SERMONS

BY

J. B. MASSILLON,
BISHOP OF CLERMONT.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED

BY

WILLIAM DICKSON;

AND

DEDICATED, BY PERMISSION, TO

HER GRACE

THE DUCHESS OF BUCCLEUGH,

EDINBURGH:

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1797.
TO HER GRACE

THE DUCHESS OF BUCGLEUGH.

MADAM,

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

It is not your rank in the world, Madam, elevated as it is, which renders your protection of any part of the amiable Massillon's Works so eminently proper; it is your rank in the hearts of the good and virtuous, such as he was, who will unanimously acknowledge the propriety of the Dedication.
Were I at liberty to mention instances, within the sphere of my own knowledge, of your Grace's humanity and benevolence, the pleasure with which I seize this opportunity of expressing my veneration for your character, would be little wondered at; nor would the sincerity be doubted, with which I subscribe myself,

Madam,

Your Grace's most respectful,

And most obedient servant,

WILLIAM DICKSON,
TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE
TO THE
PUBLIC.

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

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

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

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

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

Jean Baptiste Massillon was born in Provence in the year 1663. His father was a poor attorney of that inconsiderable place. The obscurity of his birth, which gives so much lustre to the splendour of his personal merit, should make a chief feature in his panegyric; and it may be said of him, as was said of that illustrious Roman, who owed nothing to his ancestors, Videtur ex se natus: He seemed to have produced himself.

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

The young Massillon did every thing in his power to avoid that fame. He had already, while in the country, by order of his superiors, pronounced the funeral orations of two Archbishops. These discourses, which were indeed nothing but the attempts of a youth, but of a youth, who shewed what he would one day be, had the most brilliant success. The humble orator, alarmed at his growing reputation, and dreading, as he said, the daemon of pride, resolved to escape him for ever, by secluding himself in the most obscure retreat. He repaired to the Abbey of Septfons, where the same discipline is observed as at La Trappe; and there he took the habit.

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

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

Such was the plan that Massillon proposed to follow, and which he executed like a man who had conceived it, that is, like a man of genius. He excels in that property of an orator, which can alone supply all the rest; in that eloquence, which goes directly to the soul, which agitates, without convulsing; which alarms, without appalling; which penetrates, without rending the heart. He searches out those hidden folds, in which the passions lie enveloped; these secret sophisms, which blind and seduce. To combat and to destroy these sophisms, he has in general only to unfold them: This he does with an unction so affectionate and so tender, that he allures us rather than compels; and even when he shews us the picture of our vices, he interests and delights us the most. His diction, always smooth and elegant, and pure, is everywhere marked with that noble simplicity, without which, there is neither good taste nor true eloquence; a simplicity, which being united in Massillon, with the
the sweetest and most bewitching harmony, borrowed from this latter additional graces; but what compleats the charm of this enchanting style, is our conviction, that so many beauties spring from an exuberant source, and are produced without effort or pain. It sometimes happens, indeed, that a few inaccuracies escape him, either in the expression, in the term of the phrase, or in the affecting melody of his style; such inaccuracies, however, may be called happy ones, for they completely prevent us from suspecting the least degree of labour in his composition. It was by this happy negligence, that Massillon gained as many friends as auditors: He knew, that the more an orator is intent upon gaining admiration, the less those who hear him are disposed to grant it: and that this ambition is the rock on which so many preachers have split, who being entrusted, if one may dare thus to express it, with the interests of the Deity, wish to mingle with them the insignificant interests of their own vanity. He compared the studied eloquence of learned preachers to those flowers, which grow so luxuriantly amongst the corn, that are lovely to the view, but noxious to the corn.

Massillon reaped another advantage from that heart-affecting eloquence, which he made so happy an use of. As he spoke the language of all conditions, because he spoke to the heart, all descriptions
descriptions of men flocked to his sermons; even unbelievers were eager to hear him; they often found instruction, when they expected only amusement, and returned sometimes converted, when they thought they were only bestowing or withholding their praise. Massillon could descend to the language, which alone they would listen to, that of a philosophy, apparently human, but which, finding every avenue to the heart laid open, allowed the orator to approach without effort and assistance; and made him conqueror, even before he had engaged.

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

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

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

These sermons, composed in less than three
months, are known by the name of Petit Carime.
Though they are not in the highest degree fi-
nished, they are a true model of pulpit elo-
quence. The great sermons of the same author
may possess more pathos and vehemence; but
the eloquence of these is more insinuating and
delicate, and the charm resulting from them is
enhanced by the importance of the subject, by
the inestimable value of those simple affecting
lessons, which being fitted to penetrate, as agree-
ably as forcibly, the heart of the young Monarch,
seem calculated to procure the happiness of mil-
lions,
lions, by acquainting the Prince with what was expected of him.

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

Deeply impressed with a sense of the true duties of his station, Massillon fulfilled the principal
pal function of a bishop, that which attracts love and respect from incredulity itself, the delightful exercise of humanity and benevolence. He sent, in the space of two years, twenty thousand livres to the Hotel Dieu at Clermont. His whole revenue was at the service of the poor. His diocese retain the remembrance of his benefits, now after thirty years, and his memory is still honoured by the most eloquent of all funeral orations, the tears of an hundred thousand people whom his bounty made happy.

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

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

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

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

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SERMON I.

ON SALVATION.

John vii. 6.

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

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

The slightest worldly interests agitate them, and
make them undertake every thing: for what is
the world itself, whose deceitful ways they fol-
low, but an eternal agitation, where the passions
set every thing in motion; where tranquillity is
the only pleasure unknown; where cares are
honourable; where those who are at rest, think
themselves unhappy; where all is toil and af-
fection of spirit; in a word, where all are in
motion, and all are deceived? Surely, my bre-
thren, when we see men so occupied, so interest-
ed, so patient in their pursuits, we would sup-
pose them labouring for everlastling ages, and for
riches which ought to secure their happiness:
How can we comprehend, that so much toil and
agitation has nothing in view but a fortune,
whose duration scarcely equals that of the la-
bours which have gained it; and that a life so
rapid, is spent with so much fatigue, in the
search of wealth which must perish along with
it!

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

Yes, my brethren, our cares for this world are always animated; obstacles, fatigues, disappointments, nothing can repulse us: Our cares for this world are always prudent; dangers, snares, perplexities, competitions, nothing can make us mistake our aim: whereas, our cares for salvation bear a very different character; nothing can be more languid, or less interesting to us, although obstacles and disgusts there, are so much to be dreaded; nothing can be more inconsiderate; although the multiplicity of ways, and the number of rocks for us to split upon, render mistakes in it so familiar and common.

