor man is rich in God, for he possesses God. Hence God said to the Israelites in speaking to them of the Levites, who were the types of the evangelical poor—“They will have no heritage on earth, but I will be their heritage; and you will not give them among you any possession, for I myself will be their possession and their good.” Now who can say how rich is he who possesses God? David says: “Men esteem those blessed who abound in gold, in silver, and in temporals; but

those are truly blessed who have the Lord for their God, and to whom he holds the place of gold, silver, and of all goods." "Can a man be poor who is rich in God, and of God?" says Manucius Felix. You think, perhaps, says St. Augustine, that such a one is rich, because his coffers are full of gold, and that another is not, who has his soul full of God. But he is truly rich in whom God deigns to take up His dwelling. The *very rich poor* and those who possess innumerable goods, says Venerable Bede, are the evangelical poor; they possess in their hearts, God—source of all good—and without doubt they can want for nothing. He, says St. Ambrose, who has God for his portion and his heritage, is possessor of the whole of nature; he enjoys with God the entire universe.

Then the voluntary poor, possessing God after this manner, God exercises towards them the care, the affection, the tenderness, and all the solicitude of fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, the most affectionate and tenderest of friends. He provides them with all necessities, and lets nothing be wanting to them. "The poor man is abandoned to Thee," says David: "Thou wilt take care of him; Thou art ever at his right hand to defend him, and Thy eyes are continually watching his wants." God Himself says, by David: "I shall give bread to the poor of my Son" (these are the evangelical poor), "and I charge myself with feeding them." Behold the effects of this promise; and know the admirable method that He has adopted in fulfilling it. There is not a life of a Saint, among those who

have founded an order or monastery, or who have lived in great poverty, wherein this truth cannot be recognized. If it were desirable to collect all the scattered traits of their histories, tending to show this clearly, an immense volume would be made. It will suffice, therefore, to relate a few instances.

Every one knows how God fed Paul, the first hermit, for the space of sixty years, in a desert. He sent him every day, by a raven, the half of a loaf, and when St. Anthony came to visit him, a whole loaf was sent for the latter's entertainment. Rufinus relates of St. Helenius, the hermit, that when he was in want, an angel appeared to him in a dream, saying: "Arise and take for your food what you will see before you." The Saint arose and saw a spring of limpid water, bordered and beautified with delicate, sweet-scented herbs, of which he ate; then drank of the water. In after life he gave many assurances that he had never tasted anything so delicate as this food, nor so delightful a drink as the water. He found a cavern in the same place, wherein he dwelt for some time. Here God never failed to supply him with necessary food. As this holy man was in the desert and had not the wherewith to entertain the hermits who visited him, a young man would at such times present himself, bearing loaves of bread and all that was necessary to give hospitality to the guests; after depositing these provisions at the entrance of the cavern, this young man would disappear without any one knowing who he was, or whence he came. One day, while this man of God was going to visit

some brothers who were in great want, and carrying them some food, the weight of which so inconvenienced him that he could not proceed on his way, he instantly beheld at a distance some wild asses crossing the desert, and he cried out to them: "In the name of Jesus Christ, one of you come to my assistance and carry my load." Directly one of them came to offer himself with singular gentleness. The Saint placed his burden on the back of this docile animal, and then he himself mounted, and was thus speedily carried to the cells of the brothers he wished to visit.

Another anchorite, who passed the greater part of the time in the desert, occupied in meditating on spiritual things, and singing the praises of God, when returning one day to his cavern, pressed with hunger, found, on entering, a table spread with bread of most admirable whiteness and excellence, of which he ate sufficiently, then returned thanks to God with hymns of praise. Palladius relates of St. Possidonius, the hermit, that, on finding he had nothing in the way of food, went from his cavern to seek for some; when, on looking around, he perceived a man on horseback, whom he took for a soldier, wearing a helmet, and who left in a cave close by a basketful of figs and grapes freshly gathered. The Saint took them away to his usual retreat, where he ate of them during two months.

Rufinus again relates something remarkable of St. Appolonius. This good hermit, not having, on Easter Sunday, anything but a little very stale bread and some salted herbs to give to the solitaires

who were dwelling in the same cavern with him, and wishing to regale them with better cheer than ordinary, prayed Our Lord to furnish him with the means for so doing; whereupon there came some unknown men, carrying a great quantity and variety of food—even fruits not to be found in Egypt, such as bunches of grapes of an immense size, nuts, figs, and large mulberries, much in advance of the season, together with a quantity of milk, honey, beautiful large dates, and very white bread, this latter still quite warm. Scarcely had these men unloaded themselves, than they left in great haste, as if compelled to return to Him who had sent them; leaving these good hermits giving thanks to God for His gifts, of which they ate, and had afterwards enough of this food remaining to last them till Pentecost.

I find in the life of St. Fronton, Abbot of Egypt, who is commemorated in the Roman martyrology on the fourth of April, something well worthy of being related as in connection with this subject. This Saint and his Religious lived in great austerity and extreme poverty. The Religious, however, wearying of so austere a life, which they felt unable to support any longer, commenced murmuring against the Saint, and then thought of going to some town, in order to procure some of their little comforts; but the Saint consoled them, and inspired them to hope that God would take care of them, as soon happened. God sent an angel during the night to a very rich man, who, whilst he was sleeping, heard the angel say to him: “You

make good cheer every day, while my servants die of hunger in the desert. Arise! and send some of this wealth I have given you, as much as is requisite for my servants. I have chosen you for this; my pleasure is to feed, by your alms, my poor who live spiritually and holily in the desert, and who have placed all their confidence in me. Do then what I command you, otherwise some misfortune will befall you." This man awoke much frightened: communicated the affair to his friends, and in accordance with the advice of the wisest of them—though ignorant where these servants of God dwelt—he loaded with provisions seventy camels, tying them one to another, and let them go without a guide, committing them to the keeping and guidance of God. These animals arrived, after four days' travel, at the monastery, at the moment when the Religious were in choir, occupied in singing the praises of God. The holy Abbot, who was near the door, hearing the little bell on the first camel, looked out, then called his Religious, who, seized with admiration, and whilst blessing God, joyfully unloaded the camels. The next day the holy Abbot sent back the camels in the same manner; but such were his dispositions of humility, his spirit of poverty, honesty, and charity towards him who had bestowed all these goods, as also of gratitude to God, that he received no more than the half of the alms, returning the balance to his benefactor. Now, this man seeing his camels thus returned, and without injury, conceived such an affection for St. Fronton and his Religious that he

sent them provisions every year—never leaving them to want.

St. Robert, first Abbot of “Chaize Dieu,” in Auvergne, gave to a poor man, whose voice he had heard when in prayer, a little bread that remained the preceding day from the supper of the Religious. As it was all they had, the procurator of the monastery complained of making so ill-timed an alms; but the Saint appeased this complaint by these words: “Be not troubled as to what you are to eat and what you are to drink, for your Father knows well that you must eat and drink.” In a word, this good Father thereupon provided abundantly for them; for a rich Abbot sent them three horses laden with bread and wine, two of which alone arrived at the monastery, the third horse stopping on the road—so the Saint was told by the person who brought them. St. Robert, having thanked God for this timely aid, said to his Religious: “May brother procurator henceforth have more faith. He sees our faith recompensed by the load of these two horses, and the lack of his faith punished by the loss, or at least by the delay, of the third one.”

It is related in the life of St. Dominic that two of his Religious were sent to preach the Gospel, and after walking a great while, grew troubled about their food, as they found they were in a poor and strange country, and knew not to whom to have recourse. Just then a fine-looking man, clothed as a stranger, presented himself to them, saying: “Why are you troubled, *men of little faith* and

confidence? Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and the necessary things for your maintenance will not be wanting. You have confided yourselves to God, by abandoning for Him and for His service all that you had in the world, and now you fear that He will leave you die of hunger. Be assured that He who feeds the beasts will not permit His servants and His children to perish of want. You are going to experience the truth of what you now hear: when you will have passed this field, you will descend into a little valley, where you will find a village. Scarcely will you have entered the church, when the curate will invite you to dine; but just then there will come up a soldier, who will desire to take you to his house, and thus cause a charitable dispute as to which of the two will claim you for guests. In the height of this contest the lord of the place, who will be the stronger, will arrive to take you, the curate and the soldier into his own house, where he will make good cheer for you all." Having thus spoken, this stranger disappeared, and what he predicted was verified.

We will give you an example from among ourselves. The blessed St. Francis Borgia (commisary general of all our Society in Spain) was at the college of Seville, then recently established, when our Fathers were reduced to such want that they were actually without food; under these circumstances there arrived some of our Religious from other houses, whom it was necessary to receive with charity, and to treat better than the rest. In

this extremity, the Superior of the house went to Father Borgia, and asked him if he wished the bell to be rung to summon the Religious to the refectory, though there was nothing there for them to eat. The Father hesitated a little, and entered into himself; then, full of confidence, he said to the Superior: "Ring, Father, ring; God will provide." And in fact, at the very moment when the refectory bell was ringing, a man rung that of the gate; he brought provisions for all our household, and even more than enough, for there was some left to give to the poor. Father Borgia, in view of so marked an evidence of the goodness and providence of God, said to our Fathers that this was a lesson from which they should learn to have entire confidence in Our Lord, and that they might feel assured always that whoever labors for His glory shall never want for anything, either for soul or body. The historian adds that this providence was displayed in behalf of our Society, not only at Seville, but also at Valladolid and at other places.

Behold how God provides for the wants of His poor, by extraordinary and miraculous ways! And it is no wonder, since He has promised to do so: since He has solemnly engaged His word, when He said that whoever would abandon father and mother, and kindred and wealth, for love of Him, should have a hundred-fold in this world, and life eternal in the next. Moreover, He has again said: "Seek first of all the kingdom of God and His justice;" that is to say, "strive to live well, and all that is necessary for your support will be pro-

vided you." That great servant of God, John of Avila, underlined these words in his New Testament, and profited greatly by them. He says that by confiding in this promise nothing was ever wanting to him for his maintenance. Pope Honorius III. wished to persuade St. Francis not to live only by alms in his Order, but to have some revenue, expecting that such a life would encounter great inconveniences; but the Saint replied: Holy Father, I trust in Our Lord Jesus Christ, who, having promised us eternal glory and the possession of heaven, will not refuse us on earth the little that is necessary for our food and our clothing. Pope Innocent III., predecessor of Pope Honorius, judging the poverty established by this Saint in his Order to be too rigorous, wished to mitigate it; but the Saint immediately replied by this parable: "There was once a virgin of most perfect and extraordinary beauty. She dwelt in an out-of-the-way and solitary place. The king of the country, a rich and powerful monarch, having seen her, became desperately enamored of her, married her, and lived many years with her in this desert. They had many children, in whom could be seen the beauty of their mother and many of the features of their father. Business of state called the king to his capital, and to his palace in the midst of his court, and he left this dear spouse and his children in their solitude's home. This mother nursed and brought up her offspring with the greatest care, then sent them to their father, after telling them: 'My children, you are born of a

great king, who is now residing at his court; go, to be there with him. For my part, I am resolved not to leave my solitude, queen though I am. Your father will be careful to support you in a manner in keeping with your dignity, and he will furnish you amply with all that your noble birth demands.' These young princes then departed, and soon arrived at the court of their father; they presented themselves before the king, who recognized and acknowledged them for his children: he afterwards gave them an equipage suitable to their rank, and built them a dwelling worthy of their birth. Most Holy Father, this virgin so perfectly beautiful is poverty—despised by men, she is constrained to live in retirement. This king is Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords, who, ravished with the beauty and the charms of poverty, came from heaven to earth to espouse her in the manger, to live with her in most intimate friendship. He has had many children: these are the apostles, the hermits, the Religious, and all persons who have for His sake renounced their wealth. Then is there any likelihood that this King, so good, so wise, and so rich, who gives of His table and of His treasures to the Moors and infidels—to those who blaspheme and hate Him—all that is necessary for them, and who even loads them with benefits; is it likely that He will allow to perish of hunger and misery the children whom He loves, and who have deprived themselves, for His sake, of all they possessed in the world? No, most holy Father, such a thing should not be

feared." The Pope, hearing this discourse, was satisfied, and approved the rule in all its austerity.

Our Lord said to His apostles: "In your journey, carry neither bag, nor purse, nor bread, nor silver." By this He wished them to understand that He Himself would be their staff, upon which they were to rest; that He would be their money and their bread—designing to furnish all this for them in their need. St. Francis, the first two years that followed his conversion, going into the country, carried a staff as a sign that he considered himself a pilgrim in this world; but on hearing these concluding words of Our Lord, he threw it aside till the last two years of his life, when, having received the stigmata, he was compelled, in consequence of the weakness of his body, to resume its use. Thus Our Lord is the staff of the poor; He is their support, and they should hope to be able to say with David, whatever happens to them: "The Lord directs me. He is careful to nourish me—nothing shall be wanting to me.

It is necessary that I should introduce here the words of a pagan; they being all the more forcible from the fact that he had less knowledge of the goodness, the providence, and the other perfections of God, than we Christians. It is Epictetus, who, we are told by Arian, his disciple, says, in irony: "A man of virtue, I believe, will not fear that food shall be wanting to him; it is not wanting to the blind or to the lame; it is not wanting to the wicked, and will it be wanting to the good man? The soldier receives his pay, the workman his

recompense, and will God refuse His to the good man?" It is thus that God will have lost the remembrance of His commandments, and the care of His servants, who alone among men serve Him as torches, to enlighten those who know Him not, and also as witnesses to render testimony to all that He is the Lord of the universe; that He governs it with admirable wisdom and order, and that He cares in a special manner for the affairs of men, so that He permits not any evil to befall a good man, either during life or at the hour of death. Whence should be drawn this important consequence, that the mendicant Religious, and the houses that subsist by alms, should never fear that He will fail them in their need. They should not take excessive care to procure what is necessary for themselves, for God infallibly provides, seeing that He is held thereto by His given word, which will not fail as soon as the heavens and the earth.

They should be solicitous *only to live well*, and to unite to the promise of God the condition he has placed thereto, viz.: that they first seek the kingdom of God and His justice. If they leave their fathers, mothers, relations, and goods, and this renunciation be not only as to the body and the exterior, but still more as to the interior and the spirit: finally, if Religious do not in their hearts abandon their parents and all things; if they preserve for these an ill-regulated affection, and fail to place their principal occupation in seeking the kingdom of God, and in laboring at their perfection, they do not fulfil the condition that God asks

of them, and consequently God is not obliged to execute His promise. Thus it happens sometimes that He does not assist them in temporal things: He leaves them in their need, for they themselves fail in their duty. Afterwards, they are constrained, as a matter of necessity, to yield a base complaisancy to the rich, from whom they await help; become the slaves of their whims and their passions—make over-frequent visits, and thus to act very much like seculars; go from one concession to another, and so contradict in many things the excellence of the religious state.

As long as virtue is practiced in these houses, and the rule is observed, there is nothing to fear; their revenue, that never congeals, and upon which the rain, the hail, and the other inclemencies of the atmosphere have no power—their revenue consisting of the word of God and His promise, will undoubtedly furnish them the necessities of an honest support in keeping with the requirements of their institute. I say *necessary* things and not *superfluities*, for He is not obliged to give the latter. Thus, if they incur useless expenses—if they contract debts unreasonably, or if they live extravagantly, and then come to want, Our Lord is not obliged to apply a remedy. He can say to them, on the contrary: “You live very comfortably; you want for nothing, either in your drink, your food, or your clothing. I myself did not live in that manner, and you wish that I perform miracles for you!” But God will infallibly give necessary things: He gives them to the birds,

as has already been said ; He gives them to Jews, to idolaters, and to His enemies ; He gave them formerly to the children of Israel in the desert, where, there being neither bread nor water, He scattered manna by the hands of angels, to feed them, and caused a fountain of sparkling water to issue from a rock, to allay their thirst. In the year of Our Lord four hundred and fifty-four, in the midst of a famine that desolated Phrygia, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Cilicia, God, as is related by Evagrius and other historians, made it rain a species of food like the manna of the Israelites, and the following year the trees produced, in the spring, their fruits perfectly matured and fit for eating.

Firm in the conviction of this infallible truth, the Saints enjoyed tranquillity of mind in the midst of their necessities ; feeling every assurance of help from God, as much as if they had visible proof of this assistance, or had experienced its effects. The Religious of Citeaux, in the commencement of their Order, lived in extreme poverty, and in need of almost everything ; so that their venerable Abbot and Founder, St. Stephen, called one of them and said : “ You see, my brother, to what poverty we are reduced : all our Religious are in danger of dying of hunger, cold, and misery. Go to the fair that is to be held in a few days, in such a place ; buy us three carts with good horses, to the number of three for each vehicle, and when you have loaded these carts with food, cloth, and other things necessary to us, return, bringing them

with joy." The good Religious addressed thus, replied : " Father, I am well disposed to obey your orders, provided you give me the purchase-money needed." The Saint then answered : " Go ! my brother, go ; as for the sum requisite, I have found in the house but three pennies ; take them, if you wish ; the mercy of God will furnish the rest. Depart without fear ! I trust that God will send His angel to conduct you, and that your journey will be prosperous." The good brother obeyed, and went to the place indicated by the holy Abbot. A kind and virtuous man charitably received him into his house ; then, on learning the motive of his journey, the poverty of his monastery, and his inability to make the purchases as directed by his Superior, this man went to seek a person who was very rich, and who, being afflicted with an incurable disease, and near his death, was distributing large alms to the poor, and who, hearing this account of the poverty and distress of these good Religious, sent him as much money as was requisite to enable him to make his purchases.

This Religious, accordingly, procured the three carts, the nine horses, the cloth, and all the provisions he could remember, after which he returned full of joy to Citeaux. Before his arrival, however, he took care to have the Abbot apprised of his returning, and of the happy success of his mission. The holy Abbot, extremely consoled by such tidings, assembled all his Religious, related to them the paternal care, love, and goodness of God towards them. They then advanced in procession to

meet the good brother, escorting him to the door of the monastery. The cross and the holy water were borne in front, then the Religious, two by two, followed by the Abbot in his sacred vestments, bearing his crosier ; and all from the depths of their hearts were thanking and blessing God for this gift, which they received not as coming from the hand of man, but from the liberality of God.

St. Francis, being grievously sick at Norceric, of the disease of which he died, the inhabitants of Assisi deputed to him some of its chief citizens to beseech him to return to their town, requesting, at the same time, that, should it please God to call him to Himself, he permit his body to be restored to his native town. The Saint allowed himself to yield to the entreaty of his fellow-citizens, who conveyed him accordingly, and on arriving at a place where they were to dine, they complained to the Saint that they could find nothing to eat, in spite of all efforts to this effect, and even for money. The Saint said to them: You find nothing to eat, because you confide more in your "*flies*" (for thus he styled money) than in Our Lord ; but return to the same houses, and in place of money, which you offered to no purpose, present them for a price, the "*love of God*," asking their charity with humility: you will see that you will not be refused, but that they will give you abundantly of all that is necessary. They then went, and it happened as he predicted. St. Francis Borgia, finishing his visit to the college of

Seville, of which we have already spoken, said, in making his parting adieux to the Fathers, that he left them feeling well satisfied and happy for several reasons; but mainly because he saw them without a house, and destitute of provisions. He, however, exhorted them to be of good courage, adding that "God would provide." And in fact, He showered down upon them so many blessings that before long they had in that very city three well-established houses. The Saints, ever feeling certain of the care and help of Our Lord, ceased not in their poverty to bestow alms. They shared with the poor the little that was given them. Then, this is no small secret, to oblige Our Lord *not* to forget them in their wants. Our Lord has said: "It will be meted to you as you have meted to others;" give, and it will be given you—a truth of which the Saints are well assured. Religious houses, however, fail sometimes in this: their charity has grown cold, or they have not sufficient confidence in God; or yet again, they are too much attached to the things of earth; wherefore, also, God permits that they should have nothing given them. Thereupon, "Cecarius" relates a pleasing incident of an Abbot of St. Benedict, who walked not in the footsteps of his saintly predecessor; for St. Benedict was proverbial for his hospitality and charity; in receiving guests and bestowing large alms on the poor. Thus God blessed him even in temporal things; for the more he gave, the more God returned to him, and the more was his house enriched. But this Abbot in ques-

tion condemned the liberality of his predecessor as being very indiscreet, and the cause of the house being so impoverished. Consequently, he retrenched, through avarice, most of the customary charities and alms; but it was soon evident that the goods of the house sensibly diminished: charities no longer came in; the sources of aid had dried up, and the house became so miserably destitute that the Religious had scarcely enough to sustain life. At this very time, an honest old man came to the monastery, asking in charity for lodging. The porter received him as well as he could, though it be meagerly, in secrecy and with fear, whilst making excuses for the poverty of the house, which was much greater now than formerly. The stranger guest then replied: My brother, this decline and misfortune of your monastery comes from your having driven from it the twin brothers, one of whom is called "*give*," the other, "*it will be given you*." You no longer give anything to the poor, nor to the guests who seek your hospitality, in accordance with the rule of your institute; thus, God inspires no one to bestow charities on you. If you are desirous to restore your house to its former state of plenty, cause, first, the return of these *two brothers*; otherwise, you can expect nothing. Having thus spoken, he disappeared.

The Saints carried this confidence in God for their wants to such an extent, that they have sometimes refused money offered to them, for fear it would create mistrust. Some charitable Greeks

having come to Ostraine in Egypt, to bestow alms, and taking with them the economists of the Church, so as to learn who were the most needy, were conducted to a leper. But this leper refused their proffered gifts, saying: I have some palm leaves from which I make rope, and this suffices to procure me bread. They then went to a poor widow, a laundress, with daughters, who, with all possible industry and labor, could earn but sufficient for their most pressing wants. This day, the woman having gone out to work as usual, when the charitable strangers called, the door was opened by one of the daughters, most miserably and scantily clad. These persons wished to give her both clothing and money; but she refused, saying: that her mother had exhorted her, before leaving the house, to confide in God, as she had work enough to procure them food for the day. In a few minutes the mother returned, and the Greeks being still in the house, besought her to accept some money; but she also refused, saying: I have a guardian, who is my God, He takes care of me, and you wish to deprive me of Him to-day, by causing me to confide more in creatures than in Him.

A man once carried some money to an aged Father of the desert, who was leprous—saying to him: “Father, you are old and sick, I beg you to receive this money to provide for your wants.” The holy man not wishing to take it, replied: In offering me your money you wish to deprive me of Him, who has fed me for more than sixty years. His

goodness and His mercy, have never left me to want for anything, during all the time of my infirmity. I thank you: I do not desire your money, God thinks of me, and feeds me.

It is related of St. Ignatius, Founder of the Society of Jesus, that on going to the Holy Land, out of devotion, he wished neither travelling companion nor money, which many offered, entreating him to accept. He resolved to go alone and without resource of any kind, saying, he was content to have no other companion in his voyage, no other escort or provision, than the three theological virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity, and that nothing should change the confidence he had in God, and the love he bore Him. Accordingly he observed his resolution so firmly, that, on finding he would not be admitted aboard the vessel unless he provided himself with as much biscuit as would be necessary whilst crossing the sea, he yielded only after making all possible resistance, and by the advice of his confessor, he took a few pieces of money, but on finding they were not absolutely necessary to him, he left them upon a rock on the sea shore.

The following sage reply of this Saint is worthy of remembrance. St. John the Almoner, in reparation for an injury he had innocently caused this holy Religious, wished to give him a hundred shillings, but he excused himself from receiving the money, in these words: "My Lord, I wish for nothing. A Religious has no need of money, if he has faith: if he finds money needful, he is de-

void of faith—not believing as he should the truths of our Religion.”

SECTION XII.

Last Motive.

The last motive to be given, to cause voluntary poverty to be loved, and which will be for many a most powerful incentive, is the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. St. Paul says of Him, “that being infinitely rich as the Son of God, and as true God, He became poor for men, by taking their nature, in order that his poverty might enrich them and load them with goods.” The prophet Zachary, addressing the City of Sion, as also persons in particular, thus predicted of Him: “Lo! your king cometh to you, just, saviour and poor.” Our Lord speaking by the mouth of David, says: “*I am a mendicant, and poor.*” And again in St. Luke: “*The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests*”—where they can repose—“*but the Son of man hath not whereon to rest his head.*”

Our Lord having chosen poverty, practised it in a most wonderful manner, in the choice He made of His mother, of his foster-father, in His birth, in the offering made for Him in the temple, in His journey to and stay in Egypt, in the trade of carpenter (as it is believed, or of “locksmith,” according to the opinion of St. Hilary and St. Ambrose) that He exercised with St. Joseph; in His apostles, in the whole course of His life, in His death, and in His tomb.

The blessed Angela of Foligno notices three degrees in the poverty of Our Lord. She says that the first was great, the second greater, and the third greater still. The first consisted in the renunciation of all temporals, as Our Lord would have neither house, nor field, nor vine, nor garden, nor any other possession; nor gold, nor silver, belonging to Him; and the little He received in alms from *honest* people He held in common with His disciples. He wished not for His own use anything delicate, exquisite, or precious; but only such things as were coarse and ordinary, in keeping with places and times, living with His dear disciples without any certain dwelling or abiding place of His own. The second degree, more elevated than the preceding, was made to consist in the poverty of His parents and friends, in the privation of the support of the great—the kings, the pontiffs, the scribes, the pharisees, the sages, the judges, and the Roman officers, who could, by their influence and their authority, have defended Him, and prevented Him from being so outraged and persecuted. He wished to have no friend, or any one for whose sake He would be spared a single blow, a single injurious word. The third degree, that rises to the highest possible perfection, was, Our Lord renouncing himself in all things; for, in His divinity, being infinitely great, infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, infinitely perfect, and greatness, wisdom, power, and perfection itself, He despoiled Himself, apparently, of all this, by making Himself, not in appearance only, but *truly*, man,

by rendering Himself subject to the weaknesses, the miseries, and the imperfections of our nature—to hunger, thirst; heat, cold, to weariness, to pain, and to death—excepting sin alone—by giving power over Himself to the elements, to thorns, bonds, whips, nails, to men, to demons, and to all creatures to torment Him, and in depriving Himself, as it were, of the strength to resist them.

Behold, to what an excess the poverty of Our Lord is reduced! But what was not His poverty on the cross? He died, not only stripped of His clothes, but still more of His honor, and of the good opinion that had been conceived of Him. He was subjected to the grossest indignities and most atrocious affronts: could the vilest and most criminal of slaves in the world have been treated more cruelly than He was? This was not yet sufficient; He despoiled Himself of Himself, when ascending Calvary, in the midst of injuries and the maledictions of a miserable rabble, wishing not to receive the compassion shown Him by some pious women, nor the solace of their tears of pity that fell on beholding His sufferings. Extending this poverty yet further, He deprived Himself in some measure of His holy Mother, by giving her to St. John; and to us, in the person of this apostle. Then He was rejected by His Father, to whom He addresses Himself as follows: “*My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?*” You perceive He durst not call Him His Father. In fine, when about yielding up His last breath, He recommends to Him His soul, although beatitude is due

Him by every right, and which he enjoyed even from the first moment of His conception, and which He could give to whomsoever He pleased, as is evident in the case of the good thief. Alas! He thus made use of it so as to exercise a prodigious act of poverty—despoiling Himself of the right of disposing of His own soul, and of replacing it in the hands of His Eternal Father. It is for us, then, to imitate His example, since He embraced and exercised poverty, only to evince for us His love, to give us an example, to show us its nature, and make its practice easy. We should imitate it, both interiorly and exteriorly, as much as circumstances permit. Is not that avarice incurable, says St. Augustine, that the poverty of the Son of God cannot cure? And St. Bernard says: Jesus Christ left the inconceivable treasures of the riches of heaven, and coming here below, wished not to possess those of earth, of any kind whatever. He embraced a life so poor that at His birth He was obliged to be laid in a manger, not being admitted into the inns. Who does not know that He was so destitute, so poor, that He had not where to lay His head? In truth, it is a great, an intolerable abuse, that man, *that little worm of the earth*, should desire to be rich, when the God of majesty, and the Lord of armies, has deigned to become poor for love of him, and for his example. Elsewhere, St. Bernard again speaks on this subject, as follows: The manner in which Our Lord wished to be born at Bethlehem teaches us the way He desires to be received by us. Some, perhaps, imagine

that to worthily receive the King of glory there should be prepared for Him superb palaces, all brilliant with gold and precious stones; but it was not to be received thus on earth that He left His royal and celestial abode; that He descended from His throne: to use the expressions of the Wise Man, "He holds in His left hand riches and glory, and in His right, the duration of an immortal life." He has in heaven, his dwelling place, an eternal affluence of all goods; but poverty was not there met with—this kind of goods was wanting. It was to be found here below in abundance—all the earth was filled with this merchandise, but men knew not its value. Wherefore, the Son of God, who knew it—being infinitely wise—desired it ardently, descended on earth so as to possess it, and to render it precious to us by His esteeming it so greatly. Prepare, then, a magnificent cradle for the reception of this new-born Saviour, O Sion! But ornament it with humility and poverty, for Mary, His mother, has taught us that it is in these cloths of silk and scarlet that He desires to be enveloped: sacrifice to thy God the abominations of the Egyptians! Let us here add another happy saying of the same Saint: Voluntary poverty is honorable and illustrious, inasmuch as Our Lord taught it by His word, saying: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit*;" and that He consecrated and deified it in His person and by His example; for He had no place of dwelling, nor a room in which to eat the paschal-lamb with His disciples, nor wherewith to pay the tribute.

Jesus Christ, says St. Cyprian, being poor, wished not to have the rich for His disciples. A poor mother, a poor son, a poor lodging, efficaciously show to those who enter His school, and who wish to fight beneath the standard of His Church, what they should be.

The blessed Angela Foligno gives some most important instructions on this subject. She says: "God has spoken to me interiorly, and has recommended holy poverty, as a thing of such high importance, and so great a good, that it surpasses all thought and all words. 'I am God,' he said to me, 'I have need of nothing; I am infinitely rich; I hold my being from myself, and consequently, if poverty was not so great a good, I would not have loved it so much; and if its nobility was not so excellent and so exalted, I would not have espoused it—I would not have become myself the poorest of men.'" Continuing she adds: "Our Lord, having embraced a great, an enduring poverty of affection, of spirit, and of will, in all things, how happens it, alas! that now-a-days this poverty should be so despised, condemned and repulsed by every one; and what is most astonishing and most unbecoming, this is done by those even who preach it and give it praise. It is this poverty that the world holds in horror, and avoids as much as possible, though the Son of God has loved and elevated it to the dignity of His spouse and inseparable companion; it is this that He gives to His own, as a rich treasure, and that very few deign to receive. Alas! we have heard repeat-

edly, and we know, that our Lord made Himself poor to serve us as an example ; we know how He lived, of what food He partook, how He was clothed, in what house He lodged, who were His parents and His disciples, what was His employment, what were His actions, and nevertheless, we do not imitate Him ! Woe to us, who, after such an example, and so great a Master, believe not His doctrine, practise not His works ; and who, running after the goods of this life, are totally deprived of eternal goods ! Blessed, on the contrary, a thousand times blessed, those who, undeceived by the illusions of temporal riches, follow Jesus Christ in His poverty !”

St. Francis Xavier having considered very attentively, and during a long time, the poverty of Jesus Christ, who, being infinitely rich, became poor for us, singularly loved evangelical poverty, attaching himself to it particularly.

My adversaries, says St. Gregory Nazianzen, in his Apology, reproach me for my poverty ; but they do not perceive that it is precisely in this poverty that I place my riches. I know not what effect it produces in others : as for me, it inflames my courage, it renders me, in some way, glorious, and almost proud. They are kind indeed, to blame me for being poor ; they should blame me then for walking in the footsteps of Him who, possessing immense and infinite riches, became poor for us. Ah ! may it please God, that by imitating Him yet more, I may be divested of these wretched clothes that cover me, and that thus

stripped, I may take my flight towards Him : Yes, would that I were disengaged from all these thorny hinderances that withhold those who desire this union with God, never to have it interrupted !

St. Augustine writing to “ Hilary,” and alluding to the counsel that our Lord gave a young man who possessed great wealth : “ that if he wished to be perfect, to go and sell what he had, give the price to the poor, and then to follow Him ”—adds : I have ardently loved this perfection, and have done what Our Lord counselled, not by my own strength, but by that of grace. Not having been rich in the world, it follows not that my action should be the less esteemed, for we know that the apostles, who did the same thing before me, were very poor ; and though it seemed that they left little, they still left all, in leaving the world, and all the world’s possessions—all that it desires, and that it could desire.

It is related of St. Clare, that having distributed all her wealth to the poor, she made so strict an alliance with poverty, and entertained for it such love and complacency, that she wished for nothing but Jesus Christ, who was all her riches, and her only treasure.

The celebrated Abbot, St. Lamner, expressed the like sentiments to the robbers who entered his cell, thinking they would there find money : “ For my part, I have no money ; my riches and my treasure are in Jesus Christ.” Such words were frequently used by St. Louis, Archbishop of Toulouse, as also by the holy Martyrs, Olympius and Maximus,

persons of high rank, when replying to the Emperor Decius, who demanded their riches, saying: "Our riches, our precious stones, our gold and our silver, is Jesus Christ." Then to have Jesus Christ, is to possess immense riches. Thus wrote St. Paulinus to Sulpicius Severus: "We have no longer anything but Jesus Christ: we have stripped ourselves of all our wealth for Him; but consider, if in having but Him, we have nothing? see if we are poor, since in possessing Him, we have the One who possesses all."

Doubtless, if the Religious is poor, he indeed wishes to be so; if he has nothing, it is because he desires nothing; for if he but wished to have earthly goods, it would often be easy for him, by his birth, by his friends, by his talents and industry, or by other ways, to find the means for having them.

Aristotle relates that Thales, one of the seven wise men of Greece, was blamed by his friends for becoming poor through his own fault, and that the labor to which he condemned himself—that of teaching philosophy—was a lost labor; that he should rank philosophy among useless things, as it seemed to be in his case, since he was none the better off for being a "*philosopher*." Thales allowed them to talk; for by the science of astrology he foresaw that there would be that year an abundance of olives, and he found means to procure some money, wherewith to purchase, for a low price, during the winter, a quantity of olive-trees, both in Milet, his native country, and in the island

of Chio ; their fruit yielded much oil at great profit. He afterwards said to his friends, that philosophy was not as useless as they imagined, and that philosophers could readily become rich if such thoughts and desires were theirs. The poverty of Religious merits, therefore, honor and not blame, for they could readily have their conveniences, if they wished, but they prefer to have nothing, according to the spirit of Jesus Christ and for love of Him, than to have much according to nature.

SECTION XIII.

The Practice of Poverty.

All that we have said of poverty should serve to give us an esteem for it, to cause us to love it and put it in practice. Wherefore we have need to act by the meaning of a wise little saying of Pythagoras. This philosopher tells us, that *we should not walk by the great roads*. His meaning, however, was not that we should avoid the common and beaten roads—for these are the safest and the best—but in accordance with the explanation given by Philon, he simply meant that, in the judgment of things, we should not follow the common and popular opinion. This is evident in regard to poverty. If we consult the greater part of men upon what concerns it, we would not even wish to approach poverty, much less to put it in practice. Leave then the sentiments of the vulgar, and take those of noble, enlightened souls, infinitely elevated

above the things of earth: let us draw near to poverty without allowing ourselves to be repulsed by its exterior vile and contemptible appearance, but try its practice.

The practice of poverty consists in interior and exterior acts. It should be composed of six degrees, as already mentioned, and of which the first is, to abandon effectually all temporal things. The second is to abandon them in spirit (*much stress is to be placed on this degree*), for this is the very essence of the virtue and of the vow of poverty. In fine, says St. Bernard, it is not effective poverty, but the *love* of this poverty, that makes the virtue; and the poor, who are praised in the Gospel, and declared *blessed* by Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, are not the poor in the goods of earth, but the *poor in spirit* and in affection. The practice of the venerable Father Le Févre, the first and most worthy companion of St. Ignatius Loyola, S.J., will help much to explain this degree. This holy man was accustomed every year to deprive himself of all he had, and to change everything; so that there was nothing in which the spirit could be poorer or more divested. This practice is made use of in many religious Orders to disengage the heart from affection to things of this world, and we are made to exercise it in our novitiate. It is related of Father Caraffa, of holy memory, Seventh General of the Society of Jesus, that, being master of novices, he required the novices to bring their rosaries, office and spiritual books, and all their little objects of devotion; these he placed altogether,

adding to them his own ; then he would distribute to each one what fell to him by lot. It is also related of him that many persons sent to him from India presents of the rarities of that country, but that he did not retain any of them a quarter of an hour before distributing them, on obtaining the permission of his Superior. Thus, to receive and to give was for him the same thing. He was accustomed to say of all such objects and similar things: "All the good they are is to rid one's self of them and bestow them on others."

When you feel your heart clings to something, and that you possess it with affection, take it to the Superior, or, with his permission, give it, exchange it, rid yourself of it, for in this lies your only cure, or at least the most effectual remedy for your ill. Thus Dorotheus forbade his dear disciple, Dositheus, using a well-worn knife that had been given him for the infirmary of which he had charge, because he loved it a little too much. Also, when he received a habit, his own being worn out, material was given him for making another, and when he had finished it with his own hands, very neatly, with much pleasure, and when he was thinking of wearing it, St. Dorotheus would oblige him to give it to some one else : the like thing happening to him repeatedly, yet this holy disciple obeyed instantly and without murmur. Nothing less than such means as these are needed to detach one's affections ; all other efforts will be of no avail. Privation gives infallible proofs of detachment or of the heart's affection. It often happens, says

St. Augustine, that when we are in possession of a thing we are not conscious of bearing affection to it; but when we no longer have it, we then feel that our heart clings to it; for a thing is not possessed with indifference and without love, except when it can be lost without pain.

Upon this renunciation and this privation of things it is to be remarked, however, that it is not necessary, for poverty of spirit, to rid one's self of an object as soon as affection for it is perceived, because all affection is not opposed to this degree of poverty, but only such as is ill-regulated—that binds and captivates the heart; that occupies and embarrasses the mind, and causes something to be held almost as one's own; when it is hidden, or is with difficulty lent to another. But should you have some image of devotion—for instance, a crucifix—that when you see it, and take it to kiss, produces in you sentiments of piety, exciting you to grief for your sins, to gratitude and to love for Our Crucified Lord, to hope in God, and causes in your soul other impressions of grace; or, if you have a good book that affords you instruction, that consoles and fortifies you, is useful to you in any way, you should not rid yourself of either one or the other, because you love them, for it is to be supposed you love them, *not* from any light or frivolous attachment, but with reason, on account of their being somewhat necessary to you, and that they hold the place of proper and efficacious means for your salvation.

Thus St. Gertrude loved the books, the images,

and all other things that aided her to love Our Lord, and to work out her perfection; and she loved these more than all the others that did not render her this service.

The third degree of poverty that should be practiced is to retrench superfluous things, and to be content with necessities. The fourth, not to have even for necessities too much eagerness or desire. The fifth, to suffer privation in necessities. The sixth, to suffer such privations, even when in sickness and infirmity.

Moreover, poverty should be practiced in the three degrees that we remarked in paragraph eleven, in the poverty of Our Lord—becoming poor on His model: first, as to exterior and temporal goods; secondly, in the loss of our parents, in the absence and privation of our friends, in their inconstancy, their change, their infidelity, in the privation of persons who love us, who esteem us and do good to us, in the loss of power, of authority and influence; and in the third place, in the impoverishing of ourselves, by the despoiling and annihilation of what we were, of our mind, of our judgment and will, of our opinions, of our affections, and of all that appertains to us, and placing instead the mind, the judgment, and the will of God and of Our Lord, and to act but by their opinions, their affections, by their movements and directions.

Again, if you wish to practice poverty easily and constantly, ever keep your eyes fixed on Our Lord, who, being infinitely rich in Himself, made Himself excessively poor for love of you, in

His birth, in His life, in His death, and who gloried to appear for you in this state before the whole universe. Consider the attractions and advantages of poverty ; it will bring you immense wealth, and under the appearance of lowliness and abjection it encloses a brilliant glory, and beneath a worn-out and tattered habit it conceals a robe of cloth of gold, all studded with precious stones.

Ever look upon the things given you in Religion for your use as belonging to others, and *not* to yourself. Finally, as we have said, the vow of poverty that you have made renders you incapable of possessing anything whatever, as your own ; wherefore, it is well that sometimes, casting your eyes upon the trifles in your cell, and upon other things allotted to your use, you say : Behold, this is not mine, I have nothing of all this ; and then make use of these articles with a spirit entirely disengaged ; that is, without attachment, being well convinced that all these things are only *lent* you, and that you have absolutely nothing. Then, whenever these things are taken without your knowledge, when you are asked for them, when they are retained for a longer time than you expected, when they are spoiled, or returned to you in a worse condition than when in your keeping, do not be displeased, for these things *belong* not to you ; for if you evince displeasure, you testify thereby that you regard them as your own. Seculars, who are masters of their goods, and who can dispose of them, would not act otherwise in similar occurrences.

Imitate that aged Father of the desert who, to practice this spirit of detachment, did not reprove a neighboring Religious when taking things from his cell, and did not try to prevent him doing so. When near his death, all the Religious came around him, to assist at his last moments, as was customary. Having noticed the brother who pilfered from him, he besought him to approach ; then taking his hands, he kissed them, saying: I give thanks to these hands, for they have opened for me the kingdom of heaven. This brother, touched with repentance for his sins, did penance immediately. Remember always that you are poor, that you have voluntarily embraced poverty and the renunciation of all the things of the world, and that you are engaged thereto by vow and by promise made to God. Afterwards, act in all things as a poor person ; be poor both interiorly and exteriorly ; bear the effects of poverty. Would it not be a most audacious thing, highly blameable and deserving great punishment, to have promised God to do a thing and then not to keep such a promise, excepting in appearance?—to acquit one's self of it only in word? Would not this be, in reality, to mock God? Ah! such a crime should be guarded against more than death, for, as St. Paul says: "God is not to be mocked without fear." Wherefore, when you suffer some want in your food, in your clothing, in your lodging, and in all other things, do not complain, murmur not, do not find it strange, do not think that you are wronged, for it is not true. On the contrary, recall to mind your

vow, and the obligation of your promise : receive these privations with tranquillity, regarding them as the fulfilment of your vow, the execution of your word, saying : This is what I promised—to what I am obliged. Consider again how many poor there are in the world who suffer much more than you, and who suffer patiently. By the force of such reflections, be firm and courageous in all the wants that your state causes you to experience. It is related of St. John the Almoner, Archbishop of Alexandria, that, though his archbishopric was very rich, he lived *personally* in extreme poverty : that he slept on a small, low bed, with but a single miserable coverlid. One of the principal citizens, knowing this, sent him a good blanket, that cost *thirty-six* pieces of silver, praying him to accept it for his own use, and in consideration of the *donor*. The Saint received it, and on account of this man's earnest entreaty, he used it one night, which he passed in trouble and without sleep, reproaching himself for such condescension, saying (as is related by those who overheard him): “Who would think that the ‘*humble John*’” (it was thus he called himself, not meaning to attribute to himself the virtue of humility, but merely to show his nothingness and misery) “is now covered with a blanket worth thirty-six pieces of silver, whilst the brothers of Jesus Christ are dying of cold? How many are there not in this severe season who are shivering! how many who are passing the night in the mountains, without bread and without fire, suffering from the double torment of hunger and

cold ! At this very time, how many poor are there in Alexandria who know not where to lodge !—who are sleeping on the sidewalks, after being, perhaps, all drenched with rain ! And you, who think to enjoy a blessed eternity—you are well sheltered and covered with this costly blanket ; but this shall be the first and last night for you to make use of it.” Accordingly, in the morning he gave directions to have this blanket sold, and with the money to buy others for the poor. Then the person who gave the blanket bought it, and returned it to the Saint, who again caused it to be sold ; but the same man repurchased it, and as often as three times—St. John as often having it sold.

Certainly, the Religious can with good reason represent to himself, in *his* necessities, those of innumerable seculars, incomparably greater and of longer duration, than his own want of all necessities of life ; yet these people endure such privations without a murmur—with much patience and submission to the divine will. To bear with courage and perfection all inconveniences, the Religious should, when feeling inclined to impatience and discouragement, represent to himself, how many are there at this moment patiently bearing up under emergencies greater than mine ! Whilst my nature is ready to complain for a trifle wanting to me, how many are there of more noble birth and better position than myself who are worse fed, clothed, and lodged ! I, however, have vowed poverty, so as to experience its effects, which they have not.

Finally, let it be remarked, regarding the practice of the virtue of poverty, that our nature is a great enemy to it; for as we are infected and vitiated by self-love, which is ever creating fears of something being wanting to us, and with a strong inclination to possess the goods of this world, a Religious should be most careful, after having vowed poverty and renounced all that he had, lest cupidity be rekindled, little by little, within his breast, so as to lead him insensibly to retake, *at least in affection*, what he has already given to God. There should be a most careful watch kept in religious communities, lest under some pretext and for some specious reasons there be a relaxing of poverty and of the primitive austerity of the rule, as too often happens. St. Ignatius, S.J., wishing to obviate this, that the professed members should make a vow never to permit the poverty of the Society—established in the professed houses, which live by alms, and which can have no fixed revenue—to become relaxed; but that, on the contrary, they should use every endeavor, if necessary, to have it more strictly observed. It is true that nature works with much skill and subtlety, always to ameliorate things: it does not love to be so poor; it prefers to be more at its ease, and the demon does not forget this fact; for, knowing that poverty is the bulwark of religion—so St. Ignatius calls it—and conscious that its observance will infallibly preserve and render all virtue flourishing, he uses all his efforts to disturb its practice.

We read a case in point in a memorable account

in the chronicles of "Friars Minors." It is related that the Religious of St. Francis, of Mount Alverno, living in the same poverty and austerity to which their holy founder had raised them, the demon, an enemy to so much virtue, and raging with spite at seeing such continual prayer, such exact silence, such profound humility, so rigorous an abstinence, so great a spirit of mortification, and so perfect a life, tried by many temptations and a thousand different means to lessen their courage, to cause them to omit something of their austerity, and to disturb their regularity; but he could not, with all his efforts, succeed; whereupon he devised a wonderful stratagem, as follows: There was in that country a very rich gentleman, who entertained no affection for these good Religious; he was harsh towards them, and never gave them alms. The demon, assuming the form of a man, went to this gentleman to offer his services as valet, which were accepted. Discharging his duties with much care and attention, he soon won the good will of his employer, and gained access to his heart. Accordingly, the master confided to this servant the government of his house, giving to him the absolute management of his affairs, as well as following in all things his advice. One day, as they were conversing very quietly, this cunning fellow, judging it to be a favorable time to succeed in his design, commenced to praise the "Friars Minors of Mount Alverno," saying they were most excellent Religious and Saints, and those who showed them charity—sent them alms—rendered great service to

God, and also merited recompense. Dilating upon this subject, he adduced so many proofs that the master was extremely touched—became very kind to these Religious, and sent them every day bread, meat, fish, fruit—all in such abundance that they had more than they needed. Thus, whilst formerly they lived with great difficulty, they began now, on the contrary, by means of these alms, to be very comfortably sustained. But by this means, also, followed a diminution in their fervor, a relaxation in prayer, silence, mortification, and in all other virtues. Some of the good old Religious, perceiving this change, and wishing to apply a remedy, one amongst them, after much prayer, took a companion and went to make a formal visit to this gentleman. After returning him thanks for his good will towards them, and for the overabundant alms he sent, they enquired into the cause of such a great change of sentiment in their regard. The gentleman replied that this change was to be attributed to a servant he had, who ever spoke to him much and favorably of them, and who every day reminded him to send them alms, adding that he esteemed this the principal of all the services this man had rendered him, it being the most conducive to his salvation. The Religious, surprised at so extraordinary a charity in a servant, begged to see him. The gentleman had him sent for, but as he did not come, he had him called a second, and even several times; when this servant, not being able to give further excuse for presenting himself, was forced to obey, but no

sooner had he appeared than these good Religious recognized him for what he was, and the "*old fellow*," finding himself thus discovered, quickly vanished, without ever again being seen in the house. The Religious, making known to the gentleman the ruse and wile of the demon, besought him, and even made him promise, not again to send such plentiful alms to their monastery ; whereupon there was soon rekindled that primitive fervor which came so near being extinguished—the monks resuming once more their many admirable practices of virtue. As a conclusion to this paragraph, we will cite an act of St. John the Almoner, as being most worthy of remembrance. May it serve as a fine example for teaching us that, to, apply a remedy for our poverty, and to find help in our needs, nothing should be relaxed in the rules, nor in the other obligations that we have contracted, but that, on the contrary, we should hold firmly to them all, without admitting any pretext for their dispensation. The Persians having made an irruption into Syria, ravaged it completely, carrying off a vast number of slaves. All those who could make their escape came for refuge to St. John, as to a safe port, and arrived in crowds at Alexandria, where provisions were very scarce, owing to the Nile not having overflowed its banks, as usual, that year. Notwithstanding this obstacle, the holy patriarch received them all most charitably ; and when he had contributed to their relief the entire sum of money he possessed, he borrowed a thousand shillings ; but on this amount being spent, no

one was willing to lend him more—the famine continuing, each one feared for his own support. The Saint perceiving he had not the wherewith to feed these poor people, prayed to God incessantly, in his grief, to render them some assistance. At this juncture, a citizen named “Cosme,” who had been twice married, and who now wished to be received among the deacons, having learned the extreme necessity of the Saint, determined to take advantage of it, so as to induce St. John to confer upon him the *order* he so much desired. He therefore entreated the Saint to accept from him two hundred thousand bushels of wheat and one hundred and eighty pounds of gold, to supply the public necessities ; on condition, however, that it would please the Saint to confer on him the deaconship, and thus to satisfy his desire of serving God the balance of his days at His altars, as also of being purified from his sins. Then, to render his request the more effectual, he quoted the “Apostle,” the true preacher of the word of God, as saying: “That there are necessities to be met with, that permit us to pass beyond the law.”

The Saint, being enlightened by the grace of God, knew how to receive such a request, sent for Cosme, saying to him : Your offering is most legitimate of itself ; it could not have been made in a time more necessitous ; but it is defective, and you know it to be forbidden by the law to offer any victim, small or large, if it be not pure and without blemish, which latter caused God to turn away from the sacrifice of Cain. As to what you say, my brother,

“that necessity allows us to go beyond the law,” the Apostle understood this to be of the *ancient* law; for otherwise, how could the Apostle St. James have said “that whoever observes not the law in its full extent, and sins against one of the commandments, is reputed guilty of all”? Now, as to what regards my brothers, the poor, God, who fed them before you or I were in the world, knows well how to feed them still, provided we observe inviolably whatsoever He commands us. He who formerly multiplied five loaves to feed five thousand persons, can very well, also, if it so please Him, multiply by His blessing the ten bushels of wheat that remain in my granary. Thence, I must say to you, my son, what is in the “Acts of the Apostles:” “*Thou shalt have no share, by such means, in this good work.*” After having thus rejected the entreaties of this man, and dismissed him, much saddened, the news came that two large vessels, belonging to the Church, and which he had sent to Sicily for wheat, had just entered port. The Saint immediately prostrated himself in adoration, and offered thanksgiving to God, in these terms: “I thank Thee most humbly, my God, for not having permitted me to sell Thy grace for money, and for making it manifest that those who seek Thee in truth, and who observe inviolably the rules of Thy holy Church, shall never want for anything.”

SECTION XIV.

Conclusion of the Chapter

In concluding this chapter on poverty, I would say that, persuaded by the reasons that have been given, we should be disabused of the opinions commonly entertained by men, that we should esteem, love, and practice poverty, and entreat God to grant it to us. We should endeavor to conceive and to taste that truth which Our Lord tells us of the vanity, the deception, and the injury of riches, by following His doctrine, to regard the rich as most unfortunate, and in great peril of being eternally lost; and on the other hand, as most blessed, the poor in spirit.

Let us be persuaded, once for all, of this truth, as it is set forth by St. Paul: "Those who desire to become rich fall into temptation, and into the snares of the demon." They engage themselves in a thousand desires, and useless, hurtful designs, that precipitate them into certain ruin; for the root of all evil is cupidity. Many persons, infected with this covetousness, have wandered away from the true faith—have cast themselves into much grief and great anguish. St. James, speaking to the rich, who are inordinately attached to their wealth, is not less energetic. He says to them: "It is to you, rich men, that I speak. I warn you that you have cause for tears. Weep, then, and groan aloud, in the fear you should justly feel for the misery that will come upon you, and for the eter-

nal pains that await you. You have wasted yourself in toil and suffering to amass riches, and these are now corrupted; your wheat and your wine are spoiled from being too long kept; your clothing, shut up in your wardrobes and deprived of the sun and air, are moth-eaten; your gold and silver are covered with rust from being hidden in the ground; and this rust will accuse you before God, on the day of judgment; it will burn your body as a devouring fire; it will cause you to feel extreme anguish, and to bear the effects of God's wrath, which you have irritated in amassing your treasures."

The illustrious St. Sebastian, a martyr of Jesus Christ, seeing that the holy martyrs, Mark and Marceline, were astonished at what was told them, to inspire them with a love for the world, and to cause them to renounce the faith of Jesus Christ, addressed them in a lengthy and powerful harangue, to encourage them to hold firm; telling them, among other things, that they should represent to themselves riches, speaking thus to those who are their partisans: You love us! Love us, then, in such a way that we may never be separated—that we may never leave you. We cannot follow you after death, but we may go before you in life, if you wish. Then, to make this voluntary, take the examples of the "usurer" and the "laborer;" consider how one gave cheerfully to whoever asked him, in order afterwards to receive it doubled; and how the other scattered with pleasure his grain on the ground, hoping, justly, that it would be returned to him a hundred-fold. The debtor can

then render to his creditor, with interest, the money he had lent him, and the earth to the laborer the grain he deposited in its bosom; and cannot God give with usury the riches that you will have given to Him? If you ask me why God has given you riches, if you have to return them to Him, I reply, that it is to make you know, by their possession, all the good they do you, the pleasure and the great advantages they bring you, in order that, loving them as you should, you may resolve to preserve them forever. But for this, they should be confided to the keeping of God; and if you are not willing to place them in His hands, you will soon see that either gluttony, injustice, trickery, or other vices, and in the end, death, will deprive you of them, never to possess them more. Tell me, I beg of you, if you had to pass through the midst of a band of robbers, with a purse filled with gold, what would you not give for some valiant captain to say to you: "Give into my keeping that purse, because these robbers, through the midst of whom we shall pass, will soon deprive you of it with your life; and when there will be no more danger I will return it to you." Tell me, would you not quickly confide to him your purse? Would you not even beseech him, with hands clasped and on bended knees, to take it? And would you not esteem yourself extremely happy that he has deigned himself to ask it of you? Do the same towards God, with the goods he has bestowed on you.

Behold how St. Sebastian exhorts us to renounce

riches. Hear, also, what St. Teresa says, to engage us to love poverty. Addressing her Religieuses, she tells them: "Believe not, my sisters, that by not giving satisfaction to the people of the world, that food and drink will ever be wanting to you: no, I assure you that it will not. Therefore, never think of providing for your wants by human artifices; for if you do, you will die of hunger, and most justly. Direct your eyes to the Lord, your Spouse: it is He who will provide for your nourishment without fail. When you shall have contented Him, those even who bear you the least affection will aid in your support, though without the will for so doing, as you have learned by experience. The words of Our Lord are true; and heaven and earth will pass away, fall sooner into ruin, than they be not fulfilled. Wherefore, fail not in anything due to Him, and fear not that He will fail you. If it happens, sometimes, that He allows you to suffer, it is for your greater good—it is thus He acted towards the martyrs; abandoning them to the power of the tyrants, to be put to death, but it was to augment their merit and to crown them with glory. Believe, my daughters, that God has given me, for your good, some knowledge of the great advantages included in the love of holy poverty. It contains all the goods of earth—it exerts a powerful dominion. I then say, and I still repeat it, he that makes no account of the goods of earth has the ascendancy and the dominion over all that is contained in the universe. What have I to do with kings and potentates, if I

•

have no desire for their revenues? What need have I of their honors, since I recognize that true poverty renders one most highly honorable?" Such is the language of St. Teresa. In the chapter of her Constitutions where it speaks of the reception of novices, she again says: "Let care be taken that the reception of novices be from no interested motive; for covetousness can thus enter, little by little; and finally, the alms thus bestowed will be more regarded than the goodness and the fitness of the subject received. May this never happen! It would be a great misfortune! May we ever have before our eyes *that* poverty of which we make profession! And may we spread everywhere its good odor! May we know that it is *not wealth* that is to support us, but *faith, perfection, and confidence in God.*" This Constitution should be much dwelt upon, faithfully practiced, and frequently read to the Religieuses.

"We should be watchful," says St. John Climachus, "that *we*, who have abandoned the world for the love of God, be not worse off than the birds, that have no need of sowing and reaping to obtain their food. Have we not a thousand times more reason to hope for this help from God? Let us do what we should, believing that His providence will not fail us." To the two exhortations just given I wish to add a third, which is not less instructive, and which is given in the life of "SS. Barlaam and Josaphat," by St. John Damascene. He says that an infidel king, but a most wise prince, once took his confidant and first minister of

state, a Christian and a man of great virtue, to visit the city during the night. On the way they perceived in the obscurity a light escaping from a *fissure* that caused them to observe a subterraneous opening. At the entrance was seated a poor man, with no other covering than a few tattered garments. His wife was giving him some wine, singing in the meanwhile most melodiously, to cheer him. The king stopped, contemplating for some time the scene, listening attentively to the melody, being quite surprised and delighted to find, amidst such extreme penury, such sweet and thrilling joy. In the height of his emotion he said to his confidant: Behold, my friend! what an admirable spectacle we have before us! Overwhelmed during our whole life with such vast wealth, with so many honors and such varied delights, have we ever been so content, so joyous, as are these poor people, in the midst of their privations? Then his confidant, a wise and well-informed man, asked the king the question: Sire, what opinion has your majesty formed concerning the life of these poor people? "I esteem it," replied the king, "as most unfortunate, and worthy of execration and horror." "Well, Sire," answered the wise and virtuous minister, "these good people, who know the glory that God reserves for the just, for those who labor to acquire this reward, have the same opinion of *your* life that you have of theirs; they even consider yours incomparably poorer, harsher, more trying, than the one they lead: all the magnificent palaces we inhabit, our rich and costly clothing, and all the

pleasure of our life, appear to their eyes more contemptible than the veriest filth, when they recall the inestimable beauty of the house of God, the richness and ornaments of the robes of glory, and the immortal crowns they hope for; as these people are deemed by us as senseless, so also, and with even more reason, *we*, who allow ourselves to be enticed by creatures into the abuses and vanities of the world, and who place our happiness in the goods of earth; we are judged by them as truly deserving tears." The king listened with pleasure to this recital, so new to him, desired to be more fully instructed; afterwards profiting so greatly by his knowledge as to become converted. St. John Damascene then adds that St. Barlaam, in order to confirm the prince in the design he had formed of leaving the world and the kingdom of his father to embrace the poverty of Jesus Christ, spoke to him as follows: "If you put into execution your resolve, you will do what was accomplished by a young man of good family, of whom I have heard it related that on coming to a suitable age to be married, his father sought for him a young lady of high birth, rich and beautiful. This good father mentioned her to his son, alleged many reasons to induce him to agree to the marriage; but the young man had no taste for this alliance, and fearing lest he might be constrained thereto, fled from his father's house, and set out for a foreign country. Whilst travelling, finding himself, one day, fatigued and overcome by the intense heat, he stopped at the house of a poor old man to rest. At the en-

trance of the hut he met the man's daughter, who, whilst working, sang the praises of God most sweetly and soothingly. He listened for some moments, then approached, to ask her what was her occupation, and how it happened that, being so poor—as he judged her to be by her clothes—she was yet so joyous. The girl replied: “Do you not know, sir, that, as a trifling remedy often brings to a sick person great relief, and even health, in like manner, I, in thanksgiving to God for small benefits, often dispose Him to bestow on us much greater ones. Wherefore, I, who am the daughter of a poor old man, bless and thank God for the little *means* He has given me, in the firm confidence that His goodness can bestow on me much greater, if He so desires. I now only allude to *exterior* and *temporal* goods, which, properly speaking, are not ours; for he who has received more of them does not always draw profit from them, but on the contrary, receives great detriment; and he who, on the other hand, receives less of them, suffers no injury, inasmuch as one and the other are on the same road, and tend to the same end, which is death and the eternity that must follow. But as to what relates to interior goods, so much more necessary than all others, God has granted to me great and numberless ones, viz.: He has created me to his own image, given me a knowledge of Himself, favored me with reason above all animals, has invited me, through His mercy, to the possession of a blessed life and of *eternal* goods, and to cause me to arrive thereat He has enabled me to participate

in the mysteries and the Sacraments of His Church : these being so many channels by which I may receive grace, and so many doors through which I can enter into paradise, if I desire. Behold a portion of the wealth God has bestowed on me ; and as I cannot begin to thank Him worthily and sufficiently for such a multitude of inestimable benefits, which He communicates to the poor as well as to the rich, would my ingratitude be excusable, if I did not at least give Him the little praise that it is in my power to render Him ?”