We must labour, therefore, towards its accomplishment, with fervour and prudence; with fervour, in order not to be repulsed; with prudence, in order not to be mistaken.
Part I.—Undoubtedly nothing in this life ought to interest us more than the care of our eternal salvation; besides, that this is the grand affair upon which our all depends, we even have not, properly speaking, any other upon the earth; and the infinite and diverse occupations attached to our places, to our rank, to our situations in life, ought to be only different modes of labouring towards our salvation.

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

It is a very deplorable error, that mankind has attached the most pompous names to all the enterprises of the passions; and that the cares for our salvation have not, in the opinions of men, been capable of meriting the same honour, and the same esteem. Military toils are regarded by us as the path of reputation and glory; the intrigues
trigues and the commotions which contribute to
our advancement in the world, are looked upon
as the secrets of a profound wisdom; schemes
and negotiations which arm mankind against
each other, and which frequently make the am-
bitious of an individual the source of public ca-
lamities, pass for extent of genius, and superiori-
ty of talents; the art of raising from an obscure
patrimony, a monstrous and overgrown fortune,
at the expence often of justice and probity, is
the science of business, and individual good-man-
agement. In a word, the world has found out
the secret of setting off by honourable titles, all
the different cares which are connected with the
things of this earth: The actions of faith alone,
which shall endure eternally; which shall form
the history of the age to come, and shall be en-
graven during all eternity upon the immortal
columns of the heavenly Jerusalem, are account-
ed idle and obscure occupations; the lot of
weak and limited souls, and have nothing which
exalt them in the eyes of men. Such, my bre-
thren, is the first cause of our indifference to-
wards the business of our salvation: We do not
sufficiently esteem that holy undertaking, to lab-
our at it with fervour.

Now, I do not think it necessary to stop here,
and combat an illusion, which so flagrantly vio-
lates right reason. For what is it that can ren-
der a work glorious to the person who under-
takes it? Is it the duration and the immortality
which it promises in the memory of men? Alas!
all the monuments of pride will perish with the
world which has reared them up; whatever
we do for the earth, will experience the same
definity which it will one day undergo: Victo-
ries and conquests, the most splendid enterprises,
and all the history of the sinners whose names
adorn the present age, will be effaced from the
remembrance of men; the works of the just
alone, will be immortal, and, written for ever in
the book of life, will survive the entire ruin of
the universe. Is it the recompense which is held
out to us for it? But whoever is unable to ren-
der us happy, is consequently unable to recom-
pense us; and there is no other who has that
power but God Himself. Is it the dignity of the oc-
cupations to which they engage you? But the most
honourable cares of the world are merely games,
on which our error and absurdity have bestowed
serious and pompous names: Here, on the contra-
ry, every thing is great; we love the Author of
our existence alone; we adore the Sovereign of
the universe; we serve an Almighty Master;
we covet only eternal riches; we form projects
for heaven alone; we labour for an immortal
crown.

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

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

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

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

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

Joseph was charged with the management of a great kingdom; he alone supported the whole weight of the government; nevertheless, did he forget the Lord, who had broken asunder his chains, and justified his innocence? Or, in order to serve the God of his fathers, did he delay till a successor should come and restore that tranquillity to him which his new dignities had necessarily
necessary deprived him of? On the contrary, he knew how to render serviceable towards the consolation of his brethren, and the happiness of the people of God, a prosperity which he acknowledged to be held only from his Almighty hand. That officer of the Queen of Ethiopia, who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, had the sole government of her immense riches; every particular with regard to tributes and subsidies, and the administration of all the public revenues, were entrusted to his fidelity; now, this abyss of cares and embarrassments did not deprive him of leisure to seek, in the prophecies of Isaiah, the salvation he expected, and the words of eternal life. Place yourselves in the most agitated stations, you will find examples of upright souls, who in them have wrought their sanctification: The Court may become the asylum of virtue, as well as the cloister; places and employments may be the aids, as well as the rocks of piety; and when, in order to return to God, we delay till a change of station shall take place, it is a sure mark that we do not as yet wish to change our heart. Besides, when we say that salvation ought to be your sole employment, we do not pretend that you should renounce all other pursuits; for you would then depart from the order of God; we only wish you to connect them with your salvation; that piety may sanctify your occupations; that faith may regulate them; that religion may ani-
mate them; that the fear of the Lord may moderate them: In a word, that salvation may be as the centre to which they all tend. For, to wait till you shall be in a more tranquil situation, and freer from worldly perplexities, is not only an illusion which Satan employs to delay your repentance, but it is also an outrage upon the religion of Jesus Christ; you thereby justify the reproaches formerly made against it, by the enemies of the Christians; it would seem that you look upon it as incompatible with the duties of Prince, courtier, public character, and father of a family; like them, you seem to believe, that the gospel proposes only maxims unfortunate and inimical to society; and that, were it believed, and strictly observed, it would be necessary to quit all; to exclude ourselves from the world; to renounce all public concerns; to break all the ties of duty, of humanity, of authority, which unite us to the rest of mankind; and to live as if we were alone upon the earth; in place of which, it is the gospel alone which makes us fulfil all these duties as they ought to be fulfilled; it is the religion of Jesus Christ which can alone form pious princes, incorruptible magistrates, mild and gentle masters, and faithful subjects, and maintain, in a just harmony, that variety of stations and conditions, upon which depend the peace and tranquillity of the people, and the safety of empires.

But,
But, in order to impress more sensibly upon you the illusion of this pretext, when you shall be free from embarrassment, and disengaged from those external cares which at present detach your thoughts from salvation, will your heart be free from passions? Will those iniquitous and invisible bonds which now stop you, be broken asunder? Will you be restored to yourselves? Will you be more humble, more patient, more moderate, more virtuous, more mortified? Alas! It is not external agitations which check you, it is the disorder within; it is the tumultuous ardour of the passions; it is not from the cares of fortune, and the embarrassments of events and business, says a holy father, that confusion and trouble proceed; it is from the irregular desires of the soul; a heart in which God reigns is tranquil everywhere. Your cares for the world are only incompatible with salvation, because the affections which attach you to it are criminal. It is not your stations, but your inclinations which become rocks of destruction to you; now, from these inclinations you will never be able, to free yourselves with the same facility as from your cares and embarrassments; they will afterwards be even more lively, more unconquerable than ever: Besides this fund of weakness which they draw from your corruption, they will have that force and strength acquired by habit through time and years. You think, that in attaining rest every thing will be accomplished; and you
will feel, that your passions, more lively in proportion as they no longer find external resources to employ them, will turn all their violence against yourselves; and you will then be surprised to find in your own hearts, the same obstacles which at present you believe to be only in what surrounds you. This leprosy, if I may venture to speak in this manner, is not attached to your clothes, to your places, to the walls of your palaces, so that, by quitting them you may rid yourselves of it; it has gained root in your flesh; it is not by renouncing your cares, therefore, that you must labour towards curing yourselves; it is by purifying yourselves that you must sanctify your cares: Every thing is pure to those who are pure; otherwise your wound will follow you, even into the leisure of your solitude; like that king of Judea mentioned in the Book of Kings, who in vain abdicated his throne, delivered up all the insignia as well as the cares of royalty, into the hands of his son, and withdrew himself into the heart of his palace; he carried with him the leprosy with which the Lord had struck him, and beheld that shameful disease pursue him even into his retreat. External cares find neither their innocence nor their malignity, but in our own hearts; and it is ourselves alone who render the occupations of the world dangerous, as it is ourselves alone who render those of heaven insipid and disgusting.