The young man, astonished at the wisdom of this girl, called the father and said to him : “ My good man, you have a very wise daughter : give her to me in marriage, for her prudence and virtue have won my heart.” The old man replied : “ It would not be suitable or becoming that you, who are—at least, if one may judge from appearances—a person of rank and very rich, should form a misalliance by taking for a wife the daughter of a poor man like myself.” “ No,” said the young man, “ give her to me, I beg of you. My father wished exceedingly for me to wed a lady of high birth and great wealth ; but I had no heart for it, and so as not to marry her I fled from home, as you see. I do not feel thus towards your daughter ; her virtue has won me, and I care not for her poverty ; she is wise and virtuous ; in fact, all I desire her to be, and I am ready to espouse her, if you, who are her father, will consent.” “ But sir,” said the old man, “ I cannot give her to you, to be taken to the home of your father. I love her alone, as she is my only

daughter.” “Well then,” replied the young man, “I will live with you; and moreover, I will send away my servants—I will dress like you—I will assume your mode of life—I will apply myself to your labors.” He then asked for poor garments, which were given him, and he cast off his fine, rich clothing, to dress in that of poverty. After such proofs, and many similar ones, to further test the young man’s strength of courage and sincerity of intentions, the old man, satisfied that he was all that was desirable—that is to say, resolute in renouncing his wealth and determined to endure poverty, to prefer an abject life to nobility and glory of birth—took him by the hand, led him to a secret, retired cabinet, and there showed him immense treasures—more gold and silver than he had ever seen; telling him at the same time: “My son, I give you all this wealth with my daughter.” And thus was the young man rendered, in a moment, the richest and happiest person of his time.

This discourse of St. Barlaam served greatly to cause the “Prince Josaphat” to despise the treasures of the king, his father, and to make him embrace the poverty of Jesus Christ—to cause him to regard in this his sole treasure and his whole wealth. Should it not make a like impression on the Religious, and hold him to the exact and constant practice of his vow of poverty? Make him take pleasure in possessing nothing but God? The heritage of the true Religious is God. Wherefore, “Hugh of St. Victor” says: If we desire that God should be our heritage, we should have nothing

except God, for he is too avaricious who is not content with possessing God, the sovereign and infinite Good.

It is related of St. Alypius, who lived in the time of the Emperor Heraclitus, near the city of Adrianople, on a column, after the manner of the holy "Stylites," that his mother passed her life in great sanctity near the column of her son. She one day received in alms the third part of a piece of gold; her son directed her to change this piece for small money, and to purchase what was necessary for them; but this good woman on her way gave all this money to the poor who asked for alms. She frankly told the affair to her son, and, though he had desired her to buy them their little provisions, was nevertheless well pleased with the use she had made of the gold.

History tells us that this holy woman lived contented and happy near the column of her son, as in a paradise of delights, gaining by the labor of her own hands her own scanty livelihood and that of her son—having so great an esteem for poverty that she considered it an evil to possess even so little as *two cents*.

St. Gregory of Nyssa relates of St. Gregory Thaumaturgas that, entering for the first time, as bishop, into the town of Neocesarea, had there no dwelling-house of his own, nor had any been provided for him; consequently, his people who escorted him were greatly troubled as to where he could lodge and take his meals. But this holy bishop, who had cast away all his wealth as a

heavy burden that impeded his advancement in perfection, now made his faith and other virtues hold place of lodging for him, as also of country and of all goods, said to them : “ You are troubled and disturbed as to where we shall rest, and who will feed us, as if we were not under the protection of God, and in the care of His providence ! Do you find God to be a small dwelling and an ordinary palace ? And that he who is in God is poorly lodged ? You know what St. Paul tells us—‘ *that we live, we move, and are in Him.* ’ Take you the heavens, all brilliant and luminous with the sun and stars, for a narrow, contemptible and too common a ceiling ? Give no attention to the houses built by men, but prize infinitely those that virtue raises up in heaven, and that, in place of stones, are built with good works. Terrestrial houses appertain more properly to earthly and vicious men, to cover the ignominy of their vices and their infamous acts, than to good men, who do nothing which needs the cover of darkness, or which is not worthy of appearing in the light.”

We shall conclude with the prayer that St. Francis made to Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the poor, to ask Him for poverty :

“ O my Lord Jesus Christ, show me, I implore Thee, the road to Thy well-beloved poverty ; I burn for its love, and I can have no repose without it. Thou knowest, Lord, that thou hast made me ardently love its beauty ; but though it is so beautiful, I see it, nevertheless, condemned by all, abandoned as a *widow*, and held as vile and unworthy to ap-

pear, although she is a powerful queen—the *queen* of all *virtues*. She is kept apart, seated amidst filth, sad and afflicted, by those who have made profession to love and defend her: who even neglect and desert her, and are the first to attack—to persecute her; and yet, O my Lord! Thou hast so esteemed her, that thou descendest from Thy throne in heaven to come on earth to unite Thyself to her by an indissoluble love, to espouse her, and to have by her the divine race of all the children of perfection. Since Thou art so indissolubly united to her, she also is intimately and inseparably united to Thee. She commenced this union from the first moment of Thy conception in the most chaste and pure bosom of Thy holy Mother. She received Thee afterwards, at Thy birth, in a stable, laying Thee on straw, in a manger, between two animals. She held Thee faithful company during Thy whole life, so that Thou didst not make one step without her, nor hadst Thou whereon to lay Thy head. She assisted at all Thy combats in Thy Passion; and when all Thy apostles basely abandoned Thee, in Thy necessity, she remained faithful. When Thou hadst to be crucified, it was she who labored to have Thee attached naked, to the hard, rough cross, with large blunt nails, and with only three, so that each foot could not have one a-piece, and when on the cross, Thou wert dying of thirst, this constant spouse would not let Thee have a drop of water to refresh Thyself, but had Thee served with vinegar, mingled with gall, that could be better tasted than drank. Finally,

Thou didst die and yield up Thy soul on this gibbet, in the arms and close embrace of this dear spouse, that failed not to assist at Thy funeral, carefully seeing that neither the tomb, the grave-clothes, nor anything else, should belong to Thee. And when at Thy resurrection, Thou didst issue glorious from Thy tomb, she made Thee leave there all the linens in which Thy body had been wrapped.

“Behold ! how this cherished spouse accompanied and followed Thee through all, and everywhere ; even in Thy ascension into heaven, Thou didst take her with Thee, since Thou hadst promised her, after this life, the kingdom of heaven and its beatitude, and that Thou desiredst to make her the seal, wherewith to stamp all the elect, who wish to become illustrious in virtue and to arrive at perfection. Oh ! who would not love poverty with all his heart, and above all things ? O, my Lord Jesus Christ, Thou model of poverty ! I beseech Thee to give me poverty, and to enrich me with this treasure ! I conjure Thee to stamp me with her seal ; let her be mine own, and of *mine* forever, so specially and entirely, that for love of Thee, we can never hold anything, as belonging to us ; that in our wants, we use only such things as are anothers, and that we live to the end of our lives in experiencing the effects of holy poverty. Amen !”

THE VOW OF CHASTITY.

WHAT IS CHASTITY?—IN WHAT CONSISTS
ITS PERFECTION?

CHAPTER VI.

THE second vow the Religious makes to consecrate himself entirely to God is the vow of chastity. This vow is nearer to him than that of poverty, for it relates to his body, that forms a part of himself.

Chastity, says the Angelic Doctor, is a virtue dependent on temperance—one of the four cardinal virtues, having for its object to moderate and to regulate the appetite of concupiscence, on account of the pleasures the body may receive from the sense of touch. Then, as temperance, considered in general, designs to moderate and reduce to reason the passions of the concupiscible appetite, relative to the pleasures of the body, as abstinence, which is a special temperance, is occupied in regulating what regards eating; and sobriety, which is another species of temperance, teaches the proper

use of drink ; in like manner, chastity, which is still a special temperance, labors to procure the necessary moderation for the delectations of the body, so that God may not be offended by thoughts, by affections, by word, or by action. Its name alone suffices to show its nature. It is called chastity, says St. Thomas, because it chastises, with the lash of reason and the fear of God, the concupiscence of the flesh, and that, after the same manner, says Aristotle, that a person chastises and corrects a child to restrain it, and to make it wise.

Others, as St. Isidore, draw the name of chastity from a different source—from “*castanea*,” a chestnut. As the chestnut is thorny and all set with prickles, it cannot be readily handled ; in like manner, a person truly chaste so conducts himself that it is impossible to approach him too closely, or to show him a forbidden liberty. Methodius, in the library of the patriarch Photius, says that the thorn called “*rhamnus*” is the symbol of chastity, and for which reason it is called *rhamnus purus*—*i. e.*, white thorn : thorn, in order not to permit being handled without pricking to blood those who are so rash and show it such outrage ; white and pure, on account of the purity and whiteness of chastity.

Mention is made of a plant of a marvellous character found in Mexico, and which perceptibly shrinks and droops, if a dissolute person approaches to touch it ; it is then seen to contract, lower itself, close its leaves with a low, plaintive sound, as if to say : I am troubled, I suffer much,

when I find myself in impure hands. On the contrary, if a chaste person touches it, it unfolds, it expands its leaves, with a sweet, agreeable sound, as if to testify its joy. Wherefore, it is named *herba casta*—"chaste-herb."

Chastity being a virtue, it must be principally in the soul. The body being but flesh and corruption, is not capable of possessing so beautiful an ornament and so precious a treasure. Since all virtues are of a spiritual nature, they must reside in the soul. Thus St. Thomas says: Chastity dwells in the soul, as in its proper abode; it is there seated as on its throne, and there regulates the thoughts and affections. Its jurisdiction is not limited thereto; it passes and extends to the government of the body also, whose members it regulates in accordance with both reason and the law of God. Thus, he who has but a chaste body, has but the deceitful appearance, the phantom of chastity; he does not in reality possess this virtue; but if his soul is chaste, then will chastity flow from the soul into the body, and he will truly possess the virtue. Wherefore, the Wise Man gives this advice: "Use all imaginable care to guard well thy *heart*." He does not say your eyes, but your *heart*. It is in the heart that are conceived, are formed, are organized and live virtue and sin; it is by the heart that the eyes are corrupted—that the other parts of the body become disordered. As to what now are the degrees of chastity? Abbot Chorcæmon, in Cas-sian, places six; St. John Climachus notes but three; while others recognize more or less, accord-

ing to their varied ideas. Not, however, confining ourselves either as to the number or to the difference of these degrees, we would simply say that they should be taken according to the growth of chastity in a person; and that his soul and his body becoming purer, approach more and more to the purity of children—or rather, to that of the angels. Moreover, these degrees should be established on the love of chastity, and on the hatred of the contrary vice: herein lies their true, their natural foundation. Thus, the greater is this love, the stronger will be this hatred; so also, the more elevated these degrees, the more pure and chaste will be the soul. The mark of perfect chastity, says St. John Climachus, is to be no more sensible or moved by animate than by inanimate objects: it is to possess a soul exempt from all improper thoughts, and a body as if dead to all movements of concupiscence.

At the same time, it is well to remark that there is a great difference between the chastity of the future and that of the present life. Between the chastity of glory and the chastity of grace there is this difference: that the soul in the first is made perfect with the sovereign degree of possible perfection, the fire of concupiscence is entirely extinguished in beatified bodies, and the sting of sin altogether annihilated in these holy and deified souls, being elevated, each, to the state of blessed impeccability; whereas, it is not the same with the chastity of this life, and of grace; for this chastity suffers combats and temptations, and in order to

be excellent, and to have all its perfection, it is necessary that it issues victorious from these combats. Every one knows from experience, and with pain, that this life is a life of continual war; and Job had good reason for saying, as also Epictetus after him, "*that the life of man on earth is a continual warfare.*" It is necessary to be ever armed and ceaselessly fighting. St. Paul to the Galatians declares the nature of this war, and who are the combatants. He says: "There is always in man a civil war; the flesh and spirit of which he is composed being ever at variance—the superior and inferior parts divide his soul; reason, virtue, and concupiscence are continually in opposition, one with the other, as two tenants who are striving for the mastery, or as two violent enemies, who strike and exasperate each other; so that the soul, thus thwarted and kept under, can effect no good, or, if it does, it is not with so much readiness, nor at the desired moment." These are the two famous men, in the doctrine of St. Paul, that every one bears within him, etc.

When this concupiscence is called sin by the same apostle, as, "*Sin makes its dwelling within me,*" this is not to say that concupiscence is of itself a sin; it is only so named as being bad, in the sense that it is opposed to the law of God, and is like material sin, since to render it absolute sin, there alone is wanting the consent of the will. Secondly, it bears this name of ignominy, since it drives man to sin, and is for him a movement to sin. Wherefore, St. Augustine says: Concupis-

cence is called sin because it is the source from whence flow all sins.

Thirdly, it is so denominated, as it is not only the cause of sin, but has the effects of sin. Thus was it so named by the Council of Trent. St. Augustine had also a long time previously given and explained the same reason by the following comparison: The tongue is sometimes used for the words it forms; thus we say the Greek tongue, the Latin tongue, etc., to signify the Greek and Latin words the tongue pronounces; in like manner sin gives its name to concupiscence, because it was sin—the sin of Adam—that produced it in us. In conclusion, concupiscence bears the name of sin because it is a trial. The sin of the first man, again says St. Augustine, in speaking of concupiscence, has merited this punishment for himself and for his children, their nature not possessing it. Elsewhere he expresses himself in these words: The just chastisement of sin is that man, not wishing to submit to the commandment of his Creator and unite himself to Him by obedience, was not in accordance with his true sentiments, and so revolted against himself.

Besides, this concupiscence, though incorporated in us and deeply rooted in our nature, can readily be weakened and diminished during life, but not entirely uprooted and destroyed—it can only die with us; and whatever care is taken to destroy it, something of it will always remain.

Who doubts, says St. Augustine, that concupiscence can be diminished, or that it cannot be en-

tirely destroyed? St. Augustine, explaining these words of St. Paul: "Let not sin"—that is to say, concupiscence—"reign in your mortal bodies, to obey its solicitations and its movements," says: Observe that the apostle says not that concupiscence, that sin, *be* not in you, but that it reigns not; for do what you will, it is not possible for it not to be in your members. Since you cannot banish it—drive it out entirely—at least deprive it of authority; allow it not be the mistress; let it not subject you to its laws. Whatever you may do, whatever pains you take, to prevent a briar bearing thorns, you will not succeed; you may prevent their growth by clipping them so soon as they make their appearance, but you can never, by any manner of toil or artifice, deprive them of their natural power of production. Thus it is readily in your reach to arrest, by your care and your vigilance, the movements of your concupiscence: you can prevent them from becoming sinful, you can even succeed in weakening their strength and diminishing their number, but it is impossible to rid yourself of them entirely: the complete victory of this enemy is not out of heaven, where alone we shall have the happiness of being freed from it entirely.

St. Augustine, interpreting these words of David: "God, who heals all your infirmities, and delivers your life from death," says: After the remission of your sins by the sacrament of baptism, you nevertheless have a body inclined to evil, and subject to concupiscence. Thus it is unavoidable that you

sometimes have bad desires, that suggest to you illicit pleasures; such being the effects of your languor, and the symptoms of the malady with which you are afflicted. You are still, in the weakness of the flesh, drawn to its miseries, the death of sin not being vanquished in you, nor your corruptible body clothed in the immortality of the blessed; but when it shall be in heaven, when God will have freed your life from death, then will it be that He will deliver you from all evil, that He will cure all your weakness, and give to you a perfect health. Elsewhere the same holy Father says, in a like sentiment: In this combat, entire victory will be the perfect cure and health, when the just will say: "My soul, bless the Lord, who cures all thine infirmities." But if in this mortal life we would fain be without suffering from concupiscence, nor experience any disorderly movements, if we hope to enjoy a profound and perfect peace, we deceive ourselves: this will never be but where there will be no death, no sting of sin, and when we shall possess the Sovereign Good.

Theodore IV., an emperor of the east, was a wise and virtuous prince. After a year's reign he ceded the purple and the crown to Leo of Isauria and received holy orders. He directed that after his death there should be engraved on his tomb, as an epitaph, the single Greek word, Hygicia, which signifies health; thereby wishing to designate that the perfect cure of concupiscence, of the disorders of the passions, and of all our ills—in a word, the perfect health of the soul, cannot be till after death, and in the land of the truly living.

From all this let us draw two conclusions : First, that concupiscence is found in all men, even in the most just and the most saintly of this life on earth. "From the soles of the feet," says St. Bernard, in speaking of concupiscence, "to the top of the head, we are all ailing, and there is no part of us that is not infected with this poison."

But no one has spoken better on this subject than St. Paul. His expressions are so forcible that the Greek Fathers thought he spoke not of himself, but in the name of a sinner—of some vicious man. However, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, and other Latin Fathers, were confident that he alluded to himself when he wrote the following: "It is not without pain that I obey the law of Jesus Christ; for it is spiritual, whilst I am carnal: not that in reality I resist Him voluntarily, but because concupiscence is still within me: this source of evil desires, this nursery of disorderly affections, etc. In this lamentable state I am as a slave of sin, delivered up in some measure to its power, for it drags me after it by force, and in spite of myself, causes me to do what I would not. Neither my reason nor my will approves of the movements of my concupiscence, nor of the actions to which it constrains me. I sincerely wish not to experience these emotions, and yet I endure them; they are within me regardless of consent. Thus, concupiscence, material sin, the cause, the effect, and the source of sin, dwell within me. I know that in my flesh and in the sensitive part of my soul there is nothing that draws me to good, but on

the contrary, an inclination to evil. I wish to do good, yet all the power I have for doing it tends but to doing it badly; I cannot finish and accomplish it: consummate perfection is not a work of earth, but of heaven, where there is no more opposition of the flesh to reason—no more sin. On the one hand, the law of God gives me pleasure; and on the other, it causes me pain. I feel as if separated in two parts: according to the superior and reasonable part, fortified by grace, I find the commandments of God most just, and I wish to observe them; but, according to the inferior and animal part, I find therein great difficulty. I feel in my soul a law that contradicts my spirit; that subjects me to it, as a poor slave; tyrannizes over me; impels me by temptations to offend God, though my liberty has no share in it. *Alas! miserable wretch that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Who will end this cruel and dangerous combat that I feel within me? It will be the grace of God, through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ; it will be the waters of His grace that will cool within me, even in this life, the ardor of the fires of concupiscence, and that will entirely extinguish them in eternity."

Since concupiscence is found in every man, and exercises over them its tyranny; since the greatest saints are not exempt from it, as we are taught by St. Paul, St. Bernard; and as St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. Jerome relate of themselves, for though far advanced in years, they had to lead a most austere life—to shun all occasions of evil—it is

evident, and the conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing remarks, that chastity can be attained in this life, it can have all the degrees of perfection, notwithstanding the ceaseless agitations of concupiscence, the combats with the demon of the world, and with all its enemies. Chastity in this life is the lily of the Canticles, planted in the midst of thorns, where it retains its brilliant whiteness, and exhales the sweetest and most agreeable perfumes, it is like to gold in the furnace.

Of gold, there are two kinds. The most excellent is that which is called virgin gold, and which Aristotle and Athenius style *Apyron*, because it has *not* come in contact with fire; being such as is found in rivers, that the waters have carried away in passing through the mines. Such gold is taken from out the rivers Tagus in Spain, the Po in Italy, the Hebron of Thrace, the Ganges of India, and in some of the rivers of America. There is no gold purer than this. The second species of gold is that which passes through fire, that is purified in the crucible, which process causes it to become very good. This latter is a representation of chastity on earth, where it experiences the fire of concupiscence, and is refined in these flames; but the virginal gold is the symbol and image of chastity in heaven.

SECTION I.

Of the Vow of Chastity—To what it Obliges.

Persons who have promised and vowed to God

their chastity in Religion, are bound by their vow : First, to an absolute renunciation of marriage. This vow, according to all the Doctors, deprives a man of the power and the natural liberty he has to marry ; and if he marries, this vow renders null his marriage.

Secondly, he is obliged to abstain entirely from all that is contrary to chastity, in thoughts, in affections, in words, and in works ; it obliges keeping the soul and body in perfect purity, and to avoid all that could sully this precious virtue.

Thirdly, he must know, that, in promising God chastity, he had the intention of performing a good and virtuous action, and to offer to God an agreeable sacrifice ; it is necessary, as we said elsewhere, that this action should appear not only outwardly, but be chiefly interior ; for it is in the interior that virtue is formed and dwells ; it is from thence it should pass to the exterior, if it is wished that the sacrifice made to God be good and virtuous. Thus, all Religious are obliged by their vow to be chaste in body, and more so in soul, as says St. Paul. It is for this reason, that in the holy Canticles the Spouse says twice consecutively to His beloved : “Behold thou art fair, O my love, behold thou art fair!” wishing to show by this double beauty the twofold purity of the soul and body, that he requires of her, and of which she should be careful.

Fourthly, the religious vows—*specially that of chastity*—binds and attaches a soul to Jesus Christ ; making between them a true and perfect marriage, of which that of man with woman is but an image.

Consequently, the soul is held strictly and indispensably bound to render to Jesus Christ, its Spouse, the duties that a wife should render to her husband, which are to give him her body, her heart, and its affections, etc.

No one is ignorant that the Son of God, in becoming man, espoused our nature, and that He therein contracted marriage in the mystery of His incarnation, operated in the most pure bosom of His holy Mother. "This is a great sacrament," says St. Paul, speaking of the sacrament of marriage, as exists between man and woman; but I understand his meaning as representing and signifying the union that is between Jesus Christ and His Church. Wherefore does St. Bernard also say: We are the spouses of Jesus Christ, since we compose His Church: *collectively*, we make but one spouse. Yet each one is a spouse in particular. Then, since all the faithful are the spouses of the Son of God, a Religious is doubtless much more so; for he or she is first of all of the number of the faithful. Besides, Religious have given and entirely consecrated themselves to Jesus Christ by their vows. Whence, Tertullian says to the virgin who has vowed herself to God: You are married to Jesus Christ; you have consecrated to Him your body in the maturity of age, and in the state of liberty you were in to have given yourself to a man: you have chosen Jesus Christ for your Spouse; then regulate your life in quality of spouse, according to the will of your Spouse.

Friedeberg, a young princess of incomparable

beauty, had been affianced, without her consent, to Sigebert, King of Austrasia ; but having vowed to become a Religious, in gratitude for being delivered of a demon, of which she was once possessed, she was in much trouble, when she found herself so entreated by the king, who was at Metz, to celebrate their marriage. She knelt before him, asking for seven days' consideration. This specified time being nearly finished, she set out early one morning (accompanied by two men and by two of her maids of honor) for the cathedral church dedicated to St. Stephen. When there, she withdrew to one side, divested herself of her magnificent attire, to be clothed as a Religieuse. After placing the veil on her head, she approached the altar, prostrated herself with her face to the ground, conjuring the goodness of God to be pleased to touch and change the heart of the king, so that he might not take further steps to effect the proffered marriage. She seized on to the corner of the altar—she redoubled her prayers to St. Stephen that he would obtain for her this favor, and that the king might leave her to her resolution, and in the habit she had just assumed.

The king, on becoming acquainted with what had transpired, was greatly astonished ; took counsel of some wise persons, principally of St. Cyprian, Archbishop of Arles, then acted most generously, and indeed royally. He stifled the ardent love he entertained for this princess, went to the church, commanded that she be divested of the religious habit and veil she had taken, and that the royal robe be given her, a crown be placed on her head,

and that she be decked with all the ornaments he had designed for the day of their nuptials. Then casting on her a gaze of admiration, feeling the power of her brilliant beauty, enhanced by all these ornaments, he said to her, without listening to his private sentiments: I had hoped to espouse you—to make you my consort; but seeing that Jesus Christ our Lord wishes you for Himself, I relinquish my claim, and yield you to this celestial Rival. Then taking her right hand, placed it on the altar, as if to say he gave her to our Lord, to become His spouse, and reserving for himself no further right to her, instantly retired in tears.

In token of the true marriage that the vows of religion make between our Lord and the soul, and in order to declare it publicly by some exterior act, it is customary—at least in many religious Orders—to give to the Religieuse, the day of her profession, a ring, as a symbol of her espousal with our Lord. This is the practice in marriages, when the husband gives to his spouse a ring, as if to stamp her, and say to her that she belongs to him, as also to furnish her with a pledge of his fidelity, and to oblige her to a similar affection for himself. From thence comes the practice in ancient times of engraving these rings with the figure of Faith, with two hands clasped one within the other. This custom is very ancient, being in use among the Hebrews in the time of the patriarch Jacob. As for an inviolable assurance of their promises, they mutually gave rings, which they wore till after the execution of the promise. In certain communities the priest,

on placing the ring upon the fourth finger of the left hand of the professed, and which has a more direct correspondence with the heart, says to her : I make you the spouse of Jesus Christ, Son of the Sovereign Father. After which the Superioress says: My sister, receive this ring in token of the perfect love and the perpetual fidelity which you should observe for your royal Spouse, Jesus Christ our Lord, during your whole life. In another Order there is sung for the newly-professed, during the ceremony, these words of St. Agnes : “Jesus Christ my Lord” (and this latter appellation is a distinctive term used by chaste women, in high position of life, to designate their husbands ; for thus did Sarah call Abraham) “has given me His ring as a sign of our nuptials ; and has decorated me with a crown, as His spouse.” As it is usual for brides to wear a crown, in some religious Orders a crown of flowers is placed upon the head of the newly-professed, as a token and an assurance of the one she is to wear in heaven, if she perseveres in fidelity to her Spouse. After this there is sung: “Come, Spouse of Jesus Christ, receive this crown, in emblem of the one that your Spouse has prepared for you in eternal bliss.” The veil of the professed is also a token of her espousal ; for the solemnity of nuptials has ever been performed beneath a canopy, or something that holds the place of a veil. Moreover, the veil gives her to understand that she is espoused to Jesus Christ, and should live subject to Him. Thus, in one Order, there is said to her, in this part of the ceremony :

Take this sacred veil, by which it will be made known that you have contemned the world, and that truly, humbly, and with your whole heart, you have subjected yourself forever to Jesus Christ as His spouse.

The Religieuse, being then truly the spouse of Jesus Christ, should render to Him the duties of a spouse. She should give Him her whole being: thus, she cannot dispose of her body, vowed to Jesus Christ. When, therefore, beholding her hands, her arms, her feet, she should say: Behold the hands, the arms, and the feet, that do not belong to me; behold the eyes and this face, they too belong to Jesus Christ. Then when the flesh, the demon, or the world, tempt her to commit some fault prejudicial to her vow, she will say: What do you ask of me? You come too late; my body no longer belongs to me, but to Jesus Christ, my Spouse, with whom I desire to keep an inviolable fidelity.

The second obligation to which a Religieuse binds herself by vow is to give to our Lord her heart and her love, though, properly speaking, this should also be the first; for, without the affections, all other things she may give signify little, and are not valued by Him.

Then the principal offering that should be made—that which is the soul of all gifts—is the heart and the affections; and a Religieuse, face to face with our Lord, her Spouse, would give little to Him, in giving everything else, if the heart, which He demands above all, is withheld.

St. Bernard says to her: From whence comes this happiness? From whom have you received so inestimable a glory as that of being espoused to One whose perfections and attractions are so great that the angels ever desire to look upon Him, so as to complete their felicity? Who has granted you this favor, that He should be your Spouse, whose beauty is admired by the sun and the moon? See with what ardent love you are obliged to embrace and cherish Him, after having so much esteemed you, and above all, for having done so much for you.

Thus, the spouse in the Canticles says to her companions, with all the ardor of the tenderest affection: "Daughters of Jerusalem, O my dear companions, I conjure you, if you meet my Beloved, tell Him that I languish with love for Him." The faithful spouse, says St. Ambrose, has no other desire than for her Spouse, Jesus Christ: she wishes for Him, she seeks Him, attaches herself to Him with all ardor; she cherishes Him in the depth of her soul; she discloses herself to Him; pours forth, in His presence, all her secrets; and she has no other fear but to lose Him." In certain religious Orders the newly-professed says, after having received the veil, these words of St. Agnes: "He has placed His seal upon my brow and upon my head, that I should admit no other lover than Himself;" and during this part of the ceremony there is sung for her these other words of the same Saint: "It is Jesus whom I love: I am become the spouse of Him, whose Mother was a virgin, and who was

begotten spiritually of His Father: of Him, whose sweetest music already sounds in mine ear; so if I love Him I am chaste; when I touch Him I am pure; when I possess him I am a virgin."

"I will espouse thee," says this Spouse to the soul, by the prophet Osee—"I will espouse thee in an eternal and indissoluble marriage, if thou desirest; but I will espouse thee in justice, in judgment, in mercy, and in faith. In justice, so that thou mayest render to me what thou owest, and that thou triest to be just and virtuous in my presence; in judgment, which is an abyss within me, and should be for thee the subject of thy admiration, of thy gratitude, and of thy love; for you see that I have chosen thee for my spouse, in preference to so many others, who were more worthy than thou; in mercy, for in the preference and the choice that I made of thee I have been infinitely merciful, and I incessantly continue to be so; in faith, in order that you be inviolably faithful to me—that you entirely renounce the world, and all that has no reference to me; and that you breathe but for my service and for my love."

According to St. Jerome, and to many other Fathers, the religious soul—spouse of the Son of God—should effect an entire change of manners and sentiments: she should renounce her evil habits, forget the thoughts and maxims of the world, and not only to moderate the excess of her affection for her relatives, but even to stifle it, so as to bury in a holy forgetfulness all cherished ones, and to consider them as dead. Wherefore, is ad-

dressed to her these words in the forty-fourth psalm: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider that, to be the spouse of the Son of God, you should forget your country, and your father's house." So, then, it is necessary that she so change and so completely renounce all things, that nothing may interfere in the accomplishment of the design of her divine Spouse. "This celestial Spouse," says St. Paul, "died for her, in order to render her beautiful and agreeable to His eyes, so that she be without spot or wrinkle, or any deformity, but that she be holy and pure."

St. Syncletica, as related by St. Athanasius, discourses thus with her Religieuses:

"We should ever take a most special care to adorn ourselves, when we approach our true Spouse, the King of heaven." It is by the continual exercise of the virtues that we efface all the stains of our sins, and that we change all these terrestrial and perishable ornaments into such as are divine and celestial. Let us render ourselves brilliant with every virtue; place upon our brow the triple diadem of faith, of hope, and of charity: let our necklace of pearls be humility; our cincture of diamonds, temperance; our precious and costly veil be voluntary poverty; and the prayers and psalms, the delicious, incorruptible viands of our festivity. Let us be careful, when approaching these all-celestial nuptials, that our lamps need not oil; that is, our souls be not devoid of virtue, or our immortal Spouse will turn in aversion from us, and will refuse to accept our nuptial promises. If

you ask me, what are these promises, I will reply: it is to condemn our bodies, and to take exceeding care of our soul. Behold! in what consist the articles of the marriage contract of virgins with their divine Spouse.

In the ceremony of profession, as performed in another Order, a crucifix is given to the newly-professed, with the following words: Behold your divine Spouse, Jesus Christ, crucified, whom I present to you: you should have Him more truly engraven in the depth of your heart than He is here mysteriously represented before you. Here you behold your Spouse, nailed to the cross, all covered with wounds and blood, to excite in you, by a reciprocal love, a perfect model of His divine virtues. Behold, O daughter, Him whom you should alone love, since He honors you to-day with the title of spouse. If you love Him, you will conform yourself to Him.

He presents Himself to you thus wounded and bleeding, not to excite your horror, but to oblige you to love Him; for all these wounds you see in his body are as so many mouths He opens to ask your love, or to reproach you for your ingratitude and infidelity.

SECTION II.

The Excellence and the Precious Advantages of the Vow of Chastity.

This vow is certainly most excellent, it having for its object a virtue that elevates man much

above himself, and draws him very near to the condition and to the purity of the angels. There is in it even much more honor and glory for man, since the angels are pure in their own nature ; whereas, man has to do great violence to his to acquire purity ; nor can he succeed but by exalted virtue. It is for this reason that ordinarily chastity is called an angelic virtue ; for it renders man chaste like unto angels. No virtue, says Cassian, so fittingly and justly merits that carnal man, in his mode of life and conversation, should be compared to those pure spirits, the angels, as chastity. Is there anything more beautiful, says the chaste and devout St. Bernard, than chastity ? Of a creature, sullied by original sin, it produces one pure and spotless ; of an enemy, it makes a friend, and of a man, an angel. It is true that an angel and a chaste mortal differ ; but it is only in happiness, not in virtue. Further adding, that if the chastity of the angel is happier, that of man is more proved. It is chastity alone, continues this holy Father, that in this life, and in this time of our mortality, expresses in some sort the state of immortal glory. He who has conquered the flesh, says St. John Climachus, has conquered nature ; and he who conquers nature, is above nature ; and he who is above nature differs but little from the angels. St. Cyprian, St. Basil, St. Chrysostom, and other Fathers, express the same sentiments in other terms.

Chastity surpasses even the angels—it elevates man to the resemblance of God. Another reason for this is, as already said, that the vow of chastity

contracts a happy and divine espousal between Jesus Christ and the religious soul—makes the soul truly the spouse of the Son of God, and consequently mounts to a sovereign and inestimable glory—to infinite treasures.

Who does not see the perfect happiness of this soul, and the wisdom of the choice it has made, in preferring our Lord to a mortal spouse? Hereupon is called to memory what is related of the seven Pleiades, who were seven sisters—daughters of Atlanta and Pleione—six of whom were allied to gods, according to pagan views; whilst the seventh, named Meropia, was the spouse of a mortal. These seven sisters being transformed (says the fable) into seven stars which compose the Pleiades, situated in front of the knees of Taurus, and shine with great brilliancy. Meropia alone does not appear: she conceals herself, abashed, for having espoused a mortal, and for having made so disadvantageous a choice, in comparison with her sisters. Wherefore, the poet sings: Meropia, for having espoused a mortal, is overcome with regret, stands aloof, and hides herself in confusion.

The vow of chastity has this in particular: that it makes profession of a virtue unknown to the pagans, and even to the Jews.

The Jews knew not what it was to vow their virginity to God. However, they so greatly esteemed chastity, and had so much veneration for those who observed it, after the manner known to them, that they regarded them as Saints, and durst not touch them.

The patriarchs even, who were men of great sanctity, as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and others, did not require by their law, the virtue of chastity to be practised in its greatest perfection.

It was reserved as an heroic action and as a masterpiece of grace for the new law. The Wise Man, dazzled by its effulgence, cries out : “O how beautiful is chastity ! how excellent are chaste souls ! they sparkle with a marvellous brilliancy, they are in great consideration before God and before men ; and their names will be forever in honor and glory.”

The wise son of Sirac, admiring the nobility and the worth of this virtue, says : There is nothing comparable to a chaste soul ; all that can be placed in the balance with it cannot be its counterpoise.

But let us go much further, and say : that not only is chastity most honorable, but it is also most useful to him who possesses it ; it brings with it great wealth. First, we should believe that our Lord, in quality of Spouse, makes invaluable gifts to the religious soul. He gives to His spouse jewels of different kinds. He loads her with His graces, the least of which is worth infinitely more than all the gold and gems of the entire earth. Thus in the forty-fourth Psalm, where there is mention of the Spouse, the Holy Ghost, after calling her queen—and with reason, since she is espoused to the King of kings—says to her : “The queen stood on Thy right hand, in gilded clothing, surrounded with variety,” that is decked with all ornaments calculated to enhance the charms of her beauty.

Secondly, the vow of chastity delivers the Religious from many and great sins, that sully both the soul and body ; it withdraws her from the occasions of committing them, where the frailty of nature causes those often to fall who have not carefully shunned danger. How can one be near the fire and not feel its heat? how handle pitch, and not have the hands soiled?

Thirdly, this vow imposes on him who makes it the happy necessity of practising a great number of virtues, requisite for the preservation of chastity, and it leads the way to perfection and sanctity. From whence it comes, that in the doctrine of St. Paul, according to the remark of Cassian, chastity bears the name of sanctity and holiness. "Such is the will of God," says the apostle to the faithful of Thessalonica, "that you be saints, that you do not fall into sins" *against purity*, "and that each of you study to have a chaste body, and to use your members becomingly." Again, "try to live in peace with everyone," he says to the Hebrews, "and to love purity, without which no person will have the happiness of seeing God." For this reason chastity and wisdom appeared as two sisters, closely united, full of majesty and beauty, in a dream to St. Gregory Nazianzen, while pursuing his studies at Athens. They promised to accompany, to assist, to protect, and to teach him, and afterwards, to conduct him to heaven, and there to place him near the throne of the adorable Trinity, for eternal contemplation. Wherefore it is also that the Holy Ghost says: "Wisdom enters not into a

wicked and malignant soul, and takes not its abode in a body sullied by sin.”

In this vow is also experienced much sweetness. The delights therein to be tasted are so great as far to surpass all luxury of the senses. Souls perfectly pure and chaste have more joy and contentment, in the contempt they hold all worldly pleasures than those persons have, or could possibly have, who are wholly sensual.

The holy and innocent pleasures that chastity brings the soul are so savory and so delightful that Abbot Cheoromon says in Cassian: As he who has not experienced this delight can form no idea of its nature, so he who has felt it finds no words adequate to its expression, or its perfect understanding, any more than a person who has eaten honey can ever give an idea of its sweetness to one who is ignorant of its taste.

The fruits of chastity, says St. Bernard, are suavity and pleasure. What a happiness, says St. Jerome, what felicity, not to be the slave of a mortal, but of Jesus Christ!—not to serve the flesh, but the spirit! For he who attaches himself to God, says St. Paul, becomes one spirit with Him.

Let us conclude with the beautiful words of St. Ephrem, as they contain all that has been said: “O chastity, which art the mother of beautiful and holy love of God our Lord—state of the angelic life! O chastity, that renders men equal to angels! O chastity, that fillest with joy the chaste soul, and serves as wings for it to fly to heaven! O chastity, which art a true source of spiritual pleasure, dissi-

pating sadness and ennui ! O chastity, allaying the ardor of the passions, and delivering the mind from trouble ! O chastity, spiritual chariot which transports its possessor, like another Elias, towards that which is divine and celestial ! O chastity ! which art like a beautiful rose, blooming in the midst of the soul and body, and embalming the whole dwelling of the soul with a delightful fragrance !”

SECTION III.

Means of Preserving Chastity, the First Being Prayer.

We have said above that St. Ephrem compares chastity to a “beautiful rose;” this is true for another reason, inasmuch as the rose is not without thorns, neither is chastity without difficulties. The Fathers teach, says Cassian, that the combat to be waged against the enemy of this virtue is much the most enduring, it being no other than a fierce war, in which but few persons are completely victorious.

“I know,” says the Wise Man, “and am well persuaded, that I cannot be chaste if God gives me not the grace;” and whoever persuades himself that by his own strength he can overthrow such an enemy as concupiscence, resembles one who wishes to bind a strong man with a twig.

He who thinks to subdue his flesh by his own power, works in vain ; for neither his watchings nor his fasts can accomplish the task : only God can demolish this material edifice of our carnal inclina-

tions and build up on these ruins a spiritual dwelling, wherein our soul may be in safety.

Therefore, since it is so difficult to suppress entirely the disorderly movements of the flesh ; since the virtue of chastity is so much above our nature that of ourselves we cannot attain it, whatever efforts we make, it is absolutely necessary that God should aid us—that He should give us His grace : let us pray continually for His assistance ; and if we would be forever chaste, we have ever the need of this same help. Let us then pray earnestly, for the matter is of the highest importance.

The same Saint speaks of the prayers we should make to God, and says we should offer similar prayers, to the same end, to the august Mary, who loves most specially this virtue ; for she is the purest and most chaste of all creatures ; St. Ambrose calling her, for this reason, the Mistress, and St. Ephrem the Princess, of Virginity. St. Gregory Nazianzen styles her the “Splendor,” St. Damascene, the “Queen, the Mother, and the glory of virgins ;” and the holy Church, the “Virgin of virgins.” Prayer, faithfully addressed to her for this intention, cannot fail of success : she will promptly obtain for us the grace of purity, and the strength to surmount the temptations and assaults against this virtue.

It is most advantageous to say daily some special prayer for this intention. Persons who have made the experiment find the recitation of the little office of the Immaculate Conception very efficacious. If we wish to know the *cause*, it is that our faith, es-

teem, and veneration for this mystery, merit from the goodness and generosity of Mary some special help against these disorders for those who thus honor her. In the prerogative of the Immaculate Conception, the B. Virgin was preserved by a singular privilege from the stain of original sin, by which we are sullied from the instant of our conception, and which is the poisoned and inexhaustible source of all our concupiscence.

St. Mary of Egypt had passed several years of her life in all manner of excesses, which were sufficient to condemn her, with all her accomplices, to eternal reprobation. She went to Jerusalem, during some great solemnity (with the intention of corrupting the young, as she had previously done in Alexandria), but when she wished to enter the church, with the crowd, to venerate the Holy Cross, she felt herself repulsed several times, as by some occult power. Astonished at being thus excluded, she retired into a corner of the vestibule of the church, and there, thinking what might be the cause of this repulsion, she soon made up her mind that it was no other than the depravity of her life, for which she instantly conceived an intense grief, and casting herself on her knees before an image of the Blessed Virgin—over the church door—she melted into tears, and asked of Mary to obtain mercy and pardon of her divine Son, promising an entire and sincere change of life. Our Blessed Lady heard her prayer, and this great sinner was instantly converted. She then forsook the world, retired into a desert, where she passed the rest of

her days in austere penance, and became a great saint.

We recommend also for the same purpose the frequent reception of the sacraments of confession and communion. As for communion, the worthy participation of this adorable mystery is a sovereign remedy towards crushing the sting of sin within us, or at least towards moderating it, so as to render the body chaste.

The infinitely pure body of our Lord imprints on ours—according to its dispositions—His holy and divine qualities. Wherefore, the prophet Zachary calls this Sacrament, “The wheat of the elect, and a wine that maketh virgins.”

As to confession, Cardinal Tolet gives this advice: Sins opposed to chastity do incalculable evil: one cannot be easily rescued therefrom: their cure is difficult, and I believe that the greater number of the reprobate are sullied with this sin of concupiscence. I do not see but the one efficacious remedy for this evil—that of *very* frequent confession. This sacrament was instituted by our Saviour for the good of sinners, and for their purification. Such as do not make use of it need not promise themselves to be chaste, unless by a miracle, or by a special and most rare privilege.

SECTION IV.

Another Means for Preserving Chastity is Humility.

This second means proceeds from the first, which

is prayer. One prays not to God to grant him the grace to be chaste, but when he recognizes that of himself he cannot be: herein, then, is humility of the understanding, which is no other than the knowledge of the truth, or at least it flows from it as its source. If, then, you wish to be chaste, be humble; and if you desire to be *very* chaste, be very humble; otherwise, you cannot be what you desire; besides, you will be in great danger of falling, as the most ordinary chastisement for pride is impurity. And is not this most just? By pride you wish to exalt yourself unjustly above others; and in punishment, you are lowered by uncleanness beneath them, and placed on a level with the brute.

Our Fathers assert, says Cassian, that chastity cannot be acquired without first having cast in the heart the foundation of humility. Relating at great length all the means that should be made use of, in order to combat and overcome whatever is opposed to purity, he says: You will never meet with success, if, before all else, you are not established in true humility, without which you will never be able to triumph over any vice.

Acknowledge before God, with humility, says St. John Climachus, the weakness of your nature; place before your eyes your own impotence for any good, and you will insensibly acquire the gift of chastity. The combats that we endure against chastity are sometimes in punishment of the vanity we have entertained of being exempt for a while from these assaults. When we have generously

combatted against the *arch-enemy* of all virtue, and have driven him from our heart by our fasts, our prayers, and our humility, as with a sharp, cutting sword, this wretch attaches himself as a worm to our body, endeavoring by its ceaseless stings to excite in us feelings that sully the purity of our soul. This happens principally to those whom the demon of pride holds in his power: they dwell with satisfaction on the thought that they are no longer molested by evil suggestions, and thus they fall into vanity. But if those whom these evil thoughts leave in repose would examine themselves with care, they would find at the bottom of their heart, as in a heap of filth, a hidden serpent, to whisper in their ear that it was by their own strength and exertions they had acquired chastity. They would not consider these words of St. Paul: "What have you that you have not received from God, without meriting it; or that has not come to you through the prayers of others?" Then should no effort be spared to stifle, by great humility, so dangerous an enemy, so that, delivered from this poisonous serpent, we should be able to sing, with pure and blessed children, the triumphal hymn of chastity that David puts in their mouths, which we cannot do if not reclathed with innocence and humility.

Pride, says St. Gregory the Great, has often been for many a source of sinful and infamous acts. Explaining these words of Job: "It undoes the belt of kings," the same Saint says: Kings are those who govern their bodies with wisdom, and

regulate its movements by virtue ; but who, when the soul becomes proud, because it is chaste, God often permits, in punishment for its pride, that it fall into some grievous sin : thus is undone the belt of kings, when, in chastisement for their vanity, He withdraws chastity, as is seen by many examples among the ancient Fathers. Ruffin relates of Abbot John, the Egyptian, that he predicted to the Emperor Theodosius the victory of the tyrants, Maximus and Eugenius, in a discourse he addressed to him and to six other persons present ; exhorting them to fear and sedulously fly vanity ; then related the following : “ There was, in our time, in a neighboring desert, a solitary, inhabiting a cave, supporting himself by manual labor, whilst leading a life of most extraordinary rigor. He passed almost the entire day and night in prayer, and practiced heroic virtue. So many fine qualities, and the career of so perfect a life, ended by inspiring him with vanity. He commenced by confiding in his own strength, as if to it could be attributed his advancement in virtue, and referring to himself what he owed to God alone. The tempter—man’s enemy—discovering the presumption of his mind, lost not so fine an occasion to surprise him, and catch him in his snares. And thus, he who had hitherto been so virtuous and edifying, fell into sins opposed to purity, by yielding to a single movement of vanity and concupiscence. Wherefore, whoever wishes to preserve chastity, must be well founded in humility, the practice of which is in the firm persuasion that of ourselves we cannot

be chaste, and that even when assisted by God, our soul and our body are sources of evil.”

Next, in whatever age, place, time, or exercise, we may be, or whatever degree of virtue we possess, it teaches us still to mistrust ourselves, and carefully to avoid dangerous occasions.

Again, when we see some one fall, it teaches us not to mock them, to offer them insult, to treat them with contempt, or to esteem ourselves stronger or wiser than others ; but on the contrary to humble ourselves before God, and to ask of Him grace, for the one who has fallen, so that he may rise again, and for ourselves, lest we fall.

SECTION V.

Other Means for Preserving Chastity—To Guard the Heart.

The heart, as mentioned elsewhere, is taken or used in Sacred Scripture and in profane writings, for the principle of the thoughts and affections. Accordingly, he who wishes to acquire and to preserve chastity, should be most careful in watching over his heart. It is in this sentiment that Cassian, speaking of impurity, tells us: The amendment of which, comes principally from the good dispositions of the heart, whence flows also the poison of this malady, according to these words of our Lord . “It is from the heart that cometh forth evil thoughts.” We should then, in the first place, purify that which holds the place of the source of

life and death, in keeping with this warning of Solomon : Keep an ever vigilant watch over thy heart ; and gives as reason for this, “because,” says he, “the heart is the source of life.” It is the principle of the life of the soul, taking it in the the sense spoken of here, as it is also in its animal nature relative to the body. We should keep over ourselves three sorts of vigilance, says St. Bernard : the first, over the hand for works, the second, over the tongue for words, and the third, over the heart ; and according to the instruction of the Holy Spirit, we exercise this last above all, with the greatest attention, because the heart is the seat of life. Then, we suppose this vigilance to consist principally in two things · the first is, the application of the soul in guarding its affections and its thoughts.

It is with great reason that this vigilance is pointed out as the most important, and is exacted as strictly as possible ; for the other two depend upon it. Let us speak first of the thoughts, since these *precede*, ordinarily, the affections. This guard of the heart upon the thoughts consists in two things, viz., to have good thoughts, and to turn aside improper thoughts, or at least, *not* to consent to them.

As to good thoughts, let us consider what Abbot Moses says in Cassian : that it is impossible for us to have no thoughts, but their quality depends much upon ourselves ; no one can be so guarded as not sometimes to be attacked by bad thoughts ; but it is in our power to consent to, or reject them, to open or to close the door of our will to them : as a

mill goes constantly when water is plenty; however, the miller makes the flour according to the grain he wishes to grind, whether it is wheat, oats or tares. So one can readily retrench superfluous and imperfect thoughts, but not by exhausting the source. This appears most evident in holy and perfect souls; they never think of advancing, of enriching, of establishing themselves on earth; they apply not their minds to the honors and pleasures of this life, for as they are not of this world, as our Lord said of the Apostles, neither are their thoughts of this world, but of heaven.

Their heads and their hair are white as the snow, according to the expression of St. John in the Apocalypse, wishing thus to signify that the thoughts of the just come out of their minds as the hair shoots forth from their heads—so also are they, by the purity and the whiteness of their innocence, like snow; whereas, the thoughts of the wicked are vicious, as thus expressed by the Wise Man: “The thought of the foolish”—that is, the wicked—“is sin.”

Since, therefore, the quality of our thoughts depends much upon ourselves, and if we wish we can have them good, chaste, and holy, let us employ our care in having them effectively such. The purity of our thoughts is of an inexpressible consequence. Thought being the first movement of all that is worked within us, is consequently the source from whence flow our affections, our words and our works, and consequently the principle of all our purity, as well as of all our imperfections.

Our thoughts produce our affections. Do you wish to know where you place your treasure? says the blessed Laurence Justinian: consider what you love. Do you wish to know what you love? Reflect on your thoughts. Thus, by means of your love, you will know your treasure, and by your thoughts, you will know your love. The reason of this is an invariable principle of theology, that teaches that the will cannot love, nor hate, nor operate upon anything, if the thing is unknown to it, and that our love or our hatred is proportioned to the thoughts that are presented to us by the understanding. Moreover, our words are the images and portraits of our thoughts, which are insensible, being spiritual, and hidden in the depth of the understanding, and are rendered sensible and evident by our words. Our actions also originate from our thoughts; receiving from them their color and their force. All works, says St. Augustine, both good and bad, arise from the thoughts. Man is innocent or guilty by thought. A good thought, says holy Scripture, will save you; whereas, a bad thought will *destroy you*—it will cause a wicked action, which includes mortal sin.

In a word, it is our thoughts that will accuse or defend us: by them is the guilty person judged, and made conscious of his works. So also, St. Augustine says elsewhere, on the same subject: "It is not possible that he who has good thoughts should commit bad actions, as actions spring from thoughts; and no one can do a good act, or even move a member to act, if the direction has not pre-

viously come from thought and the mind." He then elucidates this by a beautiful comparison. As all that is done in the province of the Roman Empire is executed by the orders emanating from the imperial palace, and from the supreme council, so even all that passes within us, in the province of the sight—if so to speak—in that of hearing, and of the other faculties, must necessarily come from the secret interior of the mind and of thought.

St. Macairius, considering the importance of thought, says that all the care and the application of man should be given to watching his thoughts. The Religious of a monastery in Alexandria, as relates St. John Climachus, carried, suspended from their cinctures, tablets, on which they wrote, as directed by their Superior, all the thoughts they had had during the day, in order to be obliged, by this holy artifice, to keep watch over themselves, and to endeavor to have none but good thoughts.

Good thoughts, to be such, should regard only God and our salvation. St. Basil, explaining this passage of the Wise Man—directing us to guard our heart most carefully—says: To execute so holy a counsel we should not allow the thought of God to escape our mind, and the remembrance of what He has done for our salvation, be sullied by useless thoughts; but, on the contrary, we should be enabled, by thus constraining our thoughts, to have our mind profoundly impressed with recollections of Him, as a seal never to be effaced.

This constant application of our mind to good thoughts is the surest means of closing the door to

idle reflections. Thus, we can apply the comparison of Abbot Moses, "that if a mill grinds good wheat it must produce good flour."

When once our mind is accustomed to thoughts that are holy and useful, it finds no pleasure in such as are evil and vain; but if, as may often happen, our mind is attacked by some bad thoughts, what must be done, in order not to yield and to offend God?

First, we should as much as possible give strong resistance to an evil thought—stifle it in the commencement, before it has time to grow and become stronger; such being the counsel long since given.

Behold, says Cassian, the first watch over our heart! As soon as we perceive the approach of a bad thought, to drive it off. we should, above all, guard against the venomous head of the serpent—that is the commencement of bad thoughts, by which the demon tries to insinuate himself into our souls; knowing well that if, by our negligence, we permit the head to enter, all the rest of the body—the consent of our will—will easily slip in, and thus is spread its venom, which proves fatal.

"We should put to death the sinners of our land" (says the prophet), "early in the morning, and at their first appearance"—meaning our sensual thoughts—"and to crush the heads of the children of Babylon against a stone whilst young," for if permitted to grow large, it is to be feared we cannot rid ourselves of them, or if we do, it will be with great difficulty.

St. Augustine, elucidating this passage, asks,

Who are these “young ones of Babylon?” says: They are our first sentiments of concupiscence: whilst they are yet young and feeble, they should be crushed; for there is cause of fear lest crushed they may still have life, and to effect their entire destruction, “dash them against the Rock,” which is Jesus Christ. St. Clement, in the first epistle he writes to St. James, kinsman of our Lord, relates that St. Peter recommends vigilance over the heart in these words: To guard the heart one must keep a constant watch over himself—be attentive everywhere to the presence of God, and stifle bad thoughts as soon as discovered.

The manner of dashing them against the Rock, Jesus Christ, is to suppress them by thoughts of Him; of His life, His death, His perfections, His manifold benefits, and the love He bears towards us; also, by recalling His humility, when we are tempted to pride; His wisdom and meekness, if moved to anger; and so on, in regard to other temptations.

It is with the cables of such good thoughts, says St. Bonaventure, that we should anchor the vessel of our heart to the immovable Rock—Jesus Christ—so that when navigating the stormy sea of life, where it is agitated by the tempest of vices, by the adverse winds of immorality, it may not suffer shipwreck, but bravely bear up against these threatening and imminent dangers.

Secondly, so as not to offend God, when you are attacked by bad thoughts, give them no consent. This can be done in two ways: the first is negative,

and consists in turning aside your mind from the thought suggested, by contemning it and letting it pass without deigning to give it the slightest attention. This practice is most excellent, especially with improper thoughts, which are never easier gotten rid of, than when least attended to, and not dwelt upon. Whereas, to reflect upon them, and to examine whether or not consent has been given, and to become interiorly disquieted, is to cause their continuing—of causing their increase, instead of driving them off.

Then, as it takes so little for improper thoughts to enter our imagination, which they so readily sully and disturb, the most important advice is never to allow our mind to dwell on them if possible ; but when assailed, or when some undesirable mental impression is made, the surest means is to turn aside the attention, not to look at it, and thus to retain no idea of the representation.

The second method is positive, and consists in valiantly taking up arms and using them against this evil suggestion ; to vanquish which, it sometimes suffices to make the sign of the cross on one's heart, or by raising the soul to God to ask His help, or by forming an interior act of virtue, contrary to the vice with which we are tempted ; or to expel the temptation by some good momentary thought. But the most excellent and most powerful means, is the remembrance of the Divine presence. Remember that you are not only before God, but in God, in His essence ; how then can you, in the midst and in the centre of His infinite purity, think of aught to offend it ?

An aged Father of the desert said : It is through our own negligence that often we are attacked by bad thoughts ; for if we but considered that God dwelt within us, we would not, most assuredly, admit into His presence anything displeasing to Him. We bear Jesus Christ our Lord in our hearts, and it is this truth that caused the Prince of the Apostles to say : "Sanctify and honor thy Lord Jesus Christ in thy heart, by pure and holy thoughts." St. Paul also styles us the temples of the Holy Ghost. The sacristan and the priest of this temple, says Tertullian, are Chastity and Vigilance, who cannot permit anything sullied or *not pure* to enter, for fear that God should be offended and withdraw.

St. Synclitica said to her Religieuses, as related by St. Athanasius : "Pure and fervent prayer is the most powerful help we have to resist bad thoughts ; but, besides this means, we also have need of some special aid for promptly expelling them, and this is to form in our mind thoughts contrary to those that the demon suggests. Thus we should chase away these wretched thoughts, on the principle that contraries war against each other." Whenever St. Pachomius found himself tormented by improper thoughts, he silenced them by pondering over the torments of hell, of this worm that gnaws the wicked eternally : his method is exceedingly to the purpose.

Also, an aged Father of the desert, when consulted by a junior Religious, much annoyed by thoughts contrary to purity, told him to cast upon

the false and deceitful sweetness of his vagaries the bitter powder of the remembrance of death, judgment and hell, and his delusion would rapidly vanish.

A mysterious voice was once heard by a hermit, saying: "Listless solitary! thou art assailed by evil thoughts; arouse thyself! act, walk, labor, watch, pray--ask, and it will be given thee: knock at the door, and it will be opened: prayer should be thy refuge." Abbot John gave the following explanation of this: The Religious should resemble a man resting under a tree, who perceives coming towards him, on every side, numerous hurtful animals, and as he is powerless to resist them, he saves himself by promptly climbing the tree, where he is in security. So also, a Religious, sitting in his cell, is surprised by a multitude of importunate thoughts, coming in crowds to harass and sully him; but let him have immediate recourse to prayer, and he will thus guarantee himself against their persecution, or at least he will be preserved from the harm they would otherwise do him.

Treating of this same subject, and wishing to prevent useless, imperfect, and pernicious thoughts from occupying the mind, St. Bernard says: Let there be placed on duty a porter, whose *name* would recall his profession, so that, when the mind felt itself entrammelled by thoughts or imagery adverse to purity, he should say, as in reproach: Upon what do you think? you Priest! you Ecclesiastic! you Religious! Should you have such thoughts? You, whose duty it is to exercise the

virtue of chastity—should you receive into your soul anything contrary to it? Is it becoming for a servant of Jesus Christ—for one who loves God, to occupy himself, even for the space of a second, with such things? In speaking thus, in making such reproaches, he will repulse, by the remembrance of his profession, all such vagaries.

Therefore, use the utmost care in guarding your heart; for on your thoughts depend your affections, your words, your works, and consequently your salvation, or your ruin.

Remember that your heart is emblematical of the terrestrial paradise. God placed at the gate of this garden of delights, to guard it, an angel, holding a flaming sword. It is one of those spirits highest in dignity—a cherubim—who presides over the mind and its sentiments. You should learn, thence, the necessity of a sword of fire—such as consider God's love and justice, His promises and threats, His benefits and chastisements, so as not to give entrance to the serpent that will infallibly come to whisper in your ear, as he did to Eve, and induce you also to partake of the forbidden fruit. Remember, also, that your heart and mind are represented by the royal couch of the wise Solomon, which sixty valiant and well-armed men, skilled in all tactics of war, most carefully guarded, and thus guard your heart.

St. Macairius advises such as desire to lead a perfectly Christian life, to use all possible diligence for the good conduct of this part of the soul that thinks, that knows, and judges of things, so that,

having just thoughts, correct opinions, they will live and act uprightly and justly. We should use this faculty as the eye of our soul, to direct us well ; in the same way that our body uses the sight as a guide and a conductor, so should the soul make use of its intelligence and its thoughts in all its conduct. The eye regards and observes—it conducts the body by the right road ; for instance, if a person is passing through a forest filled with briars, mud, water, and precipices, by the help of his eyes will escape all these dangers, for he will readily perceive where to step, and thus avoid the thorns, the mud, etc. So also, the soul, clothed with its body, will, by properly using its mind and its thoughts, pass over all the dangers of this life without injury. But where these means are not used, there will happen what befell the miserable Isboseth, son of Saul. Whilst he was comfortably sleeping after dinner, and when the portress was also resting, two assassins entered his chamber and killed him. This they could not have done, remarks St. Gregory, if he had not confided to a woman the guarding of his door ; that is, had he not committed the entrance to his mind to the keeping of a cowardly and weak guard, rather than to a porter, at once vigilant, robust, and courageous. Embrace strenuously the resolution of watching over your heart and your thoughts, and by way of commencing the practice, retrench the crowd of superfluous, puerile, and impertinent thoughts with which the mind is often occupied. Wherefore, you will have to use some violence towards

self, and at the cost of many repeated efforts, owing to the unwillingness the mind has to meet with restraint—it prefers to follow the bent of its inclination, to seek and view all that passes, or presents, and thus to spend hours, days, months, years, and even the greater part of life, in trifles, and without profit. The mind, like a field which is left uncultivated, will produce nothing but the rankest weeds. Henceforth, close as much as possible every avenue of your mind to idle and pernicious thoughts, which are so injurious when suffered to become habitual. Moreover, use every effort for the culture of good and salutary thoughts. The soul is ever in motion—in continual action; and when good and suitable thoughts are wanting to it, such as are vain and improper will inevitably claim its attention, much to our detriment and disquiet. That which is most excellent and most divine in us is our intellect; would you desire to employ it in thinking of trifles? You are created to contemplate God; will it not be shameful for you to abandon so noble and so sublime an end by lowering it to things vile and contemptible?

“The prince,” says Isaias, “ever takes care to have thoughts worthy of the prince.” So even man, and, with much more reason, the Religious; as, by his profession and the sanctity of his state, his intellect is consecrated in a special manner to the worship and the service of God, he should have sentiments worthy of himself, and as calculated to raise him above the sordid things of earth—to unite him more closely to God.

St. Peter, as above cited, teaches us that we should sanctify our Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts—meaning, to have our minds imbued with God ; to honor Him by the sanctity of our thoughts.

The greatest honor of Jesus Christ is in being the Son and the Word of God : He is the sole, the continual, the eternal thought of the Father, whose mind dwells on no creature, and can think of none, but in Him and by Him. So also should our intellect, which is a participation and a feeble ray of that of God, and which should, consequently, imitate Him in His movements, by taking our Lord Jesus Christ for the one continual subject of our thoughts, so as to apply the mind to nothing but to Him, by Him, and for Him ; in a word, to make our Lord the principle and the end of all our actions.

SECTION VI.

Guarding the Heart in its Sentiments—Particularly in that of Love.

The sentiments of the heart should be carefully guarded, and watched over with all possible diligence—specially that of love, as being the principle and the source from whence flow the other affections. This desire for gratification is the one for which man has the strongest attraction, whilst it is the most dangerous in regard to chastity.

Therefore, is it of the greatest moment to keep all the affections well regulated.

Where love is properly regulated in man, all goes well; and when it is not, all is disorderly. Wherefore, St. Augustine says: Love, but love properly, and then do whatever you wish. "Man," remarks this same Father, "becomes whatever his affections make him. Do you love earth? You will become earth. Do you love God? What would you have me to say? You will be God. For"—as continues this same saint—"that which makes good or bad habits, are their good or bad affections."

From thence can be judged the importance of properly guiding the affections.

There are four kinds of love to be distinguished and classified, viz.: the spiritual, the natural, the sensual, and the carnal.

The spiritual is a gift of God—an effect of His charity—a flame of that divine fire that the Holy Spirit illumines in the heart, causing us to love a person purely in God and for God; that is, with no other view but for the glory of God and our salvation.

Natural love is imprinted in us by nature, causing us to love our parents, our benefactors—those in whom we see attractive qualities, and with whom we find sympathy.

Sensual love is merely for the delectation of the senses, and where this delectation is its own end.

Carnal love is prohibited, as it is altogether sinful.

The first-named love is holy, and merits eternal recompense. The second, as a *well-regulated* work

of nature, is in itself reasonable, good, and permitted, provided it passes not the bounds marked out for it by reason and the law of God. The third is *forbidden*, as it mistakes the means for the end. Thus it is that pleasure is received in eating—substituting the end for the means, which is to alter the established order of God—to effect evil; for the satisfaction found in eating should *not* be the end of this action, but simply the means for readily accomplishing this end, viz.: to make use of food as a necessary means for supporting life.

Religious should altogether renounce sensual love—should exalt, purify, and sanctify natural affections, by rendering them subservient to grace, and to spiritualize them; thus will natural love be merged into spiritual love, the only one which they ought to apply themselves to cultivate, and thus attain to charity—the pure love of God—to which they should entirely consecrate their hearts.

The evident and true marks for discerning spiritual love are the following: First, when we speak but of good and holy things—of the service and glory of God—being animated by His love, advancing the affair of our salvation, and perfecting ourselves in virtue. And if occasionally we discourse with a person thus loved, it is ever in discreet language, with chaste thoughts, and in angelic purity.

Secondly, it says or does nothing in secret that may not be spoken or done in public, from the fact of never losing the divine presence, conscious that God sees and hears everything.

Thirdly, it bears in peace and tranquillity the

absence of the person loved ; thus our prayers are not disturbed and interrupted ; the imagination does not contemplate this person but when and where it should ; in prayer, we are content to commend her to God, in whom alone is fixed the repose of our souls. Should there be felt some sadness of heart, occasioned by the person's absence, and a desire for her return, these sentiments are not inordinate, if we alone experience them, on seeing that we either receive or lose a means of perfection by the presence or absence of such persons : however, we are not disquieted, but bear the privation with a patient submission to the will of God, and in a spirit of perfect disengagement from creatures.

Fourthly, spiritual love is universal—its pleasure is augmented in proportion as it is extended ; as fire, it is intensified, increased, by the addition of fuel, and spreads the more rapidly when not impeded.

Finally, those who love spiritually and holily are ever ready to excuse vice, where there is reason or charity for the obligation, but at the same time will condemn the vices whilst endeavoring to correct them in the person beloved.

The above distinctive marks of spiritual love should suffice to guard us against sensual affection ; teaching us, moreover, that we should never forget that herein is nature attracted, and the demon's snares are ever spread ; to avoid surprise by these evils we cannot keep too strict a watch over self. But that which above all should inspire us with

fear is that nature and the demon employ much artifice to throw us off our guard—to deceive us—for even among persons who make some efforts to acquire virtue, many commence well, but finish badly; they form a friendship based on spiritual love, and insensibly decline to natural affection; from which it easily becomes inordinate—if not most watchful, to fall imperceptibly, little by little, and from bad to worse.

Let us watch even with fear, lest any creature should snatch away the heart consecrated to its Spouse, or lest we ourselves dare take away from Him the love of any one of His creatures.

We will conclude this subject in repeating with the Wise Man: “With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out from it.” Cardinal Cajetan, explaining this passage, says: Employ for the guarding of your heart all the means used for keeping a treasure you would not wish to lose.

Nature protects our eyes by lids; our tongue by the teeth and lips; our hearing by certain little labyrinths of cartilages; our flesh by a double skin; the blood and veins by an integument; the brain by the skull and its two membranes. Also, a garden is protected by means of hedges and trenches; cities by walls and ramparts; citadels by bastions; kingdoms by armies and fortresses. Alas! defend your heart even more, because your life, your salvation, and all your happiness depend thereon.

The ancients used as a device the dragon, as a meet representation for guarding a treasure. These

animals, as is signified by the etymology of their name, which springs from the verb *to see*, have not alone a very piercing sight, but their eyes are ever open, sleeping but rarely, and thus serve well as a symbol of vigilance.

Our great treasure is our heart, wherein we hold our most precious riches, which are grace, virtues, the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

We should there place vigilant dragons for its guard; that is, most careful attention; learning still from these watchful animals the means necessary for its defence and preservation. The dragon bears in its head a precious, highly valuable stone, which, to be good and perfect, has to be extracted whilst the animal is living.

Therefore, those who seek this stone cause the animal to take an artificial sleep, by casting on it a *soporific* liquid; after which the stone is readily extracted; it is called *dragontias*, from the animal, and *eucardia*, on account of the heart found therein. Of these there are three sorts: in one species is found the figure of a heart in black relief; in another, the image of a green-colored heart; and in the third, a black heart on a white base. The demon uses a similar artifice to deprive us of the precious gem of our heart; for which purpose he lulls us into insensibility by the enchantments of pleasure, riches, and the honors of this life; then, when he finds us in this state of lethargy and idleness, he deprives us, without resistance, of our treasure.

Let us, then, be ever on our guard: watchful as

the *dragon*, whilst practicing the counsel of St. Paul: "Give not entrance to the demon; allow yourself not to be surprised by his charms."

THE PARLORS OF RELIGIOUS.

It is in the parlors of Religieuses that the vow of chastity is in its greatest peril. No place in the monastery are Religious so exposed to the danger of losing the spirit of their vocation, and even to risk their very salvation. The principal cause of the ruin of religious communities proceeds from the visits of seculars.

It is through the parlor that the religious spirit leaves the cloister, and that of the world enters therein.

It is there that acquaintances are formed, familiarities are permitted, friendships contracted, time is lost; there the heart becomes dissipated, good thoughts are obliterated, and devotion evaporates. It is there that one hears and speaks of worldly news, and of things that are useless, vain, curious, ridiculous, impertinent, and, alas! sometimes contrary to modesty: from whence the Religieuse comes with her mind unfitted for recollection, and filled with subjects altogether foreign to her obligations and her duties.

How can it be, that a Religieuse who frequents the parlor unnecessarily, will not be imbued with the maxims of the world, to the serious detriment of her state? And a Religieuse not much given to mortification and prudence will readily make known

to seculars all that transpires within the convent—even its most secret affairs—the subjects of her own discontent, as also her ambition for charges; thus giving, at once, great disedification to seculars, as well as inspiring them with less respect and consideration for the religious life, and the community in particular where such liberty is allowed; or such freedom taken in the parlor.

Behold some of the detriment that religion and Religieuses receive by too frequent and useless intercourse with secular acquaintances.

Ordinarily, Religieuses suffer much less in their devotion, when seeing their parents and relatives too frequently: by listening to detailed accounts of family matters, and to the current news of the day, their spirit of piety is much impaired, or at least they lose more in one hour in the parlor than they can recover possibly in a week's retreat.

St. Teresa wisely remarks, in the seventh chapter of her life, the serious detriment, the distractions, the indevotion, and other considerable evils, received by her in the visits and conversations of persons of the world, and which were near causing her ruin.

When discoursing on this topic she scarcely knows when and how to finish, so feelingly does she portray her experience. She mentions that in the beginning she perceived no ill effects, but at a later period of her life she experienced all the consequences of these idle visits and conversations. She deplores these evils with much bitterness of heart, and in terms bordering on exaggeration.

She speaks thus: "I commenced by an over desire for this secular intercourse, not considering the prejudice I was receiving thereby, viewing the matter in a false light, when it pleased our Lord to withdraw me from so fatal a delusion. One day, as I was entertaining myself with a friend, for whom I had a warm affection, and which was reciprocal, our Lord made me understand that this friendship was dangerous to me. He enlightened my blindness on this subject by presenting Himself with a countenance of much severity, giving me thus to know that my course of conduct was displeasing to Him. Though I beheld Him but with the eyes of the soul, it was much more clearly than I could have done with my corporal sight, and His image seemed so engraved in my mind that I still remember Him as He then appeared, though it has been more than twenty-six years since it happened.

"This vision left me much overcome and troubled; so that I determined not to see this person again, and to break off all communication with her; but in this resolve I failed—the demon on one side and secular friends on the other persuading me that I was wrong to be so resolute, and proving to me, against my own conviction, there was no harm in such intercourse. Thus I returned to my former attraction, and even with an increased ardor. When again with this same friend—several other persons being also present—our Lord, who abandoned me not, but would have me to be undeceived and unfettered, made me see a large frog advancing towards me with the astonishing swiftness peculiar to

this species of animal. I could not perceive how such a reptile could have found entrance to the parlor, particularly in full daylight, and when they were not common to this locality. I am still sensibly affected when recalling this novel sight, that can never be effaced from my mind.

“There was in our monastery at this time an elderly Religieuse—a relative—who was a great servant of God: she remonstrated with me, and warned me concerning these intimacies with seculars; but, far from receiving and profiting by her advice, I considered her as interfering with my affairs, and from an unkind motive. I relate all this to show my own wickedness, as well as God’s excessive goodness towards me; for truly did I merit eternal reprobation for such ingratitude; and so may God permit some Religieuse to read this account, in order to take warning from my example; and wherefore I supplicate all Religieuses, for the love of God and their own perfection, to shun all vain and worldly diversions.”

Behold! what St. Teresa relates of herself, having previously, in the same chapter, mentioned something else as bearing on our present subject: “It was a great misfortune for me that I had not entered a monastery where strict enclosure was more exactly observed—where the parlors, the most important part of the house, were left unguarded. Monasteries where their rules of enclosure are not observed, are to its members often a means of ruin; a road open to their destruction, rather than an aid to salvation and a remedy to their weakness. Re-

ligieuses not living in enclosure, according to their rule, are much to be commiserated; and did it please parents to follow my advice, if they wished not to have their daughters in a place of safety, but rather, in relaxed houses, where their soul's salvation is imperilled, it would be preferable to leave them in the world, and where, under circumstances, they would be in less danger. Youth, sensuality, and the demon, cause them to seek for the satisfactions of the world, and this without any one to condemn their course, but rather to give it approval. O lamentable evil! again I say: When Religious, of either sex, do not faithfully observe their obligations, and whilst there exist, in the same house, two different roads, one of which leads to virtue and salvation, the other tends to vice and eternal misery. Where those who wish to acquit themselves of their duty, and live up to their vocation, have more to fear from the inmates of the house than from all the demons united, having to use more reserve in speaking of spiritual things and the love of God than that of the creature, and such topics of conversation as should not be permitted even in the parlor, and which are ordinarily the subjects most pleasing to those lovers of secular society.

“Why should we be astonished at the existing evils in the church, since those who should serve as its lights and its models in all Christian virtues have so entirely ignored the spirit, the sanctity, and the perfection with which their saintly predecessors were imbued, and have bequeathed to their

respective religious orders. May it please the Divine Majesty to apply to this evil the requisite remedy !”

All the above, from St. Teresa, should be well considered, and bring about effectual measures for perfectly conforming to the rules and constitutions in regard to intercourse with seculars, and the frequenting of the parlors, where Religieuses should be ever most circumspect, in word, manner, and looks.

And the Superior will have no *little* sin to answer for if she fails in vigilance in this respect, both on account of her Religieuses and of seculars ; using even a just and reasonable severity, when sweetness and expostulation are of no avail, so as to retain all things as established in the Order.

SECTION VIII.

Continuation of the Same Subject.

The one who should be *most* careful as to what pertains to the parlor is the Religieuse herself. Therefore, let her not fail in the following particulars :

First, she should not *love* the parlor, nor seek it in desire, knowing it to be a place of peril for virtue. She should remember that she can readily say there many vain, useless, and thoughtless words that she will repent of afterwards : often she is in a manner constrained to hear what is calculated to tarnish the purity of her heart, and to dis-

turb her interior peace, and to have impressions formed in her mind that cannot be effaced but with time and trouble. For all these reasons, that often experience alone can teach her, she should fear and fly the parlor as a plague-spot and as a dangerous precipice.

Secondly, she should never go to the parlor but with the requisite permission, as the rule directs; otherwise, besides the fault committed by the transgression of so important a rule, she will be disposed thereby to many imperfections, and to readily fall on the first occasion. She should be impressed with the truth that she cannot be secure against sinning, in so perilous a position, without the grace of God. It is not possible this grace will be afforded her, if knowingly she goes against the rule, and in direct opposition to the will of God.

Thirdly, when she goes even with the requisite permission, she should still keep an attentive watch over herself, considering herself as responsibly situated, and as liable to fall as if walking on ice, or near the brink of a yawning chasm. With all this care and exceeding precaution, she may deem herself blessed, if she returns from the parlor without experiencing any loss, and can repeat these words holy Church attributes in another sense to St. Lawrence, and that some one has kindly referred to the Religious, "My God, I have not denied Thee at the *grille*, I have not there offended Thee, either with my eyes, my ears, my tongue, nor in my heart—in a word, I have not failed in a single point of duty."

Therefore, should a Religieuse be most exact as to what is required by her rule, both as to the hour of attending the parlor, the length of time of remaining there, the tone of voice used in speaking, also, the choice of subjects for discourse, that should be ever good, pious, and well calculated to edify the seculars with whom she converses, and who do not leave without profiting by their visit, so as to bear away with them the good odor of sanctity. All this was most faithfully accomplished by St. Gertude, St. Catharine of Sienna, St. Teresa, and many others; consequently, their conversation had a marvellous influence over the minds of their audience, and changed the most rebellious hearts. This same good will be also effected by all well disciplined Religieuses who frequent not the parlors from choice, but from a sense of duty, remembering to exert their abilities for benefitting the persons with whom they have intercourse, by attracting them to virtue, detaching them from the world, and to impress them with reverence and love for our Lord.

A Religieuse whilst in the parlor should be particularly attentive to the presence of God, well persuading herself that He is beholding her every action, and listens to every word.

She should also recall the watchful care of her good angel, ever near to approve or condemn her conduct.

Thus is it related of the angel of St. Frances of Rome, that he turned aside his face in grief, to give her to understand how much it pained him

when she pronounced an idle word, or performed some imperfect action.

Moreover, the Religieuse should speak with the grate closed, and with her veil lowered, when the rule so directs, and always in the manner prescribed by her institute. It is dangerous to see and to be seen, human eyes carrying with them a secret poison, that jet out as envenomed and mortal a look as those of the basilisk. There are no glances of the eye without peril for a female, writes St. Jerome to the holy virgin Eustochia, this being true, either of those looks she gives or receives. St. Bernard says: in speaking of Religieuses who wish to be seen, "As you are a spouse of Christ, if you wish to appear before men, you do wrong to your Spouse Jesus Christ."

A Religieuse who perfectly loves her Spouse, is incapable of permitting any other love, and may she know that her eyes are the first robbers of her chastity, the first messengers and solicitors of vice.

A truly chaste virgin fears nothing so much as *herself* and the fragility of her sex; wherefore should she have recourse to her veil for protection, covering herself with it as with a casque, and using it as a buckler of defence, against wily temptations, against the arrows of scandal, and of all suspicions or evil discourses.

Tertullian in addressing a christian virgin, says: Virgin of Jesus Christ, whether you be advanced in years, or yet in the bloom of youth, I beseech you to wear a veil in such a manner that it will

screen your face, and prevent your seeing and being seen, by which means you will be supplied with armor, defensive and offensive, to protect your chastity, with a rampart to secure your modesty, with walls to support the weakness of your sex. You have espoused Jesus Christ, you have given to Him your body, you have bound yourself to Him ; be then attired and adorned as is agreeable to Him, and readily believe that He desires His chosen spouses to be becomingly veiled.

SECTION IX.

Other Means for Preserving Chastity—The Flight of Occasions.

According to Father Balthazar Alvarez, a man, if fastened to the top of a high tower by a slender thread, is not in so imminent danger of falling, as is he who exposes his chastity. The most efficacious and most powerful means to avoid sinning, is to fly occasions, for, says the Holy Spirit : “ *He who loves danger shall perish in it.* ”

An aged Father of the desert delivered a most sensible discourse much to our present purpose : The cedar trees assembled one day for mutual counsel, the *oldest* and wisest saying : It is surprising that we, who are so strong and so tall, the pride of the forests, the ornament of mountains, and the glory among trees, that, nevertheless, it takes but an insignificant piece of iron to cause us to totter and be felled to the ground. We are even

so unfortunate as to afford aid to this piece of iron for our overthrow, by furnishing it the *handle*, without which it could do us no injury. Behold man ! long since was it said of him : Man, on account of his dignity, and his pre-eminence over all animated nature, merits to be among these, as the cedar among trees ; and as the cedar furnishes the handle for the axe that levels it, so also man gives to the demon means for his destruction.

As he who fears to fall over a precipice, far from throwing himself into it, is even careful not to tread near its brink, knowing that dizziness is produced thereby, and the footing readily missed, so he who holds sin in abhorrence, and not wishing its proximity, should likewise dread occasions, and fly its allurements.

SECTION X.

Continuation of the Same Subject.

As all that we are about mentioning is confirmed by numerous fatal examples, it is conclusive that whoever desires to preserve chastity of both soul and body, and faithfully comply with the vow he has made, should fear and carefully avoid intercourse with the opposite sex.

When necessity, charity, or obedience require this intercourse, he should still be most circumspect in demeanor, with a continual fear and mistrust of self.

Cardinal James Vitry relates of St. Marv d'Oignes

that one of her friends, a prudent and spiritual man, was prompted by a chaste and holy friendship to shake hands with her; but, in the act, he experienced a momentary satisfaction, when the Saint, at the same instant, heard a voice that said: Do not touch me. She related to this friend these words, heard but by herself, but of which she did not understand the meaning, as she had not been any more moved than if her hand had been of marble; however, this pious man understood it perfectly, and from thence forward became more cautious—never again touching the hands of a woman, however saintly she might be.

Whilst in this life, says St. John Climachus, let us never forget the origin of our body, which is formed from clay; and never, for one single time, regard it as invulnerable, nor to rely on your abstinence as a sufficient security to your chastity. Be ever watchful—defide in self. Alas! how many hermits and solitaries, wasted to skeletons by their fasts, have, nevertheless, miserably fallen.

And St. Augustine says: As to what regards conversation and social intercourse with the opposite sex, believe me, I have seen even the cedars of Libanus fall—the greatest personages, the guides of the people, and of whom I had as little fear of falling as I would have of St. Ambrose or St. Gregory Nazianzen.

Therefore, avoid occasions as a *possible evil*, you who have not more sanctity than David, nor more strength than Sampson, nor more wisdom than Solomon. Nay more, never suffer your mind to dwell

unnecessarily on what you have seen or heard in these conversations, but imitate St. Arsenius, who, when a lady of rank had come from Rome to Egypt expressly to see him, and to ask for a remembrance in his prayers, merely replied to her *I pray God that I retain no remembrance of you.*

SECTION XI.

Other Means for Preserving Chastity—Flight of Idleness and the Mortification of the Senses.

According to the Holy Spirit, “Idleness hath taught much evil.” Also, “In doing nothing,” says Cato, “one learns to do evil.” The sins that caused the ruin of Sodom, says the prophet Ezechiel, “were pride, abundance, feasting, and idleness.” The reason for this being that nature, of itself, inclines to evil, if care is not taken to draw it to, and employ it in good, or it will infallibly follow its bent to the contrary. Our mind and heart are like an uncultivated field, which yields but weeds and thistles, but by tillage it is made to produce good grain.

A holy Father of the desert remarked: “To cause us to fall into all manner of sin, the demon uses three means, which are ever the forerunners of evil, viz.: *forgetfulness, negligence, and concupiscence.* Forgetfulness engenders negligence, negligence gives place to concupiscence, and this latter draws us to sin; but if we keep our mind recollected, and so well occupied that it can never for-

get its duty, it will not become negligent, idle, nor loitering, and thus will not give access to concupiscence, which otherwise can cause us no evil, with the help of God's grace."

The Holy Spirit instructs us, in the parable of the *servant*, how we should treat our body, which is the slave of the soul, that it may not revolt and do what has been forbidden: "*Fodder*, and a wand, and a burden, are for an ass; bread, and correction, and work, for a slave. He worketh under correction, and seeketh to rest: let his hands be idle, and he seeketh liberty. The yoke and the thong bend a stiff neck, and continual labors bow a slave. Send him to work, that he be not idle; for so it is fitting for him. And if he be not obedient, bring him down with *fetters*."

St. Jerome relates of himself: "That he became angered against himself—would strike his breast, as if by these strokes he would drive away all temptations to sin; at the same time would speak to his body thus: Thou resisteth my soul, but I will serve thee rightly; I will not give thee oats, but straw, for food; I will make thee feel the rod; and I will correct thee, by hunger, thirst, cold, heat, and will give thee so much to do as not to leave thee any time for amusement or pleasure, and only allow thee something to eat, to prevent thee dying of hunger."

The mortification of the senses is the second remedy.

When the body is healthy and robust, is well nourished, is delicately treated, it cannot be but

that the senses revolt against the spirit, and that they be drawn to sensual pleasures, as things befitting them ; but when mortifications and austerities have attenuated and enfeebled the body to a just temperament and prudence ; when they no longer possess this vivacity and this strength to excite them to revolts against the soul, they give it no more trouble, leaving it in peace.

A Religious of the desert, much tormented by improper thoughts, complained of it to a senior Father, saying : Father, I am excessively annoyed by bad thoughts. The good Father replied : And I, my brother, am exempt from all such misery ; by the grace of God, I have a body that gives me in this respect no further trouble, because, since my first entrance into solitude, I have never eaten bread, nor drank water, nor slept till surfeited ; on the contrary, I have used industry to mortify and torment my body, by retrenching necessary things, and by such means have prevented improper thoughts, and the stings of concupiscence have been allayed. To treat the body harshly as regards eating, drinking, sleeping, and clothing, is an excellent means to restrain it within the bounds of modesty.

The Saints, and all who are jealous of their chastity, have ever kept a strict guard over all their senses.

SECTION XII.

Abstinence a Means for Preserving Chastity.

This means is also *absolutely* necessary: without it, all the other means will want sufficient strength to combat vice. St. Jerome says: When one satisfies his appetite, he will soon become tyrannized over by immorality; whereas, abstinence is the *mother* and *nurse* of chastity.

The Saints, and all who have had a great desire for their salvation—to preserve the purity of their soul and body, and to arrive at an eminent degree of perfection—have ever been most careful to practice mortification in eating and drinking, by cheerfully embracing the virtue of abstinence. Those persons who wish to have this confirmed by examples should cite all the renowned personages, one after the other, herein mentioned, as none of them had ever omitted to closely practice this virtue, and all fasted much from the moment they gave themselves to God.

Cassian relates that the Fathers of the desert assembled to confer with St. Anthony upon the means for attaining perfection: the first opinion offered was that this means consisted in fasts and watchings; for the soul, disengaged from the material by these exercises, and having *acquired* purity of heart and body, is thus disposed to a ready union with God.

St. Anthony approved of this opinion, provided

that the necessary discretion was applied to these fasts and watchings. Abbot Moses remarked that to take a city and to force the inhabitants to surrender, it is necessary to starve them into submission by cutting off their resources of food and water: the like measures must be used with regard to the body, if we wish to become its master.

In the general chronicles of St. Benedict it is related that no Saint ever attained perfection without first having treated his body rigorously. In the fifth century, so much regard was had for abstinence that a monk was not considered to be such who did not pass his entire life in fasting, and content himself with the coarsest and poorest food, simply with the design of supporting life.

Ruffin, as an ocular witness, relates as follows of the monks of the East: "We met with a holy Father, named Ammon, a Superior of about three thousand Religious, all assembled in one part of the desert, called Tabenna, and observing a general abstinence. They wore flax habits, mantles of goat's skin, and cowls, that were used principally at table, to screen their faces, and not to notice who ate *less* than another.

"They also observed so profound a silence during their repast that it could be supposed that no person was in the refectory. Although so numerous, they lived as if in solitude, concealing their abstinence, one from the other. At table they rather touched than tasted food; and yet, so prompt in proceeding thither that it could be said in truth that they went more to conform to regular observance than to eat."

St. Augustine also mentions of the Religious of his time that many of them kept an inconceivable fast; not alone content to eat once a day—and towards evening, as customary among them—but to pass three entire days, and often more, without taking any food. Behold some of the many examples of abstinence as practiced by the Saints and *Ancient Religious*.

You may object that to act thus is to ruin the health—to commit suicide; but, in reply, let us say that when by fasts we render the body a little weak and sickly, no damage is thereby committed. Who is not aware that fasting is not intended to invigorate and fatten the body?

It is much better that abstinence should reduce your flesh, than sickness consume your life, than that, after death, for your body to become a *feast for worms*.

I prefer, some one wisely remarks, that my body be in pain, to give ease to my soul and my conscience.

Secondly, fasts and abstinence, practiced with discretion, as required by St. Anthony, far from injuring the health and shortening life, on the contrary, are advantageous to and prolong life. “*By surfeiting, many have perished,*” says the Wise Man; “*but he that is temperate will prolong life.*” As examples of this continued fast and abstinence to prolong life, we may here cite SS. Arsenius and Romuald, who lived one hundred and twenty years; St. Paul—first hermit—one hundred and fifteen years; St. Simon Stylites, one hundred

years ; the Venerable Bede, ninety-two years ; and many others, near a hundred.

In the written life of St. Benedict, there is mention, on one single page, of no less than three Saints who, after having been Religious, were consecrated bishops of Brittany, viz. : St. Sampson, as Bishop of Dole ; St. Malo, Bishop of the town that bears his name ; and St. Paul, Bishop of Laon—all of whom lived over one hundred years, which they passed in great austerity, keeping almost a continual fast, partaking but of bread and water, though often they were feeble and infirm.

Do we not see villagers who, from necessity or habit, are mostly sparingly fed, often having no other food than bread and water ? Yet they are generally healthy, and longer lived than those who lead luxurious lives in cities.

Galen attained to the age of one hundred and forty, but some say not so long ; however, it is agreed that he lived to be very aged, by observing this discretion in his eating and drinking, that he never withdrew from the table otherwise than feeling some degree of hunger and thirst, and he never used any other than raw food (or uncooked) This regimen even rendered his breathing sweet and gentle, and he died from nature being exhausted, having reached its utmost term. From thence the proverb, to designate perfect health and a long life : "*It is the health of Galen.*"

Hypocrates, the "Prince of Physicians," by the same abstemiousness, reached to the age of one hundred and nine. He left, as a principal and a

general rule of health, in the sixth book of his "Epidemics," these words: "The means for preserving health is to eat *sparingly*, and to take *voluntary* exercise." His wise translator adding thereto the following: Hypocrates, in this celebrated sentence, touches the two principal causes for preserving health.

Galen also advised another means for preserving health, viz.: to keep abstinence every ten days, saying: Whoever observes a fast, or at least eats very little, every *tenth* day, will never be attacked by any serious malady, even if otherwise he be unhealthy.

Many Religious, as wise as virtuous, fast through devotion, and in honor of our Lord's Passion, every Friday, when they take little or no food. This pious practice contributes much to their physical health. For myself, says a pious and learned author in our Society, I assure you that I have known many persons for whom fasting was a *preventive* as well as a *remedy* for most diseases, and thus preserved their health and strength, which were not the most robust.

I doubt not that the above-mentioned author had a special reference to Father Leonard Lessius, a person of celebrity in the "Society," both for his eminent virtue and his profound science. He was of an extremely delicate constitution, as also in feeble health, when he was stricken down with a contagious malady (contracted in the village hospital), which, in the judgment of the most skilful physicians, would cause his death, though possibly

he might survive two years ; however, he lived to the age of seventy, by means of the strict abstinence he continued to observe, and which restored him to his former usual health, with all his mental and physical faculties unimpaired, to the last ; but for an accidental death he might have lived many years longer. Thus abstinence was beneficial to his health, in lieu of an injury ; instead of abridging his life, prolonged it.

Let us then generously embrace this virtue—make use of so efficacious a remedy to preserve chastity, and to quench the fires of concupiscence ; otherwise, this will be increased, and chastity become impaired ; for, according to St. Jerome, purity cannot be secured and protected but by *abstinence*.

Besides the necessity for abstinence, and all the benefits appertaining to it—and of which we have made mention—St. Bonaventure remarks, to cause us to esteem, to love, and to practice it, that Nature has given to no animal—in proportion to his body—so small a mouth as to man.

The force of all these reasons decides us as to the practice of abstinence : let us now see in what this practice consists. The exercise of this virtue, as we will consider it here, consists in the quantity and the quality of food.

1. In the quantity. Eat and drink little, taking no more nourishment than can be readily digested. To lessen the quantity, and to remain constant to this allowance. Thus, if to-day you observe it, and to-morrow, without some good reason, you dis-

pense yourself from it, your chastity also may be overcome, and not retain its pristine purity, according to this adage of Cassian : He who cannot be constant and unalterable in the practice of temperance, will not be so in that of chastity.

You should remain firm in your resolution regarding abstinence. When you have placed before you a greater quantity of food than necessary for your proper nourishment and than you have decided upon ; or more than an ordinary variety, as will sometimes happen, even in communities, on certain festivals ; or that you find yourself in company at some well-furnished table, where delicate viands, well served, will tempt your appetite, remember not to relax in such a conjuncture : it is then that abstinence will count its greatest victories, and that it behooves you to watch, to make the flesh be subservient to reason—to prevent it revolting against the spirit. Who tells you that the demon has not placed himself on these dishes, to tempt you ? Was he not on the “ tree of knowledge, of good and evil,” to tempt Eve, and to induce her to eat of its fruit ?

We read in the Life of St. Pachomius that the demon concealed himself on a fig-tree belonging to the monastery of this Saint, in order to entice his youthful disciples, who really yielded to the temptation ; for they secretly climbed the tree and gathered the figs. The holy man, having perceived them, and even discerned the demon on the tree, which he knew to be the demon of gluttony, he instantly commanded the gardener, who was a

faithful old man named Jonas, to cut it down. But this good man could not readily execute the order he received, because this was a fine tree, that bore a quantity of delicious figs. Then St. Pachomius had recourse to prayer, and the fig-tree withered that same night: the next morning it presented the appearance of the barren tree of the Gospel, that was accursed by our Lord. The pious Jonas hereupon experienced much distress, more on account of his failing in prompt obedience than for the loss of the tree, that was for him a daily opportunity for practicing an heroic abstinence; for he had never so much as tasted one of these figs, nor other fruits of the garden he so assiduously cultivated, and which supplied the community with an abundance.

When such occasions of practicing abstinence present themselves, remember that it is then you can give much to our Lord—have a better opportunity for evincing the love you bear Him, and that you can acquire greater merit. This thought should be present to Religious when they are served to more than they require; it being given to them thus, that they may leave it or not, and that by voluntarily abstaining, they may practice the virtue.

St. Pachomius, when visiting one of his monasteries, expressed displeasure to the cook that he prepared nothing for the community. The cook excused himself by saying that when he did cook anything the Religious would not partake of the dishes, which were always returned to him as he

had served them, and that they were better satisfied to take such food as needed not to be cooked—were content with olives and a little lettuce—having to throw away everything else he would give himself the trouble to prepare. To this St. Pachomius replied: Do you not know that it is always meritorious to deprive one's self of something that is in one's power to possess or retain, and that he who does so for the love of God receives a great recompense. But to abstain from a thing of which you do not have the disposal, because the thing is wanting to you, and when privation is from necessity, or *forced*, there can be no recompense. When, therefore, the Religious are served to a greater quantity of food, and they retrench therefrom a portion for the love of God, they have reason for hoping that God will reward such works; but how could they expect that reward for doing what was not in their power—for example, not eating something that they had not even seen? Thus, to spare yourself a little trouble, you should not deprive the brothers of that which can be useful to them, and be the cause of their losing this means for practicing virtue.

To acquire this degree of abstinence, in regard to the quantity, and which consists in eating and drinking little, persons who would make this attempt, and who were accustomed to eat and drink much, should not retrench all at once, so as to arrive at the degree of abstinence proposed, but approach it gradually by gaining each day or week some victory over their appetite. The effects of so doing will soon be evident, for little by little

nature will be content with less, the body will become submissive—habituated to everything, when once it is in proper training. Govern it, therefore, with authority; it will obey without resistance, as it is born in servitude, and is a slave: on the contrary, the more you yield to it, the more you caress it, the more insolent and exacting will it become.

It was thus that St. Dorotheus acted in regard to his dear disciple, Dositheus. Having learned how much bread this disciple required at each meal, he adroitly diminished the quantity gradually, and from time to time, till he reduced him to eating very sparingly, and this without experiencing any greater hunger than he had felt when he took more food.

It was also after this method of gradually advancing that St. Charles Borromeo arrived at so eminent a degree of abstinence; contenting himself with a small quantity of bread, some lupins, and drinking only water.

But what shall we say of St. William, Duke of Aquitaine, who was nearer in size to a giant than to an ordinary man? He ate more at one repast than several strong, hungry men could possibly have done. However, after his conversion, and without detriment to his strength or his health, he became so temperate and abstemious that he could be surpassed but by few of his contemporaries.

He fasted every day, not excepting the feasts, and instead of the enormous quantity of food formerly eaten, or rather devoured, he took very little nourishment beyond some coarse bread, with a few

raw herbs and water ; only three times a week did he indulge in a little thin porridge, and a glass of wine so well diluted as to be nothing more than colored water. It is readily seen that this saint could not have passed from his excessive appetite to this extreme abstinence without approaching to it gradually, and without learning daily, by slightly retrenching from his fare, to take it in moderation.

St. John Climachus says : A child is not directed to reach the top of a ladder by mounting all the rounds at once, but by taking one after the other. We should commence the exercise of abstinence by retrenching, first, that food which is too rich ; then that which is heating ; afterwards, such as is delicate and palatable, and to stop at that which sustains nature, is easily digested, appeases avidity, and by such means delivering us from this scourge of greediness.

If in this exercise you experience, sometimes, a little hunger, do not retract for that ; it is precisely this symptom of hunger that holds your body in subjection, and renders it chaste.

St. Marcian, as related by Theodoret, mentions that a person should never feel satisfied, and that a *true* fast consists in experiencing some hunger ; but this hunger is sometimes false and deceitful, for gluttony is often a ruse of nature that demands food even when satiated. It is also an illusion of the sight, making us believe that all that is on the table is necessary for our nourishment ; whereas, a very small mediocrity suffices.

In conclusion, let us add that it is immaterial

what the quality of food is ; be it ever so vile or common, it should not be taken to satiety, there being nothing that so tends to overwhelm the mental powers as an excess of food.

2. As to abstinence in quality, we mention that the ordinary food of the ancient Religious was bread, vegetables, and herbs, seasoned with a little salt, with a little water to drink and for moistening their bread, to make it more easily swallowed.

According to Varron and St. Isidore, *legumes*, or vegetables, are so called from being gathered with the hand, without the aid of a knife. Peas, beans, lentils, gray-pease, and lupins are classed among the principal vegetables ; but the most ordinary refectio was peas and herbs. From whence arose the admirable reply of a Religious, who, when asked what he had eaten that day, pleasantly replied : Herbs with peas. And what on the day before ? Peas with herbs. And on the third day ? Peas and herbs. And on the fourth day ? Herbs and peas. And ever on in the same manner. This kind of food is suitable to Religious, as being lighter, less nourishing and heating to the body, is easier of digestion, and more readily prepared and obtained. Herbs, fruits, and vegetables, says St. Jerome, are more easily and quickly had ; culinary art is not needed for their use, whilst they cost little ; they support the body without trouble, and when taken in moderation, are digested without difficulty.

We should know, however, that there are some vegetables naturally heating. St. Jerome, writing

to a lady on this subject, says: In the use of food, avoid such as are heating; and this, not only with regard to meat—of which St. Paul, that vessel of election, remarks: “It is good not to eat flesh, or not to drink wine”—but I say the same for some vegetables; such as heat the blood and produce indigestion are not to be used. No diet is so well adapted to the use of Christian youth as vegetables. Whence the same apostle says elsewhere: “He that is weak, let him eat herbs.” St. Thomas, in explaining this quotation from St. Paul, says: We ought to counsel those who are weak in the virtue of chastity, who are liable to be overcome by the assaults of concupiscence, and drawn to its vices, to eat herbs; that is, light and dry food.

The ancient Religious followed most exactly this counsel, as to not eating flesh and to not drinking wine. St. Benedict, in his rule, twice directs his Religious to refrain from flesh meat, unless sick or infirm. Before St. Benedict, St. Basil, in the twenty-eighth chapter of his monastic constitutions, plainly indicates that the use of meat is ordinarily prohibited to his monks, they being permitted *only sometimes* to soak a small piece of bread into a soup of salted meat. Prior to St. Basil, the rule given by an angel to St. Pachomius directs, in its twenty-second article, that no one is to touch wine, grease, or gravy, unless it be in the infirmary, while sick.

St. Athanasius relates in the life of St. Anthony that this great saint partook of no other nourishment than bread, salt, and a little water. Then he

adds : As to meat and wine, I consider it more proper not to mention them, as the greater number of Religious know nothing of their use.

St. Jerome, in speaking of himself, says : I pass over in silence as to what I ate and drank after I retired into solitude ; for there the Religious, even the weakly, drank nothing but cold water, and it was considered as too delicate and sensual to eat anything that was prepared by fire. See also how he speaks elsewhere to the heretic Jovean : I object not to all the nations of the world eating meat, and that everywhere they be permitted to use whatever is most common and most readily procured ; for what does that signify to us, who consider heaven as the place of our dwelling, and where our conversation is also : we, who should be wiser than Pythagoras and all who have made profession of wisdom, and who abstained from meat ; whereas, it suits us to do so, not for any temporal consideration ; as we are born anew, by grace—we who, by fasts, keep the flesh under subjection to reason

Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria, who lived under the reign of Theodosius the Great, invited the Fathers of the desert to assist at the demolishing of the idolatrous temples. These monks came accordingly, and were entertained at this patriarch's private table, where they were served to some veal, of which they partook without reflection. The patriarch, well pleased to see these good Religious so kindly receiving his hospitality, gave a choice morsel of the same meat to one of the most aged

monks, who was seated nearest to himself, saying, whilst presenting it to him: Eat, Father, eat; behold here what is good. Then this Religious, as well as all the others, suspected by these words that there must be something unusual in the food of which they were partaking, said to him: My lord, we were under the impression, till now, that we were eating herbs; if it is meat, we should not have eaten it, nor would one amongst us have been induced even to touch it. This shows that it was not customary for them to use meat, as also the indifference with which they received their food, since they mistook flesh for herbs.

Behold the regimen followed by the ancient Religious, as regarded their food. St. Mark, anchorite and disciple of St. Macairius of Egypt, having drank a little wine, and eaten his food dressed with oil, at the age of one hundred years, and when he had lost all his teeth, reproved himself, when in his cell, saying (as is related by Palladius, an ocular witness): Well! wicked old man, gormandizing in your old age; so you have regaled yourself with oil, and by drinking wine! Slave of your appetite! what will you not do?

But this system of diet is yet more ancient than religious orders. Adam and Eve, with their posterity, lived for the space of two thousand years at least on the fruits of the trees and the spontaneous productions of the soil.

The Israelites, who passed forty years in the desert, ate nothing but manna, and drank only water, and when they desired flesh meat, on asking

for it they had it given to them ; but to their misfortune, for the majority of these sensual murmurers became victims of the wrath of God, falling dead whilst the flesh they ate was yet between their teeth—a fact that is for everlasting remembrance, as the place was afterwards called “the graves of concupiscence and of disorderly appetites.” Nor did God give to them in the desert a drop of wine, but only water, which at first was had by ordinary means, and later on, by miracle—as when He made issue from a rock an inexhaustible fountain of clear water, that followed them everywhere. An angel conveyed to Elias, for his journey, a *loaf* and a cruet of water. Eliseus, having invited to dinner the children of the Prophet, gave them but wild herbs.

Daniel, Ananias, Misael, and Azarias, captives in Babylon, contemned the delicate viands and costly wines that had been assigned them by the king himself, contenting themselves with eating vegetables and drinking water ; and, however, instead of this diet causing them to grow emaciated, they became handsomer and stronger.

A raven brought daily to St. Paul, first hermit, the half of a loaf, but when St. Anthony came to visit him, the whole loaf was given. As a final example, we will take the King of Angels, our Lord. One day, when he was weary with toil and parched with thirst, He asked of the Samaritan woman only water—not wine.

SECTION XIV.

Of Temptations Against Chastity.

So long as we are in this life, we should expect—at least, without some very special and extraordinary grace—to be tempted against chastity, and to have some degree of combat to sustain with the enemy of this virtue. First, our nature is frail—we are clothed in a body in which concupiscence exercises a sway that tends to evil, as we explained in the commencement of this chapter.

As each thing desires what is in conformity with its nature, so thus is the flesh and the spirit ever at variance—"the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Blessed are they who have not experienced this warfare! We cannot too earnestly pray God to assist and to deliver us in this combat.

Secondly, not only one, but many demons are ever near, to solicit and to tempt us to evil. They know the weakness of our nature and its inclinations—understanding well how to turn such armor against us, so as to deceive us, and cause our ruin. Even the advanced in age and virtue—hermits of the greatest austerity, and dwelling in the remotest parts of the desert—are not secure, for concupiscence is never entirely extinct; and the demon dies not, nor does he ever sleep, but is, at all times and everywhere, the irreconcilable enemy of our salvation.

St. Gregory Nazianzen, relating the principal events of his life, says that after having, in his

youth, readily surmounted sensual solicitations—preserving unsullied his virginity—was, at the close of his days, violently attacked by these temptations, and that he had serious difficulty in overcoming them, notwithstanding his fasts, watchings, prayers, and other austerities, as also by the remembrance of the last judgment, and the exact observance of monastic discipline.

Palladius relates that, being tormented by thoughts against chastity during the day and by dreams at night, and this with such great violence and importunity that he was obliged to quit his solitude to seek St. Pachomius, aged seventy years, anchorite in Scete, to whom he disclosed his trouble. In order to console and encourage him, the holy old man said to him: Be not astonished at that, my son, since this evil comes not from delights, nor from indolence, nor negligence, as is evident from your habits and the poverty in which you live, nor from any intercourse with the world; then it must proceed from the demon, who cannot tolerate the design you have formed of passing your life in the exercise of virtue. You see, I am very aged; it has been forty years since my retirement to this cell, to be here wholly occupied with the care of my salvation: well! this has not prevented me from being tempted like yourself. For two years—day and night—I was tormented by things contrary to purity, so as to cause me to fear that God had abandoned me. Seeing the demon had so much power over me, I resolved—though it was not altogether in keeping with reason—to put

an end to my life, rather than to be betrayed into sin. Thus, leaving my cell, wandering here and there in the desert, I met with the den of a hyena; I therein entered, divested of all clothing, and so remained during the day, awaiting these cruel animals to come to devour me. Evening came, when both the male and female animal returned; but instead of devouring me, as I expected they would, they contented themselves with caressing and licking my body, after which they withdrew, without injuring me in the least. Having passed the night in safety, I could but recognize God's pity for me, and forthwith returned to my cell, where the demon gave me truce for some days, but soon again commenced to torment me with renewed energy, even to inflicting sensible blows on my body, which I thought I could not survive. Beholding myself so cruelly persecuted, I lost all courage; despaired of salvation, and in this state of dejection, again wandering over the desert, I found a little asp, which I took up and placed upon my skin, hoping that its sting would cause my death, and thus be the remedy for my troubles. But God, as by a signal mark of His providence and His grace, again shielded me from injury. Then I heard an interior voice saying: Pachomius, return to thy cell, arm thyself for renewed combats, with the assurance that I give thee, that I have alone permitted the demon to act over you with such power, in order that you should not yield to vanity, nor think that of yourself you could surmount these temptations, but to make you conscious of your

impotency, to cause you to have recourse to prayer, and not to feel presumptuous by the good life that you lead. After receiving this instruction, and feeling greatly fortified, I returned to my cell, and since which time I have remained full of confidence in God without troubling myself about anything the demon could suggest. I now pass my days in peace, for the demon perceiving the contempt in which I hold him, is so confused and abashed, that he dares not so much as approach me.

The Saint, having by his words thus animated me to combat the demon, and instructing me as to the means of becoming victorious, bid me go in peace, and show forth by my actions both courage and constancy.

But these temptations, as has been said, though both difficult and perilous, are also most useful when properly dealt with, bringing great good to a courageous and faithful soul.

Another Father of the desert, seeing one of his disciples much tormented by like temptations, asked him if he wished him to pray to God that He might deliver him from these trials? The disciple replied: Father, I see that while these temptations cause me much pain, they are also of great service to me; they make me fast, watch and pray more. Wherefore, be pleased to pray God to give me grace to derive profit from these assaults, and to come off victorious. Then the good Father, filled with joy, said to him: I see now, my son, that you have not been idle, that you turned to advantage these trials, and are more advanced in virtue than

I am. Thus are these temptations the cause of much virtue, being practised by those who would not otherwise recognize the necessity of abstinence, mortification, and continual prayer; as also to be a special specific against pride, for it at once disperses the smoke of vanity, and any good opinion one may entertain of self, there being no thoughts so humiliating as such as are contrary to purity; wherefore, St. Paul prayed three times to our Lord to deliver him from this importunate and insolent demon; but our Lord in answer replied: "My grace is sufficient for thee," as virtue is perfected by temptation in experiencing one's infirmity.

According to the explanation of St. Thomas, our infirmity furnishes us with matter for practising patience, humility, and many other virtues. Besides, he who is tempted feels his weakness, yet not wishing to consent to the temptation, he makes much more strenuous efforts to resist it, and thus the temptation serves as an occasion for virtue.

Let us now come to the manner in which we should resist these temptations; but as this makes a part of the practice of chastity, it is reserved for the following paragraph.

SECTION XV.

Of the Practice of Chastity.

This practice refers to the time of war, as also to the time of peace. The practice of chastity in the time of war, is when one is attacked by temptations

contrary to this virtue, which, in order to preserve, these assaults must be resisted.

The manner in which the Saints have ever resisted these temptations is most admirable. Extremely jealous of their purity, loving God most ardently, and preferring to die a thousand times rather than offend Him in the least, they have suffered and done strange things to surmount these temptations, and to preserve intact the purity of their soul and body. Some, for this purpose, have burnt their flesh with red hot irons. St. Macairius of Egypt dwelt for the space of six months in the marshes of Scete, so as to be bitten by enormous flies, whose sting was so sharp and penetrating as to draw blood, and hereby he was much disfigured by the time he left his penitential abode.

St. Benedict slept on briars. St. Bernard cast himself into a frozen pond; and St. Francis rolled himself in the snow.

If, after all such resistances to interior temptations, we should wish to consider those that many persons have exercised for exterior assaults of their modesty, we will again behold wonderful things. What have they not done, what not endured to preserve their virginity. Ecclesiastical history relates and the holy Fathers eulogize, the extraordinary actions of many females in order to preserve their virtue when they perceived it in danger. Mention is made of some who cut and gashed their bodies with a sword, others who precipitated themselves from the top of their houses, others again, casting themselves into deep water, and thus all

preferring death to the risk of losing their virginity.

The memorable fact is known of the mother and the two sisters of Pelagia of Antioch. This mother, with her two daughters, who were exceedingly beautiful, when seeing their chastity exposed to peril, resolved on drowning themselves. They held one another by the hand, ran to the river, entered boldly into the water, which was very deep, and instantly sank. Their bodies were afterwards sought for, were found modestly covered by their clothing, the daughters hand in hand and closely folded within their mother's embrace.

St. Louis returning to France, the Saracens failed to observe the treaty of peace they had made with him; and they pillaged the city of Antioch, where there was a monastery of Religieuses. These holy virgins on learning of the arrival of the barbarians, who had no more regard for what was sacred than for what was profane, and not knowing what measures to take to secure their virginity, resolved by mutual accord to cut off their noses and to disfigure themselves. After they had executed their generous and heroic deed, the barbarians entered the monastery, but on beholding the revolting spectacle of its inmates so mutilated, their fury was aroused, and they instantly dispatched them with their sabres, thus sending them all to heaven to receive the two-fold crown of virginity and martyrdom.

One other admirable example is given of the fidelity of St. Andragisin, daughter of Robert,

Chancellor of France during the reign of King Clo-taire II. She was of brilliant beauty, unequaled by any lady of the court. Contrary to her wishes, her father affianced her to a great Lord named Ouen, who subsequently became "St. Ouen." As she had plighted her virginity to Jesus Christ, she besought Him in prayer to take from her the beauty that was the cause of the danger in which she perceived she was of retracting her promise to Him; when accordingly, she became hideously ugly. Our Lord deferring not the request of His spouse, covered her face with a leprosy, which rendered her an object of aversion and horror. Her father, seeing in this strange occurrence something more than ordinary, and believing that God must have therein some secret design, particularly as all the human remedies that had been resorted to for her cure were ineffectual, finally consented to his daughter becoming a Religieuse. But no sooner had she entered the monastery, than all her former beauty returned. The young nobleman, imitating her example, left the world, taking the religious habit in the monastery of Fontenelle, where he made rapid progress in virtue, his eminent sanctity rendering him so renowned, that he was withdrawn from the shades of the cloister to become the Archbishop of Rouen.

Doubtless, all such resistance is most efficacious for banishing temptation; but as they are extraordinary, and every one is not equal thereto, let us now approach some more ordinary means, and to which all are obliged in order not to offend God and to succumb to temptation.

First, be careful to employ the above remedies of prayer, of humility, watching over the heart, the flight of occasions, specially in conversation with the opposite sex, for he who does not wish to become warm, should avoid approaching fire. The good employment of time, and the flight of idleness, also to practise mortification of the senses and abstinence. All these remedies will produce salutary effects if well used ; but for this, violence to self is requisite, for inasmuch as you do not force yourself, and you are lacking in courage, it will be most difficult not to yield to the tempter in some measure.

It is *absolutely necessary*, that the person tempted against his purity should be neither cowardly nor idle ; but on the contrary, that he be vigilant and courageous, and use efforts to repulse his enemy. He should say to the tempter, as St. Bernard directs : Begone Satan ! you who taste not the things of God, but rather of all that is diametrically opposed to His infinite sanctity.

This same Saint tells us elsewhere, that luxury is like a coach and pair, each horse having its respective driver. The four wheels representing good cheer, the search after sensual delights, softness of raiment, and indolence that produces drowsiness. The horses are prosperity of life and abundance of riches. The two coachmen being *inertness of a languishing mind*, and *self-confidence* that nothing intimidates. To upset this coach, it is necessary for that of chastity to oppose its passage. The coach of chastity is conducted by numerous cour-

ageous and faithful souls who are ever resolute in resisting temptation, and in not offending God at any cost. Behold the most ordinary means of opposing temptations contrary to chastity, and for counting as many victories as combats. Three other excellent means are here also given.

First, to disclose to your director or confessor the temptations with which you are attacked, as well as to make known the trouble they occasion you; for the demon fears nothing so much as to have his wiles brought to light. He cannot endure, on account of his pride, this act of humility practised in confessing one's own misery, and which naturally causes so much self-confusion.

Secondly, when assailed by improper thoughts, and incited to any sensual gratifications, to remember the nobility of your soul. "My son," says the Wise Man: "Keep thy soul in meekness, and give it honor according to its desert. Who will justify him that sinneth against his own soul? and who will honor him who dishonoreth his own soul?" The soul is a pure spirit made to the image of God; it bears on its brow the glorious traits of His infinite perfections; it has been ransomed by the death of Jesus Christ, sanctified by His blood, and created to see and enjoy Him for all eternity. It is therefore a creation truly admirable, whose excellence surpasses all that can be said of it, or even conceived of it; consequently, we should hold it in great esteem, respect it above everything, bear towards it supreme honor, and never be so rash or blind as to sully its purity, to tarnish the

lustre of its glory, to abase it by improper or unbecoming actions, and to inflict on it the cruel outrage of dishonoring it by indulging sensual gratifications. Would you wish to cast into the mud a rich diamond worn on your finger, or better still, a consecrated chalice containing the precious blood of the Son of God? Your soul is a jewel of inestimable value, a sacred vase filled with the blood of Jesus Christ. Preserve it with all possible care, and suffer it not to fall into a filthy sewer.

Also, consider the dignity of your body. It has been consecrated by baptism, to the glory and worship of the most Holy Trinity; it has the honor of belonging to Jesus Christ, being as one of His members; it is sanctified by touching His virginal flesh in the Adorable Eucharist; it is created to become glorious in heaven, and to live eternally with a purity equal to that of the blessed spirits. Attentively consider all these reasons, and without fail, you will conduct it in all propriety; you will stifle its sensual movements; you will render it chaste, making it a vessel of honor and not of iniquity.

Moreover, consider that you live, that you act ever in the Divinity, and in the midst of His perfections; that your body and your soul are, in all times, in all places, in the centre of His infinite purity, and consequently, that you should assiduously endeavor to preserve unsullied both your soul and body.

The third means is to *bind* and unite yourself to our Lord Jesus Christ; in your temptations, to

behold Him dwelling in the midst of your heart, to ask of Him purity, fidelity, love and courage ; and to assist you in the height of your combats. This is recommended both by St. Catharine of Sienna and St. Anthony in these temptations.

An aged Father of the desert says : When we are assaulted by improper thoughts, we should represent to ourselves our Saviour, as occupying our heart, there to contemplate Him, desiring to sanctify ourselves on the model of His holiness, according to this instruction of the Prince of the Apostles : “ Sanctify,” that is to say honor, “ the Lord Christ in your hearts,” by the purity of your thoughts and of your affections.

St. Jerome gives the following beautiful signification to the account of the three children in the fiery furnace of Babylon : “ The mortal enemy of our salvation directs against youth the ardor of their age, and thus accomplishes these words of Osee : ‘ Their hearts become as an ardent furnace ;’ but the mercy of God and the ice of fasts can readily cool and temper this heat. The demon’s suggestion inflames and wounds at the same time, like the furnace that the King of Babylon prepared for the three children, and which was heated to its utmost ; but in the midst of the flames enveloping these three young men appeared a fourth person, resembling the Son of God : according to Tertullian, St. Hilary, St. Augustine, and several others, it *was* the Son of God in person, who, before effectively assuming human nature, wished thus to anticipate and to exercise His pre-ordained

office of Saviour, in protecting these youthful Israelites. By His presence in this horrible furnace, He tempered the flames, so as to render them as a gentle dew, and whilst retaining the appearance of real fire, they were so deprived of heat that their touch was delightfully soothing. Likewise the celestial dew of grace deadens in youth the heat of the passions, and as our Lord remains in their heart, His very presence is a preventive from injury. Youth, thus powerfully protected from threatening danger, so admirably rescued from the midst of the flames of concupiscence, without even being seared, should, in unison with the three children of Babylon, entone the *Benedicti*, sing a canticle of praise and glory to our Lord Jesus Christ; for it is to Him that they should attribute the honor of so signal an act of deliverance, and not to draw from it any self-complacency, though the demon may sometimes suggest such thoughts; for not succeeding in entering a soul by one means, he will seek some other way, and when the door of vice is closed to him, he is adroit in seeing if that of vanity has been left open. Thus, the holy Abbess Sarah, having sustained with heroic courage some furious combats with the demon, who, to give her a good opinion of herself, said: O Sarah! thou hast vanquished me! But the Saint, knowing well his malice, and the full meaning of his words, replied: It is not I, but our Lord Jesus Christ, who has vanquished you. And so should every one speak who becomes a victor in any combat against the demon.

Besides, when you are attacked by temptations to sully purity, be not frightened: the temptation can do you no harm, if you give no consent to it; and the demon will have no other power over you than you permit. He will doubtless solicit your consent with instance and importunity; but he cannot *force* you into compliance. It is, then, at your discretion to yield to or to repulse him. Therefore, fear nothing; only remain firm in your purpose; for sometimes one falls from over-great timidity, which enfeebles both the body and the mind; so, also, too much apprehension concerning improper or dangerous thoughts will be apt to arouse them. Whatever, then, happens to you in this respect, either in the body or in the soul, without exception, be not disquieted—mock them; provided you ever keep a courageous heart; that you have not contributed to these suggestions, and that they afford you no contentment, no detriment will ensue. It is alone the consent to evil, and the satisfaction it may occasion, that causes sin; otherwise, be not disturbed; do not even speak of it, for it is both wiser and more useful to remain silent—as ignorance is oftentimes preferable to knowledge.

Let us now come to the practice of chastity in time of peace. This consists in forming, interiorly and exteriorly, acts of this virtue. The interior acts of the virtue of chastity are to conceive an exalted idea of chastity: ideas that are founded on all the reasons for its excellence, its utility, and its numerous advantages. This virtue should be greatly esteemed, loved, desired, and asked for.

One should have a firm and constant resolution to keep inviolably the vow that has been pronounced, and to renew it with fervor; also, to entertain a supreme contempt and a great horror for all that is contrary to chastity, and to refrain from whatever could in the least sully its purity. The exterior acts consist in embracing every means calculated to increase, preserve, and perfect chastity—to avoid all occasions, all actions, all words that tend to the opposite vice, so as not to allude to it—not to know its name. “Pronounce not even the name of things that are improper, as it behooves the Saints,” says St. Paul. To perform excellently and easily the acts of chastity, Religious ought not to lose the remembrance of their dignity. That they are the spouses of the Son of God—being such much more in reality than persons who are united by the sacrament of marriage, which is, as St. Paul teaches, but a figure of that which is contracted between Jesus Christ and the soul. The person consecrated and united to Jesus Christ by the vows of religion is stripped of everything; she has given to our Lord, for her dower, all that she possesses, without reserving anything—and this she does by the vow of poverty. She does not even possess her body, since she has renounced it by the vow of chastity. Neither has she her liberty, of which she is despoiled by her vow of obedience.