2 And,
And, behold, my brethren, the last reason why we shew so little fervour and animation in the affair of our eternal salvation; it is because we fulfil the duties necessary to accomplish it, without pleasure, and, as it were, against our will. The slightest obligations of piety appear hard to us; whatever we do for heaven tires us, exhausts us, displeases us: Prayer confines our minds too much; retirement wearies us; holy reading, from the first, fatigues the attention; the intercourse of the upright is languid, and has nothing sprightly or amusing in it; in a word, we find something, I know not what, of melancholy in virtue, which occasions us to fulfil its obligations only as hateful debts, which we always discharge with a bad grace, and never till we see ourselves forced to it.

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

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

In the second place, If you wish to know why the yoke of Jesus Christ is so hard, and so burdensome to you; it is because you carry it too seldom: You give only a few rapid moments to the care of your salvation: Certain days which you consecrate to piety: Certain religious works of which you sometimes acquit yourselves; and in accomplishing their immediate discharge, you experience only the disgusts attending the first
efforts; you do not leave to grace, the time necessary to lighten the weight; and you anticipate the comforts and the consolations, which it never fails to shed upon the sequel. Those mysterious animals which the Philistines made choice of to carry the ark of the Lord beyond their frontiers, emblematic of unbelieving souls little accustomed to bear the yoke of Jesus Christ, bellowed, says the scripture, and seemed to groan under the grandeur of that sacred weight: In place of which, the children of Levi, a natural image of the upright, accustomed to that holy ministry, made the air resound with songs of mirth and thanksgivings, while carrying it with majesty, even over the burning sands of the desert. The law is not a burden to the upright soul accustomed to observe it: It is the worldly soul alone, little familiarized to the holy rules, who groans under a weight so pleasing. When Jesus Christ declares that his yoke is light and easy, he commands us, at the same time, to bear it every day; the unction is attached to the habit and usage of it: The arms of Saul were heavy to David, only because he was not accustomed to them. We must familiarize ourselves with virtue, in order to be acquainted with its holy attractions; the pleasures of sinners are only superficially agreeable: The first moments alone are pleasant; descend deeper, and you no longer find but gall and bitterness; and the deeper you go, the more will you find the void, the weariness,
weariness, and the satiety which are inseparable from sin: Virtue, on the contrary, is a hidden manna; in order to taste all its sweetness, it is necessary to dig for it; but the more you advance, the more do its consolations abound; in proportion as the passions are calmed, the path becomes easy; and the more will you applaud yourselves for having broken asunder chains which weighed you down, and which you no longer bore but with reluctance and a secret sorrow.

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

In a word, You perform the duties of piety without inclination, not only because you do them too seldom, but because you only, as I may say, half perform them. You pray, but it is without recollection; you abstain, perhaps, from injuring your enemy; but it is without loving him as your brother; you approach the holy mysteries; but without bringing there that fervour which alone can enable you to find in them those ineffable comforts which they communicate to the religious soul: You sometimes separate yourselves from the world; but you carry not with you into retirement the silence of the senses and of the passions, without which it is only a melancholy fatigue. In a word, You
only half carry the yoke. Now, Jesus Christ is not divided: That Simon of Cyrene, who bore only a part of the cross, was overcome by it, and the soldiers were under the necessity of using violence to force him to continue this melancholy office to the Saviour of the world. The fulness alone of the law is consolatory; in proportion as you retrench from it, it becomes heavy and irksome; the more you wish to soften it, the more it weighs you down; on the contrary, by sometimes adding extraneous rigours, you feel the load diminished, as if you had applied additional softness: Whence comes this? It is, that the imperfect observance of the law takes its source from a heart which the passions still share; now, according to the word of Jesus Christ, a heart divided, and which nourishes two loves, must be a kingdom and a theatre full of trouble and desolation.

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

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

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

But, in order to serve him as he wishes to be served, we must esteem the glory and the happiness of his service; we must prefer this happiness to all others, and labour in it with sincerity, without reserve, and with a ripe and watchful circumpection; for, if it is a common fault to want favour in the business of our eternal salvation, and to become disgusted with it; it is likewise a much more general one to fail of prudence, and to mistake our path towards it.
PART II.—An enterprife where the dangers are daily, and mistakes common; where amongst so many different routs which appear safe, there is, however, only one true and unerring, and the success of which must, nevertheless, decide our eternal destiny: An enterprife of this nature surely requires uncommon exertions; and never had we occasion, in the conduct of any other, for so much circumspection and prudence. Now that such is the enterprife of salvation, it would be needless to waste time in proving here, and equally so for you to doubt; the only object of importance, then, to establish, is, the rules and the marks of this prudence, which is to guide us in so dangerous and so essential an affair.

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

Such are the common rules of prudence adopted by the children of the age, in the pursuit of their pretensions and their temporal expectations: Eternal salvation is the only affair in which they are neglected. In the first place, No person examines if his ways are sure; nor does he ever require any other pledge of his safety,
safety, than the crowd which he sees marching before him. Secondly, In the doubts which spring up during our proceedings, the party the most dangerous to salvation, having always self-love in its favour, is always preferred: Two important and common errors in the affair of eternal salvation, which it is necessary to combat here. The first rule, is, not to determine by chance, and in the affair of eternity to give nothing to opinion or example. Indeed, the upright is everywhere represented to us in the holy writings, as a judicious and prudent man; who calculates, who compares, who examines, who discriminates; who tries whatever may be the most proper; who does not lightly believe every fancy; who carries before him the torch of the law, that his steps may be enlightened, and that he may not be in danger of mistaking his way. The sinner, on the contrary, is there held out as a foolish man, who marches by chance, and who, in the most dangerous passes, advances forward with confidence, as if he was travelling in the fairest and most certain path.