One of the principal evils of Religious is that they do not consider, and do not recall sufficiently often, that they are truly the spouses of Jesus Christ.

The greatest misfortune of a queen would be, not to know that she was the consort of a king ; for in this ignorance she would conduct herself as any ordinary woman, and possibly in an unsuitable and degrading manner to her true position ; whereas, the knowledge of her royal alliance would cause her to have other thoughts, affections, words, and manners—to act very differently, and in conformity to her eminent dignity.

In conclusion to this subject, and which specially regards Religious, let it be said that, as they have vowed their chastity to Jesus Christ, they should ever keep a most vigilant watch over this virtue. The demon's highest aims are the ensnaring of these religious souls ; his most strenuous efforts are exerted against their modesty : he has recourse to every stratagem—he employs a thousand means to sully the purity of those consecrated to God—to snatch from Jesus Christ His dearest spouses, to despoil Him of His holiest victims, and so to destroy these chosen souls. St. Jerome, in giving instruction to the virgin Eustochia, and arming her for these combats, says : So long as we are in this life, and we are clothed with a body that has such inclination for sensual pleasures, we should never believe ourselves beyond danger, nor regard our virginity as invulnerable. If St. Paul, after enduring all the sufferings of poverty, fasts, famine, imprisonment, stripes, and scourging, when considering what he had by nature, was forced to exclaim : “Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?” should you feel

assurance? He further adds, that the virginity and purity of the mind is lost more readily than that of the body, by the evil thoughts and affections to which it gives consent—that the demon has no greater delight than to ensnare virgins, and all who are consecrated to God. He seeks not infidels, for these he counts as his own; but he is eager to grasp what is choice and more excellent—that is, Christians, Ecclesiastics, and Religious, who are consecrated to Jesus Christ by the vow of chastity. When the demon gains some victory over these persons; has succeeded in causing them to sully their purity in the least, he considers himself as having achieved a *chef d'œuvre*, and he exults. This will appear most evident in the following narration, to be found in the “Lives of the Fathers of the Desert,” and given by a Religious of the Thebades, son of an ancient *pagan* priest. While very young, he once witnessed, in the pagan temple, an assembly of demons, presided over by Lucifer. Four of these evil spirits presented themselves before their chief, to give an account of their proceedings against men. The first exultingly related that he had burned and devastated everything in one province; that he had fomented quarrels, and thereby occasioned many murders; and had executed all this fine work in thirty days. The second demon reported he had raised a furious tempest at sea, when several vessels were wrecked, numerous persons drowned; and this gave him employment for twenty days. The third one said that whilst assisting at a merry-making

he had effected many dissensions and conflicts, by which means much blood was shed ; and that this havoc was completed in a ten days' toil. The fourth one recounted that he had been mostly busy among the solitaries in the desert ; that he had employed forty years to tempt one Religious, and had at last succeeded in making him commit a sin against purity. Hereupon, Lucifer directed that the first three should be punished for having spent so much time in accomplishing so little evil, while he highly extolled the fourth demon : even had him seated nearer to himself, placing his crown on him, in recompense for an action incomparably more glorious and more important than the united efforts of all the other three. This spectacle was the cause of this youth's conversion ; and, as it gave him to understand that the religious state was most excellent, he accordingly embraced it.

All this teaches that those who are consecrated to God, who have sacrificed themselves by the vow of chastity, can never feel secure, nor relax in the strictest watch, in order to preserve unspotted the whiteness of their purity ; and that, after becoming the spouses of Jesus Christ, after serving as temples for the Most Holy Trinity, never to allow, under pain of death, an entrance to the demon. But for encouragement, it is known that since Satan has dared to buffet a body so chaste and pure as was that of St. Paul, whose purity was transported to the third heaven, it is certain that, in order to live a divine life, it is not required that we be free from the rebellions of the senses and of

nature, but that we show a resolute resistance to everything contrary to perfect purity, on account of which some one compares chastity to “*a lily that grows among thorns.*”

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE.

IT now remains for us to speak of the third vow, that binds the Religious to God, and consecrates him to His service—the vow of obedience, which is the principal and the most excellent of all. Then we will speak here, not of obedience in general, but of obedience in particular.

St. Thomas, with all the Doctors, teaches that there are two sorts of obedience, and also two sorts of disobedience. The first is called material and general, and is no other than the performance of all good works and all acts of virtue commanded, in such a manner that it enters and mingles in all the acts of the virtues of faith, hope and charity, of patience, humility, and of all the other virtues we are obliged to practice.

Thus, the failure to perform all these duties, and consequently all sin, causes a general and material disobedience. The second kind of obedience is enclosed within stricter limits, and is taken in its highest sense. It has for its object the accomplishment of a thing commanded, precisely because it is commanded ; so that it is performed with this sole motive, which, doubtless, is of itself good, proper, and praiseworthy, and consequently con-

stitutes a special virtue, different from all others, for as it may extend to the matter of all the virtues, after a certain manner peculiar to itself; regarding them in such a way—in reference to itself alone—so as to make known that the command of the Superior is just and suitable for the inferior to execute.

So, then, where there is no command, this virtue cannot be found. A formal and special disobedience is its enemy; it takes the reverse, revolts against the command, does not what the Superior prescribes, because it is prescribed; which cannot be done, says St. Thomas, without a formal contempt of the command.

Now to come to the vow of this special obedience, which is made in religion. I say that this vow is a promise made to God to obey the persons He has appointed to govern us in His place, in all that they command us that is not bad, but good and conformable to the institute, and to the rule we have embraced.

1. It is a promise. There is then an obligation to execute it. In this it differs from a purpose that, however limited and determined it may be, does not oblige and engage absolutely, but always leaves the liberty to do or not to do the thing, and by not doing it one is but fickle; but when a person fails in his vow, he should in the first place be considered inconstant, and then to inconstancy is added infidelity and injustice.

2. We say that it is a promise made to God to obey men. It is then to God the vow is made, it

is to Him that one obliges himself ; for the vow is an act of religion, the first moral virtue ; it regards the service of God as its object. But if the vow is made to God, its obligation is at the same time to obey men, whom God has given us to command us in His place. Whereupon the Doctors remark that the vow does not oblige us to obey only men, but God commanding by the medium of men : If God commanded us immediately by Himself, or by an angel, or in any other extraordinary manner, we would not be held to obey Him in virtue of our vow, but merely from the duty of the creature towards his Creator. In fine, the terms of the vow and of the promise made show it. The end of the vow makes it also clearly seen ; for, as says St. Thomas, this end is, that man be conducted by man in the way of his salvation and perfection.

If now you ask me, Who is the man to whom the Religious is obliged to give the obedience he has promised to God ? I will reply, with the Doctors, it is he whom God has given him to govern him in His place ; that is to say, his legitimate Superior. It is first the Superior of the house wherein he lives, and above him the Provincial, and above these the General of the whole Order, and above all the Pope, whom the vow of obedience regards more than all the other Superiors ; for so St. Thomas teaches. Then he is obliged to obey the sovereign Pontiff, not only by the obligation in common with all the faithful, as a member should obey his head, and a child its father but even by a particular obligation, as the first Superior and sov-

ereign General of all Orders, whose approbation is essentially necessary for their erection, and from whom emanate, as from their sun, all the rays of authority, all the power of jurisdiction and domination that all subaltern Superiors possess. Thus the Pope is the Superior of Religious by two titles; he keeps them attached to him by two bonds: the first is his title as head of the Church—a title that makes him Superior of all Christians; the second is the quality he has of Chief and First General of all Orders and of all Religious, over whom, by the vow of obedience they have made, he has a special power to dispose of them—a power that he does not possess over the rest of the faithful.

3 The vow of obedience is a promise to obey in all things. In fact, the signification of the promise implies no exclusion; it is not said: *I vow to obey in this or in that*; but I vow to obey *absolutely* and without reserve. Then to exclude nothing means that all is legal. It should be remarked, however, that this should be understood, in the first place, of such things only as could be commanded; for it is most evident that obedience is not due there, where no command can be given. In the second place, it should be observed that the limits of the vow of obedience are not the same in all Orders. In fact, in some, as in ours (the Society of Jesus), obedience is made the foundation of the whole edifice, as the pivot on which turns all the rest. Inferiors are there most dependent upon Superiors for the distribution of employments in connection with the neighbor, and this in order to

succeed therein according to the intention of God and of the Order. Thus, this vow amongst us implies an obedience in all things where there is no manifest sin. I know that certain authors interpret this as but of the perfection of obedience, to which one is not strictly bound to aspire; but others understand an absolute obligation, and wish that this perfection enter into the essence of our vow. In many Orders the power of commanding and the obligation to obey extend not so far. St. Bonaventure holds to the same opinion as the first, for obedience in his Order; so also St. Thomas, who distinguishes three kinds of obedience: the first is indiscreet—as to obey contrary to the command of God, or the rule; the second—the imperfect—that he calls elsewhere necessary obedience, where obedience is given only in things to which one is precisely obliged; the third is perfect obedience, which causes one to do all that is good, though not bound thereto.

I say, moreover, that this promise supposes the command of the Superior. If he simply signifies that he desires such a thing to be done, that he would be pleased to have it done, the inferior is still at liberty to do or not to do it. To oblige him thereto, and place him in the necessity of executing his vow, the positive and efficacious will of his Superior is absolutely necessary. Moreover, this command should be given *exteriorly*, either by word or by writing, for the *interior* will, even should the inferior know it, does not suffice; this method of commanding not being in conformity with the nature of man

But all this is only said for the necessary accomplishment of the vow in its strictest sense, and not for its perfection, upon which all good Religious should cast their eyes and make efforts to attain. To obey, perfect obedience does not require an absolute command from the Superior, and to act, awaits not that authority be used ; a simple word, a glance of the eye, and the least knowledge the inferior has of the will of his Superior and of his inclination, suffices for him to walk, to run, and to fly, after the example of those faithful servants mentioned by David, who have ever their eyes fixed on their masters', to execute, at the slightest sign, all that they desire ; or, to speak more properly, after the example of our Lord, to whom, says Albert the Great, the desire and good pleasure of His Father served as an absolute and inviolable command. In fact, whoever wishes not to obey God and His Church, only when they employ their sovereign authority ; when they command something determinate, under pain of condemnation, would not he be considered as a very tepid and imperfect Christian, and even reprehensible ? It is the same with the Religious who wishes not to obey but when his Superior obliges him thereto by his vow ; when commanded in virtue of holy obedience, and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, for these are the extremities that bear with them an obligation under pain of sin, or rather the means used to suppress harsh and rebellious spirits.

Moreover, it must be that what is commanded by the Superior to bear with it the power to oblige,

should be accompanied by three conditions. The first is that it be not bad ; for the vow cannot have evil for its object—it never regards anything but what is good. It is evident that God will not give His authority to the Superior in a thing opposed to His service and His glory. Thus, when the Superior commands, not having such power from God, from whom must come all authority to make such a command, it follows that he is *not* Superior in giving it, and consequently the inferior is *not* bound to obedience. From this it must be concluded that the inferior, even according to all the rules of perfect obedience, and even of that called *blind* obedience, has ever a right to consider in some measure, if the command given him by the Superior is just and according to God ; and if he finds it is not, he should not obey. Such is the teaching of St. Bernard, writing to a Religious who had executed the orders of his Superior where he should not have done so. This Saint tells him, among other things, that were it necessary to obey in that manner, it is without reason that the Church reads these words of St. Paul : “ *But prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.* ” There would have to be effaced from the Gospel these words of our Lord : “ Be as wise and prudent as serpents,” if the following sufficed, “ and simple as doves.” It is not that I wish to say, adds this great Saint, that inferiors should examine the commands of their Superiors where no sin appears ; but I say that prudence is necessary to see that there is none, and the liberty to freely condemn the

commands if there is sin in them ; so that an inferior should have the prudence for his discernment, and the simplicity of the dove to obey simply when no sin is perceived.

The second condition is that the thing commanded should be good in itself, or at least that its end should be. Thus Cassian relates that Superiors command, sometimes, indifferent things, as directing Abbot John to water a dead tree, and to move a huge rock that several men, with all their united efforts, could not accomplish, in order to break his will and to accustom it to a blind obedience.

The third is, for the thing not only to be good, but also in conformity with the institute and the rule you profess, and that the thing commanded should be therein contained, either directly in express terms, say the Doctors, or indirectly and understood, as are all necessary things for the observing of the rule: such as acts of mutual charity ; the assistance and the services rendered to each other ; the common penances imposed for faults committed against the observance of this same rule ; corporal penances, the austerities enjoined to prevent a relapse into faults, or to turn aside a danger into which, otherwise, one would be liable to fall.

If, then, the Superior commands something contrary to the rule, or above the rule—that is to say, either stricter or more severe ; or *below* it—that is, less strict and milder than the rule, without a just cause, the inferior is not obliged by vow to obey. Let the command or prohibition of the Superior,

says St. Bernard, be contained within the limits of my profession ; that it swerve neither this way nor that ; that it does not prevent me from doing what I promised, and that it requires no more of me ; that it adds nothing to my vows without my consent, and that it diminishes nothing without great necessity.

The reason for all this being, that the Superior is not the institutor of the rule, but only the guardian and conservator or keeper. He should have it observed by the inferiors, and so conduct them to their salvation. Each religious Order has its limits and the measure of its religious exercises; they are contained and declared in its constitutions and its rules, and it is for their execution that Superiors are appointed by God, so that this execution and the Orders be preserved, and that Religious be saved. Besides, St. Thomas and the other Doctors agree in saying that the Religious, by his vow, had no other design than to oblige himself to live in accordance with the rule he embraced, and that thus no Superior, not even the Pope, who is the Superior of all Superiors, can, without a just reason, command a Religious to do something contrary to his rule, either of greater or less moment than is required by his rule ; because all authority that these Superiors hold in this respect comes to them from the vow he has made. Then, this vow being limited to certain things, nothing more can be claimed of him. St. Bernard says on this subject : I think no one can exact of me but what I promised. A Doctor places among the

number of things that exceed the limits of the rule a command to go to preach the Gospel to the infidels, in countries where there would be danger of death or captivity; to fast for a long time, not to eat meat for a month, and similar things, to which the rule *does not* oblige. Another Doctor wisely remarks that, although these extended abstinences cannot be commanded by way of exercising virtue, since the rule does not prescribe them, they may, however, be enjoined in punishment of crimes, which is conformable to the rule, or even because they are judged necessary for observing the vows. It is thus, for example, that Religieuses can be obliged to keep enclosure, though formerly they did not keep it and had not promised it; but experience showed it to be necessary for the observance of their vow of chastity, and to draw them from the numberless perils to which, without this, they are exposed.

The Religious is, then, obliged by his vow of obedience to fulfil all the commands of his Superior that are in accordance with the rule, and to obey, under pain of mortal sin, if the command is made him with these words: In virtue of holy obedience, and if the thing is of consequence; for then, according to the interpretation and usage of all religious Orders, it is believed that the Superior exercises all the authority he has to command, and that he means to impose on his inferior all the necessity he lies under by his vow to obey him, when he uses such powerful terms, and that when he does not use them, it is judged that his intention is

not to oblige so strictly ; but, however, there is always venial sin, when one fails to do what is commanded, provided he does command him. In fact-to command anything is not to counsel it ; is not to leave the person commanded at liberty to do it or not : it is to enjoin it by the legitimate power he has over the will with which it is done, although he wishes not to command in keeping with the full extent of his power. Moreover, religious discipline demands that the inferior should obey his Superior in whatever manner he commands, provided always that it be in a reasonable manner. Then the Superior can act thus, for there is every appearance that the power to command with which God has invested him is so completely in his hands that he can extend or withdraw it ; command under pain of mortal sin, when the thing is great and important, or only under pain of venial sin, even though the thing be great and of importance ; and again, even without any penalty of sin ; and thus the delinquent commits none, it sufficing in satisfaction for his fault that he submits to some ordinary correction.

The Religious, in obeying his Superior, is obliged by his vow to do it, not only exteriorly, but also interiorly. He must then exercise an act of virtue, for we have already said that when a man makes a vow he means to do an action that is good, and promises to God something that is agreeable to Him. Otherwise, it will *not* be a vow, since the vow is one of the most excellent acts of religion—the first moral virtue—and one cannot promise to

God a bad or indifferent thing, for to promise Him something that displeases Him is offending Him; and to promise Him what is neither good nor bad, that neither pleases nor displeases Him, and serves in no wise to His service, is to mock Him. It must then be necessary that in promising Him a thing we promise a good thing—an act of virtue that will be agreeable to His divine majesty. Then you have promised Him obedience; you should, therefore, acquit yourself of your promise. Your obedience must not be bad or indifferent, but good and virtuous, and consequently it cannot be simply exterior; for this obedience has but the appearance of virtue, and not the reality, and God is not content therewith; but it should be truly interior and practical, with a motive of virtue. Some say that they can command good acts, purely spiritual; others deny it; but, however it may be, it is ever true that promising to God a good action, as obedience, you are obliged by your promise to render both your act and your obedience good, and consequently to produce them with a pure and interior intention, which alone can render the whole exterior good and agreeable to God. Behold, then, in what the Vow of Obedience consists, and to what it obliges. It was necessary to elucidate all these difficulties before going further. Let us now speak of its advantages.

SECTION I.

The Inestimable Advantages of Obedience.

All that we have been saying regards mostly obedience considered in its strictest obligation. Wherefore, let not the good Religious, that by the obligation of his state should ever tend towards perfection, stop here. He should, on the contrary, use every effort to arrive at a more sublime degree, and this for the motives and the reasons we are about to propose.

The first is the excellence of obedience, in that it elevates and admirably ennobles a Religious. His state being established and essentially founded on the three vows, the vow of obedience incomparably excels the other two. In fact, the vow of poverty gives to God but our gold, our silver, and our riches; the vow of chastity only sacrifices to Him our body; but the vow of obedience offers and sacrifices to Him our soul. Then our soul, the living substance and life of the body, a spiritual being, immortal and divine image of the divine perfections, made to see and to possess them forever, much surpasses in dignity and in value our body and all our riches. It gives Him our liberty, the most precious and the dearest possession that we have, the only gift we can dispose of, and the only one, consequently, that belongs to us, properly speaking. Moreover, as the vow submits and unites our will to the will of God, which is the holiest, the wisest, and

the most perfect, that is and can be, it follows that ours shares in all these perfections, and that the soul, being united to God, becomes, as says St. Paul, the same spirit with Him. Thus, then, whichever way we regard the matter, it must be ever admitted that man could not act more excellently, more perfectly, nor more divinely, than to act as God—to do what He wishes, as He wishes it, and because He wishes it.

Wherefore it is that the holy Fathers have said such wonders concerning obedience, and have preferred it to all the other virtues. Obedience, says St. Augustine, has the preëminence over all the virtues; it is, so to speak, their principal and their mother. Elsewhere, he again says: Obedience, in a reasonable creature, is as the mother and the guardian of all the virtues. St. Gregory also says: Obedience is the only virtue that implants in a soul the other virtues, and preserves them, because, as is explained by St. Thomas, it causes them to act; which action, in certain circumstances, is all commanded. Thus, a holy Bishop, wishing to ordain St. Abraham, anchorite, as priest—whose life has been written by St. Ephrem—so as to give him charge of a large town of pagans, and the Saint, refusing a second time to accept the charge, the great difficulties he opposed, even to shedding copious tears, caused the Bishop to say: It is true that you have left the world, and that you have practiced the virtues, but you should consider that you have forgotten the principal one, which is, *obedience*. At this word the Saint relented.

Rufinus relates that a Father of the desert saw, one day, whilst in an ecstasy, four orders of the just in heaven. The first was composed of such as had been afflicted by maladies, which they had supported patiently, and in thanksgiving to God; the second, of those who had practiced hospitality—had received and lodged pilgrims and the poor—in a word, who had given themselves to the exercise of charity; the third, of anchorets, who, leaving the world, withdrew into solitude, where, separated from the company of men, and occupied themselves but with God; the fourth, of the obedient, who, renouncing their own will for the love of God, had followed in all things the will of others, and placed themselves under the government of a spiritual Father. Then, as the Saint perceived these latter to be more brilliant with glory than the rest—wearing around their necks a rich chain, and crowned with a most precious diadem—he asked of his guide the cause of this diversity, when he was told that it was because the first three orders had, in the exercise of their good works, managed for themselves and retained their own will; whereas, the last had renounced themselves for God.

In fact, self-abnegation, being much more difficult and more noble, it should receive in heaven a much greater recompense. It may happen, says St. Gregory, that a man finds no difficulty in leaving his wealth, and will experience much in renouncing himself; for it is much easier to rid one's self of what he has than of what he is, and to give what he has in his purse than that which is in his heart.

It is thus we should understand these words of Samuel to Saul, when he reproved him for having made sacrifices that God did not wish, saying: "*Obedience is better than sacrifice.*" And in fact, as explains the same St. Gregory, by sacrifice you offer the flesh of an animal, but by obedience you give death to your own will, Let us conclude with this reason of St. Thomas: "That all the actions of the virtues draw their glory and merit before God from what they do for the accomplishment of His will." Finally, if any one endures martyrdom, or gives all his goods to the poor, without referring these great actions to the fulfillment of God's will—that which belongs directly to obedience—these actions will be deprived of all their glorious merit, in the same manner as if they were performed without *charity*, which, says this holy Doctor, cannot be without obedience. Wherefore, since charity is the queen of all virtues, obedience bears to it a strong alliance: joins closely to it, because one and the other unite the soul to God; they bind their wills to make the soul wish what God wishes, and not to wish that which God does not will. At the same time, there is this difference: that obedience submits the soul to God, as a subject to his lord and to his prince; whereas, the submission that springs from charity is that of a friend to his friend, of a child to his father. This is why obedience, as well as charity, is called by theologians the mould of all virtues; because the virtues do not produce their actions—do not act but to accomplish the will of God and to execute His commands.

The second motive for efficaciously persuading a Religious to perfect obedience is its great utility, and the inestimable treasures it procures. In truth, obedience renders a man, in some measure, impeccable ; for so long as he will obey God, it is evident he can never offend Him, nor commit any sin. Then the obedient man, using towards God the greatest liberality and the richest munificence of which he is capable, since he gives him what is dearest to him in the world, viz.: his *soul* and his *liberty* : he draws down on himself, in consequence, the immense profusion of God's graces : the Creator, being infinitely rich and powerful, does not allow himself to be surpassed in generosity by a poor creature.

Moreover, the obedient man acquires every day, at each hour and each moment, treasures of merit and spiritual riches ; for obedience has the singular virtue of changing all that it does and all that it touches into gold and precious stones : obedience enhances the value of all things, great and small ; while disobedience withdraws it from even the greatest.

Blessed Herman Joseph, Religious of the Premonstratensian Order, being sad and afflicted because he could not, owing to the charge of the refectory that had been appointed him, have as much time as he could have wished for prayer, the holy Virgin, for whom he had the greatest tenderness and affection, and who loved him in return most dearly, asked him why he was so dejected, when the holy Religious told her, with all simplicity.

Our Blessed Lady, wishing to undeceive him, said: My son, do not be afflicted ; you take a false light for a true one. Know that all your devotions should cause you suspicion, and would be effectively illusions, if you allow yourself to fall into sadness and inquietude, as I now behold you. You should recall these words of Holy Scripture: "Obedience is better than sacrifice." Prayer is good, but only when God wishes it. If He commands something else, it has no longer any value. One always does enough when he does what God requires. At present, you have no stricter obligation than to serve your brothers with charity, in the refectory ; do it, then, leaving all other cares, and live in peace.

What rendered the sacrifice of Saul disagreeable to God, and caused it to become detrimental to this prince, was that he offered it contrary to received orders. Wherefore, the ancient Fathers of the desert, as related by Cassian, to properly train their disciples, and to render all their actions meritorious, watched closely that they should do nothing of their own accord, so that they dared not leave their cells, or do the least thing, without permission.

St. Jerome says also on this subject, that the principal point they held in common, and to which they toiled, was to obey their Superiors, and to do all that they commanded.

Obedience has that excellence that it shields man from all danger of condemnation, and gives him an infallible assurance of his salvation ; for besides

these advantages that come to him most certainly of his doing the will of God, if there be any sin that is not manifest, in what is commanded him by his Superior, the sin is not imputed to him, but to his Superior, who will be condemned for eternity for giving such a command, and the inferior will go to Paradise for having rendered such obedience.

Who can recount the blessings contained in these words of the Wise Man : "*An obedient man shall speak of victory.*" He will be victorious, because God will cover him with His armor—will fortify him with His strength—will protect him in a most special manner, and powerfully assist him. Thus the demon, and all his other enemies, on whatever side they attack him, cannot injure him ; while he who acts of himself and without obedience, being unarmed and left to his own resources, is extremely impotent—will readily be conquered, though otherwise he be valiant, and had carried off numberless and noble victories.

The history of the Blessed Astion, a Religious, is most remarkable. Having gone of his own accord to draw water from the river, he was assailed suddenly by an improper thought, against which he fought with all his strength for three days successively, to no avail. It then caused him great sadness, which even appeared in his countenance. His Superior, St. Epictetus, perceived this change, and having asked him the cause of his sorrow, Astion told him frankly that, seeing him engaged in conversation with persons who had sought him, for spiritual direction, he had gone without permis-

sion to get water, which was needed, and that whilst on the way a thought contrary to chastity glided into his mind; that this thought had so occupied him for three days, that despite his tears, his prayers, and the words of Holy Scripture that he recited to expel it, he had not succeeded, nor restored his interior calm. Then St. Epictetus said: You should not have left your cell to go to the river, without permission. Do you not know, Astion, that obedience is an invincible wall, an impenetrable cuirass to all the wiles of the demon, and a sovereign means to vanquish him? Having thus spoken, he commanded him to kneel and to join him in prayer. The prayer finished, Astion beheld issuing from his bosom a little imp, bearing a lighted torch, that said on leaving him: Astion, the avowal you have made of your temptation, together with your prayers, drive me to-day from your heart, but I mean to enter into that of the governor Latronian, so as to cause him to torment your master, Epictetus, and you, and put you both to a cruel death. This really came to pass: they both became illustrious martyrs for Jesus Christ. In the midst of their tortures they exclaimed, so as to practice obedience in a most excellent manner: "We are Christians—may the will of God be done in us!"

We have just seen a mental evil resulting from disobedience; here is one of the body, produced by a like cause. We read in the life of St. Dominic that one of his Religious—infirmarian in the convent of Bologna, where the Saint was—having

one night eaten, without permission, the remnants of meat served to his sick—which he had done many times—he was of a sudden possessed of the demon, and commenced uttering the most insupportable cries. St. Dominic ran to him, and reproved the demon for his audacity in entering the body of one of his Religious. The demon replied: I do so because he well merited it by eating, without your permission, and contrary to your prohibition, the meat of the sick.

But without stopping to cite innumerable examples to show the evils produced by disobedience, and the inestimable good resulting from obedience, let us be content to know that the disobedience of Adam, our first father, has been the cause of all the evils of the human race, and that the obedience of our Lord has merited for us all our good. In like manner, says St. Paul, “as the disobedience of one man has made all men sinners” (and consequently unfortunate), “so the obedience of one man has rendered a great number of men just and happy.”

Obedience, again, greatly fortifies a man at the hour of death. In this final and dangerous combat, when the demon exerts his greatest efforts and gives his most furious blows, it imparts strength to bear away the victory from this terrible enemy: it crowns him with glory, because he dies in the spirit of our Lord. The annals of Citeaux furnish us with an excellent example on this subject: they relate that a lay brother of the monastery of Clairvaux, a good man, simple and obedient, being near

death, St. Bernard went to see him, and in order to console and fortify him, said to him : Take courage, brother, take courage ! Behold yourself at the term of your labors : have confidence that God, to whom you go, will show you mercy, and will soon make you participate in His glory. The sick man replied : Why, Father, should I not go with courage and great confidence in God, my Saviour ? Certainly, I dare promise myself His goodness, and I feel assured that soon I will behold Him in heaven. St. Bernard, fearing that so bold and confident a reply came rather from presumption in this illiterate man, than from a good conscience, said to him : Make the sign of the cross on your heart, brother, for what you have just uttered ; and from whence comes this assurance of your beatitude ? Are you not a poor, miserable mortal, who, having nothing, or nearly nothing, in the world—constrained more from necessity than moved by the fear of God, have had recourse to us ? Is it you, whom we have received with your poverty and ignorance—whom we have fed and clothed as those among us, who are noble, learned and wise ? What have you rendered to God for all these benefits ? And yet you promise yourself His kingdom, as if it were your due. The sick brother replied, with a composed countenance : All that you say, Rev. Father, is perfectly true ; but, if you please, permit me to speak one word. I wish to show you the cause of this assurance of my salvation and beatitude. Speak, my son. Have you not often told us, Father, and repeated unceasingly in your ex-

hortations, that the kingdom of heaven is acquired neither by nobility of birth nor riches, but by the virtue of obedience? By your telling us this, and repeating it over and over again, I have had it deeply imprinted in my memory—have made it the principal point of my meditations, and I have applied myself, with all my powers, to reduce it to practice. Ask, if you please, of all who are in the house, if they have ever known me disobedient, and if I have not always done the will of those to whom you have given the power of commanding me. This is why it seems to me that, without presumption, but supported by your words, I may hope that God will be merciful to me, and even assure me that He will give me Paradise. St. Bernard, on hearing this well-timed reply, was filled with joy, and said to the sick brother: Truly, my son, you are blessed, for it is neither flesh nor blood that has taught you such wisdom, but our heavenly Father, who has conducted your steps in the right road of your salvation, and will cause you to arrive at felicity. Die, then, with confidence—the door of life is open to you. After his death the Saint delivered an excellent sermon to his Religious on the obedience of this good brother, and on the benefits he had derived from it. He then most powerfully exhorted them to the esteem, the love, and the practice of this virtue.

These are some of the notable advantages of the virtue of obedience; but there are still others more remarkable. One is, that God takes such care of an obedient Religious that He guides him in all

things, and his Superiors have very little power to dispose otherwise of him than He wills and ordains for his good. As it often happens that God, to punish bad inferiors, gives them incompetent and impetuous Superiors, who, either from ignorance or passion, commit many faults in their government; faults that cause much detriment to their subjects; for, says holy -Job, “*To chastise the faults of a people, God caused a hypocritical man to reign over them,*” in like manner, to recompense the virtue and obedience of good inferiors, God gives them wise Superiors, on whom He bestows His lights for their direction, and if sometimes they are inefficient, from human frailties, in their government, it follows, by the unexpected difficulties He causes to arise, or by other secret interventions, to turn aside and change their orders—to rectify their failings for the good of these children of obedience—these souls of benediction. Thus, we know that St. Francis Xavier, who had been chosen by God for the mission of the Indies, sent him thither in place of Father Bobadilla, whom St. Ignatius had destined for it, but who had been prevented by sickness.

Another advantage, but which more regards Superiors, is that obedience renders an inferior useful to the Superior and to religion, because he is easy to govern; whereas, disobedience causes injury to all parties, and a disobedient subject is also difficult to manage, being as a stiff and paralytic limb. Thus, a Superior is in need of some one to perform a duty, if he addresses himself to a

wilful spirit, he has not the leisure, or will be otherwise occupied—has a head ache—in a word, he ever finds some excuse when he does not wish to obey; but let the Superior address himself to an obedient subject, he is ever ready. Wherefore, those who are truly submissive greatly comfort their Superior, and are to him most dear, whilst on the contrary, spirits that are cross and intractable, are a great charge, and are his heaviest crosses.

Rufinus relates of the Abbot Sylvin, that he had twelve disciples, one of whom he particularly loved, and set to copying his books. The others were jealous and made loud complaints, which came to the ears of the other Fathers of the desert, when these, to appease this trouble and to restore calm, judged it to be expedient to apprise Abbot Sylvin of the state of things. They therefore came to find him and gently remonstrated with him as to this special affection he manifested for Mark, to the prejudice of the other disciples, which gave them annoyance and caused their murmurs, for which it seemed they were not altogether to be blamed. Abbot Sylvin, without making any reply, led these Fathers to the cells of all his disciples, and going from one to the other calling them, saying: Brother, come, I have need of you. Not one of the eleven took the trouble to obey. Then going to the cell of Mark, calling him in like manner, this good brother left all instantly and even an O that he had commenced to write, did not wait to finish it. On presenting himself he said: Here I am, Father, what is your wish? Then Abbot Sylvin said to

these Fathers: Well, Fathers, you now see for yourselves · behold the cause of my preference for Mark, judge, if I have not reason for it. All these Fathers replied · You have great cause for loving him, and we love him now with you, for in fact he must be very dear to God for his obedience.

An obedient and virtuous Religious is always useful to religion, though he should be maimed and crippled; because, if he cannot do one thing he can do another, besides, by his obedience, humility, and patience, his prayers, and his other virtues, he is most profitable to the house. Virtue alone, properly speaking, renders a person suitable for God's service, and for usefulness in religion. Those who have great talents, who preach or instruct well, who have much influence, who are very learned, but who are without virtue, and are wanting in submission, execute neither the works of God nor of religion, but rather their own; for in place of seeking God and the advancement of His glory, they seek themselves and the accomplishment of their own designs. The holy Spouse in the Canticles compares the neck of His spouse to jewels, and to the strong tower of David when he says to her: "*Thy neck is as jewels of pearls*"—" *Thy neck is as the tower of David.*" By saying that the neck is adorned with a rich collar of pearls, that it supports the head, and is the symbol of obedience, on account of its flexibility; so also the obedient Religious is the ornament of the house in which he lives, and the strength of his Superior,

whom he supports in some way, by his submission, whom he greatly aids in his government, and whom he relieves of the weightiness of his charge.

The third motive for perfect obedience is, that it is accompanied by great contentment and solid joy. St. John Climachus says : Obedience is a movement without reflection and without inquietude, a peril without care and without danger, an assured navigation, and a voyage which one makes in repose.

St. Francis Borgia, third General of the "Society of Jesus," said in a like strain, that obedience was a safe and strong vessel in which the Religious, mocking the winds, the rocks, the tempest, and all storms, navigates in security the perilous sea of this world, and happily arrives at the port of his salvation. It is certain that he who obeys with a true submission makes the voyage of his salvation much at his ease ; he advances as in a carriage, a litter, a boat ; he has but to obey to gain the port of the land of the living and the blessed ; he is delivered from the ignorance and illusions of his own mind, and escapes all the precipices into which the use of his liberty might cast him. St. Dorotheus relates that, speaking one day of his interior to an aged Father—Abbot John—he told him that he was troubled about the teaching of St. Paul, which said we could not enter heaven but through the way of much trial and tribulation ; as for himself, he experienced nothing of this, but enjoyed an unalterable peace and tranquillity of mind ; that thus he feared he was not in the way of his salvation. The

holy old abbot replied : Be not afflicted ; for whoever practices the virtue of obedience, and left himself to be governed by his Superior, enjoyed this peace and calm. Adam and Eve taught us this mystery from the beginning of the world. In fact, their obedience to the commands of God kept them in the terrestrial paradise, which was a place of delights ; their disobedience, on the contrary, expelled them thence, and cast them into a state, replete with trouble, inquietude, and misery ; so that God said to them : “*Because of your disobedience the earth will be cursed, and will produce thorns and briars in abundance—it will be but by the sweat of your brow that you eat of its fruits.*” This punishment is exemplified every day, in all those who are disobedient : God curses their designs and chastises their rebellion ; their conscience is pricked by the thorns of remorse ; they are filled with sadness, chagrin, and ennui ; for such evils do not arise within us without rebellion of our minds, and consequently peace and repose are the result of our submission.

Moreover, obedience gives the firmest assurance to a person when he has to leave this world. It affords him comfort in the face of death, which is so repugnant to nature—causing him to be inundated with joy, in this last and frightful passage. Wherefore, St. John Climachus styles it the assurance and freedom from the fear of death.

St. Bernard, explaining these words of St. Luke : “Our Lord is truly risen, and showed himself to Simon”—a name signifying obedience—says :

“Consider, my brethren, that these words are particularly intended for us, who are children of obedience.”

Behold an agreeable word! it merits to be received with sentiments of the greatest respect and affection: it causes untold joy to all truly obedient men. Our Lord appeared to Simon, and by a special privilege to him alone. Oh! could we but conceive how much consolation this view and this apparition of our Lord gives to all children of obedience at the hour of death—at that uncertain moment which decides their eternity! Perhaps He appears visibly even, to some, bearing the standard of obedience; perhaps rejoicing them in this last and trying affliction, consoling them with these sweet words: “Fear not, children of obedience; be comforted on seeing my hands attached to the cross by obedience—behold my feet pierced with nails, and my side opened by the iron of the lance. For if your weakness has rendered your obedience imperfect in some things, the perfection of mine will supply the defect.” What could there be sweeter, in this hour of extremity, than such consolation? Could the heart of man receive greater than is imparted by these words? Wherefore, “children of obedience,” engrave this truth in your hearts, rejoice and exult with exceeding joy! for our Lord is truly risen, and has appeared to Simon the obedient.

SECTION II.

Of the Different Degrees of Obedience, Including the First Two.

St. Ignatius Loyola, in the excellent letter he left, on the subject of obedience, distinguishes three sorts or degrees of this virtue.

The first degree is, to do exteriorly the thing commanded ; the second, in the execution, to conform one's will to that of the Superior ; and the third, which passes to the judgment—judging with the Superior that it must be done as and in the manner he has commanded.

For the first degree, it may be said it consists of very little, even nothing, if you ascend not to the second. Hereupon, St. Ignatius expresses himself as follows: I greatly desire that you be well persuaded of the truth, and have it profoundly engraved in your minds, that this first degree of obedience, which only regards the *exterior* execution of things, is very low and imperfect, and does not merit the name of virtue, if it does not rise to the second, which unites the will of the inferior with that of the Superior, and causes his command to be executed, not only in effect, but to join thereto, also, the heart and affections of the inferior, so as not to wish but one and the same thing.

From whence it may be inferred that he who stops at the first degree does not make, as we have already noticed, an act of virtue agreeable to God, nor meritorious for himself, and consequently that

he does not accomplish his vow, nor the promise he has made to God; for the action produced is not, in reality, either good or virtuous.

It is necessary, then, to ascend to the second degree of obedience, which, we have just learned from St. Ignatius, subjects the will of the inferior to that of the Superior, and causes him to wish, or not wish, what the Superior wishes, or wishes not; so that, not having longer any self-will, it is the will of the Superior that absolutely governs him. From whence it comes that St. John Climachus elegantly styles obedience the sepulchre of the will: it is in obedience that the will is effectually dead and buried.

This union of the will of the inferior with that of the Superior is so essential to obedience that without it this submission is, as we have said, neither agreeable to God, nor profitable to man, since it is forced, and that the heart is wanting, which gives value to all it accomplishes. David says of the "just man," that his heart is altogether in the law of the Lord, and that his will draws him continually to the execution of His holy commands.

St Ambrose says · We see herein the distinction there is between a just man and a beast: the just and the wise man does what is commanded him, not from necessity as an irrational animal, but of his own free will; so the merit of the recompense is founded on the will, which, being free to do or not do a thing, acts voluntarily; whereas, necessity renders but a simple service, and a constrained

obedience, according to these words of the Apostle: "If I preach cheerfully and willingly, I shall be recompensed; and if I do so with regret, and from mere necessity of my obligation, I will merit nothing."

St. Ambrose remarks that for this reason the law of God commences with the will, and with *love*. "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.*" Thus, the law is not well observed, if it is not loved. It is this also that caused David to say: "I have kept Thy commands, because I have loved them much." Our Lord also says: "*If any one love me, he will keep my word,*" etc.

It is this will, this love, that lightens the weight of the yoke of obedience, and renders easy the things prescribed, which otherwise would be most onerous. In fact, as Seneca says, he who receives willingly a given order, and executes cheerfully the thing commanded, ameliorates what is most vexatious and bitter in servitude, namely: to do what you do not wish. That person is not miserable who does a thing by command, but only the one who executes it against his will, and with repugnance. •

Therefore, to fulfil his vow of obedience, the Religious must renounce his own will, making of it a generous sacrifice to God, to embrace that of his Superior. St. Ignatius remarks that in this, one sins in two ways: the first, by submitting readily to our Superior when he commands something contrary to our nature, and which evidently tends to our advancement in virtue, and we have difficulty

in giving up our will, when it regards our exercises of devotion—the cutting off or moderating our fasts, prayers, and penances. To disabuse ourselves, let us learn what Abbot Daniel says in Cassian: “It is certainly the same kind of disobedience, when one transgresses the commands of a Superior, in applying himself to labor or to repose; and it is equally as detrimental to break the rules of religion, in watching as in sleeping. Also, there is as much evil in violating the command of a Superior, by attending lecture, as to condemn it by falling asleep.” St. Ignatius adds that the action of Martha was holy—that the contemplation of Mary was holy—that the penitential tears with which our Lord’s feet were bedewed were holy—but all these things should be done in Bethany, which means, “*house of Obedience*.” Thus it seems that our Lord had wished to make us understand from these *events*, as is remarked by St. Bernard, that neither the care of good exterior actions, nor the repose of holy contemplation, nor the tears of penance, could not, out of Bethany,—and the *house of Obedience*—have been agreeable to Him, who possessed and exercised obedience; even to the loss of life, rather than fail in this virtue, and who was obedient to His Father even unto death. Finally, to finish the condemnation of this deceit, let such persons remember the fast of the Jews, as mentioned in Isaiah, which was not pleasing to God, because their own wills were found in it and also because the demon, easily assuming the appearance of an angel of light, and under the pre-

text of great virtue, made use of their devotion to seduce them.

The second mistake is of those who, desiring something, and fearing not to obtain it from their Superior, will not with simplicity ask it of him, but will employ artifice and a thousand different inventions to draw the Superior's will to theirs, and make him condescend to their design. Herein is certainly a great mistake, an evident blindness, that bespeaks a mind obscured by self-love. St. Bernard hesitates not to condemn it when he says: "Whoever, either openly or covertly, and by *address*, causes his spiritual Father to command what he himself desires, deceives himself, if he supposes such an act to merit the name of obedience, for in this he does not obey the prelate, but the prelate rather obeys him."

To these two deceptions—taken notice of by St. Ignatius—let us add also that into which those fall who, foreseeing that the Superior will command them something that they do not relish, seek every possible means, and employ many artifices, to elude, to prevent, or to turn aside the command, by hiding themselves, excusing themselves, feigning to have other occupations that prevent them from doing what is expected of them; and if, notwithstanding, they have to do it, it is but with trouble, and as by force.

Let the Religious be ever on his guard against these three failings, and against all others that are opposed to the second degree of obedience, and which tarnish its lustre; but let him try, on the

contrary, by the subjection and annihilation of his will, to fulfil the promise he made to God, to whom he says, with St. Paul: "Lord, what wilt Thou that I should do?" O short word, cries out St. Bernard, but full of substance, full of cheer, and worthy to be received with affectionate ardor! O could there be found a few persons obedient enough not to seek nor to ask for what *they* wish, but only what God wishes, and who would say to Him in all things: Lord, what wilt Thou that I should do? Alas! we have many more imitators of the blind man of the Gospel, to whom our Lord said: "What will you that I do for you?" This poor man was truly blind, because he did not consider or understand what our Lord spake to him. He had no holy fear, or he would have cried out: Ah! Lord, may it please God that you ask me not what you should do for me! tell me rather what you wish I should do; for it is altogether unbecoming and unreasonable that you seek and do my will, but it ought to be that I seek and do yours.

It is so even now that the weakness and the disorder of many Religious oblige them to be asked, what will you that I do for you? Whereas, they should propose this question themselves, by saying: Lord, what dost Thou wish that I do? It is necessary that Superiors, the vicars of Jesus Christ, consider what their inferiors wish for them to command, whilst the inferiors take no care themselves as to what is their Superiors' will. Their obedience is neither full nor perfect, for they are not disposed to obey in all things, nor to imitate exactly Him

who came from heaven to earth, not to do His own will, but that of His Father. Wherefore, I pray and conjure those who obey with these defects that, while they may be endured, and condescension is shown for their weakness, they should feel shame and confusion for this state of spiritual infancy. that is thus fostered and increased, for fear that abusing the patience and the benignity of their Superior, this excess of goodness and mercy be a just cause for their own condemnation.

Certainly, the Religious who has left the world, and who has retired into Religion to escape sin, to practice virtue, and to work out his salvation in peace; the Religious who, by the obligation of his state, should tend to perfection, takes a road quite foreign to his design by attaching himself to his own will; and he could not take one shorter or more certain to arrive at his end than by renouncing his will, to submit to that of his Superior. If we desire, says St. Dorotheus, to see our hearts changed, and to enjoy an entire liberty, let us learn to divest ourselves of our will; by this means, aided by the grace of God, we will advance, and arrive, little by little, at the virtue of holy indifference—of having no more affection for anything of earth, and of possessing our minds in peace; for there is nothing that aids so much, and is more useful to one, than the abnegation of one's own will; nothing will cause one to make so much progress in good, or to reach the height of all virtue sooner, than this exercise. As a traveller who happily meets a by-path that shortens much his

road is in advance of others who went by another way, and he arrives much sooner at the term of his journey, so he who walks by the road of the *renunciation of his will* arrives much sooner at his salvation, and at an unshaken tranquillity of soul, than others who tend thereto by different ways.

This is most evident in the matter of sin. As the will of man is ever a blind power, and his understanding is often darkened, his judgment corrupted by the passionate love he bears himself, it is clear that, if he wishes to walk with assurance, and not to fall over some precipice and commit some sin, it is necessary that he follow the will and the guidance of another. Moreover, our will is the sole cause of all the sins we commit, and the source from whence flow all our disorders, since by a generally received maxim all sin is the effect of our liberty, and if there are no acts of ours voluntary, we commit *no sin*, and we render ourselves, as it were, *impeccable*.

Both for virtue and for perfection, what we have already said suffices. The will of God is the best of all possible wills, being infinitely holy, infinitely perfect, and the norma of all perfection ; it purifies, perfects, and deifies the will of the obedient Religious that is united to it.

After all these reasons, the Religious cannot follow a wiser counsel than to render himself obedient to God ; his contentment should be ever to do the will of others, and his displeasure and pain to execute his own. A holy anchorite, mentioned by Rufinus, being visited by some Religious, and

obliged, for their entertainment, to eat at an hour he was not accustomed to eat, upon being questioned if it did not trouble him to have to eat out of his usual time, he replied : Not at all ; for nothing troubles or afflicts me but when I act by my own will.

SECTION III.

Of the Third Degree of Obedience.

The height and perfection of obedience is the *third* degree of this virtue. It is not when the Religious is content to do the thing, for this is the first degree, or to do it willingly, which would be the second ; but to rise to the third degree we must approve the thing, and judge that it should be done—that it is a just command : thus subjecting our judgment to that of our Superior, and extinguishing all our lights to follow those of another. Take to heart and try above all, says Cassian, to become foolish in this world, in the sense of the Apostle, so as to be truly wise ; not passing any judgment on whatever is commanded you, but doing it in great simplicity and with strong faith, and holding whatever the law of God or your *Superior* will have commanded, to be good, holy, useful, and wise.

St. Gregory says after him in the same sense . True obedience examines neither the intentions of Superiors, nor their commands, because the one who has abandoned to them the government of his life does with joy whatever is commanded, and he

who has the true and perfect spirit of obedience has not that of discernment, because he esteems nothing good *but obedience*. The command ought to be considered in this view only, that it is the command and the order of the Superior, and that he who executes it should not pay attention to the thing commanded, but rather to the profit to accrue to him. St. Basil has also previously said: As the sheep simply follow the shepherd, without paying attention to the road over which he leads them, in like manner Religious should conduct themselves in regard to their Superiors, giving them perfect submission of mind without examining the things commanded them, provided they be free from sin, and to think only of executing them with much joy and affection. As a workman uses his instruments as he deems best, applying them as he wishes, when he wishes, and where he wishes, with full liberty and an absolute power, with none to resist him, so also should Religious permit their Superiors to act towards them, both as to their direction and their employments. This is the remark of St. Basil, and he put it in practice one day when he was making the visitation of the monasteries of his diocese. In one of these monasteries he asked the Abbot if he had any one in his house who he thought would be saved. The Abbot replied: Yes, my lord; I hope that by your prayers all the Religious who are in this community will be saved. St. Basil said to him: But I ask if you have any one you judge more particularly and more certainly will be saved. Then the Abbot,

who was also a very spiritual man, and who perfectly understood what St. Basil meant, replied there was one. Have him called, said the Saint. This person was sent for immediately, and as soon as he came St. Basil said to him: Brother, get some water to wash my feet. The Religious promptly obeyed, and washed the feet of the Saint. This latter then taking the basin, said to the Religious. Place yourself here; I also wish to wash your feet. The good Religious yielded quite simply, without reply, without excuse, and without ceremony, leaving the holy Archbishop to act as he pleased. St. Basil, having finished this work, and obtained proof of the obedience of this holy Religious, wished to have still another, and for this he said to him: When I shall have entered the sacristy, come to remind me about ordaining you priest. The Religious, obedient to blindness, did as he was told; for no sooner had the Saint entered the sacristy than he presented himself to him, and reminded him of what he had recommended. St. Basil, seeing so great submission, judged him worthy of the priesthood, conferred on him orders, and retained him near to himself, wherever he dwelt.

St. Francis, recommending this virtue to his Religious, explained it to them by the following comparison. I have often seen, he said, a blind man led by a little dog, that he followed everywhere it led him, whether it went by bad and rugged roads, or by such as were smooth and even: if it entered a church, a house, or other place, he followed it with blindness of spirit as well as of body, trust-

ing absolutely to this little animal, and not taking two steps without its guidance. Such should be true and perfect obedience. It is necessary it should be blind. The Religious should close his eyes to the command of his Superior, and use no discernment as to what he is directed. It is for this reason that St. Dorotheus, St. Antiochus, and other Fathers, call this obedience blind, perfect, and without discernment.

Another time, St. Francis, to elucidate the same subject, made use of the similitude of a dead body, saying: Take a corpse and place it where you please, you will perceive it offers no resistance; it does not murmur that you thus remove it at pleasure; if you place it in a chair, it does not look up, but down; if you clothe it in a robe of purple, the brilliancy of this rich color but serves to render it more pale. Behold the image of the truly obedient: he does not inform himself as to why he is so disposed of; why he is told to go or come; he does not trouble himself as to the place he occupies; he makes no request to be changed; he preserves his humility in promotion and in charges, and the more honor he receives the more unworthy he esteems himself.

Others explain this obedience by that of children, who obey with much simplicity, and who execute without reply all that is enjoined on them. St. John Climachus, speaking of the Religious of a celebrated monastery near Alexandria, where he had been, says: You would there see old men, whose white beard and venerable aspect inspired at

once both respect and fear, place all their glory in obedience; they would run as children to execute all the orders given them, resembling in all things little innocents, who think but to give pleasure to their father.

St. Ignatius gives also, as an example, the staff of an old man, that he uses as he pleases.

Rufinus and Palladius relate of a disciple of St. Anthony, named Paul, and surnamed the Simple, some remarkable things touching this subject. They say that Paul, addressing himself to St. Anthony and praying him to put him in the way of his salvation, the Saint replied to him that he could hope to enter therein and be saved, if he was *very obedient*—if he did exactly all that he was told. Paul promising this, St. Anthony, to try him, commanded that he should pray before his cell door, and there remain till released. Paul stationed himself as directed, and commenced praying. St. Anthony, unperceived, looked from time to time to assure himself what the good man was doing, but he saw him ever praying and in the same position—continuing erect—suffering alike the heat of the day and the humidity of the night, without thought of his own discomfort, but alone of what the Saint had commanded him.

One day, some solitaries of renowned sanctity, having come to visit St. Anthony, Paul accidentally overhearing some of their spiritual converse, wherein they mentioned the prophets and our Lord, with all simplicity came forward and humbly asked if the prophets lived before our Lord, or our Lord

before the prophets? St. Anthony blushed on hearing such an ignorant and ill-timed inquiry, and commanded him, by a sign, full of sweetness, as he was accustomed to use with the most simple, to cause them to withdraw in silence. Paul, who was quite resolved to execute all that the Saint said to him, just as if God Himself had spoken, retired to his cell, determined to keep silence, and not to speak a single word. Very soon St. Anthony learned that Paul had become quite dumb, not speaking at all, and was astonished to see him observing with such exactness a thing he had not commanded. He then sent for him, and having desired him to speak and tell why he kept so profound a silence, Paul replied: Father, it was because you said I should go and should be silent. The Saint, much surprised to see Paul observe so punctually what he said to him unintentionally, remarked to those whom he found present: This brother condemns us all, for he listens and fulfils the least word I utter; whereas, we do not listen to God, who speaks to us from heaven.

St. Anthony made Paul serve as an example to show that he who wishes to become perfect should not take himself for a master, nor be governed by his own ideas, though they should seem to him good and just; but should before all, and according to the command of our Lord, renounce his own will. In fine, has not our Lord said, when speaking of Himself: I came not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me? However, it cannot be said that His will was bad; it was the same as

that of His Father ; but as He came into the world to teach obedience, it was necessary to be obedient, and to gain for it esteem, He did not His own will, though good and holy, but the will of His Father.

To rise to this degree of blind and perfect obedience, one must fight much against himself, and die to nature, which is so corrupt and which loves above all else its liberty, and holds so firmly to its own judgment. Then for this degree I see but one efficacious and infallible means, and without it I believe this obedience to be most difficult, and even impossible ; but with it, it becomes possible and very easy. This means is to see our Lord Jesus Christ in the person of the Superior, to be persuaded that it is our *Lord Himself*, who, by the mouth of a man, commands, permits, refuses, reproves, instructs, and governs us in all things. And in fact, it is *Himself*, since He tells us : “ Whoever hears you, hears *Me* ; whoever obeys you, obeys *Me* ; and whoever despises you, despises *Me*.” For it is God who resides in the Superior, and who communicates to him all his authority. Thus, obedience, honor, contempt, when rendered to an officer and an ambassador, is felt to be given to the prince who sends them. St. Ignatius, speaking of this, tells us : I wish that each one of you would apply himself most strenuously to consider and to recognize our Lord Jesus Christ Himself in the Superior, whoever he may be, that you have, and to render to his person the respect and obedience that you owe to His Divine Majesty You will not find this at all strange, if you give attention that St.

Paul wishes us to obey our Superiors—even *seculars* and *gentiles*—as if they were Jesus Christ Himself, from whom is derived all lawful power, all legitimate authority. Here, in fact, is what he wrote to the Ephesians: “Servants, obey your temporal masters with fear and respect, as if it was Jesus Christ, doing cheerfully the will of God, who for His glory and your salvation has subjected you to service; serving men as Jesus Christ Himself, whose representatives they are.”

St. Benedict, describing in his rule the truly obedient, says: As soon as their Superior commands them, they obey without delay, as if God Himself had commanded it. Our Lord says of them, by David: “He obeyed me at the same moment that he heard me speak.” Cassian, speaking of the monks of Egypt, says also: They hastened to accomplish, without any discussion, all the orders of their Superior, as if they came from God.

It is related of St. Aloysius Gonzaga that he always considered God in all his Superiors, and that he was absolutely persuaded that the Divine Majesty governed him through their medium.

As it is God, said he, whom we should obey, and as we cannot see Him, on account of His nature, which makes him invisible to us, nor receive immediately from Him the necessary orders for our government, He establishes in His place our Superiors who are His vicars and the interpreters of His will, and for this reason He commands us to obey them as Himself. Such also are the sentiments of St. Paul, when writing to the Ephesians: “Obey your

secular masters as Jesus Christ Himself." And to the Collossians: "Give cheerfully your services to men, as if you rendered them not to men, but to God." We should persuade ourselves that the commands given us by our Superior come not originally from him, but from God, who makes use of him to manifest to us His will, in the same way that the orders of a king conveyed to one of his subjects by an officer are not received as the orders of the officer, but as the orders of the prince. It is the same then of all the commands of legitimate Superiors. Religious should receive them not as commands emanating from men, but from God, and in this light they must execute them with promptness and respect. Enlightened by these lights, St. Aloysius practiced all this with the most perfect exactness; he had a singular veneration for all his Superiors; he ever contemplated in them, Jesus Christ our Lord, and in this made all Superiors equal to him and to hold over him a like authority. Thus the holiest, the wisest, and most competent Superior had not more authority to humble him than he who was less holy, less learned, and less competent; all to him held equally the place of God. He made no difference between them in this respect, which alone prompted his obedience.

St. Francis Xavier, before him, regarded his Superior, St. Ignatius, in the same manner, and in a like spirit. He had for him such respect that he wore in his reliquary his name, which he cut from one of the Saint's letters. I know that he did it from the high idea he had conceived of the sanctity

of St. Ignatius, but we could also say that he rendered him this mark of honor and devotion because he was his Superior, in whom he beheld Jesus Christ. All inferiors could do as much, with reason and to the advantage of the Superior. They might even call him their “Jesus Christ on earth,” as a holy man of the Society of Jesus, named Father Bartholomew Islas, of the Province of Castile, called his Superior.

It is in this view, and by this means, that obedience will be easy and perfect ; without it, on the contrary, it will be very difficult and defective. Obedience is assuredly the harshest and the heaviest trial in Religion, because it takes away what is most excellent of the mind. It takes from us our liberty, of which we are naturally so jealous, as being the only thing of which we can dispose. Moreover, because it subjects us to a man, a stranger who is nothing to us—to one with whom we are unacquainted, and who, perhaps, is much below his inferior in age, intellect, judgment science, nobility, and even in virtue. Then we shall have to obey in the course of our lives, successively several Superiors, of very different dispositions, whose government will be very varied, one judging and wishing one thing, and his successor quite the contrary ; all which naturally renders the yoke of obedience very heavy and burdensome.

If you remark in your Superior some defect of mind or body that displeases you, if he demands of you something that wounds your feelings, if he gives you a rude and harsh refusal, and you listen

to nature in it all, obedience will certainly be most trying and difficult to you : it will be quite impossible for it not to be accompanied by the resistance of your will and judgment, and attended with sadness, chagrin, and murmurs. On the contrary, if your Superior is a person endowed with fine talents, possessing attractions and charms, who speaks to you with much sweetness, who grants you all you ask of him, and who commands you in nothing but what is most reasonable, I know you will readily obey such a Superior ; but ascend to the source of your obedience, and I will afterwards inquire if you find it very pure, and unsullied by human respect and self interest, if these amiable qualities do not greatly contribute their influence and are not more the cause of your obedience than the true consideration of Jesus Christ. Alas ! it is most perilous for obedience when not given in the spirit of faith.

Wherefore, to purify these two sources that ordinarily sully obedience, and that render it either very difficult or *very imperfect*, and consequently not very meritorious, it is necessary that without having regard solely to the good or bad qualities of your Superior, without resting your eyes either on his perfections or his defects, you keep them turned to Jesus Christ, who governs you in him and by him ; that, as the archer should not shoot at random, or turn his sight, ever so little, from the mark, so in like manner your obedience will be *false*, and all your trouble useless, if you withdraw your eyes, in any way, from beholding our Lord in your Superior.

SECTION IV.

The First Blindness of Perfect Obedience.

To give a yet greater development to so important a matter, and to place it in a stronger light, I say that this blind and perfect obedience is twofold ; first, in respect to the Superior, and secondly, to what he commands.

As to the first, this blind obedience considers in no wise the qualities of the Superior, and it sees in him but one single thing, viz.: that he *is Superior* ; that God has confided to him His authority, and has put him in His place to govern. St. Ignatius practically required this *blindness* of his subjects—this single view of God in their Superiors. Wherefore he says : We are content that other religious Orders should surpass us in fasts, in watchings, and in other austerities—that each of them be observed holily, according to its institute ; but as to what regards *true* and *perfect* obedience, accompanied by the abnegation of one's own will and judgment, I desire, my very dear brethren, that those who serve our Lord in this Society be marvellously perfect, and that it be the mark whereby to distinguish its true and legitimate children from those who are not.

Obedience is not due to the Superior because he is prudent, good, and virtuous, but simply from the fact that he *is* Superior—that he holds the place of God, and that he exercises authority as coming

from Him, who says: "Who obeys you, obeys Me, and who contemns you, contemns Me."