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

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

The world approves of certain suspicious and odious ways of encreasing the patrimony of our fathers, and places no other bounds to our desires than those of the laws, which punish violence and manifest injustice: Can you assure us, that the rules of the conscience do not observe more narrowly, and with regard to these matters, do not enter into discussions, which the world is totally unacquainted with? The world has declared, that a gentle, effeminate, and idle life, is an innocent life; and that virtue is not so rigid and austerer as we wish to make it; before giving credit to this merely upon its assertion, have you consulted whether the doctrine brought us by Jesus Christ from heaven, subscribed to the novelty, and to the danger of these maxims?

What,
What, my brethren! In the affair of your eternity, without examination or attention, you adopt common prejudices, merely because they are established? You blindly follow those who march before you, without examining where the path leads to which they keep? You even deign not to enquire at yourselves whether or not you are deceived? You are satisfied in knowing that you are not the only persons mistaken? What! In the business which must decide your eternal destiny, you do not even make use of your reason? You demand no other pledge of your safety, than the general error? You have no doubt or suspicion? You think it unnecessary to inform yourselves? You have no mistrust? All is good, and in your opinion as it ought to be? You who are so nice, so difficult, so mistrustful, so full of precaution when your worldly interests are in question; in this grand affair alone, you conduct yourselves by instinct, by fancy, by foreign impressions? You decide upon nothing, but, indolently, allow yourselves to be dragged away by the multitude, and the torrent of example? You who, in every other matter, would blush to think like the crowd; you who picque yourselves upon superiority of genius, and upon leaving to the common people, and to weak minds, all vulgar prejudices; you who carry to a ridiculous extreme, perhaps, your mode of thinking on every other point, upon salvation alone, you think with the crowd.
and it appears that reason is denied to you, on this grand interest alone. What, my brethren!
When you are asked, in the steps which you take to ensure success to your worldly expectations, the reasons which have induced you to prefer one party to another, you advance such solid and prudent motives; you justify your choice by prospects so certain and decisive; you appear to have so maturely considered them, before adopting their execution; and when we demand of you whence it comes, that in the affair of your eternal salvation you prefer the abuses, the customs, the maxims of the world, to the examples of the saints who certainly did not live like you; and to the rules of the gospel, which condemn all those who live as you do; you have nothing to answer, but that you are not singular, and that you must live like the rest of the world. Great God! to what purpose are great abilities in the conduct of projects which will perish with us!
We have reasons and arguments in support of vanity, and we are children with regard to the truth; we picque ourselves on our wisdom in the affairs of the world; and, alas! in the business of our eternal salvation, we think it no disgrace to be ignorant and foolish.
You will tell us, perhaps, that you are neither wiser, nor more able than all the others who live like you; that you cannot enter into discussions which are beyond your reach; that were
were we to be believed, it would be necessary to cavil at, and dispute every thing; and that piety does not consist in refining to such an extreme. But I ask you, Is so much subtilty required to know that the world is a deceitful guide? That its maxims are rejected in the school of Jesus Christ; and that its customs can never subvert the law of God? Is not this the most simple and the most common rule of the gospel, and the first truth in the plan of salvation? To know our duty, it requires only to walk in simplicity of heart. Subtilties are only necessary in order to dissemble with ourselves, and to connect, if possible, the passions with the holy rules; there it is that the human mind has occasion for all its industry, for the task is difficult: Such is exactly your case, you who pretend, that to recal customs to the law is a ridiculous refinement: To know our duty, it only requires a conference with ourselves. While Saul continued faithful, he had no occasion to consult the forces with regard to what he should do: The law of God sufficiently instructed him: It was only after his guilt, that in order to calm the inquietudes of a troubled conscience, and to connect his criminal weaknesses with the law of God, he be-thought himself of seeking, in the answers of a deceitful oracle, some authority favourable to his passions. Love the truth, and you will soon acquire a knowledge of it: A clear conscience is the best of all instructors.
Not that I wish to blame those sincere researches which an honest and timid soul makes to enlighten and instruct itself; I wish only to say, that the majority of doubts with regard to our duties, in those hearts delivered up like you to the world, springs from a ruling principle of cupidity, which, on the one side, would wish not to interfere with its infamous passions; and, on the other, have the authority of the law, to protect it from the remorse which attend a manifest transgression. For, besides, if you seek the Lord in sincerity, and your lights are insufficient, there are still prophets in Israel; consult in proper time those who preserve the form of the law, and of the holy doctrine; and who teach the way of God in truth: Do not propose your doubts with those colourings and softenings which always fix the decision in your favour: Do not apply in order to be deceived, but to be instructed: Seek not favourable, but sure and enlightened guides; do not content yourselves even with the testimony of men: Consult the Lord frequently, and through different channels. The voice of heaven is uniform, because the voice of truth, of which it is the interpreter, is the same. If the testimonies do not accord, prefer always what places you farthest from danger; always mistrust the opinion which pleases, and which already had the suffrage of your self-love. It rarely happens, that the decisions of our inclinations are found the same with those of the holy
holy rules; nevertheless, it is that which decides
on all our preferences in the business of salva-
tion.—Second step of our imprudence in the af-
fair of our eternal salvation.—In effect, there is
scarcely a doubt with regard to our duties, which
conceals from us the precise obligation of the
law on every step: We know the paths by
which Jesus Christ, and the saints, have passed;
they are still pointed out to us every day; we are
invited by the success which they have had, to
walk in their steps. In this manner, say they to
us, with the Apostle, did those men of God who
have preceded us, overcome the world, and ob-
tain the performance of the promises: we see
that, by imitating them, we may hope for all,
and in the way in which we walk, that every
thing is to be dreaded. Ought we to hesitate
on this alternative? Nevertheless, in every thing
we resist our own lights; everywhere we prefer
danger to safety; our whole life is, indeed, one
continued danger; in all our actions we float,
not between the more or less perfect, but be-
tween guilt and simple errors: Every time we
act, the question is not to know whether we are
doing the greatest good, but if we are commit-
ting only a slight fault, worthy of indulgence:
All our duties are limited, to the enquiry at our-
selves, if professing such principles; if to a cer-
tain degree, delivering ourselves up to resent-
ment; if employing a certain degree of dupli-
city; if not denying ourselves a certain gratifi-
cation,
A crime, or a venial fault; you always hang betwixt these two destinies; and your conscience can never render you the testimony, that on any occasion you made choice of the party in which there was no danger.

Thus, you know, that a life of pleasure, of gaming, of show, of amusement, when even nothing gross or criminal is mingled with it, is a party very doubtful for eternity; no faint, at least, has left you such an example: You are sensible, that more guarded and more Christian manners would leave you nothing similar to dread; nevertheless, you love an accommodating doubt better than an irksome safety; you know that grace has moments which never return; that nothing is more uncertain than the return of holy impulses once rejected; that salvation deferred, almost always fails; and that to begin to-day, is prudently assuring ourselves of success; you know it; yet you prefer the uncertain hope of a grace to come, to the present salvation which offers itself to you. Now, my brethren, I only demand of you two reflections, and I shall finish. In the first place, When even in this path which you tread, the balance were equal, that is to say, when it were equally suspicious, whether you are to be saved or lost; did the smallest portion of faith remain to you, you would be plunged in the most cruel alarms; it ought to appear horrible to you, that your eternal salvation was become a problem, upon which you knew not what
to decide, and upon which, with equal appearances of truth, you might determine for the happiness or the misery of your everlasting lot, in the same manner as upon those indifferent questions which God has yielded up to the controversies of men: You ought to undertake every thing, and to employ every exertion to place appearances at least, in your favour, and to find out a situation where prejudices would be on your side: And here, where every thing concludes against you; where the law is unfavourable; where you have nothing in your favour but some fallacious appearances of reason, upon which you would not hazard the smallest of your temporal interests; and with manners which to this period have saved none, and in which you only strengthen and comfort yourselves by the example of those who perish with you: You are tranquil in this path: You admit of, and acknowledge the wisdom of those who have chosen a more certain one; you say that they are praiseworthy; that they are happy who can assume such a command over themselves; that it is much safer to live as they do; you say this, and you think it needless to imitate, or follow their example? Madman! cries the Apostle, What delusion is it which blinds thee? and wherefore dost thou not obey that truth which thou knowest? Ah! my brethren, in a choice which interests our glory, our advancement, our temporal interests, are we capable of such imprudence?
prudence? Of all the various ways which present themselves to ambition, do we leave those where every appearance seems favourable to our success, and make choice of such as lead to nothing; where fortune is tardy and doubtful; and which have hitherto been only productive of misfortune? Of salvation alone, therefore, we make a kind of speculation, if I may venture to speak in this manner; that is to say, an undertaking without arrangement, without precaution, which we abandon to the uncertainty of events, and of which the success can alone be expected from chance, and not from our exertions. In a word, as my last reflection, allow me to ask, Why you search for, and allege to us so many specious reasons, as a justification to yourselves, of the manners in which you live? Either you wish to be saved, or you are determined to be lost. Do you wish to be saved? Choose then the most proper means of attaining what you aspire to. Quit those doubtful paths, by which none have hitherto been conducted to it; confine yourselves to that which Jesus Christ has pointed out to us, and which alone can safely lead us to it; do not apply yourselves to lessen in your own sight the dangers of your situation, and to view them in the most favourable light, in order to dread them less; rather magnify the danger to your mind: We cannot dread too much, what we cannot shun too much: And salvation is the only concern where precaution can never be excessive,
cessive, because a mistake in it is without remedy. See if those who once followed the same deceitful paths in which you tread, and who employed the same reasons that you make use of, for their justification, have confined themselves to them from the moment that grace had operated in their hearts, serious and sincere desires of salvation: They regarded the dangers in which you live, as incompatible with their design; they fought more solid and certain paths; they made the holy safety of retirement, succeed to the inutility and the dangers of society; the habit of prayer, to the dissipation of gaming and amusements; the guard of the senses, to the indecency of dress, and the danger of public spectacles; Christian mortification, to the softness of an effeminate and sensual life; the gospel to the world; they comprehended that it would be absurd to wish their salvation through the same means by which others are lost. But, if you are determined to perish; alas! Why will you still preserve measures with religion? Why will you always seek to place some specious reasons on your side; to conciliate your manners with the gospel; and to preserve, as I may say, appearances still with Jesus Christ? Why are you only half sinners, and still leave to your grossest passions the useless check of the law? Cast off the remains of that yoke which is irksome to you; and which, in lessening your pleasures, lessens not your punishment. Why do you
you accomplish your perdition with so much constraint? In place of those scruples, which permit you only doubtful gains, and deny you still certain low, and manifestly wicked profits, but which place you in the number of those reprobates who shall never possess the kingdom of God; overleap these bounds, and no longer place any limits to your guilt, but those of your cupidity: In place of those loose and worldly manners, which will equally prove your ruin, refuse nothing to your passions, and, like the beasts of the earth, yield to the gratification of every desire. Yes, sinners, perish with all the fruits of iniquity, seeing you will equally reap tears and eternal punishment.

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

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

Now, to God, &c.
SERMON II.

ON THE SMALL NUMBER OF THE SAVED.

LUKE iv. 27.

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

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

My intention is therefore to-day, in our morals and manner of life, to search for the cause of this number being so small. As every one flatters himself he will not be excluded, it is of importance to examine if his confidence be well founded. I wish not, in marking to you the causes which render salvation so rare, to make you generally conclude, that few will be saved; but to bring you to ask of yourselves, if living as you live, you can hope to be so. Who am I? What is it I do for heaven; and what can be my hopes in eternity? I propose no other order, in a matter of such importance. What are the causes which render salvation so rare? I mean to point out three principal ones, which is the only arrangement of this discourse. Art and far-sought reasonings would here be ill-timed.
ON THE SMALL NUMBER OF THE SAVED. 51
timed. O attend, therefore, be whom you may!
No subject can be more worthy your attention,
since it goes to inform you, what may be the hopes
of your eternal destiny.

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

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

In those happy days, when the whole church
was still but an assembly of saints, it was very
uncommon to find an instance of a believer, who,
after having received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and acknowledged Jesus Christ in the sacrament, which regenerates us, fell back to his former irregularities of life. Ananias and Saphira were the only prevaricators in the church of Jerusalem; that of Corinth, had only one incestitial sinner. Church penitence was then a remedy almost unknown; and scarcely was there found among these true Israelites one single leper, whom they were obliged to drive from the holy altar, and separate from communion with his brethren. But since that time, the number of the upright diminishes, in proportion as that of believers increases. It would appear, that the world, pretending now to have become almost generally Christian, has brought with it into the Church its corruptions and its maxims. Alas! we all go astray, almost from the breast of our mothers! The first use which we make of our heart is a crime; our first desires are passions; and our reason only expands and increases on the wrecks of our innocence. The earth, says a Prophet, is infected by the corruption of those who inhabit it: All have violated the laws, changed the ordinances, and broken the alliance which should have endured for ever: All commit sin; and scarcely is there one to be found, who does the work of the Lord. Injustice, calumny; lying, treachery, adultery, and the blackest crimes, have deluged the earth. The brother lays snares for his brother; the father is divided from his children;
children; the husband from his wife: There is no tie which a vile interest does not dissolve: Good faith and probity are no longer virtues but among the simple people; animosities are endless; reconciliations feints; and never is a former enemy regarded as a brother: They tear, they devour each other. Assemblies are no longer but for the purpose of public and general censure. The purest virtue is no longer a protection from the malignity of tongues. Gaming is become either a trade, a fraud, or a fury. Repasts, those innocent ties of society, degenerate into excesses, of which we dare not speak. Our age witnesses horrors, with which our forefathers were unacquainted. Behold then already one path of salvation shut to the generality of men. All have erred. Be whom you may, who listen to me at present, the time has been, when sin reigned over you: Age may perhaps have calmed your passions; but what was your youth? Long and habitual infirmities may perhaps have disgusted you with the world; but what use did you formerly make of the vigour of health? A sudden inspiration of grace may have turned your heart; but do you not most fervently intreat, that every moment prior to that inspiration may be effaced from the remembrance of the Lord!