Though the Superior should not be either very wise or very prudent, for these reasons obedience should not be refused him, for he is nevertheless Superior, and does not less represent the person of Him who is infallible wisdom, and who supplies for the defects of His minister. Even though he should be wanting in common civility and politeness, or in other praiseworthy qualities—he should still be obeyed; for our Lord, after saying: "The scribes and pharisees are seated on the chair of Moses" — that is, ambitious and envious men are your lawful Superiors, to teach you—adds, as a most definite conclusion: Do, then, all they shall *tell* you, but do not imitate their works. Wherefore, I wish that each of you employ all faith to recognize our Lord Jesus Christ in the person of each and every Superior, and through them, to render to the Divine Majesty all honor and obedience.

Previous to St. Ignatius, St Francis had also recommended this perfect obedience to his Religious in the following terms: "My very dear brethren, you should not in your obedience consider *who* is your Superior, nor what is his character, but only that he *is* your Superior, established over you by God for your direction. Feeling it my duty I will tell you, that among other graces bestowed on me by Divine Goodness, I will mention one in particular, which is, that I am as readily disposed to obey with attention, submission and respect, the novice of one hour, should he be given

me for guardian as I would an experienced and enlightened Father. The inferior should see in his Superior only God, for whose love he is inferior, and thus his humility will be so much the more profound, his obedience so much the more excellent, as the one to whom he renders it has fewer points of personal merit." Therefore St. Bonaventure (a most worthy son of this holy patriarch), gives this salutary counsel: In order that you may obey with more perfection, have always in your mind this thought, that when the voice of your Superior strikes your ear, to command you in something, receive not this voice or this command as coming from a man, but from God. It is God who constitutes the Superior, imprints on him the character of His power, and who, in some manner, dwells within him, governs and commands by him; then doubtless the inferior will behold God in his Superior, as the first movement and the soul of his power in government, without passing beyond or examining whether he is young or old, noble or plebeian, learned or ignorant, gentle or coarse, of good or bad manners. Thus in the same way, one who would only venerate the cross when it is large, elegant, and of precious metal, and would find difficulty in so doing or giving to it any veneration or homage when it is small and of wood, would be wanting in faith, because the only incentive to the veneration of the cross is the representation it bears of the Son of God, who was attached thereto for our salvation, and this motive is found as well in a small cross of coarse

wood as in a large, handsomely-carved one, or one made of gold or silver, for neither the material nor the ornaments contribute anything of themselves. In like manner, he who, to obey his Superior, acts but from the sole motive of his qualities, and who does not feel himself attracted thereto but by the force of the natural and acquired perfections of the Superior, evidently acts not with obedience, or at least not with its perfection; he tarnishes the lustre of its beauty, for it is founded only on the authority of God, which resides in the Superior.

Joseph, who governed Egypt for Pharaoh, was allowed to have the Egyptians submit to his authority, though he was still quite youthful, and we obey kings without hesitation, though they be young. Wherefore Cassian says of the one who embraces the religious life, and who has taken the first steps in his career: He must make himself so obedient to all, that he re-enters his infancy, according to the words of our Lord, and not presuming on account of his age, not seeking advantage from his advanced years, but without hesitation, submitting to the youngest. Thus, the truly obedient does not withhold his submission on account of the Superior's age, nor find any obstacle in the lowness of his birth, for neither of these prevented the Egyptians from rendering every homage to Joseph, and from faithfully fulfilling his orders. Nevertheless, they were all aware of his obscure parentage, that he belonged to a race of shepherds, an occupation that was exceedingly contemned by the Egyptians (as related by Moses).

Aristotle relates of Amasis, that from the ranks of the people he had been raised to the throne of Egypt; but, seeing himself despised by his subjects on account of the baseness of his extraction, had wrought out of the basin used by his valets for bathing his feet, a statue of God, which he accordingly placed upon an altar of the temple, and there it was adored by everyone without considering the material of which it was made, but regarding alone the sanctity of the figure. Amasis thence took occasion to remark to his subjects: You should also honor me in the same manner, without minding the baseness of my birth, but only the present eminence of my dignity. Thus, the olive and fig-trees, the vine and even the cedars of Lebanon, that are accounted the glory of trees, raise up the *thorn-tree* above them, to be commanded as it were by it, and in humility to render due deference.

It is loss of time to stop to consider the ignorance or origin of the Superior. For proof of this, Balaam an intelligent man, was instructed by an ass, a stupid and stubborn animal. Moses, who as admirable in virtue, as consummate in science, followed the advice given him by his father-in-law, Jethro, who was incomparably less enlightened than himself: and we know that the human race submitted itself to the faith, not by the instrumentality of subtle philosophers or eloquent orators, but by means of poor and rude fishermen.

The severity of the Superior and his changeful humor should not deprive him of the obedience

that is his due. St. Peter wished that servants be obedient to their masters, not only when they were sweet, modest, and easily contented, but also when they were disagreeable and harsh. Conformably to this doctrine, and so as to more perfectly practice virtue, to acquire greater merit, the ancient Religious, as related by St. Athanasius, sought for Superiors who were of a trying temper, and who commanded them without condescension and with greater authority ; as we have just seen that trees chose for their king the thorn tree, all hedged with briers.

We should not refuse to a Superior the obedience due him, even though his life should not be as well ordered as could be desired. A vicious Superior is always Superior, provided he does not command sin. His irregularity does not deprive him of his power, provided he makes use of it for the good of Him who clothed him with it. What is more pricking and unfruitful than the box thorn ? and, however, it was from the midst of a box-thorn or burning bush, that God spoke to Moses, to employ him in affairs most important for His glory, and to make of Moses a great Saint, the wonder of all ages. So it is by the mouth and the words of a Superior sterile in good works, that he deigns to form, polish, and perfect inferiors, and produce from them a new Moses, victorious over Pharaoh and Egypt.

The raven has always passed for a bird of ill-omen, and, however, God made use of it to feed the prophet Elias and St. Paul—first hermit—in

the desert. Thus, food for the soul is very often administered by bad Superiors to wise and virtuous inferiors. If Sampson drew honey from the gall of a lion, and water from the jaw-bone of an ass, there are sometimes received instructions of grace, and teachings of salvation, from imperfect Superiors, who are—as explained by St. Peter Damian—as indolent as *drones* in the acquisition of virtue and in the execution of their charge, and as impatient and wrathful as lions.

Not only should the inferior not cast his eyes on the bad qualities of his Superior, and remark his imperfections; he should even, to render his obedience pure and desirable, ignore in some degree his virtues, so as not to yield subjection and submission but to the sole authority of God, who is in the Superior

St. John the Baptist, to inspire minds to confidence says only of himself "*that he is the voice of God,*" who cries by him, and who excites men to penance. Why did he so act? He could have shown the authority of his mission, and made it acceptable on many other accounts. Why did he not employ them? It was in order that those who listened to him might not place reliance on him, so as to believe and do what he himself should say, nor on his sacerdotal dignity, nor on his quality as prophet, nor on the angelic sanctity of which he made so illustrious a profession, but give credit to him as the *voice of God*, judging such a reason sufficient to merit their approbation and their obedience.

St. Paul reproaches the Corinthians, "*that they are still sensual*," and the reason he gives is this: "You are divided among yourselves, and as there is jealousy for your masters and your directors, each vaunting his own, elevating him in envy above others; do you not show by this that you are still sensual, and that you act as gross and imperfect men? One says: I am a disciple of Paul; another that he is of Apollo. In saying this, are you not truly men, that you are conducted by a spirit all human, and that you see with the eyes of the flesh? But I ask you, who is Apollo, and who is Paul? They are but the ministers and servants of Jesus Christ, whose faith you have embraced." As if the Apostle wished to say to them: You are obedient to Apollo, to Paul—that is, to man—and *not* to Jesus Christ. Thus, your obedience is not spiritual, divine, but all human and sensual; it beholds in man but what is human; whereas, it should rest its eyes on Jesus Christ, who makes use of man as His instrument, to instruct and conduct you to salvation. It is for such imperfect views as these, says St. Chrysostom, and not for a want of purity of mind or body, that St. Paul calls the Corinthians sensual. Hence, to prepare the minds of the truly obedient, and so dispose them to render what they owe to their Superiors, it suffices to say to them that they are Superiors, and that God sent them to govern them; while to cause the imperfect to obey, it is necessary to praise the Superiors for their virtue—to enumerate their fine qualities, to speak of their capacity and their merit. Thus

God, wishing to put Josue in the place of Moses, to govern His people, who were most headstrong, said to Moses : "Take Josue, son of Nun, a man of intelligence, endowed with wisdom, prudence, and strength, and by the imposition of thy hands over him, institute him thy successor: thou wilt give him, before all, the necessary advice to govern well, as a part of thy glory." This glory, says Oleaster, that he derived from the Hebrews, was his humility and his meekness, as if these virtues made the glory and ornament of a Superior. This glory of Moses was, according to Tostal, a participation of his great power to work miracles, or, as interpreted by the *rabbins*, a communication and an overspreading of the light that emanated from the face of Moses upon that of Josue, who was environed with this glory, and clothed with these ornaments interiorly and exteriorly—in soul and body—in order, says the Sacred Text, that all the children of Israel would make no difficulty to obey him, which they would otherwise have done, though God had sent him to them.

But the conduct of God towards Cornelius the Centurion, portraying a perfect obedience, was quite different; for the angel He sent to him simply said: "Send some of thy people to Joppa, and have brought from there a certain Simon, surnamed Peter, who lodges in the house of another Simon—a tanner—dwelling near the sea; and he will tell thee what thou must do for thy salvation." Remark that the angel, to prepare Cornelius to listen favorably and to believe St. Peter, does not

tell him that the person that God gives him to catechise and instruct him in the faith is a man of great consideration with Him—the Prince of His Apostles ; that he has the keys of the gates of the kingdom of heaven, and that he was the principal vicar of Jesus Christ on earth. On the contrary, He concealed all these prerogatives that could give him a high opinion of St. Peter : He told him nothing of him but what was lowly and humiliating, in order to render his faith purer, and his obedience more heroic. He merely said to him : “ *Send to seek him,*” as if it would not have been apparently more reasonable that Cornelius would go himself to find him ; for St. Peter was his Superior, the chief of the faithful, and the interview was to be entirely to the advantage of Cornelius. Moreover, it is *a certain Simon* (term of contempt), and who has no lodging of his own, but who dwells in the house of another—not even in the house of a rich man, or one of quality, but in that of a tanner. All these expressions, that conferred no honor on St Peter, did not imprint in the mind or the heart of Cornelius any disgust nor any contempt for him. He accordingly sent, as the angel had directed him, to have him brought by two domestics and a soldier of his company, and he received him with great respect and joy—rendering to him that obedience God required.

Therefore, let the inferior consider neither the good nor bad qualities of his Superior, so as to regard in him but God alone, who governs him by his Superior, and thus he will practice blindly the duties of a perfect obedience.

SECTION V.

Of the Second Blindness of Perfect Obedience.

The second blindness is for the things commanded ; for true and perfect obedience does not examine and does not judge them ; it leaves the examining and the judging altogether to the Superior, and he thinks of but the one thing—that is, their *execution*. Obedience, says St. John Climachus, is a simple acquiescence, without reflection, that does not contradict, and passes no judgment on the things commanded ; it finds them all good, and applies itself to their execution. St. Bernard gives us, as an example of obedience, St. Peter and his brother St. Andrew, who, when our Lord called them, left their boat and their fishing-nets so soon as they heard His voice, without allowing any consideration to detain them. Thus, Peter and Andrew instantly abandoned their boat and their nets to follow our Lord, examining nothing, not troubling themselves to know who would feed them ; that they were coarse, unlettered men, and that such as they were, could not become preachers nor teachers, and without making any inquiry as to this singular change.

The same Saint says elsewhere that one fails in obedience when he obeys but with knowledge and precaution, when—so to say—he takes security. Besides, it is the index of an imperfect soul, and of a feeble will, little given to obedience, to sift with too great care the orders of his Superiors—to

scrupulously examine what is commanded—to wish to be enlightened upon all—to mistrust commands, the reasons of which are not evident, and not to obey voluntarily, but when the thing enjoined is agreeable, or when reason convinces him of its necessity, or the authority of the Superior constrains him.

Such an obedience is quite delicate, or, to say better, is by far too fastidious, to merit either the name or the recompense of obedience. True obedience does not make all these scrutinies: full of confidence in God, who will not permit it to be deceived, it accomplishes all that the Superior commands, without wishing to know the reasons for the order. We have a figure of this in the Levites, who carried upon their shoulders the Ark of the Covenant, covered with skins; for it was not permitted them to see it uncovered, this being forbidden, under pain of death; there being none but the priests who could look upon it when unveiled; as also upon the holy things it contained. “*Let not others,*” says the sacred text, “*by any curiosity see the things that are in the sanctuary before they be wrapped up, otherwise they shall die.*” The ark of the covenant, says Origen, the tables of the law, the rod of Moses, the vase of manna, and the other mysterious things it contained, that were carried by the Levites, who, however, dared not see them uncovered—this privilege being for priests alone—represent the yoke of obedience imposed upon the shoulders of inferiors, the commands given them, of which they understand not the reasons,

these being known but to the Superiors ; nor is it the province of the inferior to examine and judge, but only to execute the orders of his Superior.

The angels do not examine what God commands them relative to the government of the universe. All is the same to them ; that is, all is great, excellent, and most agreeable, provided God commands it. They experience as much contentment and joy in caring for a poor beggar as for a king ; of an infidel as of a Christian ; of a reprobate as of one predestined, and of one man as of an entire people, because in things commanded they consider but the good pleasure of God, in the accomplishment of which they make all their glory consist. What is there more noble than an angel, and what viler than a gnat ? However, God has given to both the same employ ; for He made use of gnats to put down the pride of King Pharoah, by tormenting his people, and of an angel to confound that of the King Sennacherib, by destroying his army. Does it not seem that the patriarch Abraham could have, with some reason, examined the order God gave him to sacrifice his son Isaac—this son that had been given him by a miracle, in whom and by whom he was promised the grandeur, the glory, and the blessing of his family, and even of all the nations of the earth ? However, Abraham obeyed without discussion, without reply, and at the instant even that this command was signified to him. St. Joseph did as much when he took our Lord and His most holy Mother, during the night, and fled into Egypt, according to the order he had received.

The history of the Society of Jesus gives us in this respect a memorable example. When St. Ignatius sent some of his Religious into the kingdom of Sicily, for the college of Messina, by request of Don John Vega, viceroy, to make choice of the persons he wished to employ in this good work, he commanded all those of the house to reply by writing to these two questions: First, if in the disposal he should make of them, either to leave them in Rome or send them to Sicily, they would esteem it best what their Superior had ordered? The second, if those who would be assigned to go to Sicily would also be disposed to fill the offices of domestics, as to be exercised in the employments of teaching, so that those who were occupied in study would close their book to give themselves to manual labor, and those who had never studied, bringing to it their best capacities, would occupy themselves in teaching? More: If such as went for the studies of the sciences were indifferent, either as to learning as scholars, or to teach as masters, in case the Superior judged it to be more advantageous for the glory of God and their salvation?

St. Ignatius gave them three days to consider upon, and to recommend the matter to God. This time ended, every one—even the cooks—to the number of about thirty-six, brought their written answers to St. Ignatius. They left all, without reserve, to his will, and they were disposed to go cheerfully wherever he wished, even should it be to the Indies, and to do all that he wished. Then, here is what Father Peter Canisius, one of the

holiest, the most learned, and the most illustrious personages the Society ever had, has left us in his writings: After having considered, said he, what my Rev. Father in God and Superior Ignatius proposed to us, I can say of myself, and at once, this: that by the grace of God, I do not feel myself drawn one way or the other, but that I am equally disposed, either to remain here or to go to Sicily, or to any other place it may please him to send me. Besides, if he sends me to Sicily I promise that, whatever office is given me, be it cook or gardener, porter or scholar, or master of any department—even should it be such a one as I am unacquainted with—I shall still be pleased; and from to-day I vow to have henceforward no thought or care of my place of dwelling, or my occupations, but to leave all the care to my Superior, to whom I entirely abandon the government of my soul and body, of my understanding and my will, and I recommend them to him with humility and confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. It is thus the truly obedient speak and act.

But if the commands given are extravagant and ridiculous, how should inferiors comfort themselves? They will simply obey; prudence is not, properly speaking, the virtue of the inferior, but of the Superior, who should consider what he commands, whom, when, and how he commands; the inferior should not open his eyes, but close them to execute what his Superior commands; it is in this alone he should place his prudence and his happiness.

St. Anthony, to form his dear disciple, "Paul the Simple," of whom we have already spoken, to elevate him to a high obedience, and to see even to what degree of this virtue he had attained, often commanded him to do something seemingly opposed to reason and custom. He once commanded him to employ one entire day in drawing water from the well, and afterwards pouring it out upon the ground; another time to pull baskets to pieces, and then to make them up again; to rip his habit, to sew it up, and then again to rip it. He exercised him thus in many things of this nature, to teach him never to find cause for reply in all that was commanded him, even should it seem to him useless and without reason. By this means he soon acquired perfect obedience.

Cassian relates in this connection, three memorable incidents of the holy Abbot John, he who, endowed with a great gift of prophecy, predicted to the Emperor Theodosius, that he would gain the victory over the tyrant Maximus, and another five years afterwards, over the tyrant Eugenius—his Superior having taken a dry stick already worm-eaten, that was good for nothing but to be burnt, and planting it in the ground, commanded him to water it twice a day to make it grow. This dear and holy disciple, without considering the impossibility of the event, went to get water with great trouble, at a distance of two miles, so as to water the stick. He continued this care and fatigue during a whole year, and neither the weakness nor weariness of his body, nor the solemnity of feast-

days, nor the severity of winter, nor the heat of summer, could make him desist. His Superior, beholding with admiration so perfect an obedience, and the simplicity, humility, devotion, silence, and imperturbable countenance with which John punctually, and to the letter, accomplished his command, led him to this stick, saying to him : Well John ! you have thrown water in abundance on this stick, has it at last taken root ? John replied : Father, I do not know ; so little did he reflect on the success of his obedience, thinking only to obey. Then the Father pulled up the stick, as dead as before, and cast it away. Sulpicius Severus relates something similar to this, if it was not that it met with better success, for the stick in question became *green*. It deserves to be related here in full. This author, an eye-witness, says : Having left for Mt. Sinai, I returned towards the Nile, to visit the monasteries that are placed in great numbers on the two banks of that river. I was there told, that in one of these monasteries, there had just occurred what I am about to relate. “ A man coming to the Abbot, asking to be admitted among the number of his Religious, the Abbot acquainted him of the obligation of obedience, and declared that above all, he should resolve to do exactly what was commanded him. This person having promised to do so, and to cheerfully perform all that was ordered him, the Abbot, who by chance held in his hand a stick, drove it into the ground, commanded him to water it till, *contrary to the laws of nature*, it should take root.

This man, truly obedient, went every day with much fatigue, to get water from the Nile, at a distance of about two miles, bringing it in quantities, and pouring it on this dry and dead stick. He thus accomplished the command of his Superior for an entire year without any effect ; but the desire he had to practice obedience gave him courage to continue a toil so irksome, and apparently so useless. He watered the stick still another year, without any better success. However, at the end of the third year, this stick, being watered night and day, with an equal submission and perseverance, became green. I saw the tree into which it grew ; it is still quite flourishing, in the monastery yard, as a testimony to the merit of obedience, and the power of faith."

The second incident of the Abbot John was this : Having received a command from his Superior, to carry a large block of stone, that several men together could not move, he immediately set himself to work to execute it, employing first his arms, then his breast, and afterwards his shoulders, using, in a word, all his efforts, with copious perspiration, to roll it, but in vain. The third was : His Superior having commanded him to take the oil-can, and to throw it out of the window, John obeyed at once, without thinking, says Cassian, either of the unreasonableness of the command, or of the need there would be of the lost oil, nor the poverty of the house, that had no means of procuring more, nor of all the other difficulties, that rendered this command most singular.

Two young men having come to St. Francis to be received into his Order, the Saint, to sound their minds, and to prove their vocation, took them to the garden, saying to them: Do what you see me do. Then he planted cabbages with their roots turned upwards and the leaves in the ground. One of the young men, really called by God, and truly obedient, did as he saw, without making any remark, or showing any discernment; but the other, thinking he knew better, said to the Saint, that this was not the way to plant them, but just the contrary. The Saint replied: My son, I know; but do as I do. But this one did not wish to imitate what appeared to him so foolish. The Saint then said to him: "Proud masters like yourself are not fit for our Order, where we make profession of simplicity and humility. Those who are good for us, are those you regard as senseless; the simple and obedient, like your companion, whom therefore I receive."

But what is there more strange, and in appearance more unreasonable than what God even has commanded some prophets? He ordered Isaac, an illustrious prophet, a person of eminent virtue, and a prince of royal blood, to go through the streets of Jerusalem, divested of all clothing: to Jeremiah, to walk the streets of the same City, loaded with chains, a cord about his neck, as a criminal: to Ezechiel, to sleep three hundred and ninety days on his left side, and forty on the right side, and to eat afterwards of bread cooked not under the ashes, but beneath ordure: to Osee, who was a

most holy and chaste man, to espouse a girl without virtue.

All these prophets, having received of God such unheard of commands, seemingly wanting in common sense, and even contrary to civility and propriety, obeyed instantly, without asking God for reasons, and without making any demur. They placed all their glory in obeying simply, with closed eyes, knowing well that God, by His sovereign authority, being essential wisdom and first reason, makes reasonable the things even that appear least so, when He wishes and when He commands them. and that by His infinite sanctity, He purifies and sanctifies all that is corrupt, that is profane in appearance. Thus we should say of such things, what the Angel said to Peter with regard to the serpent he was commanded to eat, and for which he felt a repugnance: "Call not impure that which God has purified."

But if the Superior, you still say, commanded something bad, what should I do? If the thing was evidently bad, if the sin is patent and quite apparent, the inferior should not do it, any more than the Superior should command it. In fact, the Superior has not the quality of Superior, but by the order of God, who has made choice of his person to govern in His stead, and who, for that, has given him His authority. Consequently, it is clear, He has not invested him with this power, to be used against Himself, but *for* Him; and that He has not made him Superior to offend Him, but to procure Him honor, and to advance His service.

Wherefore, if the Superior commands something that is against God, as he has no authority for so doing, neither is he Superior in this, and consequently he is not to be obeyed in it. On the contrary, he should be strongly resisted, and be disobeyed in such a case ; but let this be understood only when the sin is visible and certain : for if it is *doubtful*, the inferior makes an act of virtue agreeable to God, in leaving his doubt, and in entering without fear into the sentiments of his Superior, so as to execute what he is commanded.

What if we cite the Saints, who have given similar commands : as for that wise, St. Bernard, when he directed St. Maurice to go quickly to the lake to succor St. Placidius, who was drowning : a thing which he could not do without walking upon the waters, or sinking ; when Abbot Sisois enjoined upon a man, who asked for the religious habit, to go first to rid himself of his only son, by casting him into the river another, to throw his son into a heated furnace, and then to cast himself into it : hence, it must be admitted that these Saints and Superiors did not originate these commands, and that their inferiors did not execute them, without a particular inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who incited them to this forgetfulness of self, causing them to attempt accomplishing what was so superior to nature, and in which all self-love was silenced—alone to render them the merit of an heroic and extraordinary virtue, like to that of Abraham, in the sacrifice of his son.

SECTION VI.

Qualities and Effects of Blind Obedience.

The qualities of this *blind* obedience are very noble, and its effects as admirable as delightful. It is principally to it that should be applied what has been said in the first section, of the excellence, the utility and the prerogatives of obedience in general. It is impossible for him who takes it for his guide *not* to be loaded with thousands of benefits.

First, this obedience, wisely blind, is very certain in its government; it is not to be mistaken. If an angel appeared to announce to you something on the part of God, you would probably have doubts as to his embassy and seek to discover if it be a good or evil spirit that thus addressed you; whether the directions he gave are for your salvation, or rather tend to your ruin: and if, under an appearance of light, there be not some hidden evil; with other similar misgivings. Whereas, in obeying your Superior, there is no need of such scrutiny—there being nothing to fear; you know and are satisfied, that all that comes to you through obedience, so far from injuring you, is on the contrary, much to your profit.

The Israelites adored the “golden calf” as a true divinity, though it had not one characteristic of a god; it did nothing that was miraculous; whilst they committed not the crime of idolatry in regard to the “*brazen serpent*,” which, however,

merited their esteem and veneration, since those who were bitten by venomous serpents were instantly healed by merely looking upon this brazen image. The reason for this difference is, that Aaron acted from *human* prudence, in having made the golden calf—in order to render himself agreeable to the people, in lieu of doing his duty as ruler, and resisting them with an invincible courage.

Moses erected the brazen serpent by *divine* prudence—to obey the command of God, regardless of all human views. Joachim, King of Juda—as counselled by the prophet Jeremiah, and by the order of God, willingly delivered himself into the power of King Nabuchodonosor, although the execution of such a command was so opposed to all state maxims, and all rules of human wisdom. After abandoning his capital, with his entire kingdom as a merited chastisement for his crimes, he was thrown into prison, and harshly treated by this prince; but his son, Evilmerodoch, freed him, ever showing him great respect, retaining him near his person, and promoting him to the first rank of his courtiers. Behold! of what value *blind* obedience was to him.

Lot, having come out of Sodom, to save himself from the conflagration that was about reducing to ashes the town and its inhabitants, was sent by an angel to go upon a mountain, but which he objected to doing, not considering it to be sufficiently safe, and he besought the angel to allow him to retire to a small neighboring town, named Segar. But he was no sooner there than he learned that his pre-

cautions were of no avail, as the town was subject to earthquakes, which overthrew the houses and buried the inhabitants beneath the ruins. He then wished to leave the place, though God had assured him, that so long as he dwelt there the town would not be visited by such a calamity, and no danger would befall him; but as he was still blinded by his human prudence, he prayed to be permitted to return to the mountain, where he had no sooner arrived than, as in punishment for his disobedience and his vain wisdom (as is related by St. Jerome), he became intoxicated and committed two horrible crimes. Behold the result of self-will!

Secondly, blind obedience is in its blindness most wise and prudent, "*Thou makest me prudent*," says David, "by the obedience that I have rendered to *Thy commands*." Obedience, says St. John Climachus, is an abnegation of one's judgment by an abundance of judgment and wisdom. In fact, is it not great wisdom not to be able to err in anything? It is all that can be accorded to the infinite wisdom of God, in which blind obedience participates by a signal happiness; so that, in the midst of the most profound darkness and the thickest fogs, in which our natural ignorance, our affections, our passions, the flesh, the world and the demon, can envelop our minds, it cannot be deceived in obeying simply what the Superior says. Prudence, which is most difficult to acquire, and therefore, very rare among men, should enlighten all the other virtues, and walk before them with torch in hand. But a very easy

prudence is that of obedience: it gives to the inferior a very great advantage over the Superior; it renders him incomparably more happy, for he cannot be mistaken in obeying, whereas, the Superior may readily be in commanding. The Superior, in fact, can commit faults of indiscretion in giving his orders; the inferior commits none in executing them with fidelity; the one offends God in his commands, and the other pleases him by accomplishing these same commands.

Blind obedience is again prudent, inasmuch as it prepares the soul for light, and disposes it to see in its time, things in their true light, things upon which it closed its eyes previously; so that, in some measure it can be said of it, what Isaias says of faith: "So long as you do not believe with closed eyes, you will not understand." In like manner, if you do not obey simply and with blindness, you will not be capable of knowing the secret of things. Whoever wishes to commence his novitiate by discussing the things he is desirous of learning, says Cassian, will never enter as he should, into the knowledge of their truth, because the demon seeing how much more attached he is to his own opinion than to that of his seniors, readily causes him to consider as useless and injurious things even that are the most profitable and the most salutary to him. Thus, this artful enemy so sports with the good opinion he has of his own judgment, that nothing appears to him good and holy but what his obstinacy makes him believe to be such.

Man in this life is naturally plunged into a pro-

found ignorance of the majority of things; he cannot truly know what is useful and what is hurtful to his salvation: he thinks good, sometimes, what is evil, and he takes poison for a remedy. Therefore, to make his salvation certain, he should desire that God, who knows infallibly what is for his good, would govern him in everything. If such a happiness can by any means be his, it is assuredly through simple and blind obedience, which will be prudent in its simplicity, and clear-sighted in its blindness.

There is no doubt, that if our Lord was visibly present here below, and wished to govern us Himself, in person, we would abandon ourselves absolutely to His government in the infallible belief that He would conduct us securely to our salvation and beatitude. He exercises this goodness towards us, through our Superiors, as certainly as He could by Himself; otherwise, His corporeal and sensible absence would be most prejudicial to us, and contrary to what He so many times said to His Apostles that it was expedient for them—and in like manner for us—that He should go—that He be hid from our view; and however, that He would be with us to the end of the world—but, in another manner, viz. in the most Holy Eucharist, and in the person of our lawful Superiors.

St. Basil, giving this reason for obedience, and comparing the Religious to an instrument, that does not trouble itself as to the use the workman makes of it, but is in his hands to be freely disposed of, and applied as he deems best, says: That the Re-

ligious should leave himself to be used and employed in the same way by his Superior, because it is commonly agreed that the most difficult of all things is to know how to conduct oneself. In fact, the love one naturally bears himself, readily causes him to be mistaken in his judgment, in regard to himself—making him ever judge favorably in things even in which he should condemn himself. The Religious should therefore ever mistrust self, and leave himself to be governed without resistance by his Superior, who knows much better than he does what is best or proper for him.

As obedience is an assured pledge of salvation, so disobedience is a certain sign of ruin ; and it can be said of the disobedient, what scripture mentions of the children of the High Priest Heli : “ *They hearkened not to the voice of their Father, because the Lord would slay them.* ”—God would permit their destruction in punishment for their disobedience.

Secondly, is not blind obedience very prudent in an affair of such importance as our eternal salvation, since it takes the road which conducts thereto most securely the easiest and the quickest ? In the practice of this virtue, one possesses a profound peace—sails on an ocean of tranquillity, and acquires immense treasures of grace and glory.

He who obeys his Superior with good will, says St. John Climachus, and with true submission, awaits death without fear ; he will welcome it as a repose, or rather, as a commencement of life, by the certainty he will have, that it will not be him-

self, but his Superior, who at that supreme hour will be summoned to render an account of his actions to God.

Thirdly, blind obedience brings a great grace, an inestimable treasure to the soul, by rendering it most humble ; for it is said, that the true spirit of humility is nothing less than this perfect submission. In fact, to ask of a Superior the reasons of his commands, is not acting towards him as his inferior, but as his equal ; it is not doing the thing because it is commanded, but because it is reasonable, and one would be disposed to perform it, regardless of a command.

St. John Climachus, while visiting the monastery near Alexandria, relates that he saw there most venerable, gray-haired old men, who had borne the yoke of obedience for half a century or more with admirable exactness. As I asked them, says the Saint, what profit they had drawn from this exercise, one of them replied that they had by this means acquired a profound humility, which protected them from all the attacks and temptations of their enemies.

Father Cornelius Vishavee, S.J., much esteemed for his eminent virtue, as well as for his profound spiritual knowledge, was accustomed to say that to acquire perfect humility there was no surer means than to practice blind obedience, that by subterraneous channels and little hidden roads led to the most secret roots, and to the very heart of this virtue.

Moreover, blind obedience has still this singular

excellence, that it gives great energy to action—imparting strength to overcome apparent difficulties, and even to doing seeming impossibilities, inasmuch as where human strength avows its weakness, it obtains miraculous success. It would take entire volumes, were we to attempt relating all the examples that give testimony to this truth; but a few will suffice, particularly after the many instances we have previously cited. St. Dorotheus, as an ocular witness, relates the following. Being one day with the Abbot Seridius, when a young Religious of this venerable Abbot arrived from Ascalon. This Religious was the bearer of a message to Seridius on the part of his Superior, who had commanded him to return the same day to his monastery. While this Religious was with us, there arose a furious tempest, accompanied by heavy rain and frightful thunder; the rain continuing to pour in such torrents that the neighboring river was soon swollen to overflowing. Heedless of this difficulty, the good Religious, having delivered his message, signified his intention of leaving, and thus executing the order of his Superior. As we judged it was not prudent for him to venture out during the storm, we earnestly entreated him to remain till it had abated, and some of the water had passed off. We represented to him that it was impossible to ford the stream, even trying to convince him that he would expose himself to evident death; but he persisted in his resolution, setting at nought all our desires to retain him. We concluded then that we should accompany him, at least to the bank

of the aforesaid stream, hoping that, when he saw it so swollen and rapid, he would change his intention, and gladly return with us. We all went out together, and on coming to the bank of the river he divested himself of any superfluous clothing. fastening them around his neck, and after girding himself with his scapulars, he advanced in the water to swim, fearless of the strong and violent waves. We, the spectators, were awe-struck, lest he should be drowned ; but he possessed more courage—in a little while reached the opposite bank, where we perceived him attiring himself, after which, making a bow, he received our blessing, and diligently pursued his way homeward.

On considering the marvellous effects of the virtue of obedience, we were transported with joy ; for, as mere witnesses of this perilous act, we could but be inspired with fear ; whereas this holy Religious, by his simple faith and submission, had surmounted all danger without fear or injury.

Once, when the greater part of the Religious of St. Colombanus were grievously sick in the monastery of Luxeuil, the Saint commanded them to rise and go out during the heat of the noonday sun, to harvest the wheat. Some of them, moved by this direction of their Superior, and placing more hope of their recovery in the exercise of their obedience than in all human remedies, instantly rose up and executed the command ; and, so far from receiving detriment from this act, they were restored to perfect health ; whereas, those who demurred, and fearing to increase their malady, refused to leave

their beds, were, in return for such disobedience, sick for an entire year.

Rufinus relates of John, a Religious of great virtue and of rare obedience, that, being sent by Abbot Paul, his Superior, to a near village to seek garden seed, said : But, Father, it is reported that in the vicinity of the village there is a furious lioness ; if it attacks me, what shall I do ? No matter, brother, smilingly rejoined the Abbot ; if it comes to you, take hold of it and bring it to me. John went forth with his orders, and the lioness approaching him with great fury, as if to tear him to pieces, John, emboldened by his obedience, seized the animal, which, by divine interposition, was not permitted to do him the least injury ; it eluded his grasp and fled, when John, pursuing it, cried out : Stop ! stop, I tell you ! My Superior bids me bind you and lead you to him. At these words the lioness suddenly halted, allowed herself to be taken and bound, when she followed John like a lamb. But the Abbot, beholding this fierce animal in his presence, was terrified, and not relishing such a prize—moreover, to prevent any vanity that John might have conceived at such an act of valor, said : Brother, you have no more sense than this beast, to have brought it to me ; unloose it and let it go from whence it came. The humble and obedient disciple did as he was told without comment or reflection.

As a final example, we will relate one that occurred among ourselves, in the year 1564, in the college of Grenada, Spain. There was among the

novices one named Consalvo Esquinelle, a lawyer, who had pleaded at the bar with distinction. He came to the Society accompanied by his servant, who for a time was cook for the house, and his master, Consalvo, was assigned to assist and serve him in his charge. This good novice fulfilled his duty under the cook with all possible zeal and fervor, keeping himself in the greatest interior recollection. But not being able to be as absorbed in contemplation of heavenly things as he desired, on account of the noise made by the fowls of the neighborhood, he complained of the distraction, one day, to the Father Rector, who asked him if he had ever bidden these fowls to keep silence. Yes, Father, I have, even repeatedly driven them off. I have threatened them till I was weary, but without effect, for they are ever cackling, and proving most troublesome. You should not be astonished, brother, pleasantly replied the Father Rector, if they do nothing of what you command them, for you speak to them with too much authority. But go now, hat in hand, beseeching them with humility and sweetness, for the love of God, to be silent. Consalvo went at a time when they were most clamorous, and with head uncovered he besought them with civility to be pleased to be silent. Wonderful to relate! all their clatter instantly ceased, the hens becoming dumb—even the greatest clatterer of them all, perched above as if to encourage a universal outcry, flew down, at these words of obedience, uniting its silence to that of the multitude. Again see here the power of blind obedience.

SECTION, VII.

The Qualities of Obedience Continued—Its Integrity.

Let us now see the qualities that should accompany true obedience. St. Ignatius notes three in particular: integrity, promptitude, and courage. We will commence by integrity, which consists in doing all the Superior says, where there appears no sin, and in accomplishing it fully and not in part—not failing in any circumstance, whether it be commanded *expressly*, or as is made known by some exterior sign, imitating therein the soldiers and the centurion of the gospel: “When the centurion said to them, Go, they went; Come, they came; Do that, and they did it.”

Our Superiors govern us in two ways. The first, is by the way of command; the second, by way of warning, of remonstrances, or by a simple declaration of their will.

Obedience extends to both ways—with this difference, however, that it bears on the first with obligation of sin—mortal or venial, according to the nature of the thing commanded, and the intention of the Superior. As to the second, obedience is not of such strict obligation, for one does not sin in omitting it, provided there is no scandal given or formal contempt. At the same time, it is always a fault that renders the Religious very imperfect, as it would be for a Christian who should wish to do for God and for his salvation only precisely what is

commanded under pain of sin. Let the inferior, says St. Bernard, hold for imperfect the obedience that restricts itself to the obligation of the vow; for perfect obedience goes far beyond this—it admits no bounds; but, carried on the wings of a better disposed will, it soars on high—it flies to the excellence of charity; it applies itself cheerfully to all that is commanded, and by the strength of a large, liberal mind, it gives to the Superior an unlimited power to command him. It is of this obedience that St. Peter speaks in express terms when he says: “Purifying your souls by an obedience, animated with the love of God”—distinguishing it by these words from that indolent, servile obedience that is not moved by the spring of charity, but by that alone of stolid necessity. It is, again, the obedience of the just man, for whom, according to St. Paul, the law is not made; not that perfect obedience lives effectively without law, but is not *under* the law as its servant and its slave, for the fervor of his mind elevates him much above it, making him do much more than it commands, and even more than what his vow obliges.

St. Thomas, explaining these words of the Apostle: “The law is not imposed on the just, but on sinners;” says, very well: that that which is placed on the shoulders of some, is there laid as a burden: the law is not placed thus on the shoulders of the just, because they will have a firm will to do what it commands—a habit that inclines thereto, and which facilitates the practice. David repeats: “The law is on the shoulders of sinners, as a bur-

den, and in the heart of the *just*, as a thing they love." Wherefore, instead of being to them a burden, they are a law for themselves, says St. Paul: thus, to signify more fully that if all men were just and virtuous, there would be no need of enacting laws, because every one would govern himself well. Do we not see some men, who are, of themselves, altogether well disposed to the exercise of virtue, and on the other hand, some who need the ministry of others? The first have no need of the law to be just and virtuous, as above quoted; while the second do not require it either, because a paternal warning suffices, without command and other restrain; but those who, by themselves, or through example, do not tend to virtue and their duty, require to be constrained thereto by commands. It is in this sense that holy Scripture assures us, that the servants of God are unfettered. "Brethren," says St. Paul, "you have been set at liberty," and St. James calls the new law, "a law of perfect liberty." Since it is a law, how is it that it does not bind? for the name of law, [*lex*] conveys the sense of *binding*—and yet places those who follow it in true liberty. St. Ambrose replies, it is because our Lord esteems and approves much more the voluntary actions of His servants, than such as are forced, and that instead of servants, He makes them free men, in order that they should have more solicitude to render a willing service, rather than a constrained homage to His Divine Majesty. The Prophet Isaiah, speaking of his mission,

says: "And I heard the voice of the Lord saying: *Whom shall I send? and who shall go for us? and I said, Lo, here am I, send me.*" This proves that God wishes willing servants. He could have commanded Isaiah in quality of sovereign Lord. He did not wish, however—but waited till he offered himself, in order not to deprive him of the recompense that this action merited, by being voluntary. St. Basil throws light on this subject, by the following comparison. When asked why God does not take from us the liberty of offending him, thus rendering us impeccable? he replies: Why do you think that your servant has less affection for you, when you keep him in prison and in irons, than when you see him act with liberty, cheerfully laboring for the success of your affairs? It is for the same reason that you should not think, that this man loves God much, who does His will and observes His commandments by force, rather than the one who accomplishes them voluntarily; for virtue is the work of the will and not of necessity; of liberty, and not of fear.

As a supplement to all the above quotations from the holy Fathers, we may here insert the words of Seneca, as being most appropriate to this subject: "Virtuous men labor—voluntarily employ themselves, being neither drawn to or swayed by fortune, in the disposition that it wishes to make of them: they follow orders, are as swift as the given order—even wishing to be in advance, by anticipating, as much as possible, the will of another.

From thence proceed these generous words of

Demetrius : O immortal gods ! I have but one complaint to make of you—it is not to have apprised me sooner of your wills ; for I would have come of myself to accomplish them, without awaiting your summons : I will cheerfully give you all that you ask of me : I prefer, however, to offer, than to give it to you. What necessity would there have been to despoil me of it ? You are able to take it—I would have abandoned it to you without resistance ; and for this reason now it is, that you do not deprive *me—for one can only be deprived of what he wishes to retain.* I am forced to nothing—I suffer nothing against my will—I do not serve you as a slave—but freely giving consent to all you ask of me. These sentiments of an infidel express the virtue of a Christian, nay, of even a perfect Religious

The integrity of obedience tends to effect all that the Superior says, in whatever manner he says it, or makes known his will, whether by signs or by speech, it matters not : the least evidence of his will suffices to have it considered as a duty to be executed. So it was, that St. Ignatius wished his subjects to be perfect in obedience, that they should do not only the things that implied a strict obligation, but still others that are manifest but by a sign of the Superior's will, without any express command. David elegantly describes this exact obedience in speaking of that which is rendered to men by those who serve them. He says : “As servants keep their eyes on the hands of their masters ; as the servant maid holds hers on the hands of her mis-

tress, to execute, by the least sign of the finger, what is desired ;'' so also are our eyes, for the same reason, fixed upon God, our Lord : and let us add, upon the Superiors whom He gives us. If men obey men with such care and exactness, for a trifling, temporal interest, without being obliged thereto by any other reason, how much more ought not we obey with diligence and affection, God and His representatives ; considering how infinitely greater is the recompense promised ; also, by reason of the numberless benefits that are daily poured upon us, by the liberal hand of God.

It is necessary then, that obedience should have this perfect integrity—that it extend generally to all things, even to the least important. Indeed, the smaller the things are, and consequently, the easier, the more culpable the negligence in performing them. It is this that rendered the sin of Adam so criminal ; for having received the command to abstain from eating of one single fruit in the terrestrial paradise, while at liberty to partake of all the rest, he was not content under this restriction, but plucked the forbidden fruit, and thus disobeyed God in something that was very easy to accomplish. You now inquire : Should Superiors wish to place me in some honorable charge—raise me to one of the first offices, and thereby give contentment to my nature : should I yield to their orders ? and must the integrity of my obedience be thus extended ? St. Gregory clears up this doubt most aptly. He remarks, that the obedience rendered as to honors, preëminence, and to things in

which nature may find satisfaction, is *null* or very imperfect — especially if anything else than the command of your Superior cause your acceptance thereof: in like manner, if there is aught but this same command that induces you to embrace humiliations, contempt, and other trials, wherein your Superior is wont to exercise you, you not joining thereto your consent and good will, your obedience should be held at a low estimate. The Saint further supports his opinion by two examples: the first is of Moses, who being called by God to the government of His people, hesitated to obey; even excusing himself as much as possible. Nay, he prayed God earnestly to substitute another in his stead, and in the end yielded only to reiterated commands, and through fear of incurring God's wrath.

The second example is that of St. Paul, who having received orders to go to Jerusalem to endure much suffering, he embraced the command, with a singular courage and affection. From thence, St. Gregory concludes, that if we wish to be truly obedient, we should not obey but by constraint the commands given us as regards the honors and advantages of this life; but should yield ourselves with a good and pliable will, to such as are humiliating and painful.

If this is so—you will reply, is not the integrity of my obedience belied and destroyed, because the desires of the Superior manifested exteriorly by his warnings, remonstrances—not to say by signal of his hand and eye—do not suffice to make my will conform to his, and he finds it necessary to call

to his aid the power of command. I answer, with a great and pious theologian, that one is at liberty to resist his Superior in regard to important charges and dignities, until he is commanded, in virtue of obedience, to their acceptance; nor will a prudent and virtuous Superior ever take it ill; he will be inclined to praise a wise and reasonable refusal, rather than a prompt and ready acceptance. Moreover, this too great readiness of assent in such cases, is not so pleasing to God, as when a refusal is advanced from the promptings of humility, or a holy fear. This is sufficiently apparent in the example of Moses, cited by St. Gregory. This same Saint, together with St. Ambrose, St. Bernard, St. Thomas, and other renowned and learned Doctors of the Church, have each individually reduced this theory to practice, with great constancy and a resolute will—advancing the reason, that much virtue and talent are requisite for the highest offices, and that a man cannot give a more signal proof of consummate arrogance and self-sufficiency, than in readily undertaking the difficult charge of governing others, or of guiding souls.

Again—these elevated positions, as they are surrounded with honors, are exposed to great and numerous perils, and it is most difficult to avoid, without solid heroic virtue, antagonism from riches, honors, praises, and the allurements of the senses; he who is in authority, has often to mistrust his own will and judgment in the exercise of his power; he has to answer for the salvation of others, while he has no one to warn him and to prevent his own

mistakes; he is exposed to continual solicitude—he encounters serious obstacles to his advancement in perfection, by the many distractions occasioned by temporal affairs, and which are inseparable from important charges and employments. Notwithstanding all these refusals and resistances, which are in no wise the work of nature, obedience will not be the less perfect and meritorious.

Therefore, we should strive to practice obedience to this degree of perfection—imitating our Lord, who, in speaking of His obedience—the integrity He therein observed, and of which He gave us the model, says: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I have not come to destroy, but to fulfil: For amen, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass—*one jot or one tittle shall not pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*” Such is the obedience of the Saints, which was often so in advance of the command, that they failed not to exercise this virtue, even when there was no obligation—and had so acquired the habit of obedience that they practiced it after death. Here follows an illustrious example. As the body of St. Bernard, before being consigned to the tomb, wrought a great number of miracles, the fame of which drew an immense concourse of persons from all parts, Don Gozevin—Abbot of Citeaux, General of the Order, and Superior of St. Bernard, during this life—seeing this crowd, and fearing lest the continuation of the miracles would but augment it, to the serious detriment of domestic order, extended his authority over

the Saint even after death, forbidding him to work any further miracles. The Saint instantly obeyed ; and the historian adds : The holy and truly humble soul of our Father wished, even after his death, to be obedient to a mortal man, so that if he was no longer in a state to merit, he did not lose, at least, the glory of his obedience. Don Laucelin, General of the Carthusians, issued a similar prohibition, and for the same reason, to a holy Religious of his Order, who had passed the portals of the tomb ; and St. Francis acted in the same manner towards the blessed Brother Catane, who had been his first Vicar General, as also his second son in religion.

In conclusion, let us recall the entire and perfect obedience of the Religious of the desert. We will thereby the more readily understand how agreeable this virtue is to God, and how amply he recompenses it. Ruffin relates, that two brothers resolved to leave the world to retire into religion. No sooner had they effected their design, than one gave himself particularly to fasting, and the other to obedience. The Superior, to exercise the virtue of this latter, would say to him : Brother, do this, and he did it ; do that, and he did it likewise ; then fast no more from this day ; and he likewise obeyed. Such exemplary conduct soon gained for him the highest esteem. His brother, however, became jealous of him, and said within himself : I am going to try if he is as obedient as reputed. Thereupon, he went to find the Superior, to request that he be allowed to take a walk, accompanied by his brother. The Superior having given his assent,

the two brothers started on their way, and having arrived at a river that was alive with crocodiles, the envious brother said to the obedient one : Cross over this river (secretly hoping to see him flinch from such an order), but the good Religious immediately entered the water, when the assembled crocodiles, far from injuring him, only played around him or gently licked his body. The other one seeing this marvel, called out : that will do, return ; and he did. Continuing their road, they met with an unburied corpse, when the envious brother said to the other : If we had the necessary implements we might bury this poor dead man. The obedient brother replied : No ; but let us do better ; let us pray for him : how do we know but that God will be pleased to restore him to life. They forthwith united in prayer, and instantly the dead man was resuscitated. The envious one attributed the glory to himself, saying : Behold the fruits of my fasting ! It is this alone that has produced this miracle. But God, revealing to the Superior all that had transpired, thus accosted the envious brother on his return : Why have you so treated your worthy brother ? You are deceived ; know that it is not to your fasts, but to his *obedience*, that is due the resurrection of the dead.

SECTION VIII.

Promptitude of Obedience.

St. Bernard remarks, that “ the *Word of God* ran

swiftly," according to holy Scripture. It is not sufficient that obedience be entire, it should also be prompt; that it should act with diligence in executing all given orders, as is illustrated in the example of David, who says of himself: "*I ran in the way of Thy commandments.*" The truly obedient man uses no delay; he does not put off till to-morrow; he knows not what it is to be slothful; he anticipates the commands of his Superior; he keeps his eyes ready to watch him, his ears to hear him, his tongue to reply to him, his hands to move for him, his feet to run for him, devoting all his members, without reserve, to execute his will. Consider, continues St. Bernard, our Lord's words to Zacheus: "*Make haste and come down; for this day I must abide in thy house.*" And he made haste and came down, and received our Lord with great joy. Do we not read that the children of Israel were commanded to eat the paschal lamb *in haste*, to teach us that we should accomplish without delay the words our Lord has given us, first, by the law, secondly, by Himself while on earth, and which He still gives every day through Superiors, who are His representatives. Therefore, in giving heed to this counsel of St. James: "*Be ye prompt in receiving the commands of your Superiors,*" let us add, and *still more prompt in executing them.*

St. Ignatius required this prompt obedience, when he said: As soon as you hear the sound of the bell for the common exercises, you should *hastily* obey the summons. Elsewhere he repeats:

We should be very *prompt* at the voice of the Superior, to execute all his orders, to which our obedience extends. Before him, St. Benedict had required this same promptitude of his Religious, when he directed that their obedience should be *without delay*; and that the instant the Superior spoke the execution should follow as *promptly* as if the words and the command had come from the mouth of God, Himself. St. Pachomius also exacted this promptitude, in saying: Let all, hearing the signal, rise with great diligence to attend prayer. In fact, there are no founders of Religious Orders who have not inculcated this promptitude in obedience, ever considering it as one of the essentials to its perfect practice. Then, we may observe with St. Bonaventure, three degrees of this prompt obedience: The first is to obey without delay; so that, the same moment even that the Superior opens his mouth and pronounces the words, the inferior holds himself ready to accomplish the commands. St. Bernard, in his rule, explains this as follows: Obedience walks, he says, almost as soon as the order is heard; the action following close to the voice of the command; so that the direction of the master and the work of the disciple are accomplished at *almost* the same instant. To this subject may be most fittingly referred these words of *David*: "*He obeyed me at the sound of my voice, as soon as my words reached his ear,*" thus showing, that at the same instant, these two things, the command of the Superior, and the obedience of the inferior, should be coincident.

A single word suffices for the truly obedient, as is evident in this remark of Our Lord: "*My sheep hear my voice and my word.*" He says not, my *words*, because one single word is enough to make them follow Him.

In the galleys, as soon as the guard has sounded the silver whistle, the convicts have their hands on the oars, and obey so promptly, that commencing to do what is commanded them, they often cry out: *We have done it already.* But, if the fear of blows and the lash render these men so diligent—effects in them such admirable, and prompt obedience, should not *filial love*, much more powerful than servile fear,—that love with which Religious should be animated in all their actions, produce still greater prodigies of perfect obedience? St. Paul writing to Titus, his disciple—"to warn the faithful to obey the *first word* of their Superiors, without waiting for a second;" does not say the *words*, but *the word*. In a like sense, St. Francis said to his Religious: Accomplish at once what is ordered you, without having it repeated; for, as St. Bonaventure justly infers, that he to whom it is necessary to reiterate a command to insure its execution does not merit the name of *obedient*, or at most, he should not pass for other than one who obeys negligently and without *recompense*. According to the Gospel, St. Joseph "*rose up in the night,*" when he received the order to take our Lord and the Blessed Virgin into Egypt—he made ready his little equipage, took the child and its mother, and *without delay*, set out for the journey. Why

would he have risen, wisely remarks Cardinal Cajetan, if it had not been to depart instantly?

So also, when the Patriarch Abraham, aged ninety-nine years, received orders from God to circumcise himself, together with his son Ismael, and all his servants, Scripture affirms that he *instantly* executed this command. Fostal, considering this subject more attentively, says that obedience corresponds to good counsel; for, after having consulted and seriously reflected on an affair, no further thought should be given it, but to carry it into execution. Again is the above-mentioned patriarch cited as most exemplary for his promptness in preparing to execute the difficult command of sacrificing his son Isaac, and to this end "he arose in the night"—acting thus, says St. Ambrose, for fear it might be supposed that the night would cause some delay to his zealous ardor to accomplish the Divine command, and without even making it known to Isaac's mother, lest she would have tried to prevent it, or some delay would be the result of such a communication.

Our Lord called Lazarus out of the tomb, where he had been enclosed four days, saying: "*Lazarus, arise, come forth.*" St. John remarks that he came forth *promptly*, full of life, his hands and feet still bound, and his face yet enveloped with the winding sheet. Why thus bound and enveloped? To accomplish with greater promptitude the command of our Lord, and not to retard its execution by as much time as it would have taken to disengage himself. This same opinion is advanced by St.

Chrysostom, who likewise says : Lazarus appeared thus entangled in his grave clothes for fear that death would seem rebellious to the voice of heaven, and would retard the effects of the Divine mandate by the few moments needed to disengage himself from their folds.

The second degree of promptitude in obedience is to leave even unfinished what you are doing. This degree is more perfect than the former, for it may happen that a person will be very prompt in executing what is ordered him, provided he has the leisure, or that he has nothing else in particular to engage him ; but when he is occupied with something useful or agreeable, or with some important affair, and nevertheless abandons all to run at the voice of the Superior, this obedience is doubtless much more excellent, and the promptness with which it is accompanied much more perfect.

St. Benedict and other Founders have recommended this promptness to their Religious, thus : One should leave all, and drop what he holds, so as to instantly obey the Superior ; and though you should be discoursing with the *angels*, who will have honored you by their visit, you should leave them without even bidding them *adieu*, so highly should you esteem this degree of prompt obedience.

The Prophet Eliseus instructs us as to this promptitude by his example ; for he was occupied in plowing at the moment that he was called by Elias, yet—says the sacred text—he instantly abandoned his labor—his plow and his oxen—without

considering if there were any one to tend them, and *ran* after Elias.

The Apostles also, St. Peter and his brother St. Andrew, abandoned all to follow our Lord ; for, says the Evangelist : Our Lord called them to Him at the moment they were fishing, and casting their nets into the sea, “ they abandoned instantly their nets, without even drawing them out of the water ”—not thinking of the fish they might have caught—“ and they followed our Lord. ” Immediately after, the same remark is made of St. James and of St. John, his brother, occupied with their father in mending their nets : “ As soon as our Lord had spoken, they left their nets and their father, to follow Him. ”

There is recorded on this subject something that greatly contributes to the praise of the celebrated Doctor Duns Scotus, who is in high esteem for his eminent virtue. One day, walking in the suburbs of Paris to enjoy the fresh air, he received a letter from his Provincial, who had directed him to leave Paris for elsewhere. This great Doctor, as obedient as learned, having read this letter, did not return to the city, nor even to his monastery to get his little baggage and to take his writings ; but from the same spot where he finished reading this letter he went directly to the place he was ordered.

The third degree that raises this promptitude to the highest point of its perfection is when one not only quits the things he is doing, but leaves them even before they are finished. Some, in fact, readily leave what they are engaged in to respond to

the call of the bell or the command of the Superior, provided all is finished, but are pained to leave a work for which they have affection, so long as there remains something of it incomplete, and when the time for the execution of the thing commanded is not pressing; for passion and attachment readily convince them that the intention of the Superior is not for them to leave unfinished what they have in hand. But such, evidently, is not the opinion of St. Benedict, for in his rule he says: Emptying their hands on the spot of what they hold, and leaving their work as it is, without finishing it, etc.

Smaragdeus, Abbot of St. Benedict, who lived in the eighth century, writing on this rule, says: As soon as the signal is given to go to the church, let all, making the sign of the cross on their foreheads, reply: "*Deo gratias*;" let all those who are working in the garden leave their spade and rake; let the workmen lay down their tools, the scribes their pens, not even finishing the letter half formed; in a word, let all the brothers put down what they have in their hands, and suspend their work. St. Ignatius also gives a similar command: Let all, on hearing the sound of the bell, go immediately to whatever duty they are called, leaving even unfinished the letter commenced. The gloss, explaining the fourth chapter of St. Matthew, and admiring the prompt obedience of the Apostles, of whom we have spoken, uses the following words, that St. Bonaventure and others after him have found so beautiful and expressive: "*Perfect obedience leaves its work imperfect.*"

We have seen the practice of this prompt obedience in Elias and the Apostles ; behold it again in others. Cassian speaking of the monks of Egypt, says : As soon as the signal is heard to go to prayer or some other duty, you see them all leaving their cells in great haste—so that if any one, in writing, has commenced to form a letter, he dares not finish it, but leaves it as it is ; not having as much care for his work as for the perfection of his obedience, to which he gives himself with all possible fervor. Thus, Mark, disciple of Salvian, in the Lives of the Fathers—having been called by his Superior, left half-finished an *O*, that he had commenced ; with many similar instances given of these first Religious.

Soldiers in the army, and in the heat of battle, teach us a lesson. A soldier named Chrysentheus—greatly praised by Cyrus and Xenophon—having his cutlass raised to kill his enemy, hearing the retreat sound, lowered his arm to replace his sword in its scabbard, without striking the intended blow, judging, says Epictetus, that it was more praiseworthy to obey his captain, than to satisfy his wrath, and gratify his vengeance. It is then incumbent on Religious to obey with this requisite promptness, and to excite them thereto, they should persuade themselves, that the command comes from heaven—not from a man, but from God ; or as St. Ignatius has it : as if commanded by God in person ; and the voice of the Superior coming from the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nor did the Saint speak thus without reason, since the Superior is the

lieutenant of Jesus Christ, who governs and speaks to us in His place and in His name. Samuel, when called by God, during his sleep, replied: "*Here I am*"—and ran to the high priest Heli—presenting himself to him, saying: "Here I am, what do you wish me to do?"—As he was called three times consecutively, he ran each time with the same promptitude to Heli—because, as Scripture remarks, he knew not then that it was a divine revelation.

To excite ourselves to the practice of this prompt obedience, let us picture the obedience of the stars, of which, the prophet Baruc says: "As so many sentinels in brilliant armor, the stars make their rounds with diligence and joy. *And the stars have given light in their watchings, and rejoiced: They were called, and they said: Here we are; and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to Him that made them.*" It is written of the thunder in Job: "Thou despatchest the thunders, that go with an indescribable quickness to execute Thy orders, and then to return to Thee to render an account, saying: Here we are, ready to return." There is nothing more prompt, more rapid than the lightning: wherefore, the prophet Ezechiel saw the four mysterious animals, who drew the chariot of the glory of God, and who signified the *just*: "They went and they returned," says the prophet, "with a swiftness that equalled that of the lightning and the thunder." Consider, moreover, how very agreeable this prompt obedience is to God, who has so often recompensed it with signal gifts, and has even honored it with miracles. St. Bernard,

speaking of the obedience of Zacheus, as related above, says: You have learned how Zacheus obeyed; learn also, how he was recompensed: Our Lord saying to him: "Salvation is this day come to thy house."

Thaulerius relates of a Religieuse, that having left our Lord who came to visit her in her cell in the guise of a little child, she found Him, on her return, full grown. Astonished at this change she inquired the reason, and our Lord replied: Thy prompt obedience in attending the community exercise to which thou wast called made me increase in stature, as thou seest, and this is to show thee how agreeable thy action has been to me, and how much it has augmented thy merit.

Another Religious, having, in like manner, left the Divine Infant in his cell, to go where the bell called him, found our Lord still there, on his return, when he said to him: I would have left you and not returned, if you had not obeyed the sound of the bell. St. Frances of Rome, in prayer or any other exercise of piety, if her husband or any member of the family called her, needing her assistance or presence, she obeyed promptly and cheerfully: Our Lord gave her to understand, one day, that such conduct was most pleasing to him: for, while saying the Office of the Blessed Virgin, and being interrupted four times in one verse, she found, on her return, this verse written in letters of gold, by her good angel, who was very familiar to her.