But with what am I taking up my time? We are all sinners, O my God! And thou knowest our hearts: What we know of our errors, is perhaps
haps in thy sight the most pardonable; and we all allow, that by innocence, we have no claim to salvation. There remains, therefore, only one resource, which is penitence. After our shipwreck, say the saints, it is the happy plank, which alone can conduct us into port; there is no other mean of salvation for us. Be whom you may, prince or subject, great or low, penitence alone can save you. Now permit me to ask, where are the penitent? You will find more, says a holy father, who have never fallen, than who, after their fall, have raised themselves by true repentance: This is a terrible saying; but do not let us carry things too far; the truth is sufficiently dreadful, without adding new terrors to it by vain declamation.

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

A penitent is a man, entrusted by God, with judgment against himself; who refuses himself the most innocent pleasures, because he had formerly indulged in the most criminal; who puts up with the most necessary ones with pain; who now regards his body as an enemy, whom it is necessary to conquer; as an unclean vessel which must
must be purified; as an unfaithful debtor, of whom it is proper to exact to the last farthing; a penitent regards himself as a criminal condemned to death, because he no longer is worthy of life. In the loss of riches or health, he sees only a privation of favours that he had formerly abused; in the humiliations which happen to him, but the pains of his guilt; in the agonies with which he is racked, but the commencement of those punishments he has justly merited; such is a penitent. But I again ask you, where amongst us are penitents of this description? Now look around you. I do not tell you to judge your brethren, but to examine what are the manners and morals of those who surround you; nor do I speak of those open and avowed sinners, who have thrown off even the appearance of virtue, I speak only of those who like yourselves live like the generality; and whose actions present nothing to the public view, particularly shameful or depraved. They are sinners; and they admit of it: You are not innocent; and you confess it yourselves. Now, are they penitent; or are you? Age, avocations, more serious employments, may perhaps have checked the follies of youth: Even the bitterness which the Almighty has made attendant on our passions; the deceits, the treacheries of the world; an injured fortune, with a ruined constitution, may have cooled the ardour, and confined the irregular desires of your heart:

Crimes
Crimes may have disgusted you even with crimes; for passions gradually extinguish themselves. Time, and the natural inconstancy of the heart, will bring these about; yet nevertheless, though detached from sin by incapability, you are no nearer your God. According to the world, you are become more prudent, more regular, more what it calls men of probity; more exact in fulfilling your public or private duties; but you are not penitent. You have ceased from your disorders; but you have not expiated them: You are not converted: This great stroke; this grand change of the heart, which regenerates man, has not yet been felt by you. Nevertheless this situation, so truly, dangerous, does not alarm you: Sins, which have never been washed away by sincere repentance, and consequently never obliterated from the book of life, appear in your eyes as no longer existing; and you will tranquilly leave this world in a state of impenitence, so much the more dangerous, as you will die, without being sensible of your danger. What I say here, is not merely a rash expression, or an emotion of zeal: Nothing is more real, or more exactly true: It is the situation of almost all men, even the wisest and most esteemed by the world.

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

And what renders it still more dreadful is, that acting in this manner, you only follow the torrent: Your morals are the morals of almost all men. You may, perhaps, be acquainted with some still more guilty, (for I suppose you to have still remaining some sentiments of religion, and regard for your salvation); but do you know any real penitents? I am afraid we must search the deserts and solitudes for them. You can scarcely particularise among persons of rank and usage of the world, a small number, whose morals and mode of life, more austerer and more guarded than the generality, attract the attention, and very likely the censure of the public: All the rest walk in the same path. I see clearly that every one comforts himself by the example of his neighbour: That in that point, children succeed to the false security of their fathers; that none live innocent; that none die penitent: I see it; and I cry, O God! If thou hast not deceived us; if all thou hast told us with regard to the road to eternal life, shall be fulfilled to a point; if the number of those who must perish, shall not influence thee to abate from the severity of thy laws, what will become of that immense multitude of creatures which every hour disappears from the face of
of the earth? Where are our friends, our relations who have gone before us; and what is their lot in the eternal regions of death? What shall we ourselves be one day? When formerly a Prophet complained to the Lord, that all Israel had forsaken his protection; He replied, that seven thousand still remained, who had not bowed the knee to Baal: Behold the number of pure and faithful souls which a whole kingdom then contained. But couldst thou still, O my God! comfort the anguish of thy servants today by the same assurance? I know that thine eye discerns still some upright amongst us; that the priesthood has still its Phineas'; the magistracy its Samuels; the sword its Joshuas; the Court its Daniels, its Esthers, and its Davids; for the world only exists for thy chosen; and all would perish were the number accomplished: But those happy remains of the children of Israel who shall inherit salvation, what are they, compared to the grains of sand in the sea; I mean to that number of sinners who combat for their own destruction? You come after this, my brethren, to enquire if it be true, that few shall be saved. Thou hast said it, O my God! and consequently it is a truth which will endure for ever.

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

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

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

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

You are of a sex and rank which introduce you to the gaieties of the world: You cannot but do as others do: You must frequent all the public places, where those of your age and rank assemble; enter into the same pleasures; pass your days in the same frivolities; and expose yourself to the same dangers; these are the received
ceived maxims; and you are not made to re-
form them: Such is the doctrine of the world.