The cellarist of St. Columban was one day drawing some beer, and Bercairius, a Religious of Lux-

euil, some wine, for the use of their respective convents. When in the act, they were sent for by their Superiors. Their ardent affection for obedience caused them to leave promptly, without thinking to close their casks, which would be emptied, and the wine and the beer lost; but God, pleased with their promptitude, stopped both casks, and let not a drop be wasted. It is true, says Turrecremata—explaining the rule of St. Benedict—that in such cases, and in others, where there would be detriment ensuing to the community or the neighbor—things should not be left abruptly and unfinished; but care should be taken to prevent evil consequences: also, in our actions we should not make use of extraordinary ways to accomplish them, nor to expect miracles to give a complete success.

Besides, this diligence is not only pleasing to God, but also most agreeable to men. *Should you know a competent man*, reasonably expedient in doing what he has to do, you would say: he merits to be employed in the service of kings, and to gain their esteem. It is alike edifying and useful to a whole community—whereas, the want of diligence occasions them great inconvenience. We are sorry to see a sluggard, who delays to come—who has to be waited for—who always arises the last—who, by his laziness and his dilatoriness disturbs in some degree regular discipline, arrests action, and causes others to lose time. Wherefore, St. Pachomius had directed that he who came late to the refectory, should for penance remain standing in the midst of others: or even be dismissed with-

out his meal. St. Basil desired that such a one should fast till the morrow. At any rate, the lawful rule requires that each one should report the cause of his delay—and he is obliged to come in time when he can.

SECTION IX.

Of the Courage of Obedience.

The third quality of true obedience is courage to overcome all the difficulties it encounters. These difficulties are not by any means trifling: for as St. Bonaventure says: Man, being from his youth prone to evil, according to Holy Scripture, each wishes to follow his will and the inclinations of his corrupt heart.

The first man, by his disobedience, has entailed on his descendants a love and esteem for their own will, and a great difficulty in embracing that of others. Wherefore, St. Bernard remarks, it is no easy task to renounce one's own will to do that of another.

Then courage and strength are necessary to overcome these obstacles, and to conquer all others that the Religious has to encounter individually in divers manners and from various causes. One has great need to excite himself to the practice of this virtue, considering he has promised it to God—that he has pledged his word, in pronouncing the vow to obey in all that is not manifest sin, and consequently, in things difficult as well as easy: reflecting, moreover, that he can do nothing more

useful in this life, nor more certainly conducive to his salvation: nothing more perfect, nor more divine: nothing that can merit a greater recompense in heaven.

It is by such powerful considerations as these that the Saints have derived that admirable courage and invincible strength which have caused them to perform such extraordinary and heroic acts of obedience. Behold some examples. St. John Climachus relates: That when he went to the monastery that is near Alexandria, a man, who till then had been a professional robber, came to solicit admittance into the novitiate. The Superior, most holy and profoundly versed in the guidance of souls, told him that he must remain for seven days, to consider at leisure the order of the community and the manner of life led therein, before he could receive a definite answer to his request. The term of days having expired, the Superior had this man called to his presence, when he questioned him as to what he thought of the house, and if he still seriously desired to remain. This man, having replied that he wished it with his whole heart, the Superior questioned him upon his entire life, then obliged him to make a general confession. After which he said: I now desire that you acknowledge your crimes before all the Religious of the monastery. This poor man, being touched with so deep compunction that to expiate his sins he feared no confusion, replied that he was ready to make this accusation, not only before the Religious, but if so wished, in the midst of the city of Alexandria.

Then the Superior had all the Religious of the monastery assembled, to the number of three hundred ; as it was on Sunday, the Gospel having been read, the penitent advanced, with his hands bound behind him, clothed in rough hair-cloth, and his head sprinkled with ashes. This novel spectacle, the cause of which the community were ignorant of, so strongly affected those present that they all commenced weeping, when beholding the penitent silently advancing, and the Superior calling out to him, in a loud and firm tone of voice : Remain there ! for you are unworthy to enter a place so holy. These few words, pronounced with such solemnity and authority, so awe-struck this contrite sinner that he fell with his face to the ground ; assuring us afterwards on oath that this voice did not seem to him to be that of a human, but resembled more a peal of thunder. On rising up, bedewed with his tears, the Superior commanded him to declare openly, before the assembly, all his sins. He humbly obeyed, but not without horror to his auditors ; for he confessed not alone poisonings and murders, of which he had rendered himself guilty, but other crimes, that to hear would cause a blush, and therefore, not fit to be related. After this public confession and humiliation, the Superior directed that his head be shaved, and that he be clothed with the Religious habit.

The second example here given is also related by St. John Climachus, as follows : One of the principal citizens of Alexandria, named Isidore, who had been in some eminent post, left the world, some

years since, to retire in this monastery, where I found him on my arrival. When he first entered, the wise and holy Superior above mentioned said to him: If you are fully resolved to take up and to bear the yoke of Jesus Christ, I desire that you exercise yourself, before all things, in obedience. Isidore replied: Father, as the iron in the hands of the smith, so also I place myself within yours, to be worked, beaten, and fashioned as you wish. Accordingly, the Superior, to test his obedience, commanded him to remain at the door of the monastery, and to kneel before all who came in or out, saying: "Father, pray for me, who am a sinner, deserving chastisement." Isidore instantly obeyed, as an angel would obey our Lord. After having passed seven years in this one exercise, the Superior, in consequence of an obedience so heroic and a patience so untiring, judged him worthy to be admitted among the Religious, and even to be promoted to holy orders; but Isidore entreated him, through the medium of several in the monastery, including myself—all unworthy and miserable as I am—to be pleased to allow him to finish his career as he had commenced it: thus indicating, though obscurely, that God would soon call him to Himself; which really happened, for in ten days after his request he passed from earth to enjoy eternal bliss.

Cassian cites two examples of this courage of the virtue of obedience. The first is that of two Religious, quite young, of the solitude of Scete, in Egypt. Having received orders of their Superior to carry some figs to Abbot John, who was sick, in

this same solitude, but at a distance of eighteen miles, they lost their way, owing to a heavy fog that suddenly arose. So, after wandering about all day and night, without finding the cell of this good Abbot, and overcome with weariness, hunger and thirst, were unable to move further: they knelt down in prayer, and thus breathed forth their last sigh, in the same spot, without touching their figs, for these were found with them. When the Superior perceived they did not return, he sent out some of the Religious to seek them. These Religious, by tracing the foot-prints left on the sand, readily discovered them, dead, with their figs untouched; loving better, remarks the author, to die than to transgress the command of their Superior. What admirable obedience, and what heroic abstinence!

The second example is that of a certain Mucius who, on forming the design to become a Religious, went to a monastery to request this favor. He took with him his little son, of about eight years. He would not heed a refusal, but continued his requests with such constancy, that finally—and contrary to the customs of monasteries, he was received together with his child; but they were instantly separated, for the perfection of the father—who, if seeing this child daily, would remember that though he had renounced his wealth he had still his child—and this too he must renounce, in order to embrace the religious life, but he was firm in his resolve to endure all and everything—even to ignoring he was a father, and thus was he subjected to many severe trials. In order to prove his courage, and to dis-

cover if he had stifled as he should the natural affection of a parent, with the desire to serve God alone, in the mortification of Jesus Christ—they designedly neglected this child, leaving him shabbily clothed and with such a forlorn appearance that the sight of him was alone sufficient to pain the eyes and the heart of the father, if he still entertained the least inordinate attachment for this son, who never came into the presence of his father otherwise than in tears. However, he bore all this with an invincible constancy, saying or doing nothing that would injure the perfection of a heart consecrated entirely to God, and earnestly desiring not to oppose in the least the orders of his Superior, who after these trials, still wished to submit this courageous soul to a final one.

The Superior, one day, seeing this child crying, and feigning to be importuned and displeased thereat, commanded this father to rid the monastery at once of such a nuisance, by casting him into the river. The obedient disciple unhesitatingly took up the child, went out, directing his steps towards the nearest river, and would have executed the order he had received, if he had not been prevented by the Religious who, for this purpose, had been despatched in advance of him. Such perfect obedience was so agreeable to God, that it was revealed to the Superior, that by this one act Mucius had equalled in merit the obedience of the patriarch Abraham. Since Cassian here speaks of the obedience of this Patriarch, this same obedience serves also for some remarkable examples. Namely:

this Holy Patriarch had obeyed God in four most difficult things. The first was to leave his country, and with it, his parents, friends, acquaintances, his wealth, and all the advantages he enjoyed, to go where He would direct him, without otherwise designating the place. The second was to circumcise himself, with his son Ismael, and all the males of the family. The third was to send out from his house and his presence, this son and his mother Agar, whom he tenderly loved. But the fourth and the principal was, when he was commanded to sacrifice his son Isaac, an event in which are encountered some most memorable circumstances. 1. God had promised him in this son, a posterity as numerous as the stars of the heavens, and as the grains of sand on the sea-shore; nevertheless He commands him to put him to death, while still a youth. 2. This command to sacrifice his son, the only son of Sarah—that is to say, his heir, whom he singularly loved, as being particularly amiable and attractive, no less for his virtues than for the rare perfections of his mind and body. 3. He is commanded to put him to death with his own hand. 4. This command is to be executed in three days after being received—so as to augment during this intervening time his difficulty and his grief, by the sight of this dear child and by the thoughts of the pending trial. During three days, says Alcuin, weighing this circumstance, his paternal compassion is tormented by accumulated thoughts and the difficulties attending the execution of so painful an act. The father beholds his son during this space

of time, comparatively long in such a conjuncture; he eats and drinks with him: the son tenderly embraces his father during these three nights—he sleeps and rests on his bosom; and at each instant, the pain of the approaching death of this well beloved son, of whom he has to be the executioner, gains renewed strength in both his mind and heart. 5. God commands him to offer him in holocaust, so that, consumed entirely, there be left to him nothing to console him, not so much as his cherished remains. 6. He wishes him to offer him upon a mountain, so that before and after the death of this dear son, he would readily have before his eyes the place of his grief, that would be renewed each time he beheld it.

Lastly, and that which completed the bitterness of his sacrifice, were these words of Isaac himself: Father? The reply of Abraham: What do you wish, my son? Behold the fire and the wood to consume the holocaust, but where is the victim? God will provide, my son, is the reply of the grief-stricken father. All these words, and others similarly touching, with which he addressed him, were they not as so many arrows that pierced him to the heart? But who can say, who dare imagine, how keen his anguish when he led Isaac forth by the arm?—when he bound him?—when he made him kneel?—when he drew his sword from the sheath?—when he raised his arm to strike him—to sever the head of this dear son, who was his sole joy, his delight, and all his hope? What sentiments, what emotions, did he not experience! We are moved

and excited by the relation of such sufferings and such virtue; and St. Gregory of Nyssa could never behold the painting of this tragic scene without shedding tears. Assuredly, Abraham, in surmounting all these feelings and obstacles, has left to us a marvellous example of obedience and fidelity.

But the example of examples—the one upon which we should fix our eyes, our thoughts, and our affections—is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Obedience, says St. Cyprian, which is the mother of all arts, of all sciences, and of all virtues, and which has taken as its model our Lord and Saviour, demands that it be practiced with great care. Then let us see these models that our Lord has given us; but now, contenting ourselves with viewing them briefly, as we have heretofore spoken of them at length.

1. God, foreseeing the fall of the human race that would be caused by the envy of the demon, resolved to raise it up, and to render it yet more happy and glorious than it had been, so as to torment him, who, by his malice, was the cause of its ruin. The Son of God willingly offered Himself for the execution of this great enterprise, and He, for this purpose, assumed our nature, by taking birth of the Virgin Mary, His Mother. Thus, as man, He received of His Father the command to die for the salvation of the human race, according to these words of St. John: “*I lay down my life. No man taketh it away from me; but I lay it down of myself, and I have power to take it up again. This command have I received of my*

Father.” Our Lord accepted this order with all possible submission and affection, saying, as David and St. Paul teach: “I have said, here I am; I received this sentence, and I come to execute it. Behold, it is written at the head of the book of Thy decrees that I do Thy will, my God.” I submit thereto; Thy law is in my heart, and I wish to accomplish it. He has, in fact, executed it with such great ardor that even, according to the probable opinion of some theologians—in which they are supported by several holy Fathers—He made a *vow*. He was not content to receive with honor and respect, at the moment of His conception, and even afterwards, the command of His Father to die for men, and to embrace the Cross that was prepared for Him, to exalt yet more the obedience He rendered to His Father, and to show in a stronger light the love He bore to man, He even vowed to accomplish it, and to accept all that happened to Him during His life; so that the actions and all the sufferings of our Lord were the actions and sufferings of obedience, and promised by vow.

2. Immediately after His birth, our Lord practiced obedience to an excellent degree: though being sovereign Lord of the whole universe, He allowed Himself to be absolutely governed in all things by His holy Mother, and did as she wished, though she was but a simple mortal woman.

3. It is said of Him: In all the actions of His hidden life He was submissive to His holy Mother and to St. Joseph. He obeyed them in all things, though He knew incomparably better than they

what He should do, and how accomplish his actions.

4. He never entertained other thought or affection, during His whole life, than to execute punctually the will of His Father: "*I seek not my own will, but the will of Him who sent me.*" Also, He says to His Apostles, on the subject of the Samaritan, when they pressed Him to eat: "*I have a meat to eat, which you know not,*" which is quite different from that you offer me. "*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, that I may perfect His work*"—that is the salvation of man. He calls the execution of the will of His Father the food with which He nourishes Himself; as a delicious meat, full of juice, to strengthen Him, and in which He takes great pleasure.

5. But His most perfect and most splendid obedience was in His death and His cross. In fact, to obey His Eternal Father, it was necessary for Him to endure extreme sufferings in body and soul; it caused Him to undergo all that the rage of demons and the malice of men could possibly invent that was painful and ignominious; for He was apprehended, bound, beaten, scourged, crowned with thorns, buffeted, and then He died on a cross, between two thieves. It is why St. Paul says: "*He was obedient unto death—the death of the cross.*"

6. Add to this obedience that which He practices every day still, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar; that which fills with admiration and ecstasy all those who consider it attentively. Glorious and triumphant in heaven, surrounded by His angels, exercising His sovereignty, and His absolute power

over the entire universe, He obeys at the same time, and without delay, the words of a priest, and one who, perhaps, is ignorant, or even sinful. What excess of obedience! to thus descend from His throne, resplendent with glory, at the voice of a man, for his ends, and at the same moment that he pronounces the word. He obeys him, never failing to place Himself under the species of bread and wine, and in each of the particles, so great is His desire to obey, and to remain there, wherever He is placed, regardless of whatever indignity may be offered Him. Oh! how the Religious should imitate Him.

Learn, O man, says St. Bernard, learn to obey! Learn, O earth! to submit! Learn, O dust, to subject thyself! O proud ashes, be ashamed of thyself! A God abases Himself for you, and you exalt yourself. God obeys man, and you wish to command, and by such means to place yourself above God. If you are reluctant, being man, to imitate a man, at least do not account and esteem it beneath thee to follow the example of thy Creator.

When a Religious has to obey, when he feels his will and judgment rebelling against a command of his Superior, to lessen his pain and to bend his mind, let him attentively regard, with the eyes of the soul, our Lord in His sufferings—let him think of Him bound to a pillar, where repeated blows of rods and whips cruelly lacerate his delicate flesh: it is to this degree that our Lord obeyed, and has thus obeyed for me, for my salvation, for the hap-

piness and the glory of all. Let him regard Him at the moment when, with horrible cruelty and ignominy, a crown of thorns is thrust on His head ; when they bend the knee before Him, in mockery ; when they overwhelm Him with sacrilegious blows ; and then let him say to himself : Behold, to what extent the Son of God obeyed, and for me ! Let him contemplate Him suspended, dying, dead on the cross, plunged in an abyss of pain and infamy, and then ponder within himself the cause, the effects of this perfect obedience of the Son of God, the sovereign Lord of the universe, who wished thus to obey for my salvation, and to teach me obedience. With such an example ever present to me, can I be disobedient ? Can I recoil from any subjection ? Let the Religious who experiences pain in obeying hearken to and weigh these words of our Lord by the mouth of Isaias : “ *I do not resist ;*” I have never refused to obey in all that has been commanded me. “ *I have never gone back,*” for any difficulty whatsoever, in the accomplishment of what was ordered me. “ *I have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them : I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me, and spit upon me.*” Let him also consider these words of St. Paul, that he should render familiar by a constant repetition : “ *He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross,*” for me.

Moreover, let him see to it that each time our Lord comes to him, and touches his body and soul

in Holy Communion, moved thereto by love for him, and to give him an example of the mighty obedience of which we have already spoken, and designing thereby to imprint in him the spirit of this mystery, *“for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will.”*

Finally, let him recall the vow he has made, and the obligation he is under of keeping his word ; of the security, the excellence, and the merit of this action ; of the great grace it acquires for him in this life, and the glory it prepares for him in heaven.

Animating himself with the example of our Lord, encouraging himself by His love, and fortified with all these considerations, let the Religious, with closed eyes and with courage, do what will be commanded him ; he will find by such means it will be easy, and even agreeable, *“doing all things without murmurings or hesitation.”*

In conclusion, let us remark that if obedience should be exercised with courage, its practice augments courage, giving to it a new strength ; such being the precious fruit which, among others, it produces. Thus, the most noble Princess St. Euphrasia—near relative to the Emperor Theodosius the Younger—on becoming a Religiense, was carefully tried by her Superior, in order to cause her to rise to an eminent degree of virtue and perfection. She was sometimes commanded to carry large stones, which were by far too heavy for her strength, yet she neither wavered in faith, nor discussed the

seeming impossibility of the order, but raised them up courageously upon her shoulders, bearing them to the place indicated ; and perhaps the very next day would be told to return them from whence they were taken ; but the second command was as promptly executed as the first, and with a like disposition of mind and body. Thus, her virtue and her courage supplied her want of physical strength, causing her to perform prodigies.

It is related of St. Francis that as one of his Religious was terribly affrighted by demons, owing to the furious combats he had sustained with them, the Saint, to disabuse him of this vain fear, made use of the following remedy: He had this Religious called to him, and then asked him if it was possible that he allowed himself to be intimidated by the demon. The Religious ingeniously confessed the truth, and moreover, begged the Saint to permit some one to remain with him at night in his cell ; but the Saint replied : O coward that you are ! to fear these weak and impotent enemies, whom you know have no other strength nor power to injure you than that which God permits them ; but, in order that you may so learn by your own experience, I command you to go this night alone upon the top of the neighboring mountain, and there to cry out aloud : “ Haughty demons, proud spirits, come all of you, and do your worst to me—treat me as you may.” He obeyed with humility and courage ; but not a demon durst approach him, and thus was he delivered from his vain fear.

SECTION X.

Of Murmurs Against Obedience.

All Religious may readily conclude, from what we have said, the strict obligation they are under to obey their Superiors, without murmuring, at their direction. But because many fail in this respect, and that frequently, and thus sully and disfigure all their obedience, commit much sin, and render their life miserable. Wherefore, we may say, first, that God most expressly forbids all murmuring and backbiting of Superiors. "Thou wilt not speak evil of the gods," says God, by Moses; that is to say, you will speak no evil of Superiors, magistrates, and of those whom God has established in His place for the government of men.

It slander of any one whomsoever is a sin, strictly forbidden and severely punished, because it wounds the principal of the Christian virtues—that is to say, charity of the neighbor—it is doubtless much more so when it attacks Superiors, who hold in our midst so honorable a place—the place of God Himself. If, says St. Cyprian, he who injures his brother, who calls him a fool, is by the divine decree condemned to fire, to what should not he be sentenced who does so, *not* to his brother, but to his father and to his prelate—nay, who contemns him?

Wherefore, God says to us by David: "Offend not my anointed," (meaning kings and Superiors) "whom I give; and be not evilly disposed towards

my prophets," either in your thoughts, by conceiving for them injurious opinions, nor in your words, by speaking ill of them

The principal reason of this is that God holds as being done and said to Himself, all that is done and said to Superiors. "*He who hears you, hears Me,*" says our Lord, Himself—and, "*who despises you, despises Me.*" St. Peter says to Ananias—that "he had not lied to him," about the price of his field. "*It is not to man but to God that you have lied.*" St. Paul also gives this testimony. "He who resists power, resists God, who has established it." The children of Israel, says Holy Writ, murmured against Moses and his brother Aaron; but they said to this mutinous people: "And who are we, that you find fault with us? your murmurs are not against us, but against God." On another occasion, this people murmuring against these brothers, God said to Moses "How long do this people speak evil of Me? I will send them the plague to cause them all to die—and to exterminate them; as for you, I will give you a people to govern who will be greater and more powerful than these." Then it was to calm their trouble and appease their sedition, Josue and Caleb said to them. "Do you revolt against God"—be not rebellious to His will by opposing that of Moses. God Himself says to Samuel, when this people asked Him for a king who would govern them after the example of other nations; for until then, God had governed them Himself, by giving them the judges and prophets: "It was not with thee, but with Me, that they became dis-

satisfied, by *not wishing that I should reign over them.*” To show, says St. Gregory the Great, that He presides and commands, in the person of the Superior He has chosen, and that He, Himself, is offended in all that is done against the Superior. St. Cyprian says to the same effect: How can they escape the censure and vengeance of God, who speak evilly not alone of their equals, but also of their Superiors, to whom God wishes so much honor should be rendered, that He considers Himself contemned in the contempt shown to them, in keeping with what he said above.

These murmurs, and these disobediences irritate God, and move Him to take terrible vengeance. Thus, every time that the Israelites mutinied against Moses and Aaron, God was greatly angered, and severely punished them. As to the report of the *ten spies*, they complained of the land God had promised them, and they said: It was for their loss—their selves and their children—that they were sent there: when they turned against Moses and Aaron, so as to wish to stone them, God was greatly indignant, saying to them: “All those who have been witness to the grandeur of My Majesty, and who have seen the miracles I have wrought for them in Egypt and in the desert, and who notwithstanding, resist me, shall not see the land I promised to their fathers:”—And the Lord said to them by Moses: “How long will this people detract Me? how long will they not believe Me for all the signs I have wrought before them? But yet, all the men that have seen my majesty, and the signs that I have

done in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted Me, now ten times, and have not obeyed My voice, shall not see the land for which I swore to their fathers, neither shall any one of them that hath detracted Me behold it." And the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying: "How long doth this wicked multitude murmur against Me? Say therefore to them, as I live, saith the Lord: according as you have spoken in my hearing, so will I do to you. In the wilderness shall your carcasses lie. All you that were numbered from twenty years old and upward, and have murmured against me shall not enter into the land, over which I lifted up my hand to make you dwell therein, except Caleb and Josue. 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 that you have despised. They shall wander in the desert forty years. And for forty years you shall receive your iniquities and shall know my revenge. For as I have spoken, so will I do to all this wicked multitude, that hath risen up together against me; in this wilderness shall it faint away and die." And thus did these *murmurers* have to expiate their crime.

When Aaron and Mary murmured against their brother, Moses, because of his wife Sephora, who was an Ethiopian, God defending the cause of Moses, had Aaron and Mary brought to the tabernacle, where upon appeared the pillar of cloud, saying to them: "Why feareth thou not to speak ill of My servant Moses?" Having said this He withdrew, as an ex-

press mark of His anger ; and the column of cloud, the token of Divine protection, also disappeared. Mary, who was the more culpable, was then struck with leprosy, with which she was afflicted for seven days, during which time she was separated from all intercourse with others, and despite the prayers Moses made to God for her cure. This leprosy of Mary, says St. Ephrem, teaches us how sinful it is to murmur against Superiors, and to blame their conduct. This exterior mark of leprosy was as a mirror to reflect the soul's deformity ; the corruption of the flesh being symbolical of the state of the rebellious soul.

Secondly, to remedy this evil of murmuring, the Religious ought to consider the obligation of his Superior, as his duty obliges him by a rigorous law, even under pain of reprobation, to take care of the worship and honor of God (whose representative he is) in the house he governs, and consequently to watch if the rule is there observed, and the vows fulfilled, he should prevent as much as possible all occasions of offending God, and do all in his power to have His Divine Majesty well served. He is Superior but for this, and it is evident that God has put him in His place, has transmitted to him His authority, only to advance His worship and His honor.

Then it is clear that if the Superior is wilfully negligent, he offends God, he commits a sin which will be greater or less in proportion to the evil he does, and the good he omits.

Since the Superior is so strictly obliged to this care, it evidently follows that he is necessarily

compelled to warn, forbid, refuse, reprehend, punish ; and when he does so, has the inferior any just reason for complaint or murmur ? Should he not, on the contrary, obey without resistance, receive all given counsels and orders with submission and respect ? In not acquitting himself of his full duty the Superior lacerates his own conscience, shows himself a traitor to God, a renegade in the cause of his Master, and is even more culpable and criminal than an ambassador who betraying the prince whose envoy he is, and who confides to him his secrets, thinks but of destroying and ruining his affairs, and favoring those of his enemy.

The Religious should consider that his Superior is absolutely obliged in conscience and under pain of sin, to labor for the general good of the community, to sustain regular discipline, and to avert as much as possible all that could be injurious to it, to his own advancement, and to the glory of God.

Then, there is nothing that can cause so great detriment to himself and to the community as the faults and failings of subjects. He should therefore warn and reprove them, and thus apply a remedy ; otherwise, the house will infallibly be ruined.

It is a general and readily admitted principle, that things preserve their identity by mutual subordination, by the dependence of inferiors on Superiors. This principle inviolably adhered to, things must subsist and remain in a state of preservation ; on the contrary, if this order be reverted,

subordination cast off, there will be mutual destruction.

Father Everard, a prudently wise man, and fourth General of the Society of Jesus, said: That obedience being so necessary in all Religious orders, and particularly in his own, if it was not faithfully observed, they would all inevitably be ruined. He explains this necessity by the comparison of a vessel. If every sailor, said he, wished to make it reach the end of the voyage, according to his own views, and refused to follow the guidance and the orders of the pilot, who directs the rudder, could the vessel keep her proper course? Would she not, on the contrary, be dashed against some rock or shoal, where she would be surely wrecked? It is the same of Religious orders, if all do not allow themselves to be governed by a Superior; if each follows his own will, there cannot be discipline, and without discipline there is no stability, and Religious orders *must* be disbanded.

The Saints, to preserve their houses in primitive fervor, and to prevent their decay and ruin, have been very exact and positive in maintaining subordination and obedience—resorting to strange things for the punishment of faults.

We read that St. Berthold, Abbot, ordered his Procurator to give three pieces of silver to a poor man, who asked of him alms; and the Religious, declaring more than once that he had not that amount, the Saint gave him the key of the coffer, wherein was kept the money of the house, and he with another Religious, who was sent with him,

were told to see if they could find some. They found a box full of silver, which the Saint instantly directed to be thrown into the river. Then, as if to engage him to revoke the command, these Religious represented to him, that it seemed a great pity to lose so much money, when it could be so well bestowed in charity; but the holy Abbot replied: that it was sullied by such disobedience, therefore was unclean, that he would not have it made use of, as no good could come from it; and he persisted in having it disposed of as he directed;—nay, ordered it to be cast away. Afterwards he gave the Procurator a sharp reprimand for his disobedience, and deprived him of his office.

Another time, a poor man asking alms, he commissioned the brother who had charge of the bakery to give him some bread; when the latter replied: there was none made. The Saint then sent to the bakery to make sure of it, and there they found thirty loaves. He immediately had his Religious assembled in chapter, reproving with great severity this disobedient and untruthful brother; and he himself, with another, administered to him a discipline in public. After this, he caused the bread to be thrown into the river.

About this same time, St. Robert, first Abbot of Molesme, being one day near the door of his church, two poor scholars came to implore his charity, and to enable them to continue their journey. The Saint commanded his Dispenser to give them a dinner; but the Religious excused himself saying there was no bread in the monastery. The Saint believing

it said nothing more on the subject. However, soon after, he heard the bell at the usual time for going to the refectory, when he inquired of the Dispenser where he had procured bread for the dinner of the community, since he had so lately said that there was none in the house. The Dispenser replied: It is true, Father, that I have been sufficiently prudent in reserving a little for the community, who otherwise would have had to fast to-day. Then the Saint, filled with zeal and a holy indignation against this Religious, went to the refectory, and seeing many loaves upon the table, placed them in a basket, and directed them to be thrown into a river. He could not suffer, says his historian, anything in his house, contrary to obedience. God wishing to testify His approval of this action of the Saint, inspired some devout women of Chatillon to send three wagon loads of bread to the monastery, for the Religious.

The Saint, summoning the Dispenser before the assembled community, reproved him severely for his fault, at the same time instructing them all how they should obey their Superiors and confide in God.

St. Gregory the Great relates of St. Benedict, that when famine desolated the province of Rome, this holy man, touched with compassion at the sight of the miseries of the country, everywhere dispensed great charities. He gave freely of all the provisions he had in the monastery, till there remained but a little oil in a glass bottle.

A sub-deacon, named Agapius, came to beg the

Saint to have the goodness to give him some oil: when the Saint, without hesitation, directed his cellarist to give him all that remained, while regretting there was not more to bestow. After the lapse of some hours, he asked the cellarist if he had obeyed his order? The latter replied in the negative; because had he obeyed, there would have been no oil for the Religious. The Saint, greatly displeased with such a want of submission—such infidelity in a Religious—commanded instantly that this bottle with its contents should be thrown out of the window, not wishing to have in his store-room anything retained there by disobedience. This last order was better executed than the first, though without injury to the bottle, which fell down a deep precipice, the sound being audible from the window—yet the bottle remained entire.

St. Benedict, when learning its miraculous preservation, sent for the bottle and presented it, whole and entire—with its oil, to the Subdeacon. Then in presence of all his Religious he administered to the cellarist the correction his sin merited.

It is thus that to preserve their orders, and not to permit their decay, the Saints are moved with zeal to have subordination and obedience maintained, and to have the *disobedient* reprov'd and chastised with severity; otherwise, they would have witnessed their monasteries reduced to relaxation, or at least, behold them much impaired, and deprived of their primitive lustre.

We may add here, on the subject of obedience, that it is very strictly enforced in the army, of

which it is the soul and principal stay. The Carthagenians punished with death the captains who had gained battles contrary to their code of war. In the Roman militia, centurions were put to death on the cross—the punishment of slaves—for having fought without command, though they had defeated three thousand Sarmatians, and carried off rich spoils.

We may here also give an example from modern history. At the siege of Dourlan, the Spanish general caused a camp-master to be decapitated, because, in an engagement, he went in advance of the prescribed line, in order to capture a very important post.

By these examples, and all similar ones, let us make the following reflection : these victories were not in themselves and in their nature disagreeable to the kings and the victorious nations, since they eventually proved useful and honorable to them ; but, inasmuch as the requisite formalities of war were not observed, the victors were blame-worthy, and in lieu of receiving recompense and encomium for their valor, they were punished with death, for failing in submission to the chief in command. Thus is obedience essential for the preservation of an entire army : it being preferable to condemn an action in itself beautiful, advantageous and glorious, than to give it approval when sullied with disobedience—as well as to avoid future fatal consequences. If soldiers in the secular militia are obliged to obey their commanders, for the preservation of the army, and to secure the successful issue of battles, much

more so should Religious consider obedience as their *safe-guard*. According to the Holy Ghost in the Canticles—all Religious orders are as so many regiments of the Church militant—the *Religious, as soldiers on duty*—armed with obedience, to gain the victory over all their enemies.

SECTION XI.

Continuation of the same subject.

If all the reasons that we have advanced will not prove sufficiently powerful to arrest the course of murmurs in communities, and to restrain within bounds those who are subject to such failings, let it then suffice to know that Superiors are obliged to employ themselves in the salvation and perfection of their inferiors, and at the day of judgment God will demand of them an exact account of their stewardship. “Superiors watch over you,” says St. Paul, “because they have to render to God an account of your souls.” Wherefore it was, that God said to one of them, and in his person, to all Superiors, by the Prophet Ezekiel: “*I have placed you as a sentinel over all the house of Israel; to take care of it; for if failing to warn and correct those who need reproof: and they should come to grovel in their vice and be lost, I will hold thee responsible for their loss: thou wilt answer for it at the peril of thy salvation.*” God reiterates the same menace elsewhere, by the same Prophet, when he says: “If he whom I have placed to watch

over others sees the avenging sword of God about to fall on the head of some sinner, and he does not sound the trumpet to give him warning—the sword gives its blow and kills him—his blood will cry for vengeance against him and he will render to me an account. If I say to the sinner: Impious one, thou shalt die; and that, from sloth or from fear, or from some cowardly complaisance, thou didst not make it known to him so that he might avoid the misfortune that threatens him, and thus turn from his evil course to live better, and he die and perish: he will perish justly, since his sin renders him deserving of his fatal death; but you are guilty of his death, and I shall *re-demand* of thee his blood, at the price of thy life and thy salvation.”

Sometimes God spares, in some measure, delinquent inferiors, to discharge His wrath upon Superiors who have been negligent in preventing their faults. Here follows the remark of Theodoret and Origen, on the subject of the sin committed by the people of Israel with the Midianites. To punish them, God had all the chiefs hanged. But in a public sin, why were the chiefs punished? Because, replies Theodoret, they did not prevent it—did not turn the people aside from committing it. A people sins, says Origen, and in retribution, their princes are hanged: it is because they are responsible for the actions of the people, and have to bear the penalty of their faults, when they have not instructed them, warned them, or were not careful to reprove them.

The Superior is then obliged, in these severe extremities, to apply himself to the salvation of his inferiors—to withdraw them from sin, to correct their faults, to induce them to virtue and perfection, to which God calls them; consequently, he should, according to circumstances, warn, admonish, reprove, and impose on them the needful penances. When he thus acts, and so acquits himself of his duty, have inferiors the right to blame his conduct?—to speak ill of him, or to be angry with him? Do you wish him to be reprobated for you? Are you reasonable to exact of him to close his eyes to your vices; that he pass over your faults; that he encourage you in your bad inclinations, in your unmortified passions; that he allows you to fall without trying to prevent you, or to raise you up after you have fallen?—that he leave you to your own ruin, and by such means to offend God, and be lost along with you?

Behold the reasons why good and wise Superiors, who have care of their own salvation and that of their subjects, warn, reprove, and correct their subordinates when they should, and as they should. Thus, St. Paul, ordaining his disciple Timothy Bishop of Ephesus, gave him the following instructions: “Preach to your people the word of life and of Christian truths; solicit and urge souls with the thought of their salvation; reprehend them when they fail; have recourse to prayer to subdue them; make use of sharp reprimands in necessity—with great patience, however, and for good reasons.” Consequently, the best Superiors

are obliged sometimes to use the greatest severity, and communities often permit themselves to be deceived on this point. Imperfect subjects esteem Superiors troublesome and too severe if they are exact in having religious discipline observed, and are solicitous as to the rule being well enforced, and if they correct, when faults against it are committed. Whereas, they mistake for good Superiors those who *never* reprove nor restrict—agree to all, and refuse no one.

The wicked, says St. Augustine, are ever opposed to the good, and persecute him, because he approves not of the evil they do, and wishes not to be of their party. When the wicked commit some crime, and the Bishop does not reprove them, it is said: Behold a good Bishop! But if the Bishop is displeased—if he expresses disapprobation, he is at once a very poor Bishop. It is thus that St. John Chrysostom, though he was of a mild and gentle disposition (as is remarked by his historian), was, however, accounted austere and morose, because he inveighed against vice—reprimanded the vicious, who boldly denounced him as abusing his authority.

After all, define a good Superior as you like—depict him in whatever colors you please, we always have to agree, and return to it, that the best Superior is the one who best procures the salvation of his subjects—who prevents them from committing the most faults, who brings them most efficaciously to God, and who renders them the most virtuous and the most perfect.

This is the object, and end of his charge : he is Superior principally for this ; and when he finds a haughty, imperious spirit, one who is rebellious and refractory, who wishes neither to obey nor to give himself to his duty, should the Superior say nothing to him, for fear he would murmur and give disedification. If the Superior allows him to overturn the order of the house, and scandalize every one, it is to be feared that such a turbulent spirit will draw others to himself : for they will say: to have all license, you have but to act badly, and no one dares to touch you. But it is such subjects as these, principally, that the Superior is obliged to warn, to reprove, and to correct ; he should not fear their complaints. Sweetness is of no avail with such refractory spirits, says St. Gregory the Great ; they should be vigorously reprovèd ; and to them is applicable these words of Jeremiah : “Thy impudence makes thee bear on thy brow the look of a shameless woman;” and these of St. Paul : “O foolish Galatian, who has thus so miserably enchanted you, as not to obey ?” St. Francis Xavier, writing to an apostolic man, Father Gaspard Barze, whom he had left as Superior in Goa, expressed himself in these terms : If you have, among your inferiors, some one of great self-reliance, who bears himself haughtily, he should be severely corrected and humbled. Arrogance and such haughty manners, should be thus treated, to be cured, and much vigilance is necessary to prevent any one from supposing, that by showing resistance, and acting wickedly, he has at last succeeded in his wishes ;

that his Superior has been constrained to yield to him, and dare not correct him. Therefore, nothing is worse for such troublesome spirits, or more calculated to cause them to continue their evil course, than too great indulgence, to countenance their faults and their resistance to obedience. Such weak and timorous direction but emboldens them, serving to persuade them that they can freely do what they wish, without reproof. St. Ignatius faithfully carried into execution this wise counsel of St. Francis Xavier to Father Barze. His historian speaks as follows: If some times this holy man and wise Superior was obliged to assume a more severe countenance, it was in administering reproof, and when it rendered the more forcible and expressive, the strong and energetic terms he used on such occasions. The utility of this effective manner will appear in the conduct the Saint observed towards a member of the Society, a person as remarkable for his fine abilities, as for being turbulent and difficult to manage. St. Ignatius, not deeming it expedient to endure him longer, had him summoned to his room, and there, in the presence of several other Fathers, he tried sweetness, at first, to bring him into measures; but seeing this was of no avail, he quickly changed both his tone and manner, speaking to him with all the power of authority, threatening him with the wrath and vengeance of God, so as to strike with fear those present, who, throwing themselves on their knees before the Saint, implored pity for the delinquent. The latter, till then unmoved, as if struck by a clap of thunder,

fell down at the feet of the Saint, almost senseless, and in a stammering, confused voice, confessed his fault, with promises for the future, of a true amendment. Had not St. Ignatius resorted to such severe reproof, this Father would never have relented, and the Superior would have been accountable for his ruin.

But again—good Superiors do not content themselves with reproving the guilty alone, placing them in the right road; they even sometimes reprove the innocent—such as have committed no discoverable fault—in order to prevent their going astray, to cause them to practice the greater virtue, to augment their merit, and to elevate them, little by little, to a higher perfection.

St. Pachomius, seeing his disciple Theodore well-disposed to virtue, and capable of a high degree of perfection, and loving him most tenderly, exercised him in a heroic obedience; he would command him to perform a duty, then oblige him to leave it, to commence something else, and compel him to leave at the moment he had but half finished it; then would tell him, he had done nothing of any use—would express displeasure, load him with blame, though without the slightest provocation.

St. John Climachus, speaking of the famous monastery near Alexandria, says: That the Abbot—who was a most holy man and most skilful in the guidance of souls—appeared to be much dissatisfied with his Procurator, a very virtuous Religious, who certainly gave no cause for complaint. However, for his good, and that of others, the Abbot sharply

reproved him, and even commanded that he should be deposed from office. As I knew his innocence—adds St. John Climachus—I spoke in his behalf, privately to the Abbot, who made me the following wise reply: I am well aware, Father, that he is not in fault, but as it is an act of cruelty in a Father to take the bread out of the mouth of his famished child, so also, in a spiritual Father, is it an act of unkindness towards his inferior and to himself, if he does not hourly increase the crowns adapted to them, either by means of reproof, contempt, or humiliations. Otherwise, the Superior commits three serious faults: first, in depriving himself of the recompense merited by a well given reproof: secondly, inasmuch as he might cause a great good to others by an example of virtue in one of their brothers, and neglect to procure it for them: thirdly, and this is most important, it often happens, that those who have been the strongest and most patient in bearing abuse and contempt, lose little by little, this habit, from want of being exercised—for not being contemned by their Superior, who should not make too much account of their virtue—considering them as having already acquired perfection. The soul, like good and fertile land, if not bedewed with the waters of humiliation, will soon yield but thorns and briers, thoughts of pride, and a dangerous confidence in self. To this, particular reference is made by St. Paul to Timothy: ‘Be urgent—in matters opportune and inopportune—in time and out of time: warn and reprove.’

St. John Climachus here replied, that our weak-

ness being such, it might happen that many thus reproved without reason, or even with good reason, would leave religion to return to the world ; there-upon he remarked most wisely : The soul that for the love it bears to Jesus Christ, is attached to her Superior by the bonds of charity and faith, would sooner shed her blood than leave her profession ; recalling these words of St. Paul : “ Neither angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor any creature, will ever be sufficient to separate me from the charity of Jesus Christ.” For if the soul is not in this manner attached and united to her Superior, I am surprised that she can remain in religion. I know not of what use it will be to her, if constrained thereto, by a weak and forced obedience. Behold how this enlightened Superior treated his Procurator, causing him to rapidly advance in perfection.

St. John Climachus still relates, that the first deacon (of this holy house, a Religious of eminent virtue), begged of this same Superior two days before the “ Feast of Kings,” alias [Feast of the Epiphany] to be permitted to go to Alexandria on some business, promising to return in good time for the feast. But the demon, the declared enemy of men of virtue, raised so many obstacles, that he failed to return on the promised day and had to remain one day longer. But after his return he was suspended from his charge, and placed among the novices. This holy Religious endured this punishment with such patience and tranquillity of mind, that it seemed not as imposed on him, but

on some one else. Having passed forty days thus separated from the community, the Abbot reinstated him in his charge, but the holy man implored him the next day to allow him to continue the same penance and humiliation; because, said he, I have committed an inexcusable fault, one that merits no pardon. The Abbot, being well convinced of his innocence, and that this supplication was prompted from a desire to humble himself yet more, granted him his request. Thus was seen among the young novices, this venerable old Religious, asking of each with earnestness for their prayers, saying: I have committed the crime of disobedience, I being the least of all. This good and humble Religious, says St. John Climachus, discovered to me the reason why he asked with earnestness, not to leave the novitiate: I have never, said he, felt so great facility in bearing the yoke of religion and all the trials accompanying it, nor received so great an abundance of light and of divine consolation, as since I have been in this state of abjection.

Alas! what would be said, and what done, if Religious were so dealt with now-a-days? Much more gentle measures are used, and yet the virtues of to-day are, and should be, the same as in the time of these ancient Fathers, and in the primitive ages of the Church. Humility is the same, patience the same, obedience the same, charity the same, the Lord's prayer the same, the Apostles' Creed and the Sacraments are the same, and we should acquire all these virtues by the same means

as they were acquired by our forefathers: we should follow the same road, walk in their steps, to attain to virtue, and not think that to tend to and to arrive at perfection we shall have new roads and easy ways made for us. We read something quite remarkable in the life of St. Pachomius. This man, so holy, so wise, and so meek, for being one single time slightly angered, and for just reasons, against one of his Religious, said to God that he was unworthy to be Superior, and prayed to be discharged from his office. This great Saint, so little in his own eyes, during a famine that afflicted Egypt, sent his Procurator to buy corn for his monastery, giving him for the purchase one hundred shillings. The Procurator had at first much difficulty, notwithstanding his search, in finding the grain, till he came to the town Hermothen, where he met a pious man, who, entertaining great esteem for St. Pachomius and his Religious, and having in his keeping the public granary, when asked for corn by this Religious, instantly gave him the full value of his money, with the offer of as much more as he wished, by his promise alone to pay for it when convenient. The Procurator readily availed himself of so favorable an occasion to take double the amount of corn, as the Saint had directed, shipped it, and was about returning to the monastery, well pleased with his purchase. But St. Pachomius, having learned of the transaction, instantly dispatched an express in advance of the Procurator's return, to tell him that he was not to bring so much as a single grain of this corn into

the monastery, and that he was not to dare present himself, after acting so contrary to the received orders of obedience, and in keeping with the promptings of prudence ; that before returning he should sell this corn at the current price, after which he was to take only as much as the value of the hundred shillings given him, and restore the price of the balance to this pious man, whose goodness he had abused, regardless both of the commission of obedience and the public distress. The Procurator, having executed these last orders, returned ; but St. Pachomius removed him from his office, at the same time commanding him not to go out of the house, or to meddle with its affairs. Who would not have said that this Procurator should have availed himself of such a favorable occasion as presented to increase his store of provisions, and, in lieu of blame, that he merited much praise ? Behold, however, how such actions were regarded by the Saints, who, possessing more than ordinary perception, saw things in quite a different light.

Then it must follow that if the Religious is animated with a holy zeal for his salvation and perfection, he will not take it ill when he is reproved, or murmur thereat ; but, on the contrary, will be delighted that his Superior thus acts in his regard to exercise his virtue. Among those who make profession of obedience, says St. John Climachus, some are found who greatly deceive themselves ; for, perceiving the yielding disposition of their Superior, and the desire he has to content his infe-

riors, they attract his will to theirs, and they manage him with so much address that he gives them no command not in keeping with their desire. They should know that, having thus obtained their own will, they are not in any wise obedient—that they lose the crowns acquired by obedience, because obedience is a perfect renunciation of all one's own desires, of all deception, and of all the artifices with which self-love colors its demands. Whoever acts in this manner, either openly or covertly, so that his Superior commands him what he himself wishes, deceives himself if he supposes he is obedient, as in this he does not submit to his Superior, but rather, the Superior obeys him.

St. John Climachus following up this subject, says: There was once a solitary named John Sabaite, an intimate friend of mine, who, seeing that the Father who governed him was so extremely good natured that in place of assuming authority over him, he treated him with great consideration, and never gave him any humiliations, he most wisely judged that this sweetness would prove prejudicial to him. He accordingly asked permission to withdraw to another monastery where he would be more usefully exercised for his perfection: thereby making, in fact, great profit. In after time, three young solitaires came to see him, to beg him to receive them as his disciples; but he declined from humility. They then besought him, at least, to prescribe for them a manner of life. The prudent John Sabaite, having by this time recognized the spirit that animated those young solitaires, said to the third

one: Choose for your director the one whom you will consider as the most trying and most exacting; and suffer all the contempt, the outrages and the harsh treatment to which he will daily expose you with such courage and sweetness that you would have no more difficulty in supporting them, than you would have in eating honey and drinking milk. But, Father, said one of the brothers, if it should happen that this Superior be tepid and indifferent in the exercise of his duty, should I not leave him? The Saint replied: Were he even to do worse, and when you might see him living in every disorder, leave him not for that, but say within yourself these words of our Lord: "My friend, why came you here?" what was it that brought you here? and you will find all these thoughts against your Superior to evaporate as smoke.

Thus it is, that the Religious who wishes to advance in virtue should not be at enmity with warnings and corrections, but to love and esteem them, as most powerful means for his acquiring perfection. Otherwise, he will cause his own injury; by evincing such a craven spirit, his Superior, for fear of driving him to worse, will be most careful never to speak to him harshly, or to refuse him anything; and thus he will pass at best an unprofitable life, he will grope and die in his defects, with imminent danger to his salvation.

Something similar to this happened to a Religious of St. Augustine, a lay brother, and Procurator of the monastery. He was sufficiently competent for his charge, but while attending with all

diligence to the temporal affairs of the house, became negligent in his own spiritual advancement, so as to have much difficulty not alone in obeying the Priors, but would not even suffer them to intimate the slightest direction in his charge, thus becoming so over-bearing that all in the house had to accommodate themselves to his humor. But, as he was a faithful Procurator, zealous for the common good, he was left in peace as much as possible, in the discharge of his duty. After some years, he died ; he appeared to a Religious of the same monastery, saying : There was no salvation for him, and that he was eternally lost. The Religious then asked him why he was not saved ? Because, he replied, I was not warned in my duty, nor reproved for my faults ; and while every one thought they were doing him a good, by overlooking his faults, and in not reprovng him, they had, on the contrary, caused his loss.

Conclusion of the same subject.

To place this important subject in a yet stronger light, it will prove useful to make the following remarks : First, that one should not judge of the perfection or defects of a government by the amount of complaints and murmurs. It is evident, there never was found a Saint, however excellent and perfect a Superior he was, who escaped all blame ; nor any one, however good his government, that some contradiction has not been his portion. This is illustrated in the person of Moses. He was

chosen by God, filled with his spirit ; and the numberless, remarkable miracles, were sufficient to attest his mission and his power. He had perfectly conducted the people, with whose government he had been charged, and besides, he was, of all men of his time, the meekest and most prepossessing : notwithstanding all this, how many were there not who murmured against him and his government. But this appears even still more clearly in God's own government. He who is infinitely wise, holy and perfect : perfection itself, so that, whatever scrutiny may be made, there can be no reasonable fault found with the least thing He directs even. He is the most interfered with, the most censured of all Rulers. Thus the poor man is not content with his allotted poverty, but wishes to be rich ; the rich man desires higher intellectual capacities : the learned man wishes for better health, the farmer desires rain, while the traveller does not wish it : thus, everywhere is there discontent and complaint, though there can be no government so skilful and so just. The second remark is, that there should be taken into consideration, both the number and the quality of those who murmur, before assenting to anything they advance : for instance, when these complaints are made by one or two, they should not be as much credited as when a majority have given testimony. Again, if it is the good, the wise, and those who are esteemed for virtue in the house, who express dissatisfaction, there is much more reason for believing it to be well founded, than when the murmurs come from

the unmortified, those who are the least exact in keeping the rule and religious observance. If it is the chagrined spirits who thus complain, those who are gloomy everywhere, who are too sensitive, over delicate, ready to take offense at a word or gesture from the Superior, who think that to ask a holiday is absolutely to obtain it, or, to take it, without even giving the Superior leisure for examining or reflection : should the complaints of these latter be received and credited as readily as those of the better disposed spirits ? those who are not easily disturbed, and who pass over trifles hourly occurring in daily life, without comment or dissatisfaction. It is readily admitted, that quite a different opinion should be formed as to the complaints of the one to the murmurs of the other. The third remark is, to see about what they complain and for what cause : and to reflect first, that it is very rare to hear complaints upon salvation and perfection. No one, in fact, complains that the Superior does not mortify him, humble him, make him suffer, does not sufficiently watch over him, to oblige him to a more faithful observance of the rule and to the practice of virtue. Murmurs are not likely to be for these causes, but rather for things that restrain nature. "If they are not satiated," says David : "if they are not well fed ; if good bread be wanting, meat and wine, or something is desired besides what is served to them in the refectory, or permitted them elsewhere, they quickly murmur, they fail not to make their complaints audible.

The murmuring of the children of Israel is a

splendid example to confirm this truth. They complained many times of Moses and Aaron that they had taken them from a country where there was an abundance of food, and had conducted them into a sterile desert, to perish of hunger. Another time, the multitude, weary with continual abstinence—having nothing but manna for their daily food—desired to eat meat; and in this disorderly appetite, weeping and lamenting as children, said: Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the abundance of fresh fish we had in Egypt; the delicious cucumbers and melons; the savory leeks, onions, and garlic—the remembrance alone of which is like putting water into the mouth. Behold the murmurs of this coarse and sensual people, and their desire for dainty viands. Such murmurs are still of daily occurrence in religious communities, *not* by the wise, the virtuous, and the spiritual, but by the illiterate and sensual, who place no bounds to their dissatisfactions, but ever give free rein to their unmortified spirits in such expressions as, the bread is too stale, the meat tough, the rice not properly cooked, the roast over-done or burned, the eggs none of the freshest, the fish not fit to eat, the coffee muddy, etc. But, to place some restraint on their thoughts and their *tongues*, these miserable Religious would do well to consider the terrific punishment that God inflicted on the *sensual* Israelites, of whom David says: “They had yet the food in their mouths when the anger of God fell upon them, and caused them to die while indulging their sensuality.”

Complaints are again made, because the Superior has the rules observed—reproves and imposes penances for transgressions of silence, for entering the cell of another without permission, or refuses what is not in his power to grant. In truth, complaints are raised for his doing what is simply reasonable and necessary, but opposed to the humor of him who by command is employed in an office for which he is adapted, but for which he has no inclination. Let it then be known, first, that you cannot justly complain of your Superior when he requires of you your duty—when he causes you to observe your rules and fulfil your vows, for to this you are obliged, and he is compelled to exact it of you.

Secondly, it is well to know what your Superior has done and said, so as to apply a remedy to the subject of your complaints. He provides for the necessities of the house, to the best of his capacity; he has done all that he could to spare you, but he has no one else suited for this office, that must be filled, and while he is very sorry that it has fallen to your lot, he cannot do otherwise.

Thirdly, you complain that, on having gone to your Superior for some private matter, you had to leave him without receiving satisfaction—that he neither listened to or spoke to you as you desired. But you did not consider that your Superior was just at that time interrupted—that he had some perplexing affair in hand that engrossed his attention, or that he had to regulate some urgent business of the house; and because in your case he did not give you all the attention that you expected, you become displeased—you murmur.

As each person has more love for himself than for others, so each one wishes that his Superior should be as attentive to him and to his wants as if there was nothing of more importance to be done, or seen after, and that all else should be left, to think first of him.

Fourthly, you take offense that your Superior has refused you something that you requested, or directed you to have something else, without giving you any reason, either for his refusal or his command, and you do not consider that your Superior is not obliged to render an account, or give a reason to his inferior, for what he does, nor to justify his conduct; and that the inferior, to keep within the proper limits of his sphere, cannot exact it of him. Otherwise, the inferior would submit to reason, and *not* to authority, nor to obedience; he would be acting more the equal than the inferior; besides, of the numerous things the Superior orders, there is not very often the quarter for which he should give reasons: why he refuses this, or why grants that; why he takes an office from one, to give it to another; and why, finally, he makes such and such disposition of things in the house. The declaration he would thereof make might be prejudicial to a third party—make known his defects, put enmity between certain spirits, engender quarrels, trouble the repose of many, and cause disedification to others.

Wherefore it is that Superiors should not, very often, disclose the motives from which they act. Besides, is it not manifestly a failure of judgment

to blame and condemn a thing the cause of which we know not? And if it is known, will not the greatest censurers and the severest critics of the Superior's government judge sometimes that he could not and should not have acted differently?

If, without prejudice to the public good, each member of the community could be three or four months in office, they would learn from experience, provided they faithfully acquitted themselves of this duty, the injustice of complaints against Superiors, and they would certainly be much more guarded in future in this respect.

Fifthly, let us suppose that the Superior, who is but a mortal, and consequently is liable to commit faults, to effectually fail in some points of his office or government, still there is no person in the house so deserving of excuse, of support, and of sympathy, as he is; for he may, perhaps, have been driven to committing these faults from the multiplicity of affairs, or by difficulties ordinarily inseparable from his charge. First, he has to provide for all wants, general or particular; he has to think of affairs within and without the house; his head is ever at work on various trying affairs, whilst his inferiors are in repose: he works whilst they sleep. Then, if he has the misfortune to commit some faults, even of a *trivial* nature, all is lost—he is spoken ill of, and his conduct is blamed.

Doubtless, inferiors ought to entertain for their Superiors quite other sentiments and words, bearing towards them great and sincere compassion.

Have they reason to exalt their position, to envy

them in seeing how devoted they are in the care of temporals—of such contemptible and abject things as counting money, of finding out the price per pound of meat, etc., and of a cord of wood; of having law-suits, and other similar uncongenial things? The inferiors, on the contrary, have much greater facilities for applying their mind to things purely spiritual, for cultivating and enriching their intellectual powers, for sanctifying and deifying their souls. Is it not easily seen, after all, that the division is quite unequal, that the difference of occupation is very great, widely separated, and that the whole of the advantage is on the side of the inferior? We have but to listen to these most remarkable words of St. Gregory the Great: Often, God, by an effect of His mercy, conceals the exterior occupations of those He most tenderly and dearly loves, as we often see it happen that a father of a family gives toil to his servants, so as to spare his children; and thus these last preserve their beauty and their neatness, while the servants are covered with dust. Then he demonstrates this by an excellent figure. He says that God commanded Moses to have the sanctuary of the temple covered with a most precious carpet, made of linen and scarlet stuff, while the exterior tabernacle, in which was the sanctuary (as the interior and most holy portion), covered with a coarse hair-cloth and skins, as a protection from the rain, the winds, and the dust. This signifying that Superiors (as represented by the tabernacle) are exposed to all the unpleasantness of exterior and secular things,

whereas, they keep in security—beneath skins and awnings—their inferiors, designated by the sanctuary, who, by these means, can readily preserve the beauty of their linen and the brilliancy of their scarlet, while the tabernacle—Superiors—are beaten by the rains and storms.

In regard to the murmurs of the children of Israel, of which we have made mention, Moses, notwithstanding all his power and exemplary meekness, was so moved to displeasure, and his authority seemed to him so insupportable, says Holy Scripture, that, addressing himself to God, he said to Him, in the bitterness of his heart, and in terms that excited pity: “Why have you afflicted your servant to this degree? Why loaded me with the burden of all this people? Where shall I find meat for so many persons? They have sought me, weeping, saying to me: Give us flesh-meat, for we wish to eat of it. I can no longer live with this troublesome people; if you will not heed me and relieve me of my burden, I pray you rather to let me die; I will consider death a great blessing, if I can at such price be delivered from so many evils.”

Behold to what Superiors are reduced; are they not deserving of pity and support? They can often say in the sentiments of Moses: They ask of me such and such things, they urge it and I cannot give it; I have it not, the house has not the requisite means, the rule forbids it, the vows are opposed thereto, the public edification will in consequence be wounded and compromised

After all, the result of these complaints against Superiors is to produce a prejudice in favor of the Superior, because he does not act for his own interest, but for that of God, for the good of religion, and for the salvation of his inferiors; whereas the inferior, on the contrary, has but to look to and pursue his own affairs, often, not to say always, with an interested spirit, with self-love, and even with passion, that can readily deceive him. But what does the Superior for his personal interest, when he refuses what is asked him? Nothing at all; on the contrary it would serve to his advantage to grant requests, to permit his subjects to lead an easy, comfortable life, and by this means he would gain their hearts, cause himself to be loved, at least, by a natural affection, as well as acquire the reputation of an accommodating and *amiable* Superior.

Thus inferiors should endeavor to make all allowances for their Superiors, and be extremely reserved in complaining and speaking ill of them. The Holy Spirit says: "Thou shalt not contemn the gods," that is, *Superiors*. "Touch ye not my anointed, and do not evil to the prophets," offend not your Superiors.

Thence, in all moral actions, there can be nothing more unreasonable than for subjects to detract and contristate their Superiors, whom they should ever regard with reverence and beneficence, as also to spare them all unnecessary solicitude.

And if sometimes the Superior warns, reprehends, enjoins penances and corrections, in keeping

with his obligations, inferiors should not take it amiss and complain, murmur interiorly or exteriorly, but support these reproofs with patience, humility, and even with joy ; receiving correction as a salutary dressing, a healing salve applied to their wounds.

When St. Pachomius reproved, with or without reason, his dear disciple Theodore, so as to fortify, to exercise him, and to aid him to acquire self-abnegation, Theodore received these admonitions without vexation or disquiet, but ever with profound respect and much sweetness, thereby turning all to his spiritual profit.

We read of the blessed St. Aloysius, S.J., that when his Superiors humbled him for something, or administered reproof, he listened with respectful attention, his head uncovered, his eyes cast down; and ever without excuse or reply. It happened one day that he was blamed for some trivial, exterior fault, occasioned as was usual by his too great interior recollection : he was so touched with compunction, that he swooned away on the spot. When he had recovered his consciousness, he threw himself weeping at the feet of his Superior, conjuring him, with the greatest humility, to pardon him ; so that the Superior had some trouble to recall him from his supplicating posture.

We should imitate such models as these, when we receive the warnings and reprehensions of our Superiors.

Independent of what has been mentioned concerning obedience, we will offer some further instruc

tion, in the following section, wherein will be shown the manner of practicing obedience.

SECTION XIII.

The Practice of Obedience.

It is necessary, first of all, to know that the most important thing in this matter is, that there is no religious obedience where the *soul* is not obedient. Wherefore, *interior* acts are the first and the principal ones to which this practice points, and to which it tends. The *will* must then submit to the Superior's orders, and very sincerely wish to fulfil them ; and in order to render this obedience perfect and the sacrifice complete, one must furthermore submit his judgment by determining against all his own reasons and his own lights, as we have already explained—that the thing commanded has been wisely ordered.