Now, permit me to ask you here; Who con-
forms you in these ways? By what rule are they
justified to your mind? Who authorizes you in
this dissipation, which is neither agreeable to
the title you have received by baptism, nor per-
haps to those you hold from your ancestors?
Who authorizes those public pleasures, which
you only think innocent, because your soul, al-
ready too familiarized with sin, feels no longer
the dangerous impressions or tendency of them?
Who authorizes you to lead an effeminate and sen-
sual life, without virtue, sufferance, or any religi-
ous exercise? To live like a stranger in the midst
of your own family, disdaining to inform your-
self with regard to the morals of those depen-
dent upon you! Through an affected state, to be
ignorant whether they believe in the same God;
whether they fulfil the duties of the religion you
profess? Who authorizes you in maxims so little
Christian? Is it the gospel of Jesus Christ? Is it
the doctrine of the Apostles and saints? For surely
some rule is necessary to assure us that we are in
safety: What is yours? Custom: That is the
only reply you can make. We see none around
us, but what conduct themselves in the same
way and by the same rule. Entering into the
world, we find the manners already established:
Our fathers lived thus, and from them we copy
our customs: The wisest conform to them: An
individual
individual cannot be wiser than the whole world, and must not pretend to make himself singular, by acting contrary to the general voice. Such, my brethren, are your only comforters against all the terrors of religion: None act up to the law. The public example is the only guarantee of our morals. We never reflect, that, as the Holy Spirit says, the laws of the people are vain: That our Saviour has left us rules, in which neither times, ages, nor customs, can ever authorise the smallest change: That the heavens and the earth shall pass away; that customs and manners shall change; but that the Divine laws will everlastingly be the same.

We content ourselves with looking around us: We do not reflect, that what at present we call custom, would, in former times, before the morals of Christians became degenerated, have been regarded as monstrous singularities; and, if corruption has gained since that period, these vices, though they have lost their singularity, have not lost their guilt. We do not reflect, that we shall be judged by the gospel, and not by custom; by the examples of the holy, and not by mens opinions; that the habits, which are only established among believers by the relaxation of faith, are abuses we are to lament, not examples we are to follow: That in changing the manners, they have not changed our duties: That the common and general example which authorises them, only proves that virtue is rare, but not
that profligacy is permitted: In a word, that piety and a real Christian life are too unpalatable to our depraved nature, ever to be practised by the majority of men. Come now and say, that you only do as others do: It is exactly by that you condemn yourselves. What! the most terrible certainty of your condemnation, shall become the only motive for your confidence! Which, according to the Scriptures, is the road that conducts to death? Is it not that which the majority pursues? Which is the party of the reprobate? Is it not the multitude? You do nothing but what others do; But thus, in the time of Noah, perished all who were buried under the waters of the Deluge: All who, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, prostrated themselves before the golden calf: All who, in the time of Elijah, bowed the knee to Baal: All who, in the time of Eleazar, abandoned the law of their fathers. You only do what others do; but that is exactly what the Scriptures forbid: Do not, say they, conform yourselves to this corrupted age: Now, the corrupted age means not the small number of just, whom you endeavour not to imitate; it means the multitude whom you follow. You only do what others do: You will consequently experience the same lot. Now, "Misery to thee, (cried formerly St Augustin), fatal torrent of human customs; wilt thou never suspend thy course? To the end wilt thou drag
"in the children of Adam to thine immense and "terrible abyss?"

In place of saying to ourselves, "What are "my hopes? In the church of Jesus Christ there "are two roads; one broad and open, by which "almost the whole world passes, and which leads "to death; the other narrow, where few indeed "enter, and which conducts to life eternal; In "which of these am I? Are my morals the "usual ones of persons of my rank, age, and "situation in life? Am I with the great num-
"ber? Then I am not in the right path: I am "losing myself: The great number in every sta-
"tion is not the party of the saved." Far from rea
"soning in this manner, we say to ourselves, "I am not in a worse state than others; those "of my rank and age live as I do: Why should "I not live like them?" Why, my dear hearer? For that very reason: The general mode of liv-
"ing cannot be that of a Christian life: In all ages, the holy have been remarkable and singu-
lar men: Their manners were always different from those of the world; and they have only been saints, because their lives had no similarity to those of the rest of mankind. In the time of Esdras, in spite of the defence against it, the cus-
tom prevailed of intermarrying with stranger women: This abuse became general: The priests and the people no longer made any scruple of it: But what did this holy restorer of the law; or did he follow the example of his brethren?

Did
Did he believe, that guilt, in becoming general, became more legitimate? No. He recalled the people to a sense of the abuse: He took the book of the law in his hand, and explaining it to the affrighted people, corrected the custom by the truth. Follow, from age to age, the history of the just; and see if Lot conformed himself to the habits of Sodom, or if nothing distinguished him from the other inhabitants: If Abraham lived like the rest of his age: If Job resembled the other princes of his nation: If Either conducted herself in the court of Ahasuerus like the other women of that Prince: If many widows in Israel resembled Judith: If, among the children of the captivity, it is not said of Tobias alone, that he copied not the conduct of his brethren; and that he even fled from the danger of their commerce and society. See, if in those happy ages, when Christians were all saints, they did not shine like stars in the midst of the corrupted nations; and if they served not as a spectacle to angels and men, by the singularity of their lives and manners: If the Pagans did not reproach them for their retirement, and shunning of all public theatres, places, and pleasures: If they did not complain that the Christians affected to distinguish themselves in every thing from their fellow-citizens; to form a separate people in the midst of the people; to have their particular laws and customs; and if a man from their side embraced the party of the Christians,
tians, they did not consider him as for ever lost to their pleasures, assemblies, and customs: In a word, see, if in all ages, the saints whose lives and actions have been transmitted down to us, have resembled the rest of mankind.

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

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

Will you console yourselves after this with the multitude, as if the greatness of the number could render the guilt unpunished, and the Almighty durst not condemn all those who live like you? But what are all creatures in the sight of God? Did the multitude of the guilty prevent him from destroying all flesh at the Deluge? From making fire from heaven descend upon the five iniquitous cities? From burying in the waters of the Red Sea, Pharaoh and all his army? From striking with death all who murmured in the desert? Ah! The kings of the earth may have regard to the number of the guilty, because the punishment becomes impossible, or at least dangerous, when the fault is become general. But God, who wipes the impious, says Job, from off the face of the earth, as one wipes the dust from off a garment; God, in whose sight all people and nations are as if they were not, numbers not the guilty: He has regard only to the crimes; and all that the weak and miserable sinner can expect from his unhappy accomplices, is to have them as companions in his misery. So few are saved; because the maxims most universally adopted, are maxims of sin: So few are saved, because the maxims and duties most universally unknown, or rejected, are those most indispensable to salvation. Last reflection, which is indeed no-

thing
thing more than the proof, and the explanation of the former ones.