He should also behold God in his Superior, and that it is God, who, by his Superior, as by His organ, governs him, employs him, accedes to or refuses him, reprehends and corrects him.

It is necessary, I say, that to be well persuaded of this truth, and that he never lose sight of it, he must abandon himself to the conduct of his Superior, to be disposed of as he desires ;—he must esteem and honor him in his quality of Superior and as the vicar of Jesus Christ ;—regarding him with sentiments of respect, love, confidence and joy, as his father, his guide, his physician, and as him to

whom God has committed the care of his salvation and of all his necessities.

Secondly, exterior acts of obedience consist in doing the thing commanded by the Superior, in the time, place and manner that he has ordered it; to do it with the integrity, the promptitude, and the courage it demands, to do it even with a certain joy which appears in the countenance, in the words, and in the manners. This gayety, says St. Bernard, gives a beautiful color and a sparkling lustre to obedience: for, according to St. Paul, we must not give to God "with sadness and through necessity: God neither desires nor receives anything given in this manner; but He loves him who gives to Him joyfully." Furthermore, it is necessary to take the part of the Superior and to sustain his interests against those who oppose his authority; and approve his orders by speaking of them with honor and respect; not perform of one's own will, and without the Superior's order or permission, any fasts, mortifications, or other actions of devotion that one knows are not permitted, because, being done through a motive of self-will, they will be sullied and in no wise agreeable to God. It was thus with the fasts of the Jews, who said to God with astonishment: "Of what use have our fasts been, since Thou hast not even deigned to regard them? Of what good so many exterior humiliations? Thou hast appeared to have no knowledge of them!" God replied to them: "It is because your own will, and not Mine, prompted your fasts." St. Gregory says on this subject that we must understand, that

whatever is done through obedience can never be bad, and that the good that one does or wishes to do, should sometimes be omitted through obedience. The tree, in the terrestrial paradise, of which God forbade Adam to partake, was not of itself bad but good. Nevertheless, in order that man, who had been created in a state of innocence, and endowed with much virtue, might make progress therein, it was necessary to forbid him only one good thing, in order that the action he would perform might be all the more virtuous, and that by abstaining from *one* good thing, which prohibition alone rendered bad, he might thus testify to his Creator more obedience and subjection. It must be further remarked on this subject that there is a difference between doing a thing *by* obedience and *with* obedience. A thing is done *by* obedience when the Superior commands a thing, and it is performed by submission. This spirit renders it always good, as we have just learned from St Gregory. However base and valueless it may be, the virtue of obedience gives it merit and communicates to it its price.

A thing is done *with* obedience, when it is performed with the permission of the Superior. Done in this way, it does *not* become, by this permission, good, virtuous and meritorious, if it had not already been so before, as eating out of meals, sleeping more than ordinary; but its nature remains the same for the permission of the Superior only removes the impediment that prevented your doing it, and nothing more. Wherefore the truth is better explained,

by saying that one has done the thing *with* the Superior's permission than by saying he has done it *with* obedience: for the Superior has not commanded it, but only *permitted* it. Hence obedience comes in for no part of this thing, and if it *had* come in for ever so little, it would have really rendered it good, however indifferent it were before. Moreover, when the Religious is presented with the occasion or the necessity of performing some act of obedience, particularly when he feels his nature shrink from it, his will and his judgment resisting it, let him animate himself to overlook and to courageously surmount the difficulties; considering his obligation and the promise he so solemnly gave to God; considering the recompense and the great good that will accrue to him as the price of his perfect obedience, and on the contrary, the evils with which he will be loaded if he disobeys. Let him cast his eyes upon the obedience of our Lord, who exercised it only for love of him, for his salvation and for his example. Let him fortify himself with these words of St. Paul, which he should repeat leisurely, with attention, and incessantly, at least in his moments of trouble: "Jesus Christ made Himself obedient even unto the death of the cross, and that for me." He would do well to make himself familiar with some other words of scripture bearing upon this subject, in order to make use of them in his pressing necessities. Such as these from the same apostle: "Obey your Superiors and be submissive to them, because they watch, as being obliged to render account to God for your souls." And again

these of the Wise Man : “ The just are the children of wisdom, and the integrity of their nation—the character of their spirit is to obey and to love one another.” The following words which Samuel addressed to Saul when this unhappy king transgressed the commandment which God had given him to exterminate Amalec and all that was his, without sparing anything, and for which reason he was reprovèd, will be very good and useful : “ Obedience is better than sacrifice ; to do what is ordered is something more important than to offer to God the fat of rams—because to resist the will of a Superior is as great a sin as witchcraft, and to refuse to obey is like to that crime of idolatry—because in fact the disobedient man is idolatrous of his will and judgment.” With these and other similar words, well considered, a Religious should excite and encourage himself to perfect obedience. Theodoret relates that the officer of the Emperor Valens, who was an Arian, having come to Samosata to drive thence the bishop, the great Eusebius, whose fame filled all the East, because of his defense of the Catholic faith, this good and holy old man told the officer to keep his design secret, for fear lest the people, by whom he was greatly beloved, should make a tumult and cast this unhappy officer into the river. He took with him only one servant, and making him carry a package and a book, he departed from the city by night, and went on board the vessel which waited to bear him to the midst of his exile. His people hearing something of this departure, came in great haste to find him, and to

take him back to the city, but he told them he was obliged to obey the magistrates, alleging to support this, the doctrine of the Apostle, who says : "Obey your temporal masters with fear and respect, and render them your duties in simplicity of heart as to Jesus Christ Himself."

Father Cornelius Vishavee, of the Society of Jesus, said that in order to resist temptations and conquer them, it was necessary to arm oneself with obedience; it is, said he, a kind of defensive weapon, a cuirass which is impenetrable to all the thrusts of our enemies ; our Lord made use of it, when to repulse the three darts which the demon launched against Him in the desert, He each time replied by a passage from Scripture, and said: "*It is written,*" that is to say, thou temptest me with gluttony, with vanity, to adore thee ; but God has commanded the contrary, and He must be obeyed. Hence, in whatever manner the demon tempts you, always oppose the buckler of obedience to his attacks ; saying : "*It is written,*" it is commanded not to do that to which thou urgest me ; the rule forbids it, the Superiors are opposed to it.

Obedience ought not only to furnish us with defensive weapons, and with a buckler against our enemies, but still more with offensive arms for attacking them, to wound and kill them. It will enable us to gain some glorious victories over them, according to the celebrated words of the Wise Man : "The obedient man will speak only of victories ;" he will be stronger than all his enemies ; he will always come off victorious from their com-

bats, whatever they may be ; he will retire from them bearing palms and laurels. As Moses, according to the Hebrew Doctors, engraved the great and adorable name of God, "*Jehovah*," upon his rod, which was square, one letter upon each side, which rendered it all-powerful to operate the greatest prodigies ever witnessed by nature, so even would the Religious do well to engrave the name of obedience upon his buckler and upon his sword, in order to ward off the blows of his enemies and to deal them strokes in return, that he may not succumb to sin, and be able to practice good works, because it will communicate to him extraordinary strength and invincible courage, for accomplishing both the one and the other. It is after this manner he should proceed in the practice of obedience.

Moreover, when he shall be tempted to complain of his Superior and to murmur, let him pay great attention to himself, and that he may sweeten his spirit and restrain his tongue, let him represent to himself Our Lord in the person of the Superior who governs him, who warns and reprehends him ; let him endeavor always to have a good opinion of his Superior ; let the eyes be closed to the faults he may have as man, and let them not be opened except to see his virtues and his good qualities. "When you shall have once subjected yourself to obedience," says St. John Climachus, "do not concern yourself with judging the actions of your Superior, though he may have many faults. If there arise within you a thought to judge and condemn him, reject it as speedily as you would reject

the thought of committing a sin of the grossest nature, and guard yourself well against giving the smallest entrance to this infernal serpent and his suggestions; but say to him: Go, miserable seducer! it is not for me to judge the actions of him whom God has appointed to govern me; it is for him, on the contrary, to judge mine."

St. Gregory would have us consider the prompt and perfect obedience which Samuel rendered to the high priest Heli, who, however, he knew had committed great faults in the management of his children. The Saint greatly blames those who study the imperfections and deficiencies of their Superiors, and thence to take occasion not to obey them *as* perfectly. This is, in fact, a bad reason: for it is not the good or bad life of the Superior which should render us more or less obedient, but the authority and the power that God has confided to him. The Superior, continues St. Gregory, should not honor his inferior who has departed from his duty, at least, not till, after having warned him of his faults, he finds that he corrects himself of them. The inferior should not condemn his Superior, nor be deficient in respect for him, even when he beholds him stained with some vices from which he feels himself exempt: for the Sovereign Judge has left the inferiors to be judged by the Superiors of His Church, and He has reserved to Himself the judgment of Superiors. In this they are all the more to be pitied; because they have to answer to a God infinitely wise, and to render an account of their conduct and of their administration to a most enlightened judge.

To prevent complaints and murmurs against his Superior, and to acquire the faculty of honoring him, of respecting and loving him, the Religious should consider the labors to which he condemns himself, and the dangers to which he exposes himself for his subjects, and consequently recognize with gratitude all the obligations he owes him, by his submission, his obedience, and by all he can do to lighten the weight of his charge. St. Paul enjoins upon inferiors to obey their Superiors, because they watch with great care over them, and have to render to God an account of their souls, and he adds: "In order that they may do this with gladness, and not with sadness and sorrow." However, the inferior greatly grieves his Superior, when he is slow and careless to obey, when he brings up excuses and reasons for not doing what he tells him, when he is firm and obstinate in his will, attached to his judgment, and difficult to govern, when he breaks the rules, neglects his salvation, and gives himself little trouble for his advancement in virtue and perfection. Behold what causes Superiors to grieve, what adds to the weight of their charge, what forces them to sigh, as if they carried too heavy a burden, one exceeding their strength. St. Prosper, speaking on this subject to his Religious, said: "Because I know that a burden becomes all the lighter for being carried by many shoulders, come, share mine with me, my children, and aid me in carrying it. This will be easy for you, if, remembering the commandments of God and the care you should take of your salvation, you cherish

amongst you *a true fraternal charity*, from which, as from an inexhaustible source, will flow all the other virtues. What I most desire then, is, that you and I together carry my burden, in order I be less weighed down by it."

There is nothing that renders superiority more burdensome, or adds more to the labor of him who exercises it, than to deal with spirits that are disagreeable and difficult to govern. What makes the charge of government light or heavy, sweet or bitter, are the virtues or the vices of subjects.

St. Ignatius says that a Religious should be in the hands of his Superior, like a stick, of which he disposes at will. In fact, as the obedient Religious is to his Superior a true stick upon which he leans, that he makes use of for going here and there, for various employments, and that assists him in his necessities, so also the disobedient Religious is like a stick to him, but for very different usage, viz. : to strike and wound him.

Finally, to check and dry up all sources of complaints and murmurs against Superiors, let the Religious consider, in connection with all that has been said, the reasons bearing upon his own interest; let him be convinced of the great evils he brings upon himself, and the horrible punishments to which he exposes himself before God; for God said of Superiors, by Zacharias: "For he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of my eye," which is a most delicate and important part, and consequently it could not do otherwise than affect me most sensibly. But the Hebrew and Greek text,

with the Chaldaic paraphrase, has it thus: "He touches and wounds the apple of the eye," that is to say, as Vatable explains it, "he injures himself extremely."—We have seen this by the examples given.

SECTION XIV.

Conclusion of the whole Chapter.

All that has been said in this chapter should make us conceive a high esteem for obedience, and enkindle in our hearts an ardent affection for it. Consequently, we ought to apply ourselves carefully, constantly, and with all possible perfection to the execution of the vow we have made. This is the fundamental point of the religious institute. In fact, this institute essentially consists in the three vows. Now, that of obedience being the principal and the most excellent, it is clear that its perfection consists mainly in this vow and in the practice of it. It is like the pivot on which all is supported, like the foundation on which all the rest is seated, like the pole around which all revolves. It is like the key-stone of an arch which holds all the stones in position and each one in its place—like the root of a tree which makes it grow and bear fruit, like the soul in a living body which it animates and keeps in motion. In fact, obedience is everything. Take away obedience from a religious order, and it is no longer an order, but becomes a veritable *disorder*. St. Chrysostom explaining the words of St. Paul, which recommend obedience to us, says that

the religious state, without this virtue, is like an orchestra without a leader, an army without a head, a ship without a pilot, and like a flock without a shepherd. Now just as a flock which obeys not its shepherd, a ship its pilot, an army its head, and an orchestra which observes no time, falls, necessarily, into trouble and confusion, and cannot avoid ruin, so *obedience* in all religious orders, and we may further say, in the whole universe, where everything is preserved only by obedience, everything would lose its beautiful order and fall into confusion. Aristotle says, all inferior things should be subject and obedient to superior things; without that, all would be confounded, spoiled and corrupted, because they would be separated from that subordination which maintains them. All compounds subsist only by the mutual cohesion of their parts, by the subordination of the lesser to the greater, and in general all that remains in place, stays there by order, and order sustains itself only by the dependence of low things upon those that are higher, only by the *obedience* which they render them. Hence, the religious state cannot conserve itself, nor guarantee itself against destruction in any other manner, and it could much the less do it, bearing particularly, as it does, the name of *order*, to show that to conserve it and to put it in a state to do that for which it was established, this subordination and this obedience must be exactly observed in it.

Wherefore, the first and the principal, the most essential virtue of the Religious, is *obedience*. Sulpicius Severus, speaking of the monasteries he saw

in Egypt, says that they observed as their fundamental law the obligation to live under the control of an Abbot, to follow his orders in everything, and to do nothing of themselves, and nothing of their own will, so that the first and principal virtue they had at heart, and to which they applied themselves the most, was obedience : moreover, they were not admitted into these monasteries except upon condition that they would embrace this virtue with all their strength, and execute without opposition every command of their Abbot, however difficult it might be. Also, it was required that postulants should be so well tested, as to be found incapable of disobeying in anything whatever. The ancient Fathers, says St. John Climachus, inform us that the principal article of our compact with God is obedience. This is the virtue, St. Diadocus tells us, which best disposes the mind for the religious life, and most solidly establishes it therein ; and St. Syncletica said : We who live in monasteries prefer obedience to all the other exercises of religion. For, as we have already related, the first point of the rule which the Angel gave to St. Posthumus for his Religious, was *to obey their Superiors*.

Obedience is so excellent, it imparts so much peace and joy, such immense treasures, and such great advantages, that all true Religious have always, in a most particular manner, been careful to practice it with the greatest fidelity. Cassian says of the monks of Tabenna, who followed the rule of St. Pachomius, that there were more than five hundred of them in their monasteries, living

under the government of one Abbot alone, whom this great number of Religious obeyed from their first institution with great care and submission, and with such perfect obedience, that amongst them the obedience of one Abbot to another was given with equal indifference, however brief the time of his authority.

In another place he further says of them : They held obedience in such esteem, that they not only preferred it to manual labor, to reading, to silence, and to retreat in their cells, but even to all the other virtues, and they appreciated it so highly that they believed everything ought to be placed beneath it; everything give way to it; they were content to bear whatever loss others might wish them to experience, were willing to suffer all things, provided they did nothing against this virtue, nor slight it ever so little.

St. John Climachus relates some admirable things concerning the obedience of the first and most ancient Religious of the monastery near Alexandria, of which we have already spoken.

Arrived at a venerable old age, having acquired a long experience of things, and great capacity in the most important charges of the house, they nevertheless obeyed with all the simplicity of children, the least sign of their Superior.

We should imitate the obedience of the Saints, said St. Basil to his Religious; and to excite them thereto effectively, he made use of the passage from St. Paul to the Romans, when he says : " Let all men render honor and obedience to those in power."

He here speaks of secular powers and princes ; and again, as he afterwards explains on the subject of tribute and tithes, the reason which he gives is, that God has established them on the earth to govern men in exterior and temporal things.

Wherefore, to resist authority, is to resist the order of God, and tacitly to blame the disposition that He makes of the one and the other ; and by this means, be rendered worthy of chastisement, and of the just condemnation of God, and of those in authority.

For if God, continues St. Basil, commands, in the most express terms that christians and the just obey the temporal powers and princes, and what is more, even when they were very wicked, and their whole life nothing else than impiety, sacrilege and abomination, what obedience and what respect does He not wish a Religious to render to him whom He has appointed for his Superior? How can any excuse be made for the one who resists him, and who will fail to recognize that he resists the order and the will of God? Elsewhere the same Apostle enjoins, in a very express manner, that we “obey in all things our Spiritual Superiors.” In fact, God has appointed them to watch over the salvation of their inferiors, and to render to Him an account of their souls, and in order that they acquit themselves of so painful and perilous an obligation, easily and with joy, and not with sadness ; “for that will not be advantageous to you”—that is to say, according to the explanation of the same St. Basil, “disobedience causes great injury to

him who is guilty of it, and is to him the source of many evils."

This reason should then inspire the Religious with great fear, and serve as a powerful motive to prevent him from disobeying, for disobedience is prejudicial to him.

In fact, the three vows of religion, and most especially that of obedience, substantially make the Religious and *put him* in possession of the essence of his state ; *disobedience* draws him from it, destroys that beautiful economy, and throws it into disorder, where he is exposed to all the evils endured by something which is not in its natural place.

The good done by a disobedient Religious is *not* a good, because he loses the merit of his good works. We have already said it, but it must be repeated and inculcated, in order that it be observed with good faith. It is absolutely necessary, says St. Bonaventure, according to many Fathers, to proceed in all that one does in religion, by *obedience*, without which good things are *not good*. He afterwards brings to bear upon his subject, these words of St. Bernard, explaining those of the Spouse, when she says that her "Beloved feeds among the lilies." I fear, says the holy Father, lest there be found amongst us some from whom the Spouse does not wish to receive presents, because they have not the odor of lilies ; for if *my* will be found in my fast, the Spouse will not accept it, not desiring a fast which is not perfumed with the lilies of obedience, but with the vice of *self-will*.

What I say of fasts, I at the same time intend to apply to silence, vigils, prayer, and generally to all the good actions that are practiced in religion. The Saint continues: If all these be done by the motion of self-will, and *not* by that of obedience, I hesitate not to declare that, however good in themselves, they merit not to be ranked among the virtues—but he that practices these observances in this disposition, shall hear God say to him by His prophets: “Thinkest thou that I will be satisfied with such service? No, for thou dost render it to Me of thyself and because it is thy *self-will* which leads thee to do it, and not My will.” Oh! how great an evil is self-will, since it has the power to render useless to you all your good works!

In another place St. Bernard severely reprehends those of his Religious who, carried away by an indiscreet fervor, did not content themselves with the fasts, vigils, austerities, and prayers practiced by the community, but who wished still for some particular ones, and he added: After having once given me the care of your conduct, why do you wish to take upon yourself the control of your actions? You wish to deprive me of the power of leading and instructing you, and to take for your guide and your Superior your *own will*, with which you have so many times, by the testimony of your conscience, offended God. It is this that teaches you without discernment, not to spare your nature, not to listen to reason in the just medium to be observed for the government of your body

and your mind, in your devotions ; which tells you not to yield to the advice of the seniors, nor follow their example, nor to obey me. Are you then ignorant that “obedience is better than sacrifice?” Have you not read in your rule that *all* that is done without the command, or the permission of the Superior, ought rather to be esteemed an action of vanity than a subject of recompense ?

Treating this same matter elsewhere, he reprimands more forcibly still, those persons who are so attached to their senses and to their devotions. When speaking of the degrees of humility, he makes the fifth degree of pride consist of these private devotions, which he calls *singularities*. He says : He is not satisfied with doing what the rule commands, or what the example of the seniors afford him, he wishes to do more, and to surpass them. This is not because he would really be better, but to appear so ; nor to live better, but to gain a good reputation, and to be able to say with the Pharisee : “*I am not like others.*” He has greater esteem for a fast made when *others* do not fast than for a fast of seven days made with them ; for a little prayer of his own choice, that he will say alone, than for reciting psalms with the choir an entire night. In fine, he is courageous and diligent in doing particular things, cowardly and lazy in performing general things ; he watches in his bed where he should sleep, and he sleeps in choir where he should watch ; he is drowsy at night when he ought to chant the divine office with the others,

and after office, when others go to rest, he retires into a little corner of the church to pray, and there he coughs, and makes himself heard by all who can hear him, that they may know he is there occupied in prayer! All this goes to show how much those are deceived, who in religion direct themselves in their devotions against the orders of their Superiors, and that their good works are *not truly good* for them.

Moreover, obedience renders good and meritorious all those actions which of their nature are only indifferent: by an admirable alchemy, a happy change is effected, and the iron or lead of which they were constituted is transformed, by this virtue, into purest gold: in a word, obedience is the principle of all goods. On the contrary, disobedience opens the door to all evils, and disposes the soul to all kinds of sins.

We know that the disobedience of our first parents has filled the world with miseries, and that it has been the source of all the misfortunes that afflict and weigh us down.

Assuredly, the disobedient Religious being separated from the channel by which God has resolved to send him His graces, knows from his Superior, with whom he is at variance, and to whom he is not submissive, that he is deprived of the succors of which he has the greatest need, and consequently, he must commit many faults in the occasions that are never wanting; he will be often exposed to the temptations of the demons, and as they find him weak, he will easily fall.

We have seen above, how St. Astion, going to draw water from the river, was assailed on the way by a violent temptation. This thought exercised him greatly, tormenting him cruelly, for the space of three days, without his being able, with all his courage, his virtue and his sanctity, to rid himself of it, and all this evil befell him, because he had of his own will performed this action, without the permission of his Superior, Epictetus. One day St. Francis was shut up in his cell, praying for his Religious, while his Vicar was holding chapter. He in spirit saw the demon on the back of one of the brothers, who was unwilling to obey the Vicar, and calling another brother, said to him: I have just seen the demon sitting on such a one's back, he holds his neck tightly grasped, and it is by the suggestion of this demon that the brother hesitates to obey, wishing to do his own will. However, I have prayed for him, and thus driven off the demon; go then, tell the brother to obey without delay, and submit at once. The Saint's words were repeated to him, and he did what he was advised, immediately throwing himself at the feet of the Vicar, and receiving with humility the disposition he wished to make of him. Behold by whom the disobedient are inspired, and by whom they are led; it is without doubt by the same demon of disobedience, who led our first parents to revolt against God, who caused them to be cast off, and us also, along with them. A Religious of the Abbot Elphigius, who was subsequently Archbishop of Cantorbia, was as disobedient as the one

just mentioned, but did not get off unscathed. This holy Abbot one night saw on this Religious a troop of demons, who struck him heavy blows with thongs and fiery serpents. The unhappy man uttered frightful cries for help, but the demons, loading him with reproaches, said: "You have not obeyed God, neither shall we obey you," continuing to beat him till he expired. We read that many others have been possessed by the devil, and tormented in divers ways in punishment for their disobedience. This should fill with terror the heart of every Religious, who has made a vow to obey, and impress them with a lively apprehension of its transgression. Let them reanimate their courage, from all the reasons we have here given, and resolve to put them in practice exactly; let them consider the example of all creatures, even those that are insensible and deprived of reason, which obey God, and inviolably execute all His orders, in heaven, on earth, in the waters, and everywhere, by the simple duty of their creation; let them take an example from God Himself, who, all powerful though He is, and absolutely independent of us, yet obeys us, in a certain manner, and does our will, by furnishing us, as the general cause of nature, His assistance and concurrence for performing whatever natural actions we wish, actions which are often even bad and offensive to Him.

But I cannot forget the wonderful example of obedience and subjection that men, particularly courtiers, render to the great ones of the world, and to princes. What cowardice, what baseness, and

what shameful actions are they not guilty of in their service ! What constraint, and how many contradictions of their humor, of their judgment, and of their reason do they not suffer, and all this without even appearing to do so, but, on the contrary, with a pleasant countenance and an air of satisfaction. How many repulses, insults and vexations will they not endure ! In what a state of dependence do they not live ? Hence, Seneca said : There is no human condition unaccompanied by misery ; but that ought to be considered the most miserable, where everything is done according to the will of another ; who is, for those that serve, the first cause and mainspring of all their actions ; they neither sleep, nor walk, nor eat, except, according to the good pleasure of this master. They must even hate or love, two things that are the freest in the world, by his command.

If these people, these poor slaves, would know how short their life is, they have only to consider to which side they incline. If men submit themselves and obey other men in this manner, and for what ? for a very trifle, and often even for vain hopes, which, after much obedience and long service produce nothing ; with how much greater reason, ought a Religious to obey God in the person of his Superior ? His service is infinitely more elevated, and in every way most reasonable, as God is the first and sovereign reason, and that He promises to His faithful servants infallible and manifold rewards !

SECTION XIV.

Conclusion of the whole Chapter.

All that we have said thus far of obedience, regards all Religious in general; but what we are going to say in conclusion is particularly for those of the Society of Jesus, to whom this virtue is especially recommended, and for which they ought to have a singular affection, and apply themselves to it with great care.

For this reason then, let them consider that St. Ignatius has given it to us as the special characteristic and true mark of our Company. We shall willingly suffer, says he, that other orders surpass us in fastings, in watchings, and in other kinds of austerities, which each one of them holily observes according to its vocation; but I desire, my very dear brothers, that those who serve our Lord in this Company, be wonderfully perfect in the integrity of *obedience*, accompanied by a true resignation of the will, and by an entire abnegation of his own judgment, and that in this may be found the mark by which its true children may be known and distinguished from those who are not; let them never regard who it is they obey, but let them behold in him Jesus Christ our Lord, for love of whom they obey. This is what he tells us. Thus, even as our Lord has left us fraternal charity for the mark by which He would have His true and legitimate disciples known from those who are such only in appearance. In the same way St.

Ignatius, in his Order, has established obedience for the distinctive mark and the essential difference of those who wish to embrace it; so that the more they are endowed with this virtue, and the more perfectly they practice it, the greater is the degree in which they possess the spirit of the Order, live up to its requirements and fulfil the ends for which it was instituted. One of the authors of his life relates that he had an extreme care to form ours, not to piety and devotion, but to strong and solid virtues, and principally to detachment from everything, however good and praiseworthy the thing may otherwise and elsewhere be; but to depend solely upon the will of their Superiors, despoiling themselves of all affection, and even of all inclination, if they can, and not to accustom themselves to wish to penetrate *their* designs, or examine their commands; but to persuade themselves that God has given to their Superiors all power to advise, to judge and to dispose, and to them only the glory of simply submitting and obeying; let them, then, be ever ready to execute all that shall be ordered them, however strange and extravagant it may be in appearance.

St. Francis Xavier, far separated from St. Ignatius in body, but closely united to him in spirit, recommended, in the same view, to all our society in the East the virtue of obedience above all others. He wished that their greatest affection and first care should be given to the practice of this virtue; he said this, and repeated it often by word of mouth and by his letters, that without true and

sincere obedience, there cannot be any true religious life, or any true child of the Society; for, deprived of this virtue, one will never persevere with peace and interior joy, nor with the success which can conserve him therein. He therefore ordered them to abandon themselves absolutely to the conduct of their Superiors, as there is much more certainty in being led than in leading, in obeying than in commanding.

St. Francis Borgia, the third General of the Society, said the Society would sustain itself and increase rapidly by means of three things: the first was prayer and the use of the Sacraments; the second, persecutions, and the third, obedience. "The first," said he, "will unite us to God; the second will separate us from the world, and the third will unite us to each other and to our Superiors, in the quality of members with their head." He again said, in recommending obedience, that it was like a vessel well equipped, in which Religious navigate with confidence in the midst of the tempests of this life, and keep to an infallible road, even whilst they sleep, to arrive at the port of a blessed eternity.

These are the lights of the three most brilliant luminaries and the three most distinguished personages of our Company, touching obedience; and these lights they did not keep shut up in their interior, but showed them forth by the most heroic and illustrious actions. In fact, St. Ignatius, though he did not obey those of his own Society, since he had no Superior in it, being himself Supe-

rior General of all the others, obeyed, nevertheless, all those to whom he thought he was in any wise obliged thereto.

He bore a most profound respect and rendered an admirable submission in all things to the Sovereign Pontiff; he said that if the Holy Father had commanded him, or even motioned to him, old as he then was, to go to any place whatever, on foot, and with nothing but a stick in his hand, or else to go on the sea, even to navigating to the end of the world, in an old vessel, which was no longer seaworthy and deprived of every necessary equipment, he would have immediately gone and obeyed him. When a person of quality presumed to criticize this resolution, and said that it appeared to him this would be acting without prudence, the Saint replied: "As for *prudence*, this is not asked of him who obeys, but of him who commands; the latter ought to examine well the commands he gives, and the inferior has nothing to do but to *execute* them, without any other consideration or any other examination."

Every time he was sick, he was so obedient to the physician that he received his advice as a decree, and his orders as oracles. It seemed as though he divested himself of all prudence, to allow himself to be led by the physician, and to give him the entire disposal of his life and his death. Being one day seriously attacked with sick stomach, caused by too great a heat of the liver, the physician, who at that time visited the house, a young man, and by no means very capable, ordered him rem-

edies, quite contrary to his sickness. Believing that his illness resulted from a cold temperament, he employed, in his cure, everything that could heat the body. The patient, far from opposing this, said not a word, though he very well knew the nature of his disease, and what was good or hurtful *for* him. The physician then had him well covered, his room closed up, and forbade him to take any fresh air; he ordered hot meats to be given him, a small quantity of the strongest wine, and other things, which certainly would have soon sent him to the grave, if the Fathers, seeing the evident danger of death to which this treatment exposed him, had not called in an able physician, who, by an altogether opposite course, soon placed him on his feet. This same skilful physician once ordered for St. Ignatius, on Wednesday of Holy Week, to eat chicken and drink of its broth, in order to recover some strength, the rigorous fast of Lent having weakened him and produced a burning fever; yet he doubted exceedingly that the Saint would acquiesce on account of the holiness of the season. St. Ignatius, however, made no difficulty in obeying, and it might well be believed that he did this neither through sensuality nor pleasure, since fever patients have lost all taste, or when they do have any it is morbid. The economy of their health being deranged, causes them to crave for high-seasoned food, delicacies, and other things which are hurtful, rather than for healthful meats. Accordingly, the next day the physician called to see him, and inquired if he had eaten chicken, as he had ordered

him to do? fearing lest the rigorous fast of those holy days had prevented the Saint from complying, but Ignatius replied that he had done so. Then the physician, astonished and much edified, said to him: "You did so, Father? I will tell you what I think of this action: I have several sick persons to attend at this time, who, not having kept the fasts, nor observed Lent in any way, have fallen sick during this Holy Week: I have ordered them, for their cure, to take meat, and it is with much difficulty that they obey, thinking it is too great a crime to eat flesh at this holy season. You, on the contrary, have fasted rigorously, and you were almost at the end of your term, when you stopped short at my advice, and have eaten chicken without hesitation: Father, I cannot sufficiently admire such liberty of spirit." Saint Ignatius, with a serene countenance, replied only in these words: "Sir, it *is necessary to obey.*"

To pass from St. Ignatius to St. Francis Xavier. His historian speaks of him in these terms: The principal and the most beautiful ornament of our Company—obedience—appeared in him with the greatest lustre, from the beginning, when St. Ignatius sent him to the Indies, a very long and dangerous voyage, where he would have to endure immense labors. However, he undertook it without the least opposition, and even started on his road the very day after St. Ignatius had declared to him his will. He bore the Saint such great respect that he read his letters kneeling, and such was his reverence for them, that he cut out the Saint's name

from one of his letters and placed it in his reliquary. St. Ignatius, also, had so high an esteem for the obedience of St. Francis Xavier, and he felt such assurance in it, that, seeing his strength fail, and having some presentiment of his approaching death, he resolved to recall him to Italy, as the greatest support and the strongest pillar of our Company, and the best able to sustain its weight. He believed then, that with a simple dispatch which he had written him, that with the single letter "I," which signifies "go"—"come,"—without giving him any longer explanations, he would come from one end of the world to the other, from the East to the West, from Japan to Rome, and that he would thus make him abandon those great and wonderful pursuits which he was accomplishing with such success, benedictions and miracles. This letter would infallibly have produced this effect, if it had arrived at the Indies in time and had been sent to him before his death. In fact, to recall from such a distance, from the extremity of the East, so great a personage, one occupied in functions so important to the glory of God and to the salvation of souls—all this with a single dispatch and with the smallest of letters—*this* is a most admirable and heroic obedience.

We come now to St. Francis Borgia, who, after having been very great in the world, and having governed Catalonia in quality of Viceroy, was very humble and very obedient in religion. As soon as he entered he was placed under the control of a Superior, who, without showing him any consideration, or in the

least way sparing him, employed him upon his buildings like a workman. When he went to the kitchen to help the cook, he obeyed him with such exactness that he would not have stirred a foot without his orders. St. Ignatius seeing that his fervor carried him too far and beyond all limits in the practice of austerities, gave him a brother coadjutor, named Melchoir Mark, for his superior, in this particular, and this illustrious man, who had even been Commissary of our Company in Spain and in Portugal, rendered a submission so punctual and complete that there never was any servitude, which for harshness and constraint could compare to it: for he did absolutely nothing, touching his health, which Mark had not ordered or permitted him. He ate, drank, slept, went to take the air, and similar things, according to the will of Mark. He seemed to be absolutely dead to his own will, and lived only by that of this brother, who, going out of the house sometimes, would even substitute another in his place, to tell him, in case he wished to do such or such a thing, to do *this*, because Mark had thus directed. This holy man instantly obeyed: for, remarks his historian, he loved obedience as Jesus Christ's *own* virtue. This blessed Father endeavored, doubtless, to imitate all the virtues of which He has left so many beautiful examples; but he had a most especial attraction to imitate His obedience, considering that he Had preferred rather to lose His life than to lose this virtue, and that He made Himself obedient unto Death, even unto the death of the cross.

The same may be said of the obedience of all our first Fathers, who have been the most celebrated for their virtues, and who have the most perfectly possessed the spirit of our Institute, as we may be easily assured of in the history of their lives. The celebrated Father, Master John Avila, who was one of the ornaments of Spain, in sending two of his Disciples to St Ignatius to have them received into the number of his, in our Company, gave them at parting this remarkable advice: ‘ You go,’ said he, ‘ to enter into a company who consecrate themselves entirely to the salvation of souls; wherefore, take first of all, the resolution to make yourselves useful to all men and to procure their salvation before God by your prayers. but as to the employment, the offices, the times, the places, and all the other things with which you ought to serve your neighbor, be well persuaded that the *choice* does not belong to you, and if sometimes the contrary thought occurs to you, number it among the evident temptations of the demon and drive it from you.’ Let the words of this Religious be engraved forever in your mind: ‘ I have come into Religion to be judged and not to judge. Believe most firmly that Superiors are controlled by God in their government, and that in the dispositions they will make of you, they have reasons and motives which are unknown to you. In fine, it is a very good thing not to judge, but to repeat these words that Our Lord addressed to St. Peter: ‘ What does it concern thee to know what design I have for John, and what will become of him? Think only of follow-

ing me.' If you do not rid yourself of all this curiosity, and if you do not abstain from this examining the intentions of your Superiors, you will never have any peace, and you will never lead a true life.

“Abandon yourself entirely to obedience; hold this to be a singular gift which the bounty of God has made to man, and entertain the hope that by *it* God will take care of your affairs and conduct you to your salvation. Confirm yourself well in this hope, that you ought not to ground yourself upon the wisdom of your Superior, but upon the promise of God, and be assured that if you have great confidence in the management of your Superior and in obedience, you will enjoy great repose and you will in a short time make rapid progress in virtue. Hence, then, let nothing at all that you are commanded, either trouble or astonish you. As the religious Order you have entered is altogether made for the salvation of souls, all that can, in any manner, contribute to its conservation and increase, whatever it may be, even if it were only washing the porringers—all that is to help the neighbor and to convert souls, and it must be done with great affection. Wherefore, renounce your own actions, and think only of doing those prescribed by obedience, and of doing them precisely for this motive that they may be the actions of obedience.” He then told them to persuade themselves that they were going to the cross, and he thereupon gave them further salutary advice. He afterwards again reverted to obedience, saying: “Do everything

you can to destroy your will, particularly your judgment and your own opinions, which are the exterminators of heavenly consolations, the enemies of interior peace, the promoters of division ; they are audacious satellites and rebels, the censors of Superiors, mutineers against obedience, and idols raised against God in His temple. I exhort you, as earnestly as I can, to cast them down, to break them to pieces, that God may reign in you, instead of them, and hold it as a thing indubitable that He wishes what your Superior commands you to do. Establish yourself immovably upon this principle, and be certain that as long as you remain steadfast thereunto your affairs will go well."

Behold the last advice which this great man, this wise and excellent director of souls, gave to his two disciples. It was thus he sent them to Rome, recommending them to Father Martin Olave, a Spaniard, and his old friend, a doctor of Paris, and a man of great learning. For that reason, he wrote him a beautiful letter, in which he informed him of two important things concerning himself. The first is that he renders the greatest thanks to God for the favor He has bestowed on him in calling him into religion, but that he does not feel vain of this distinction, nor prefer himself to those who have not received this gift ; but very far from this, he believes, according to the counsel of St. Bernard, that his weakness and cowardice have reduced him to the necessity of having recourse, in order to save himself, to a greater number of powerful succors ; that he is well aware, moreover, that God punishes

Religious who flatter themselves with the excellence of their state, by permitting them to fall into aridities of heart, and into drynesses and disgusts, in the midst of which they become indevout, slothful, poor and miserable as much even as they have persuaded themselves that seculars are. The second is to have no attachment whatever to his own opinions, and to guard himself against them as his mortal enemies. He admonished him that men of letters fall, by means of this attachment, into very great dangers; that many of them, by a just judgment of God, are deprived of tasting of the "tree of life," because they have eaten to excess of that of science.

All this excellent advice makes us see that those who have consecrated themselves to God in our Company, ought, in order to serve Him faithfully therein, and apply themselves to their salvation, to give themselves with all their hearts to the virtue of obedience, to practice it with great care and in the same manner as our Company, that is to say, without constraint, with a willing heart, and through love. They must practice it interiorly, that is to say, by their will and judgment, far more than exteriorly. This latter manner ought even to be banished from among us: for St. Ignatius blamed and condemned it, saying, according to an account of one of his historians, that to perform well the functions of our Company, the virtue of obedience should be preferred to all the others; that there is nothing more opposed to it than to examine with curiosity into the commands of Superiors, and to

defer executing them ; that such conduct merits not the name of obedience—and that he cannot be called obedient who does not submit his will and judgment to his Superior's orders ; that the most agreeable sacrifice and the most perfect holocaust that one can offer to God, is when all the faculties of the soul, and principally the will and understanding, which hold in man the highest degree of excellence, are consecrated to the service of God. As to those who obey with regret and only *exteriorly*, he said they ought rather to be numbered among the miserable galley-slaves, or even the brutes, than with true Religious. Hence, one of his ordinary instructions was that he who, to obey, did not join to the consent of his own will the approbation of his judgment, has only one foot in religion.

I wish, in finishing this chapter, to relate what he said the year preceding that of his death, when he dismissed from our Company a Father, a learned man and a good laborer, but very determined and much attached to his opinions. After having used every means to break this attachment to his own sentiments, and to render him in some degree docile and submissive, he was compelled to desist. He therefore gave him his dismissal, and seeing with regret the source of his evil, though he had already spoken of obedience in his constitutions, in his epistles to our Fathers in Portugal, in his public and private exhortations and in his familiar conferences ; and as if he had said nothing on this subject, he called Father John Vitas, under-secretary, and said to him : ‘ Write : I desire that the Com-

pany, present and future, know my sentiments regarding obedience." Then he dictated what follows: "First having embraced the religious state, I ought to be resigned in all things to God and to my Superiors, and this resignation is nothing else than an abandonment which the Religious makes of himself to his Superior, to be conducted by him in all things, as he judges fit.

"Secondly, I ought to desire to have a Superior who will exercise me in obedience, who will cause my own mind *to die* within me, and who will annihilate my judgment.

"Thirdly, I ought to renounce my will, to follow his, in all things which are not sinful.

"Fourthly, there are three ways of obeying: the first is to do something commanded me, in virtue of obedience, and this degree is good; the second is, to do it when it is only proposed, without awaiting the command, and this degree is better and higher; but that which goes far beyond the other two, is when I do it at a sign and at the least indication of the will of the Superior, without there being need, that he either command it or propose it.

"Fifthly, I ought not to make any reflections on the qualities of my Superior, nor to regard whether he is very great and much to be esteemed for his merit and fine qualities, or if he is not, but only that he holds the place of God *for me* on earth: these distinctions and these looks of discernment ruin obedience.

"Sixthly, when my Superior commands something

which I fear is bad and against my conscience, I ought to submit myself to what he tells me concerning this and believe him when the evil is not evident. But if I cannot gain over my mind to submit to the judgment and to calm the conscience, I ought to give myself up to the judgment of some capable person, or of two or three. After that, if I still feel troubled, if I resist, I may hold it for certain that I am far removed from perfection and from the virtue that a true Religious ought to have.

“Seventhly, I ought not to belong to myself, but to Him who made me, and to him to whom He has given His power; so that, as a little ball of wax allows itself to be handled—to be lengthened or contracted, and made into any shape one chooses, even so should I leave myself to the control of my Superior, whether it be to write letters or to receive them, to speak with these persons or with those, placing all my devotion in obeying.

“Eightly, I ought to comport myself like a body that has neither will nor judgment, in the same way that a little image or crucifix permits itself to be turned about on all sides, and as each one pleases; and finally just like the cane of an old man, who takes it up, or leaves it, who puts it where he wishes, and makes use of it when he sees fit to do so. Even so ought I to be in the hands of my Superior, if I desire to be of use in religion.

“Ninthly, I ought not to ask my Superior, nor beg of him to send me to such a place, or put me in such a charge, but leave him all power to dispose of me, without any interference on my part,

and to regard as the best of all, the dispositions he will make of me.

“Tenthly, you may, however, ask of him some little things which are good, as to go to the stations, and similar things, with a mind always prepared to receive with a good grace the effects of his will, whatever it may be, and to prefer it to all else.

“Finally, I ought with regard to poverty, and to the usage given me of the things of religion, so to practice obedience that I be like a statue, which sometimes for certain reasons, is stripped of its drapery and everything belonging to it, lets this be done without making any resistance.”

This is the last testament and the last wishes of our Father St. Ignatius. We ought to esteem them greatly and execute them faithfully.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE ABNEGATION AND ANNIHILATION OF ONE'S
SELF.

THE three vows of which we have been speaking in detail, are abnegations and annihilations. The vow of poverty is an abnegation and an annihilation of riches and of all the goods of the earth ; the vow of chastity is an abnegation and an annihilation of the body ; and the vow of obedience, an abnegation of the soul. Now, to observe them perfectly, it is necessary to greatly renounce one's self and to annihilate one's self. We have, then, thought it would be useful to treat thoroughly this abnegation and annihilation, of which the three vows each make but one part. This is what we are going to do ; but to commence by that which must be annihilated in us, let us take the thing at the highest point, let us ascend to its source.

No person can doubt but that God made us, according to these words of David : “ Know that the Lord is God, that He has made us, and that we have not made ourselves ; ” consequently we are His creatures and His works. Now, God being infinitely perfect in His wisdom and His power, He is so, likewise, in His operations and His works ; for the property of a perfect cause, which cannot err, is to

make its works perfect, and to render them complete. Then this is what God has executed in the production of His creatures and of the whole universe, and it is for this reason that the *world* is called "*universe*" (*Kosmos*), which signifies beauty and perfection.

But amidst the works of the creation, there must be remarked two sorts : the first are those which God made at the time of the creation, giving them then all the perfection and all the excellence of which their nature was capable, as the light, the sun, the stars, the skies, the elements. The others were not finished all at once, but finish and perfect themselves little by little, as the angels and men : just as there are two kinds of statues, those which are formed at once, by being cast in a mould, and others which require much time and many strokes to give them all their beauty, as those cut in marble. Wherefore God, having made these two sorts of creatures, and considering them, said of the first that they were "*good and well made*," and there was nothing to add to them ; but He did not say the same of the second. Though these were of their nature incomparably more excellent and more perfect than those, and though God created them in His grace and His friendship ; nevertheless, all this perfection and all this great excellence was only an excellence begun, a perfection rough-hewn, that God wished to finish little by little, till He could give them the last strokes and their perfect accomplishment in the state of glory for which he produced them. Man going out of the hands of God

was not finished nor perfect, but only sketched and commenced, and he was much less so still, after his sin ; so that, to bring him to the perfection to which he ought to attain here below, in a state of grace, it is necessary to give him many things which he has not, in order to embellish him, and to take from him many others which spoil him.

God and our Lord labor for him continually, and procure for him all that can contribute to his perfection : “ My Father and I labor incessantly to perfect man, who is the masterpiece of Our works.” Certainly, reason and experience show us that excellent workmen are always engaged with their works, until they have finished them ; and that they do not permit them to quit their hands till they have given them their last touches, particularly if they bear their names. Thus, Raphael would never have suffered a half-finished picture to appear with his name, nor Michael Angelo that a roughly-cut statue should be exposed with his. Man bears the name of God engraved in ineffacible characters on the brow of his soul, because he is His living image, and as it is truly said of the portrait of the king, which is inanimate : “ Behold the king,” and still more so is the soul of man, because it has been marked in a particular manner, and with a new and eternal impression in baptism, at which time he became the disciple of Jesus Christ.

Now, that God and our Lord should see their image, which bears Their name, spoiled and stained, that is to say, man vicious and imperfect, is what

They will not suffer. Wherefore, They labor without relaxation to perfect and purify him interiorly, by Their inspirations, by Their lights, Their sentiments of piety, and other movements of grace, and exteriorly by all those things that happen to him ; by prosperity and adversity, by riches and poverty, by honor and opprobrium, by health and riches, by life and death, as by so many strokes of the brush, which finish this beautiful painting, and as by so many cuts of the chisel, which perfect this precious image.

This labor of God and our Lord has for its end, to make man ascend to his source, and to cause him to re-enter his first principle ; to render him divine, and, as much as he can be, like to God and to our Lord, since he is their image, and that the essential of the image consists in its resemblance to its model, and that an ugly and hideous thing is never the portrait nor the representation of a beautiful one. Now, to make a man ascend to his source, to cause him to re-enter his first principle, which is God, and to make him become divine, he must necessarily rise above himself, he must cease to be man, and he must empty himself of all that is opposed to God. In the same manner that, for wood to pass into the nature of fire, it is necessary that it be no longer wood, and that the first matter be despoiled of the substantial form and of all the accidents of wood, so that, being divested of all that appertains to wood, and rendered a pure capacity of the form and accidents of fire, so something similar must take place in man, in order that

he become divine, he must lose many things that he has, and he must acquire many others that he has not.

But to understand this well it must be remarked that in the blessed state of innocence in which Adam and Eve were created, the nature of man was, in its whole and in each of its parts, innocent and pure. His soul and his body, his understanding, his memory and his will, his imagination, his passions, his eyes, his ears, his limbs, his interior and exterior senses, and in general everything, was in him in a disposition of virtue, of holiness, and in perfect uprightness, with power, always, of his own free will, to depart, when he wished, from this excellent state and to lose all these advantages, as he does effectively by his sin. Hence, the Wise Man says: "God has made man righteous." What is this? and in what consists this integrity? We are to understand its definition to be that straight course which deviates not, and turns not away from its two extremities, the point of its departure and the point of its arrival, the place whence it came and the place whither it goes, but which tends directly from the one to the other. Thus, God has made man upright, because he could have, if he had so willed, *not* wandered from these two extremities, from his *first* principle, which made him, and which is God, and from his last end, for which he was made, and which is still God, according to the saying of the Wise Man: "The Lord has made all things for himself." He has produced all things, as first principle. He has produced all, for Himself,

as *last end*. Hence, man in this state of rectitude, came from God and would have returned to God; he would have referred himself to His glory; his will would have wished, desired and loved God above all, would have referred to God all things. Whether he ate, or drank, or slept, or partook of some pleasure, or done anything else, he would have been so disposed, that, following the thought and inclination of his nature created in this rectitude, he would, in all his actions, have proposed God for his end, without seeking himself in anything.

Sin has overturned all this beautiful order and destroyed this admirable harmony. In the state of innocence man was righteous, loved God above all, sought Him, referred himself and all things to His glory; and now in the state of sin, he is crooked and distorted, he loves himself better than God and all else, and, by the strength of this love, he applies himself to self, he is occupied with self, he thinks only of self, and seeks self in everything. Then the love of God governed him and his actions; now it is self-love which predominates in him and moves him. Man, said St. Catherine of Genoa, cannot of himself, think of anything but his sensualities, his pleasures, his honors, and of all that concerns him, according to the inclination for evil which sin has imprinted in the depth of his heart, and the impulse it gives him to always tend downwards. In vain does he make efforts to elevate himself to God, for, like the stone, which, though thrown up in the air, loses not the natural inclina-

tion it has to descend and to return to the earth, so man falls back always towards his nothingness and misery.

We have seen elsewhere what St. Paul has told us, from his own experience, of this irregularity.

But to speak a little more at length of this self-love, it must first be known that there are *two* self-loves: the one good; the other bad. There is a good one. Our Lord Himself teaches us this clearly, when He commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves. It is evident that He supposes we love ourselves, and with a good and reasonable love, since He gives it to us as the rule and the measure of that which we ought to bear towards our neighbor. Then, the love of ourselves is always good, when it is conformable to reason and to the commandments of God; when we love ourselves in order to tend to and arrive at the end for which God has made us, to procure for our souls and our bodies external goods.

Love of self is bad when we love ourselves against the will of God and in a way which His laws forbid; to satisfy our own will, our bad desires and irregular passions. Now, it is in this sense that self-love is ordinarily taken, and in which we here take it. This love is an affection, an inclination of solicitude that we have for ourselves, for our souls, for our bodies and for all that regards us: for, as the essence of love, considered in general, is, in every one's judgment, to wish and to do good to the person beloved, then necessarily, the private love we have for ourselves makes us wish and do

good to ourselves. This love is a continual application to ourselves; a perpetual return of esteem, of approbation and of tenderness for ourselves, a seeking in everything of our honor and of our reputation, a favorable look bestowed upon ourselves, to grant to our soul, to our body, and to our senses, what they desire according to their natural inclinations, and a care to give them what may content them, though this be offensive to God and to our salvation.

This self-love, thus considered, is in us all, and there is no person in this life, however holy and elevated in grace he be, in whom it is not found, because all human nature, says St. Paul, has been corrupted and disordered by sin. From that it must be inferred that every man is corrupt in all that he is; that his soul with all its faculties, and his body with all its members, are disorderly; that having lost that integrity which he possessed by original grace of rising towards God in all things, he has taken, by the malignity of sin, the obliquity of tending to self in all things.

Hence, the love which man has for self is not only in him, but moreover, is so deeply rooted there, that it penetrates him entirely; it is spread like poison throughout his soul and over his whole body; it is even in his bones and in their very marrow; it extends even to the center and to the very depths of his being; there is no action of the soul and of the body, interior or exterior, towards God, towards the neighbor, towards any creature, into which it does not enter and diffuse its venom;

there is not one so pure that it does not sully, so holy that it does not profane, so elevated that it does not debase ; there is not one grace, one means of salvation, the use of which it does not abuse and pervert, by making it its aliment and its sport. Self-love draws God, even, to itself, though God is the last end, to which everything should refer itself, and it makes use of this as a means of satisfying itself. And what is more, though this love thus possesses us, it is, nevertheless, so covert, it disguises itself with so many deceits, it hides itself with so many artifices, that it requires all possible vigilance to discover it. This results from its first action on the soul, which is the same as the Philistines did to Sampson, namely, to *blind* it ; it bandages the eyes and makes one blind for fear of being seen. Hence, without a special grace of God and a particular light, the soul fails to perceive it in a thousand things ; she thinks herself very free from this self-love, and even mistakes it for the love of God or for some other virtue. Wherefore, not knowing it, the soul seeks not to destroy it, but taking it for a virtue, she preserves, she entertains, and nourishes it.

St. Catherine of Sienna said, that even at the close of her life, when it is certain that she had arrived at the greatest purity to which a perfect soul can attain here below, she felt that the pure love of God took from her, every day, some little portion of self-love, which till then had remained unknown to her, as a person who would remove from some one certain little, imperceptible spots, and after-

wards show them to him. She adds that God, by a wisdom full of goodness, hides from the soul a great multitude of faults, lest she become frightened, discouraged and afflicted, on beholding how imperfect she is, and how many things she has to correct in herself, and that He diminishes them little by little, by His secret operations, and conducts the soul to her perfection.

Thus self-love poisons everything within us, and it is consequently the source of all our evils, and all our sins. "Men," says St. Paul, "are enamored of themselves." And what is the consequence of this? "They are," he continues, "full of concupiscence, of self-esteem, ambition and pride; they are blasphemers, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, wicked, unfriendly, quarrelsome, and are calumniators; there is no sensual pleasure after which they do not run; they are destitute of sweetness and patience; they are rude and savage natures, traitors, full of vanity; they love their satisfaction much more than God; hypocrites! they seek after the reputation of virtue, without wishing to practice virtue, and under the fine exterior of apparent piety, they are really impious." Wherefore, St. Thomas considering the words of St. Paul, said: "The root of all sins is self-love." St. Catharine of Genoa said on this subject, that self-love ought rather with much more reason to be called *hatred* of one's self, than *love* of one's self, since it is the cause of all our evils. It is also in this sense that our Lord says: "He that loves his soul, hates it and loses it."

Since, then, self-love thus predominates in us and spoils everything, we ought to use every effort to destroy it and to break all the hurtful bonds, and all the pernicious attachments with which it ties us to ourselves. With the grace of God, we can succeed in this great and important work ; but we should also hold ourselves well prepared against becoming afflicted and discouraged, if, after all our efforts and all our troubles, there still remains something of it , because it is so strongly attached to us, and so deeply rooted in our nature, whatsoever efforts we may make, we can never entirely extirpate it in this life. In fact, however mortified and improved our nature may become, it will always remain a nature corrupt at bottom ; it is, at the most, no better than the earth ; though you may take great care to remove all the bad weeds, to pluck them up by the roots in order to prevent them from springing up again, it is always disposed of itself to re-produce them. It will only be in the next world, where God will accomplish the promise he made by Isaias : “ Behold, here I have created new heavens and a new earth.” There He will give to man a true soul, a celestial and divine subsistence, and a body, originally formed out of the earth, elevated to the highest purity ; but all that we can or ought to do, is to cultivate this earth, to cut and root up the weeds, without expecting to be able to destroy its natural disposition to sin, and to absolutely *kill* self-love. It is in this medium degree, we must understand all that has been said here regarding the annihilation and abnegation of ourselves

SECTION I.

Of Self-denial and Self-annihilation, and of their Necessity.

The love of ourselves so pervades us, is so deeply rooted, and so incorporated in our souls and bodies, that all our actions, if it were not restrained, would be tainted and soiled by it ; there would be nothing but continual repetitions of esteem, of approbation, of preference, of complaisance, and of all kinds of well-wishing to ourselves ; nothing but continual application to self, of occupation with self, and finally, in all and by all—ourselves. We ought then, to labor with all our power to divert our attention from ourselves, to cease to be occupied with ourselves, to cast off this application to ourselves, and to be no longer within ourselves ; so that we may succeed in destroying, or at least in reforming the inclination we have for ourselves ; purify our souls and our bodies from the poison of self-love, and resume, as far as we can, the integrity of our first origin, that integrity which made us tend to God and regard His glory in all things.

There are some who have spoken very subtly concerning self-love, and who have made many researches into its failings, and for the remedies that must be brought to bear upon them. But since this love seeks itself in everything, without exception, not even, as we have before said, the last end, which is God ; that it refers to its own contentment and profit,

the remedy for this love ought to be to renounce all its researches and to change it into the love of God. "Whoever amongst you," says our Lord, in this sense, "does not renounce all that he possesses, cannot be my disciple." And again: "If any one wishes to follow after me, and to attain to salvation, to grace and to glory, let him renounce himself;" let him make use of self-denial, let him absolutely refuse the demands made upon him by his *self-love*, without, in any manner, listening to it, becoming like a man who forgets himself, says St. Bernard, who no longer thinks of himself, and who regards himself as something lost. St. Catherine of Genoa, explaining this loss of self, said to God, "I no longer see, nor hear, nor eat, nor sleep; all my interior and exterior sensations are lost; I find nothing in myself; I am entirely forgotten and lost in Thee. Every one finds something to occupy himself with, either in doing or speaking, or thinking; I see that others take pleasure in something, but as for myself, I feel like some one dead." In another place, the same saint relates that God made her know that the soul ought to die to its ways as well as the body, because it should no longer take delight in anything, nor take it by the seeking of self, any more than would a dead body. The death of the body is a very excellent image of that secret and mystic death of the soul produced by self-denial: for, as the body dies when the soul separates from it, and lives whilst the soul animates it and is the principle of all that it does, and of all its operations in the natural life, even so, the soul dies

the precious death of self-denial, by the ruin of self-love, which communicates to it a vicious life, and is the principle of all the evil which it does, which its eyes behold with concupiscence, that its ears hear with curiosity, that its tongue speaks with anger, that its mouth eats with gluttony, and that causes all its faculties, spiritual and corporal, to produce their actions with disorder and self-seeking. But as death deprives of all things, him whom it strikes, the enjoyment of his kindred, of his friends, of his riches, of his honors, of the light of the sun, and of all the creatures that surround him, and that, moreover, it deprives him of the use of his limbs, of the sight of his eyes, of the hearing of his ears, of the taste and the speech of his tongue, and denies the senses their proper functions ; as it cannot do all this to the soul, because it is immortal, but it can, at least, separate it from the body, and retrench all communication with it, even so does the death of self-denial produce similar effects in the soul : for it deprives it of all, even of itself ; it destroys all its sensual and animal affections ; it does not touch the reasonable affections except to purify, to sanctify, and to render them productive by the spirit of grace. Hence, self-denial is a real death for all those who practice it well.

The vow of poverty is a death for all the goods of the earth ; the vow of chastity is a death for all the pleasures of the body ; and that of obedience, a death of the will and judgment. Thus, then, a true Religious ought to be regarded as a dead person, and be numbered among those that David

calls "the dead of the age and to the age." Hence, the description that our first fathers gave of those men, who have the true spirit of our Society, bears, among other qualities, this one: "Men who are dead to the world." It was in this sense that St. Francis caused one of his Religious who had disobeyed, to be taken, stripped of his clothes, thrown into a ditch, and then covered with earth. When the Religious whom he had charged with his burial had covered all his body, leaving only the head exposed, the Saint approaching, said to him: "Brother, are you dead?" He referred to the death of his will and judgment, in order that he might be, in future, more obedient.

The brother, repenting of his fault, replied to him: "Yes, father, I am now dead." "Get up, then, if you are dead, obey your Superior in future without ever resisting him, like the dead who resist nothing." Then he added: "I desire that my Religious be dead in this way, and not living."

But after the comparison of *death*, that of *nothingness*, furnished by Job and David, better explains the state of self-denial, for though the dead person be no longer living, he is still something, since he is at least a corpse; but *nothingness* is *naught*, that is, *it is not*. Job says: "I was reduced to naught, and all my members are come to nothing." And David: "My substance is as naught before Thee, and I have been reduced to nothingness." Now, as naught has nothing, it has, consequently, neither body, nor soul, nor eyes, nor ears, nor tongue, nor will, nor understanding, nor

judgment; it is an absolute deprivation of all things, a pure capacity to be and to do all that God wishes without any opposition. Behold what self-denial effects in a man! This is why it is called "annihilation," a state of nothingness, because man, by the annihilation and the destruction of self-love, no longer thinks of himself, no longer applies his attention to himself, no longer occupies himself with himself, and no longer acts for himself. His soul and his body, his understanding, his will, his imagination, his passions, his eyes, his ears, his tongue, his senses, his members, and all there is in him, bears him and refers him to God and to his glory.

A certain author, treating of this mystery, has taken the liberty, in order to explain it better, to forge some words very barbarous, but significant of his ideas. He produces them from the primitives *ego*, and *ipse*, *egoitas*, *ipsitas*, according, even to the model of Cicero, who, speaking of Appius and Lentulus, has said: *Appietas* and *Lentulitas*. These uncouth names signify self-love, which causes me in all things to have my eyes fastened upon myself, to consider myself in all, and refer all to myself. Now, self-denial ought to destroy and annihilate this *my*, *to my*, and *for my*; it ought to exterminate this *mine* and *thine*—two cold, chilling words, St. Chrysostom says, which are the cause of all the quarrels, dissensions, wars, and other evils that afflict us, and put our souls and our bodies in such a disposition as no longer to have any *my*. God would reign in us in peace, and in a

way somewhat like that of the blessed in heaven, of whom St. Paul says: "*God is all in all*"—without being, in a certain manner, very perfect—rather *nothing*, in themselves; in the same way, here below, He must be *all* in me, without there any longer existing any *me*, any *my*. Behold the important labor, the precious work, the rich conquests and glorious victories of self-denial and self-annihilation.

This abnegation is so necessary to man, to render himself capable of union with God, that it is absolutely impossible for him ever to arrive at it, if he is not emptied of himself, and annihilated. It is a profound ignorance of the soul, says St. John of the Cross, to think it can mount up to the sublime state of union with God, without first emptying itself of all appetite for natural and supernatural things, as far as they may belong to it by self-love. In fact, how can you, says St. Augustine, fill a vase with honey, if you do not first empty it of that with which it is filled? We are all full of ourselves; we must necessarily empty ourselves of *self*, if we wish to fill ourselves with God: cast out what you have, in order to obtain what you have not. Your hand could not take hold of one thing, if it did not leave go another which it embraces, and which fills it. Empty the vase that is to be filled, again says the same Saint; you ought to be replenished with good, and with God; then, make the evil within you depart. Thauler, treating this subject says: All that ought to receive a new form, and pass to a new nature, must necessarily be despoiled

of its own, as we see to be the case with wood, to be changed into fire. Therefore, to render a man capable of being changed, and transformed into God, it is necessary that he strip himself of himself, that he die absolutely to his self-love, and to all that feeds self-love in him. As it is a thing altogether impossible, that two substantial forms, and that two *contraries*, should endure one another in the same subject, so it cannot be possible for God to enter truly into a soul, which is absorbed in itself; and for Him to operate in its faculties, whilst they are themselves operating by their natural inclinations. All that must perish and be annihilated, before God will unite Himself intimately to this soul, and in a wonderful manner operate in it and by it. The more a man leaves himself, the *nearer* he approaches to God; the more his faculties—his understanding, his memory, and his will are annihilated for their respective manners of acting, the more passive and submissive to God they become, the more perfectly and intimately also will God unite Himself to the soul. Just in proportion as a person quits himself, so will he find God.

St. Catherine of Genoa speaking of this in several places of her life, says in one: “I do not see that a single good, or a single degree of beatitude can be found in the creature, if the creature be not annihilated to himself, and so plunged in God, that God alone dwells in the creature, and the creature in God. In this consists the beatitude of those who are in heaven. They are blessed, *because they are annihilated to themselves, and invested with God.*”

In another place she further says: "No person ought to be astonished at what I say, that I can no longer live with myself, but must live *without* myself; that is to say, without a single movement of my own will, of my understanding, and of my memory. Wherefore, if I speak, if I walk, if I stand, if I sleep, if I eat, or if I do anything else, my nature knows nothing of it, feels nothing of it; these things are further from me—I mean to say from the interior of my heart—than the heavens are from the earth. For this reason, she elsewhere says, that she does not wish to attribute to herself this spirit of abnegation and annihilation, and that she has represented herself to herself, as a malignant being, that is not of God, and her self-love as constrained to retire far from her, and to remain hidden in a corner of the house. And again, that she was so much out of herself, that she saw only God, and she said: "I see nothing else but God alone without me and beyond me. O reasonable creature! I am certain that if thou didst know for what end thou art made, and that thy happiness is in God alone, all that is beneath God would seem so vile to thee, that thou couldst not even bear to look at it; thou wouldst flee from it as from a very dangerous enemy, that it might not prevent thee from uniting thyself to God, and acquiring that infinite treasure."

SECTION II.

Of the Best Self-denial—and the Most Necessary Annihilation—that of Self-will.

By the freedom and power to command, which God has given it, our will is the queen of our faculties. All that is within us depends upon it and its orders; consequently, its derangement is of infinite importance, and brings upon us exceedingly great evils. Hence, we should, above all things strive to regulate it.

Man became lost for having separated himself from the will of God, and for following his own. Now, as maladies are cured by their contraries, it is necessary that man recover and save himself by renouncing his will and embracing that of God. Herein consists the regulating of man's will, and following upon it, his salvation, his holiness, his perfection, his deification, and his transformation in God. As the will of God is the best, the most just, the most holy, the most perfect of all wills, that of man participates in all its excellencies, and becomes always good, when it is conformable thereto; but when it is not, and when it is purely our own, it is wicked, and the source of all our evils. Who can tell all the injuries and misfortunes that self-will brings upon us? It is enough to say that, without it, there is, and can be no sin; that it is the cause of all the sins we commit. Hence, after all the definitions given to sin, by theologians, to explain its nature, it must be said, that it is the effect of self-will.

It is evident that whilst our will agrees with Almighty God's there can never be any sin. The author of the strange and barbarous words, quoted on a preceding page, to explain the nature of self-love, says that there is nothing in the universe opposed to God, but sin ; all the rest is good and comes from God. In fact, God is the essence of all essences, the life of all things living, the goodness of all things good, the power of all things powerful, the wisdom of all that is wise ; all things have their being, their life, their goodness, their power and their wisdom much more in God than in themselves ; otherwise, God would not be, as He is, the first and sovereign Being, the only and sovereign *Good*. There is, then, nothing contrary to God but sin—and sin is nothing else than *self-will*—when the creature wishes that which God does *not* wish, or wishes not what God does wish. The author represents God as saying : “As there is no being, no life, no goodness without my Being, without my Life, and without my Goodness, so there ought not to be any will without my Will ; and as all beings are not, except in the First Being, all lives but one life in the Original Life, and all goods but one good in the Sovereign Good, so all wills ought to be but one will in the Will of God : not one should be contrary to Him.”

This writer continues : There is nothing so abundant in hell as *self-will*. In fact, what is there to punish in hell if not self-will ? Without it there would be neither hell nor demons. The demons are such only, for not having wished to conform their will to the will of God, and for having preferred to

follow their self-will ; and so with all the damned.

St. Bernard, in the same sentiment, said before the author we have been quoting : “ What is it that God chastises and pursues with his hatred—if not self-will ? If there were no self-will, there would be no hell, because there would be no sin to punish eternally. On whom, pray tell me, would this terrible fire—this avenger of offences against God, act, if not on self-will ? ” Then, this holy Father thus continues : “ This self-will is a cruel beast ; it is a savage and most wicked animal—it is a ravenous wolf, a furious lion, and a horrible leprosy, which disfigures the soul, and for which it is necessary that one wash himself, with Naaman the Syrian, in the Jordan, in order to be cleansed, and to imitate Him, ‘ Who has not come upon earth among men to do His will ’—and who said to His Father in His Passion : ‘ Let not My will be done, but Thine. ’ ”

To the evils that self-will does us, let us add those which it endeavors to do to God ; the horrible attempts of which it renders itself guilty upon His Divine Majesty.

Here is what St. Bernard further says of this : “ But with what fury does not self-will attack the divine Majesty ? Let those, who are the slaves of their will, hearken with fear. First, wishing to belong to itself, it declines the jurisdiction, and resists the obedience due Him, to whom, as to its Sovereign Lord, it is obliged to subject itself and to render homage. Not content with this injury and this treason, it robs and steals, as much as it has the power to do, the good that is of God ; it invades and

absorbs all ; for what limits does self-will prescribe to its desires, and its concupiscences ? I unhesitatingly declare, that the whole universe would not suffice for it ! But please God, may it content itself with these outrages, without breaking loose against God Himself—something too horrible to speak of—Whom it kills, in as much as it can ; for, assuredly it would desire, either that God be not able to chastise its sins, or that He would not wish to do so, or that He would have no knowledge of them. Thus, it would that He were not God ; it wishes to deprive Him of all His power, since it would have Him be either powerless, or unjust, or ignorant. Cruel and execrable malice, which seeks thus to take from God, His power, His justice, and His wisdom !”

St. Catherine of Genoa, speaking of the malignity of self will, said : “ We must deliver ourselves from the tyranny of our self-will. It is so subtle, so refined and so malicious ; it is so deeply rooted in us, covers itself with so many fine appearances, defends itself by so many reasons, that it really appears to be a demon. This is so true, that when we cannot do it in one way, we do it in some other, under good pretexts, such as charity, necessity, justice, perfection, or to find some *spiritual* consolation, or to preserve our health, or to give edification to the neighbor, or to condescend to all he demands of us. It is so opposed, and so rebellious to God, that God can scarcely bring it to do what He wishes, except by flattering it, caressing it, promising it much greater things than those it

relinquishes, by giving it tastes of things much more savory than those of which it deprives itself : for He knows that it is so inclined to sensible things, that it would never disengage itself from one thing if it did not see others, and still with all that, it seeks to fly from itself to do what it wishes, and it would escape even from God, if He did not secure it by the bond of some powerful grace.

Since self-will causes so much evil to accrue to us, since it is the source of all our sins, and the principle of all our miseries, since as long as we follow it, we will be miserable, vicious, laden with sins, enemies of God, and in the infallible road to ruin—of perdition—we ought assuredly, to do all that is possible to destroy, to annihilate it, and to conform it to that of God ; that it may be therein absorbed, and that of *two* wills, there may be made but *one* ; that God may say of our soul the same as He says by Isaias : “Thou shalt not be called one abandoned to his own will; but thy name shall be, ‘My will is therein instead of his.’”

“*Follow not after thy desires,*” the holy Ghost warns us, “and renounce thy own will.” St. Basil, making some rules for his Religious, gives them this one : “The Religious should not, for a single moment, have the free disposal of his person, nor act in anything whatever, of his own will. As the instrument never removes itself in the absence of the workman, so the Religious should not of himself, and by any motion of his will, incline to anything without the will of his Superiors.” Asking elsewhere, if a Religious does well to abstain

for a certain time from certain food and drink, doing this of his own accord, he replies: Our Lord having said: "I am not come to do My will, but the will of Him who sent Me"—it is dangerous to do one's own will in anything whatever.

St. Catherine of Genoa relates that the Spirit of God said the following, to her humanity: "I desire that thou experience what it is to be submissive, and to have no will of thy own; wherefore, I wish thee to subject thyself to every creature. Thou shalt labor to provide for thy subsistence and thy necessities (she was, nevertheless, a lady of high rank); I wish that when thou shalt be called to fulfil some work of charity towards the poor and the sick, whoever they may be, thou shouldst always go, without ever refusing. Then thou wilt do all that I command thee; thou wilt perform the most menial offices for the sick, and thou wilt leave all to go to them, when thou shalt be called, and thou wilt go quickly, whither thou shalt be sent. I wish also, that thou consider not who calls thee, nor wherefore thou art called; I wish that thou have neither choice nor election, but rather, that the will of another be thy will, and that thou never do thy own."

St. Jerome gives some advice to Rusticus, very similar: "Do not do," says he, "what you wish; eat what is given you, take the clothes brought to you."

St. Posthumous received from an angel a rule for his Religious. The first article of this rule commanded the denial of one's own will, and obedience to Superiors and seniors. The second, commanded

obedience to equals and inferiors—to such a degree that, if any one should be walking, and treading upon thorns, one of which should pierce into his foot, he could not draw it out without the permission of his Superior; and if burning with heat, and parched with thirst, he should find some water, he could not drink of it, without asking permission to do so, of his companion, though the latter be his junior.

The Abbot Poemen, or Pastor, said, according to Rufinus: Never, in anything, do your own will, but do always, and in all things the will of another. He himself practiced what he taught, with a continual denial and sacrifice of his own will; he did not act at all by his own inclination, but ever by the inclination and will of others. St. Anselm, Archbishop of Cantorbia, formerly Abbot of Bec—a very learned and wise man—previous to departing for Rome, where he was forced to go by the persecution of the king and bishops of England, for having sustained against them the interest of Pope Urban II.—asked this Pope to give him a man whom he might obey in the government of his life, and whose will he might follow in all things. The Pontiff, approving and admiring this request, coming as it did from so great a personage, appointed for this the Saint's own servant and secretary, Edinere, who afterwards wrote the life of the Saint. St. Anselm so exactly observed his orders, and submitted himself so absolutely to his will, that when Edinere ordered him to go to bed, he not only went, but even did not get up, nor, what is more, change his posture in his bed, without telling him. This

would be really incredible, if it were not supported by the authority of the writer of it, and by that of Baronius, who has inserted it, with great praise, in his annals. Hence, we cannot doubt it. Cassian mentions the heroic virtue of the holy Abbot Pynufius, in two different places in his works. We will do so likewise; for after having spoken, in another book, of his profound humility, we shall, in this, display something of his admirable obedience and the perfect annihilation of his will.

This holy Abbot being in Egypt, Superior of a great number of Religious, loved, infinitely more, to obey than to command. He envied his inferiors the glory, the safety, the profit and the tranquillity of subjection. He resolved, therefore, without telling any person, to leave his charge, and to go into some distant monastery to obey. In fact, he stole away from his monastery unknown to all his Religious, and entirely alone, took the road leading to the Thebaid. There, taking off his religious habit and resuming that of a secular, he went to the celebrated monastery of St. Pachomius, called "Tabenna," as being the most regular of all. As it was very far distant from his own, and contained a great number of Religious, he thought to live there quite unknown. He presented himself at the door, and asked to be received; he knelt down before all the brothers, who came in and out, in order to obtain his request, and he besought and conjured them to do him this favor.

After having, for a long time, been a postulant, he was finally received and put to cultivating the

garden, under the direction of a brother much younger than himself.

Delighted to have, at last, found the means of exercising at leisure the obedience so much loved, he punctually executed all that this brother commanded him for the care of the garden.

He remained thus concealed and unknown, for the space of three years, thinking of doing nothing but the will of others. However, his own Religious, extremely afflicted at his absence, dispersed themselves throughout Egypt to seek him.

At length, one of them, having come to Tabenna, after having looked at him attentively, recognized him with difficulty, because of the poverty of his dress and the lowliness of his occupation : for he hoed the ground and carried manure. This good Religious, enraptured with joy, to have found his long lost Superior, and filled with admiration to see him engaged in so abject an employment, threw himself on his knees before him. The Religious of the monastery were much astonished to see him in this attitude, before a poor old man, whom they still regarded as a novice, and who, for having come so late into religion, was looked upon as the refuse of the house. But when they had learned his name, which was held in great veneration among them, they made him a thousand excuses for the treatment they had given him.

Then, St. Pynufius, afflicted and weeping, because, by the malice of the demon, he was thus taken from this happy state, and because he was not worthy to finish his days in humble obedience,

returned with his Religious to his own monastery, where he resumed his charge of Superior. His Religious were careful to watch over and guard him with the greatest vigilance, that he might not escape from them any more; however, a short time afterwards, he played them the same trick; for he fled during the night, and went to sea, in order to go further off, into some place where no one had ever heard of him. The vessel in which he embarked arrived in Palestine, and this holy man, says Cassian, came to our monastery, which was in the town of Bethlehem, near the place where our Saviour was born; but he did not stay there long, because some Religious of Egypt, who had come to visit the holy places, recognized him, and succeeded, by their prayers and their reasonings, in taking him back to his monastery.

The life of St. Dositheus furnishes us with another most remarkable example, and one which is very serviceable to our present subject. This young gentleman, who was of high position in the world, and delicately brought up, having become a Religious in the monastery of the Abbot Serideus, was placed under the guidance of St. Dorotheus. The latter managed him with discretion, and caused him, in a short time, to arrive at the height of perfection. His principal exercise was the denial and annihilation of his own will: making it to die, and to be absolutely annihilated in all things, so that he did not take a single step without the permission of his Superior, and during the five years he lived in religion, he never, even once, did his own

will. Becoming sick—with the disease that proved fatal—a Religious, who was visiting him, recommended the use of fresh eggs, as very beneficial in pulmonary complaints, and expressed a desire that Dositheus would try so simple a remedy. Readily did nature accept this proffered relief ; but, as this invalid considered his will was too much attached to this desire, he communicated it to St. Dorotheus, saying to him : “Father, I have been told of a most excellent remedy for my malady, but as I feel in this too strong an inclination of my will, let me entreat you, before divulging the object of my desire, that you promise not to grant it.”

St. Dorotheus having made the requisite promise, the invalid mentioned that it was to make use of fresh eggs—but again besought to be denied such relief.

“Well, then,” replied St. Dorotheus, “since you so desire, and prefer to make to God the sacrifice of your will to employing so suitable a remedy in your sickness, you shall not be permitted it.” This admirable and continued self-abnegation of Dositheus caused St. Dorotheus to say of him to his Religious—in his first treatise on obedience and self-denial—“Consider, I beg you, my brothers, what progress can be made in perfection by the total annihilation of self-will, and to what exalted perfection it raises a soul in a short time. For has not this been clearly demonstrated in the B. Dositheus, who, by the exact and continual practice of this virtue, has already attained great sanctity : coming, too, out from a free and worldly life, as he

had hitherto led, and so great ignorance of God, that he had not even heard His holy Name but a short time previous to being called into religion. Let us endeavor, then, to give the death-blow to self-will, whose existence is the cause of all our misery ; its annihilation must be for us a fruitful source of every good.”

SECTION III.

What God Does to Annihilate all that is Imperfect in the Soul.

As the depraved and vicious nature of man draws him ever to his own will and inclination, so, to correct this irregularity and attain perfection, he must detach himself from such things, and refer all things absolutely to God, and this can be effected only by dying to self.

When God wills to execute His design of perfecting man, and of completing His work with the utmost care, He destroys the malignity of human nature by various efficacious means, opposed to its bent: annihilating it in its honor by opprobrium, in its riches by poverty, in its pleasures by pain, in its health by sickness, in its light by obscurity, in its consolations by desolation, and so on, in its other inclinations.

God toils unremittingly to get man to leave himself, that he may become capable of receiving the plenitude of the divinity, and that union with his Creator wherein lie the soul's perfection and felicity.

We should be in the hands of God, as a block of marble in those of the sculptor. Marble, just from the quarry, is unshapely, rough, and unpolished, but it can be formed into a beautiful statue: so man, by nature terrestrial, corrupted and vicious, is, nevertheless, capable of a most excellent transformation.

2. There exists in the marble, innumerable *hidden* statues, of different kinds, but the skill and industry of the workman must be directed to their discovery—the more skilful the artist, the better will he succeed. It is the same with man, though all terrestrial and imperfect, he is, with the aid of God, susceptible of great perfection.

3. It is by means of blows, and the application of the chisel, that marble is wrought into statuary—imperceptible, so long as it is beneath its natural covering: so also, man is fashioned and polished, by removing from his nature all obstacles to his perfection, and to his union with God.

4. The greater the number of blows dealt the marble, by a masterly hand, the more perfect and polished it becomes, the more beautiful and desirable is the statue: so is man perfected by the hand of God, that strikes, shapes, and transforms him—making him a masterpiece.

5. When the marble is being hewn, chipped and transformed, it does not resist the hand of the sculptor; otherwise, instead of a beautiful statue, there would be but an ugly, imperfect figure; so if man is impatient and unresigned under the correcting hand of God, if he does not suffer peaceably

its different strokes, he will not be benefitted; receiving the suffering without the profit.

Lastly, to cut, to polish, to shape, is the business of the artist, and *not* of the marble itself: neither is it the affair of a soul, *desirous of perfection*, but God's, to retrench from man his imperfections, to make him rise above himself, to annihilate him, and to render him perfect.

God alone knows His own designs, and He alone can effect their completion. Thus the Prince of the Apostles says: "*But the God of all grace, who hath called us into His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, will Himself perfect you, confirm you, and establish you; enduring all patiently for His love, which will be our support.*"

St. Catherine of Genoa says: I behold in our nature so great an opposition to God, so strong a resistance to His will, so violent an inclination to fulfil its own desires, and so great self-seeking in all things, that none but God can deliver us from it. He alone knows our evils, sees the ignorance of our understanding, the inordinate love of our will, as also the necessary remedies for us, and where they should be applied to be efficacious. Thence it follows, that in whatever we may do to effect self-annihilation—in whatever we do of our own accord—there is always something of *self*; while, in the operations of God over us, in all that He causes us to endure, there is nothing of us but our own consent and submission.

St. John of the Cross, speaking on this subject,

remarks: You should know that souls on earth, to become the kingdom of God—that is, intimate union with God—ordinarily pass through many trials and sufferings, according to St. Paul: “Through many trials and tribulations will you enter the kingdom of Heaven.” These trials, which God causes the soul to experience before elevating it to the divine union, are the different kinds of corporal and spiritual sufferings, and by them the soul and body are purified as by a purgatory, indispensable to so great an achievement. In truth, all toils, austerities and maladies, well accepted, as well as temptations, darkness, aridities and privations, purify the soul and render it worthy of God.

Every one, more or less, has to pass through this ordeal of suffering, so as to become worthy of that degree of union with God, to which he is destined. That so few souls attain to this perfect union may be attributed to their want of conformity to the divine will; for when God commences this excellent work, few are perfectly submissive to the divine operations—they fail to support courageously the desolations and sufferings with which they are visited, quickly become dejected, stealthily withdraw from God, before a sketch of His designs has been unfolded.

O ye souls, who desire to be closely united to God, did you but know the importance of suffering, to enable you to arrive at this blessed state, you would ask for suffering everywhere; you would find pleasure in being deprived of all human consolations;

you would quaff vinegar and gall, as milk and honey, esteeming it a great happiness to learn from experience that in dying to self and creatures, you will live to God, and for God. But let us now see, how God acts with a soul to purify it, and to consummate its perfection, to what scrutiny He subjects it, to dispose it to divine union. He deals with it, says David, "*as silver tried by the fire, purged from the earth, refined seven times.*" Wherefore, to accomplish this design, God exercises Himself in retrenching and inflicting privations, similar to the blows dealt by the sculptor, in the production of a fine statue: He commences by removing all interior and exterior things to which the soul is attached, as ties that sully it, and impede its progress to Him. He polishes it by poverty and labors, afflictions, opprobrium, contempt and rejection; by pains and sickness, darkness of the understanding, aridities, desolation of the will, temptations against purity, to gluttony, to despair, and to other horrible vices—causing it to suffer in a thousand strange and untold ways; so that it may say with holy Job: "*Thou tormentest me wonderfully.*"

But as we mention Job, how is it that God acted with such severity towards this admirable man? What pains of body, what anguish of spirit, what privations of wealth, honors, children, and all things; what afflictions from his wife and friends, did he not endure, to be exalted to perfection?

Again, how did God not exercise His great servant and faithful friend, Abraham? He banished

him from the paternal roof, from his country and his companions, inspiring him to give to Lot, his nephew and inferior, the choice of a dwelling-place. He obliges him to cast from his house and his presence, Agar and her son Ismael, for whom he entertained much affection ; and lastly, commands him to immolate what he most loved, the joy of his heart, the delight of his old age, the hope of his house—his cherished son Isaac.

St. Bonaventure amply treats this subject ; and after having shown how God permits beginners in His service to taste but delights and consolations, he then relates the temptations and the anguish of spirit with which He exercises those who are stronger in virtue, and whom He desires to make rapid strides in the perfection to which He calls them. Enumerating these temptations, he mentions the first as being a subtraction of sensible fervor and devotion ; this privation abandons the soul, as it were, to the attacks of the enemies of its salvation, rendering it fearful and timid, all of which causes it exceeding pain. The second temptation is a slothfulness in the practice of virtue, arising from the difficulties ever accompanying virtue, and the violence to be employed against one's own nature ; so that it seems, says the Saint, that they roll a massive stone before them. The third is a temptation of disgust and weariness, which causes a disrelish for all that is good, making us find nothing but restraint in prayer, pious reading, meditation, listening to, or discoursing on spiritual things, all of which are seemingly easy.

This latter temptation plunges the soul in a profounder sadness, when, with this weariness in spiritual things, it has no desire for, nor contentment in, sensual pleasures. Then ensues the horrible temptation of impatience and ill-will against God, that He should be so harsh and merciless towards a poor afflicted soul who seeks Him, desirous of His love ; that He should be so sparing of His grace and assistance to one of His creatures, who has the most need of them, and who earnestly implores this aid, never ceasing to knock loudly and with great importunity, at the door of mercy. This temptation is sometimes so violent, that it causes the person to become all but frantic, seeing he derives no solace from prayer, ordinarily the most powerful and surest refuge, since our Lord promises that, "*he who seeks finds, and he who asks receives.*" Then should this afflicted one mourn with holy Job in these terms : "*I cry to Thee, and Thou hearest me not ; I stand up, and Thou dost not regard me. Thou art changed, to be cruel towards me, and in the hardness of Thy hand, Thou art against me. Where are the multitude of Thy mercies ? they have held back from me. How long, O Lord, shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear ? Shall I cry out to Thee suffering violence, and Thou wilt not save ?*" After all, concludes the Seraphic Doctor, the most violent temptation seems to be, when one feels his soul wavering in articles of faith, when he is drawn to despair of the goodness and mercy of God, excited to blaspheme Him and His Saints, or to wound and to

destroy himself; such being evidently the disposition of a sorrowful, melancholy spirit, cast down, and, as it were, annihilated, rejecting all salutary counsel.

Let us now consider out of many, one remarkable instance of these temptations, in a great Saint—most highly cherished and favored by our Lord. It is St. Teresa who speaks of herself thus: “I was alone and abandoned in my affliction—no one offering me consolation, and it was not in my power to read or pray; I was as a person intimidated by some great calamity—overwhelmed with fear of being deceived by the demon. I was so troubled, that I was all but crazed—neither heaven nor earth containing consolation for me.” Elsewhere she repeats: “My soul was in such a state of aridity and abandonment, that I seemed to be completely ignored by God, nor could I retain any remembrance of Him. When His holy Name was mentioned, it seemed as of a voice coming from a great distance, saying: *It is such a one.*” Moreover, it appeared impossible for her to make herself known to her confessors, and she deceived them despite her efforts to be clearly understood. She was so overcome with fear, that nothing that was told her could give her any assurance; her understanding was so obscured, that all truths were concealed from her, she believing alone the representations of her imagination—allowing herself to be occupied with the reveries presented by the demon, whom our Lord permitted to suggest to her that she was a reprobate, to torment her with other similar va-

garies, which caused her such intense interior suffering—sufferings so insupportable, that they could be compared only to the tortures endured by the damned. When trying to read, she understood no more than one who was ignorant of letters—and listening to vocal prayers was equally useless, it sounding to her as a foreign tongue.

The Bishop of Tarasconia relates in the Life of St. Teresa, that, in the midst of these horrible temptations, she could find no relief; and, grace was so hidden in the bottom of her soul, that she believed herself entirely devoid of all virtue—that the many spiritual favors she supposed till then she had received, seemed now as a delusion. She could only recognize her sins and infidelities as so many torments: her soul being at times in such abandonment, that she received from Heaven, nothing but rebuffs, refusals, etc. God seemed to turn away His face from her, and to become her enemy. Her trials came from on High, and it was useless to attempt to meet them with terrestrial remedies.

These trials and sufferings continued for two years, though not always with equal force and duration.

God generally reserves for his greatest servants, as proofs of his love, crushing, interior pains, the heaviest and most unendurable.

On the one hand, He conceals Himself from them, being in their souls, enveloped in thick clouds and dark shadows—while on the other, He deprives them of the capacity of their understanding, and the affections of their will, so that they seem to be

in a vast, gloomy solitude far away from God, when in reality, He is, at such times, nearest to them. Thus it is, He purifies and perfects these souls, rendering them more worthy of Himself. St. Francis was placed in this crucible for the space of two years, at times enduring such violent disgust and profound anguish, that he could not suffer to be even addressed by any of his Religious.

It is universally admitted, that this state of entire abandonment by God, makes the most insupportable cross of the Saints, and it was this same abandonment that caused such intense suffering to the humanity of our Lord, who was impeccable, and personally united to the Divinity ; so that, on the Cross, He complains not of its roughness, nor of the nails, nor of His countless wounds, but, in anguish of spirit, laments to His Father this abandonment. Then, is it surprising, that the Saints so keenly felt this dereliction, and became so utterly cast down ?

As a privation is ever proportioned to the value of the object lost, so when we are deprived but of temporal goods, of honor, health, and the life of the body, these things should be considered as the least, and in the sight of God, they are most insignificant—nay, they are oftentimes useful, even necessary to a soul's salvation, though the ignorant or unenlightened spirit is apt to regard them as serious losses ; on the other hand, that which deprives us of God, His grace, His glory, and eternal rewards, is truly an immense, irreparable loss, and, in this state of loss, there is greater

peril to be encountered, as well as greater trial to souls that love God.

St. Catherine of Genoa was conducted by this road of abnegation and annihilation, but in quite a different manner. Let us hear her speak: "Pure Love took care of me, governing me in all things; It daily purified me, more and more, of all imperfections, exterior as well as interior, consuming them little by little. After having thus annihilated an imperfection, It would then show it to me, for Its eye of purity, Its subtle sight, discovered in me defects, that hitherto were concealed from my self-love, but on being forced to behold their hideousness, I was constrained to confess them. It caused me to observe many very great imperfections in things that seemed to myself and others as pure and perfect: thus, there was nothing in me without spot or blemish, and whether I spoke of spiritual things, or acted in any manner whatsoever, Love would reprove me, saying: I will that you be dead absolutely to all things, that you employ yourself in nothing, wherein you can find yourself. Pure Love, having for its enemy all, that is esteemed by creatures, designing to consume these, regardless of compassion, either for soul or body: were It left free to act, It would retrench all in an instant, knowing well that it is for the good of man whom It loves; but, as his weakness is such as not to be able to support so powerful an operation at one stroke, It contents Itself with retrenching gradually."

By chance I met with a writing on this subject,

in the private memoirs of a Religieuse, who testifies to the privations and annihilations to which she had been subjected by God—to purify and dispose her for the divine union. She says : The way this divine work was commenced in me, was by depriving me of human affections, often causing those persons for whom I entertained the most attachment or sympathy to break off from me abruptly. 2. God deprived me of all possible sensual gratifications, that I could either receive or seek, by allowing them to become for me both bitter and inconstant. 3. He deprived me of the good opinion of my Superiors and others, with whom I lived : permitting them to speak all manner of ill of me, distort my words, censure my actions, so as to strip me of my honor. We naturally desire to enjoy the esteem of those with whom we have intercourse. 4. He deprived me of the chance of acting according to my inclinations, or, in keeping with my natural talents, so that I was employed in all that was contrary to them.

All these privations were most galling to my nature, which had a strong inclination to love and to be loved, to seek satisfaction in creatures, to converse socially with every one, to be held in esteem, and to act and to be employed as became my capacities.

Our Lord, by His incomparable goodness, willed, besides these exterior privations, to cause others, similar, but much more important, in my interior. First, I became so detached from all creatures, endowed with such liberty of spirit, that it appeared

to me, there was nothing in this world capable of possessing or occupying my least affections. I loved all things in God, for God, and with God.

2. I was not only deprived of the contentment hitherto received from creatures, but also of the desire of it, for I was inspired with an extreme disgust and contempt for such satisfaction.

3. I was delivered from any esteem and affection entertained for me by others, and received grace to foresee the dangers, vanities, loss of time, and other defects, accruing from such attachments ; at the same time, I was inspired with a great love for solitude and retreat, causing me to esteem highly those words of David : “ *Lo, I went far off, flying away ; and I abode in the wilderness,*” so that I experienced nothing but pain, when obliged to converse with creatures.

4. I was then freed from fear of contempt and opprobrium ; so that if to be freed from all suspicions and bad opinions entertained of me, there was needed but *one single word*, I would not have pronounced it :—no longer caring or reflecting that I was thought or spoken ill of—but on the contrary, blame and contempt became more agreeable to me than praise. However, at times my nature was keenly sensitive to suffering, but a simple glance towards God, who held me attached to Himself, caused me to endure contempt with meekness, and even with joy.

5. I was deprived of all desire as to preference in employments, making an entire abandonment of my

being—my power and liberty in acting—to God's holy keeping, feeling a perfect indifference to and for all things.

6. I still retained some of my former vanity, in wishing to pass for a person of intellect and judgment ; but of this too I was delivered by our Lord's goodness, so that I now think as little of such a desire as I would to go to Rome, saying in sentiments of the deepest gratitude to our Lord : "*Thou hast broken my bonds ; I will sacrifice to Thee the sacrifice of praise.*" Thou hast so transformed me that verily can I say : "*For what have I in heaven ? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth ?*" if not Thee, O God of my heart. My whole occupation is to keep myself *interiorly* near our Lord, without thought of either body or soul ; committing all to His divine providence, and accepting all occurrences as coming from His paternal hand.

This person, in conclusion, adds : It seems to me that if God does not annihilate a soul, it cannot be truly annihilated. As for myself, I fully recognize that had He not annihilated me Himself, and by the means resorted to in His divine wisdom, and as I have recounted, I never could have renounced all as I did (owing to the malignity of my nature). When the good God calls us into this world, He finds us full of vices and imperfections, and His first work is to give us the instinct to practice virtue ; then He incites us to desire perfection. Afterwards, by infused grace, He conducts us to true annihilation, and lastly, to true transformation. This is the extraordinary road along which God

leads the soul. In all things He is its director and guide, without the help of any creature.

It is related of the B. Herman Joseph, Religious of the Premonastratensian Order—and one of the greatest favorites of our Blessed Lady—that when sick, God permitted him to be abandoned by every one in the house, so that for the space of three days no person came near him. He affirmed to one of his companions, that often he was thus deserted—no one thinking of or caring for him ; at other times, all that he did or said gave offence—meeting with nothing but condemnation and blame from all sides, without his being able to do more than practice patience and submission to God. It is impossible for any one to read with attention the Lives of the Saints, and not to remark this conduct of God over each one of them, in different ways. But is it not also astonishing to see the sufferings with which God visits just and holy persons, for slight faults, thus to purify them in this world ? We know, says Cassian, in making this same observation, that God, to punish the most trivial sins in Saints, for whom He has much love, has permitted the demon to enter their bodies, or has afflicted them with serious and painful maladies, rather than they should be sullied with the least stain, and thus, purifies them of all uncleanness of heart, according to the Prophet, who says : “ I will cleanse you of your vices—of your least defects ; I will refine you as gold in the crucible, to be purified from all alloy and all impurities, so that, after this refining, you shall be called ‘ *the city of the just—a faithful city.* ’ ”

A proof of this is shown in the death of the prophet mentioned in the third Book of Kings, who, having partaken of food, contrary to the prohibition of God, was killed by a lion on his return to his home. His offence was not the result of disobedience, nor gluttony, but simply of too readily believing a false prophet, who deceived him. Again is this made evident in the Abbot Moses, who was a person of incomparable virtue; but in a controversy, having spoken to St. Macarius, with a little too much warmth, and from some attachment to his own views, was instantly possessed by a furious demon, who threw him into such a disordered state as to cause him to use profane language, and to put in his mouth putrid viands. O what a frightful chastisement and violent purgation to so holy a man, for so slight a fault!

St. Gregory relates of a Religieuse, that entering a garden, where she saw a head of fine lettuce, she plucked and ate it, without previously blessing herself. But her negligence did not remain long unpunished; for, in the same moment and place, she was possessed by the demon, who threw her to the ground, and tormented her most strangely. This severe and humiliating penance doubtless had the desired effect, making her thenceforward more prudent and mortified.

Many similar examples could be cited of persons of great virtue, whom it pleased God to send intense suffering, both in the body and soul; in comparison with which all that the just have ordinarily

to endure is nothing more than the pain from the pricks of a pin : but what has been said will suffice to demonstrate that, where God is most lavish of His graces, He requires greater fidelity in return, and when this co-operation is wanting, He in His loving mercy visits the soul with such afflictions as purify it in this life, and render it deserving of the divine union.

SECTION IV.

What Man should do to Annihilate himself.

God alone can see what we truly are. He knows all our evils, and respective remedies—where we need the healing application ; for His touch is that of a skilful Physician, who administers as promptly as successfully. We, on the contrary, are so ignorant in self-knowledge, so timid in our own correction, that all our blows are as those of an apprentice, and we too often recoil from those dealt us by the hand of God, and do not co-operate with Him in His noble design of perfecting us. Two things are absolutely necessary, in order to practice this *self-annihilation*.

The first is on the side of God, who, as we have noticed, toils unremittingly to cultivate, to refine, to perfect us, as being the noblest work of His creation. Then, does it not behoove us to become patient and passive beneath His hand ? to receive His strokes with tranquillity, and in an entire abandonment of self, as the block of marble above-

mentioned, beneath the chisel of the sculptor, who designs to form from it a finished statue? A sick person who presents his arm to the surgeon to be bled, should hold it firm and motionless, otherwise he endangers it; for the slightest movement would cause a vein or artery to be cut, and the arm maimed. So also, when God by privations, darkness, desolation, aridity, and other annihilations, wounds, or works in us, to withdraw us from our vices, and thus to effect our cure, if our soul becomes agitated, is impatient under this operation, far from receiving health, it will become more infirm.

Whence that so few persons, of all who make profession of virtue—who aspire to perfection—arrive thereat: they lose courage in the midst, or even in the commencement of these salutary operations, begun for their spiritual health.

The first duty we owe God, when he designs to draw us more closely to Himself, is to submit to all and every one of his actions, without offering the least resistance.

Nature, it is true, will sometimes grow rebellious—the inferior part will cry out; but heed it not! What is essential, is that the Superior part of the soul should rest pliable and tractable, and it will gradually draw the inferior part to itself. Let the soul then be entirely abandoned to God—that He may act freely in its regard: let it accept with esteem, approbation, love and joy, all the dispositions God wills to make of it: for the more generous and perfect these sentiments, the more speedy and

effectual will be the operations for its purification, sanctification, and preparation for the Divine union and transformation.

There would be but the semblance of marble, if it evinced feeling and reason—expressing complaint and vexation, thus rendering it very difficult, nay, impossible, even for a *Phideas* or a *Michael Angelo* to saw, to cut, or to give it the blows necessary to produce an artistic wonder; so man, far from becoming dejected and impatient, should conceive great joy, that God is so near to him—so occupied with him—retrenching all that is superfluous, and that makes him imperfect: knowing that all these divine operations serve to perfect him, and to transform him into an admirable image of the Divinity—a *chef-d'œuvre* of grace and virtue.

The perfection that God is desirous to give him, is incomparably greater than any that can be imparted by the human hand to the marble—therefore, he should abandon himself absolutely to God, to be fashioned at His will.

The soul truly desirous of perfection cheerfully embraces the trials permitted by divine Providence, thinking of nothing but of self-immolation, and of annihilating whatever can impede the interior reign of the Sovereign Master. This loving soul pines to be united to its suffering Saviour on earth, and while waiting for the bright days of the manifestation of God's glory in heaven it places its present satisfaction in sharing the bitter chalice of its agonizing Lord. Seeing God in all events, it clings to God—God is its end and its *all*.

The marble, to become the representation of a prince, does not receive this design, by simply giving it a head, or arms, or hands ; it is necessary to complete the intended statue, by forming an entire body, well finished ; in like manner, he who makes some reserve, not wishing to give the whole to God, restricts the course of grace, without which he can never attain the perfection designed for him by the divine decrees. Whereupon, St. Teresa gives the following important advice to her Religieuses : “ Be careful, my daughters, to make *no reserves* with God, who wishes to have *all* ; and the more you give, the more perfect the annihilation you practice, for love of Him, the greater the favors you will receive in return ; for would it be reasonable to suppose that when God wishes so ardently to give Himself entirely to you, that you could wish to give yourself but in part to Him ; above all, when you consider the infinite inequality that exists between the *givers* and the things given.” This same Saint says moreover, that diligence is to be exercised herein ; and to make this evident, she uses a *naïve* comparison : “ In order to travel from one country to another, would it be wise to take a whole year, when eight days are sufficient to accomplish this journey, and when, by shortening the route, you avoid many disagreeable detentions, such as are encountered from snow, water, and impassable roads ? Would it not be better, in such a case, to resolutely surmount a little personal inconvenience in the commencement of the journey—not to loiter by the way—and thus, avoid

these unpleasant barriers to one's speedy progress ; to pass them by in as short time as possible ?

The children of Israel employed forty years in making a journey that they could have easily accomplished in as many days, or even less, their dilatoriness causing them to do nothing but advance and recede in the desert ; to turn and return around Mount Seir, without ever entering the promised land, to which, however, they were quite near. Peter de Blois adds : By incessantly turning around the mountain, they never arrived at the promised land, signifying that we turn continually round perfection, without ever attaining it, from lack of a firm and constant resolution.

The second thing which he must do, who would annihilate himself, and by annihilating himself arrive at perfection, regards himself. He must labor perseveringly and efficaciously, in so noble a work, by endeavoring to renounce himself in all things, to destroy his natural inclinations, his tendency to evil ; to annihilate his mind, his judgment, his will, to take the mind, the judgment and the will of another ; to follow his thoughts, his sentiments, his desires and affections, where there is no sin.

Behold the fundamental exercise of perfection, the assured way to sanctity, and to union with God : it being *impossible* to become what one is not, without ceasing to be what one is. Therefore, the soul who aspires to this blessed state, should spare no efforts towards self-renunciation, as pointed out by our Lord, and to dispose himself to

embrace as perfect a renunciation as is compatible with his virtue, and his desire to become perfect, assisted by the grace of God, which will not fail those who generously renounce all for Him.

The practice should consist of the following : 1. To have a determined resolution, at whatever cost, to embrace this practice; without this determination, it is difficult, nay, even impossible to advance ; for at the first difficulty, we will lose courage, nature will tremble at the thought of this severe maxim of our Lord : *“ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.”*

Few spiritual persons have a real, efficacious desire to attain perfection ; from the fact that they use not necessary means, when painful, to this end : few, who are sufficiently resolute to die entirely to themselves, to yield implicitly to grace, when it calls for a perfect, interior death.

2. When occasions present themselves for making this renunciation, fail not to embrace them, whether it be of your mind, your will, your judgment, your desires, your projects : of your body, your honor, your wealth, or of aught else that appertains to you personally. Faith animated by charity can alone conduct us in this way. If you meet no consolation in your progress, remember that God thus tries you, to increase your distrust in self, and to wean you from everything that can separate you from Him : raise the eyes of your soul to our Lord, who gives you a lesson for your sanctification ; then fortified by such thoughts, courageously execute the renunciation required of you.

St. Dorotheus teaches us this practice for the renunciation of the will, and it can be applied to all the rest. Every one, he says, has the means, if he wishes to apply them, to renounce his will many times, every little while ; for instance, if, when taking a walk, you accidentally see something that you feel tempted to look at, to regard more closely, and to which your heart inclines you ; in resisting this movement of curiosity, in replying to your heart : No, I will not look upon it, and thus turning away your eyes, so as not to notice it ; this mortification is a renunciation of the will. Or when you meet with persons discoursing on new, strange, or familiar topics, you are inclined to listen, or to engage in the conversation ; grace checks you, and you pass by without stopping, or even heeding a word that you could so readily have heard. This, too, is a renouncing of one's will. Continuing thus, in all occasions to practice renunciation in seeming trifles, you gradually pave the way for greater or more difficult things, till a habit is contracted for renouncing self, and this habitual state of renunciation leaves the will in such repose, that nothing occurs to render this practice difficult (or in which the will cannot readily renounce itself). This is the way to have no will, nor judgment, nor anything else, to which we must die, and to be as content with all that is done or executed by others, as if we ourselves had performed it.

In a word, by thus wishing *never* to do our own will, we will find that we really do it nevertheless ; for when divested of all self-will, the will of others

is adopted for our own, which change causes us to have no affection or passion, and we are consequently impassible.

In religion, it is not uncommon to find local attachments, though it be but for one's cell. Theodoret relates of St. Solomon, Anchorite, that having resolved to spend his life in perfect solitude, he shut himself up in a small house, beyond his native village, on the opposite side of the river Euphrates. After entering his domicile, he closed up the door, and but once a year did he receive his annual supply of food, which was passed to him through a small aperture he made for this purpose under the ground. Thus he continued for a great while, without ever seeing or conversing with any one, till the inhabitants of his native place came during the night to his abode, forced an entrance, and carried the Saint away with them, without his offering the least resistance, nor evincing any gratification on being returned to his former residence. The next day they built him a lodging, similar to the one from whence they had borne him, thinking thus to make more sure of retaining him in their midst. Here this holy man lived as formerly, in perfect silence and solitude. Some days subsequently the people from the burgh from whence he had been so unceremoniously captured, displeased at losing so great a treasure, likewise crossed the river during the night, to seek him, and transported him to their own village, without the Saint showing the slightest annoyance, he having no desire either to go or remain, so disengaged were his affections from

all places and dwellings: also proving at once his lively faith, and how closely he had been drawn to the Divine union.

The third means to the practice of perfect annihilation is to do nothing from one's own choice. In a word we should be without choice in all things and actions—not wishing to do otherwise than God wills and directs: so that all our movements may proceed from God, and *nothing* from ourselves.

We shall now conclude this subject, with an incident related by the deacon Paschal, in the "*Lives of the Fathers*." He mentions that twelve anchorets, most eminent for sanctity, wisdom and spirituality, once assembled in a conference to discover, by a mutual interchange of sentiments, what exercises they considered most conducive to their spiritual advancement; when the first, and most aged Father said: From the commencement of my retirement into solitude, I resolved to die entirely to all that was outside of my cell—recalling to mind these words of David: "*Let us break their bonds asunder: and let us cast away their yoke from us.*" Then, I built up; as it were, a wall between my mind and the actions of my body; saying to my mind: as a person on one side of a wall cannot see who is on the other side, so also, I wish thee to cease to regard all exterior actions—alone beholding thyself; thinking of thyself, so that by thy patience, thou render thyself worthy of the promises of God. Consider all evil thoughts and desires as so many scorpions and serpents; and when any such sentiments arose within me, I

scanned them so closely, reprehended them so severely, threatened them so angrily, that I stifled and crushed them without further trouble. Thus have I acted, without pardoning anything in my mind or body, being fearful lest they be drawn to some irregularity.

SECTION V.

The Felicity and the Paradise of an Annihilated Soul.

It is an undertaking too great for me—for any mortal, to make known the excellence, the riches, the inestimable treasures, belonging to the happy state of an annihilated soul: all being beyond thought and expression.

St. Catherine of Genoa, being well persuaded of this truth—she even knew it from experience—assures us, that the operations of God in a soul are so great and so excellent, that she deemed it useless to attempt speaking of them, as all language was far inferior, and even vain, in comparison with this divine work. O blessed state! cries out St. Teresa: the demon dares not enter such a soul—he can effect no ill to it, because God operates therein without obstruction, and suffers not even ourselves to thwart His designs. Then again, she uses the simile of a silk-worm, to explain more lucidly how an annihilated soul lives and dies to itself; saying: The little silk-worm by means of its tiny mouth, spins a silken fillet, drawn from its

own substance, and with this forms a cocoon in which it encloses itself, as in its sepulchre, when passing to the chrysalis state—thus to lead as it were a living death. Some time after this self-burial, it resuscitates—ushers forth as a moth, soon to be transformed into a white butterfly. So also, the soul, inflamed with divine love, views itself—in the light of its humility—as a worm, seeing nothing but its baseness and misery: then by acts of virtue, it draws from the depth of its heart the precious silk, out of which is formed its robe of eternal glory. Thus dying to self—enclosed in its abnegation, as in a tomb, there is found our Lord Jesus Christ; after which, like a white dove, by its purity and innocence, it readily soars to the acme of perfection.

“You are dead,” said the Apostle: “and your life is hidden in Jesus Christ:” signifying, that this mystic death causes you to lead a hidden, interior life, all spiritual and divine, on the model of that which our Lord led on earth. Precious death! happy life! “The death of the Saints,” sings David; “is precious in the sight of God.”

By the death of the Saints, says St. Denis, is understood their transformation to virtue, and the perfection of their sanctity, causing them to die to everything, and to live but to God. The beloved disciple says in the Apocalypse, “that he heard a voice from heaven, saying: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord!” and wherefore are they styled blessed? The reason quickly follows the assertion: because the Holy Spirit tells them that,

“from henceforward they shall rest from their labors”—they shall enjoy an unalterable peace, and every possible felicity that earth can give. St. John likewise says, or *predicts*, that one of the twenty-four ancients, that stood around about the throne of our Lord, answered me: “*They shall no more hunger and thirst*”—for the honors of this world, the riches of earth, nor for the gratification of the senses: “*neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat,*”—of the desires of creature; for “*the Lamb—our Lord—shall rule them, and lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;*” dissipating the *ennui* of their minds. Such is the state of those “*blessed dead,*” who by their death, and *in their death*, lead an admirable life, after the model of our Lord’s on earth; for verily, was His life most truly interior, infinitely holy and perfect. it being an entire abnegation and the deepest annihilation of self—it was all for God, and of God. In a word, inasmuch as He was Son of God, our Lord had no other understanding, judgment or will, than that of His Father, being substantially one with Him; and inasmuch as He was man, He subjected all the faculties of soul and body so entirely to the will and guidance of God, that He says: “*I seek not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me;*” and again elsewhere: “*I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me:*” reiterating this same sentiment, when addressing the incredulous Jews: “Then shall you know that I do nothing of

myself, but as the Father hath taught me, these things I speak ;” also in my actions, as in my words, I do and say ever what pleases Him. Thus, during the whole career of His life, the humanity of our Lord, never acted by its own will, but by the movements and direction of the Divinity.

The man who has annihilated his own will and judgment—is *dead* to himself and creatures—on the model of our Lord, returns to God as to his first principle—to whom he is united intimately, by this return—and in whom he is transformed by this union ; and through this transformation, he becomes divine—he acts divinely.

Finally God acts in him in a manner totally new and quite different from any previous action. As a stone that has nothing to restrain it, drops towards its centre of gravity to which it is united as its place of repose, where it receives its perfection and attains its end ; so also the soul, that is no longer arrested, either by its own will and judgment, nor by self-love, or any creature, flies with an inconceivable swiftness towards God, with whom it becomes united as its true end and Sovereign Good, in whom it is tranquil and awaits its final perfection. This is the mystic death so much praised and so desired—where the spirit is abandoned entirely to God, and man is rendered divine, because God lives, reigns, acts in him ; all sins and passions are stifled, all natural movements regulated, and all virtues practiced divinely, by this *deified* soul.

“It is true, that sometimes God grants extraordinary graces even to beginners—and that He acts

very perfectly in souls who are far removed from perfection ; but it must be avowed that He operates more fully and perfectly in those souls who, by their own labor, are more advanced in the way of annihilation : As fire burns more violently with fresh, dry wood, and destroys its form and exterior appearance, while it burns it.

St. Catherine of Genoa, speaking of herself, says apropos of this subject : “ When God disposes a soul to correspond with Him in her free will—placing herself wholly in His hands—He leads her to every perfection : thus has he dealt with one, who after she was called, never more followed her own will, but always stood waiting interiorly upon the will of God, which she so confidently felt to be impressed upon her mind, that she sometimes said to Him : *“ In all that I think, speak or do, I trust in Thee that Thou wilt not permit me to offend Thee.”* The following rule with regard to the intellect, was given to her, never to attempt to understand anything in heaven or on earth, and least of all the spiritual operations in herself ; and she obeyed so implicitly, that she never more observed curiously anything in herself or others.

If it were asked in what manner the intellectual powers were employed, I should answer that all the powers of the soul were always under the command and in the service of God, and when anything had to be done at that instant, only so far as necessity required, it was given her to know what she should do, and then the door was closed.

Of the memory she could give no account, for it

seemed as if she were without memory and without intellect. This was not caused by any voluntary act of hers, but was the result of seeing herself so often and so suddenly moved to action, that she easily comprehended that it was God who was operating in her, and that she remained occupied in Him, lost to all sense of time or place, and without the will or the ability to do otherwise, except when God suddenly effected some change in her. Nor was she ever able to consider anything except what God at the moment proposed to her; in this manner she was attentive to whatever she was doing, so long as necessity required, "but when it was finished, all memory passed with it."

"The same thing was true of her affections, which were taken from her by her Love, even at the beginning, and in such a way, that she could no longer love anything, created or uncreated, not even God Himself, at least, as He was revealed in those sentiments, in visions, delights, and spiritual correspondence, which all others who beheld them estimated so highly, but which she, on the contrary, held in *horror and sought to fly from.*"

She again says elsewhere: When the soul is annihilated and transformed in God, she acts not, hears not, understands not, has neither will, affection nor taste for anything in herself, or out of herself. God alone governs and conducts her. It is He who isolates her from her own actions, deprives her of all her attractions, extinguishes all her desires, stifles all her appetites, and deals death to all her natural inclinations. He so perfects this

work of annihilation, that He dwells alone in man, and man alone, *in God alone*, without soul, body, heaven, earth ; but he thinks, understands, loves, sees, eats, drinks, and performs every action by the direction and movement of God, who is master in him.

She again says : That she felt nothing in herself but the plenitude of God, in which she could not know herself or anything else than God *without* herself ; just as if she was wanting both soul and body. Thus was verified in her these words of St. Paul : “ He who adheres to God, is *made one and the same spirit with him.*” She then adds : In this state I saw without eyes, heard without hearing, felt without feeling, and tasted without taste. Also, when speaking of the gifts of God in an annihilated soul, she says : when a soul has arrived at this state, He fills it with most signal graces, with the pure and simple love of His Majesty, so that this blessed soul sees in all things nothing but this pure love of God, who strips her of all to clothe her with His pure, powerful, great, and burning love ; and of all this, too, she is ignorant, like the holy man Job : “ *Although I should be simple, even this shall my soul be ignorant of,*” etc.

Each day the heart separates more and more from corporal things ; the spirit dies to every creature ; withdraws and engulphs itself as it were more deeply in God, to whom it is attached, and in whom it finds the richest and choicest treasures. Then beholding the miseries to which it is subject in this life, it is constrained to cry out that it is weary of

its exile, finding it as difficult to keep itself attached to the body, to the intercourse of creatures, as a cork to remain beneath the water without some pressure to hold it down. Besides all these inestimable treasures, that are bestowed on a soul thus abandoned entirely to God, it possesses another, which may not be sufficiently prized, but which constitutes a great part of its sublunary joy and happiness : this is no other than an *interior peace*, a profound calm, that nothing can disturb.

We have already seen in the quotation given from the Apocalypse, that there is nothing in this soul that can resist God, or that is opposed to His adorable will ; for it is disengaged from everything spiritual as well as earthly ; saying or feeling : I am in the hands of God ; He is the arbiter of my fate, and will dispose of me according to the designs of His wisdom and mercy.

“ *From whence arise quarrels,*” says St. James ; vexations and difficulties ? if not from your concupiscence, your desires, your passions ? Deprive the sea of wind, you will thereby prevent tempests and insure calm : let a soul be without passions and desires, it will be rendered infallibly tranquil. It is wonderful to see how gold that is undergoing the process of refining struggles against the fire, in order to preserve its impurities ; it combats fiercely with its two adversaries, uselessly disturbing and tormenting itself, till the fire becoming victorious disengages the precious metal from all foreign matter : and thus it passively rests in the midst of the flames, which have enchained its beauty and brilliancy.

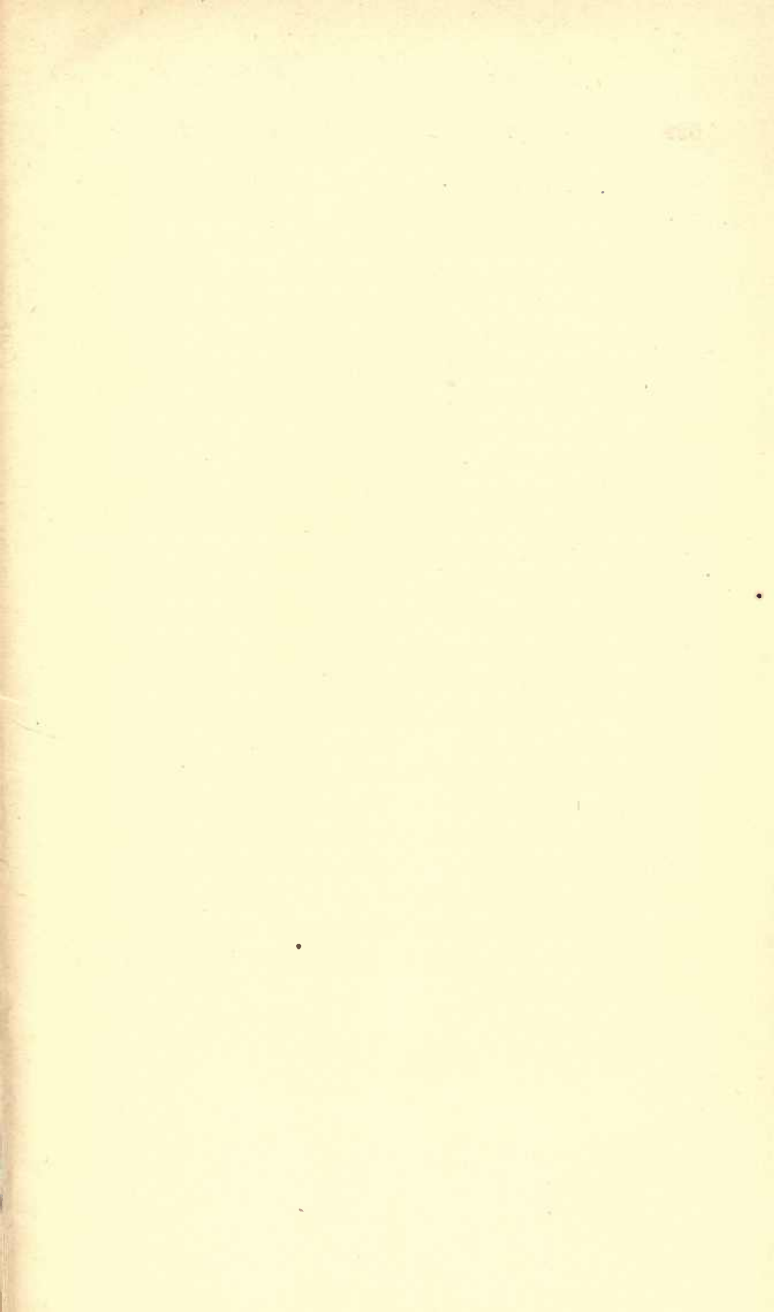
In like manner, is the soul disquieted, and in a state of suffering, so long as it is imbued with self-love, and wishes to retain its vices and imperfections; but so soon as it is despoiled of its natural inclinations—becomes pure, it rests in so sweet a repose, as to defy all adversities and sufferings.

Blessed Henry Suso, in his nine famous "*Rocks*," wherein man is gradually conducted to the height of perfection, says: *That perfection dwells on the ninth rock—and that it consists in this perfect annihilation* of which we have been treating. Then man, absolutely abandoning himself to God, has no more will or judgment of his own; neither wishing, seeking, loving, nor tasting anything else than God. But it is extremely rare to meet with such perfect souls one of which is more precious in the sight of Heaven, than ten thousand others, who still retain something of their self-love, while otherwise practicing much virtue.

These annihilated souls are the pillars of the Church, the children and true friends of God, "His adorers in spirit and in truth;" the perfect imitators of His Divine Son. These are the souls who enjoy an inexplicable interior peace—fearing neither purgatory, hell, nor the demons, nor life, nor death; being exempted from all fear, excepting the *filial* fear of God. Then, since the exercise of self-abnegation and annihilation is so important, so necessary, so useful and so divine, let us embrace it with all *zeal* and with the care it merits. Let man die, says St. Augustine, that he *may not die*; let him lose himself, in order to *find* himself.

annihilate himself, so as to become *something great*—let him cease to be himself, to belong to God. I am never better and happier, says the same Saint, than where *I am not*, because God is where thou art not. Art thou not in thy own will, thy own understanding, thy judgment, thy soul and thy body? Consequently, all in you is in disorder, imperfect and vicious. But if thou art not there, then God is there.

Wherefore, use every effort, that God may dwell within you; and for this, renounce thyself—despoil thyself, annihilate thyself. We will conclude with the words of St. Catherine of Genoa, when speaking of the felicity of this state of annihilation: “When divine Love has kept a soul in suspense, and as it were, disgusted with all things that before she loved, then He shows her Himself, with His countenance divinely joyful and radiant, and as soon as she perceives it—the soul, naked and destitute, casts herself into His hands, crying: O blind one, what didst thou seek? what hast thou desired? here are all the delights thou hast sought! O divine Love, how sweetly hast Thou deceived me, in order to strip me of all self-love, and clothe me with *pure love*, abounding with every delight! Now that I see the truth, *I have nothing to lament but my ignorance.*”



✓

35970