What are the engagements of the holy vocation to which we have all been called? The solemn promises of baptism. What have we promised at baptism? To renounce the world, the devil, and the flesh: These are our vows: This is the situation of the Christian: These are the essential conditions of our covenant with God, by which eternal life has been promised to us. These truths appear familiar, and destined for the common people; but it is a mistake: Nothing can be more sublime; and alas! nothing is more generally unknown: It is at the courts of kings, and to the princes of the earth, that without ceasing we ought to announce them. Alas! They are well instructed in all the affairs of the world, while the first principles of Christian morality are frequently more unknown to them than to humble and simple hearts. At your baptism, you have then renounced the world. It is a promise you have made to God, before the holy altar; the Church has been the guarantee and depository of it; and you have only been admitted into the number of believers, and marked with the undefeasible seal of salvation, upon the faith that you have sworn to the Lord, to love neither the world, nor what the world loves. Had you then answered what you now repeat every day, that you find not the world so black and pernicious as we say; that
after all it may innocently be loved; and that
we only decry it so much, because we do not
know it; and since you are to live in the world,
you wish to live like those who are in it: Had
you answered thus, the Church would not have
received you into its bosom; would not have
connected you with the hope of Christians, nor
joined you in communion with those who have
overcome the world: She would have advised
you to go and live with those infidels who know
not our Saviour. For this reason it was, that,
in former ages, those of the Catechumen, who
could not prevail upon themselves to renounce
the world and its pleasures, put off their bap-
tism till death; and durst not approach the holy
altar, to contract by the sacrament, which rege-
erates us, engagements of which they knew
the importance and sanctity; and to fulfil which,
they felt themselves still unqualified. You are
therefore required, by the most sacred of all
vows, to hate the world; that is to say, not to con-
form yourselves to it: If you love it, if you follow
its pleasures and customs, you are not only, as St
John says, the enemy of God, but you likewise re-
nounce the faith given in baptism: You abjure the
gospel of Jesus Christ: You are an apostate from
religion, and trample under foot the most sa-
cred and irrevocable vows that man can make.
Now, what is this world which you ought to
hate? I have only to answer, that it is the one
you love: You will never mistake it by this
mark:
mark: This world is a society of sinners; whose desires, fears, hopes, cares, projects, joys, and chagrins, no longer turn but upon the successes or misfortunes of this life. This world is an assemblage of people, who look upon the earth as their country; the time to come as an exilement; the promises of faith as a dream; and death as the greatest of all misfortunes. This world is a temporal kingdom, where our Saviour is unknown; where those acquainted with his name glorify him not as their Lord; hate his maxims; despise his followers; and neglect or insult him in his sacraments and worship. In a word, to give a proper idea at once of this world, it is the great number; behold the world, which you ought to shun, hate, and combat against by your example.

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

Where
SERMON II.

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

In the second place, you have renounced the flesh at your baptism; that is to say, you are engaged not to live according to the sensual appetites; to regard even indolence and effeminacy as crimes; not to flatter the corrupted desires of the flesh; but to chastise, crush, and crucify it. This is not an acquired perfection; it is a vow; it is the first of all duties; the character of a true Christian, and inseparable from faith. In a word, you have anathematized Satan and all his works: And what are his works? That which composes almost the thread and end of your life; pomp, pleasure, luxury, and dissipation: Lying, of which he is the father; pride, of which he is the model; jealousy and contention, of which he is the artisan: But I ask you, where are those who have not withdrawn the anathema they
they had pronounced against Satan? Now con-
sequently, (to mention it as we go along), behold
many of the questions answered.
You continually demand of us, if theatres and
other public places of amusement, be innocent
recreations for Christians. In return, I have on-
ly one question to ask you. Are they the works
of Satan, or of Jesus Christ? For there can be
no medium in religion. I mean not to say, but
what many recreations and amusements may be
termed indifferent: But the most indifferent plea-
sures which religion allows, and which the weak-
ness of our nature renders even necessary, belong
in one sense to Jesus Christ, by the facility with
which they ought to enable us to apply our-
selves to more holy and more serious duties.
Every thing we do; every thing we rejoice or
weep at, ought to be of such a nature, as to
have a connection with Jesus Christ, and to be
done for his glory. Now, upon this principle,
the most incontestible, and most universally al-
lowed in Christian morality, you have only to
decide whether you can connect the glory of
Jesus Christ with the pleasures of a theatre. Can
our Saviour have any part in such a species of
recreation? And before you enter them, can you,
with confidence, declare to him, that in so do-
ing, you only propose his glory, and to enjoy
the satisfaction of pleasing him? What! The
theatres, such as they are at present, still more
criminal, by the public licentiousness of those
unfortunate
unfortunate creatures who mount them, than by the impure and passionate scenes they represent: The theatres are the works of Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ would animate a mouth, from whence are to proceed sounds, lascivious, and intended to corrupt the heart? But these blasphemies strike me with horror. Jesus Christ would preside in assemblies of sin, where every thing we hear weakens his doctrines; where the poison enters into the soul by all the senses; where every art is employed to inspire, awaken, and justify the passions he condemns? Now, says Tertullian, if they are not the works of Jesus Christ, they must be the works of Satan: Every Christian ought, therefore, to abstain from them: When he partakes of them, he violates the vows of baptism: However innocent he may flatter himself to be, in bringing from these places an untainted heart, it is fullied by being there; since by his presence alone he has participated in the works of Satan, which he had renounced at baptism, and violated the most sacred promises he had made to Jesus Christ and to his Church.

These, my brethren, as I have already told you, are not merely advices, and pious arts; they are the most essential of our obligations: But alas! who fulfils them? who even knows them? Ah! my brethren, did you know how far the title you bear, of Christian, engages you; could you comprehend the sanctity of your state;
ON THE SMALL NUMBER OF THE SAVED.

state; the hatred of the world, of yourself, and of every thing, which is not of God, that it ordains you; that life, according to the Gospel, that continual watching, that guard over the passions: in a word, that conformity with Jesus Christ crucified, which it exacts of you: could you comprehend it; could you remember, that as you ought to love God with all your heart, and all your strength, a single desire that has not connection with him defiles you, you would appear a monster in your own fight. How! would you say to yourself, duties so holy, and morals so prophane! A vigilance so continual, and a life so careless and dissipated! A love of God so pure, so complete, so universal, and a heart the continual prey of a thousand impulses, either foreign or criminal: If thus it is, who, O my God! will be entitled to salvation?

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

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

On this account, it is, my brethren, that I confine myself to you, who at present are assembled here; I include not the rest of men; but consider you as alone existing on the earth. The idea, which occupies and frightens me, is this, I figure to myself the present, as your last hour, and the end of the world: That the heavens are going to open above your heads: Our Saviour in all his glory, to appear in the midst of this temple; and that you are only assembled here to wait his coming, like trembling criminals, on whom the sentence is to be pronounced, either of life eternal, or of everlasting death: For
it is vain to flatter yourselves, that you shall die more innocent than you are at this hour: All those desires of change with which you are amused, will continue to amuse you till death arrives; the experience of all ages proves it; the only difference you have to expect, will most likely be only a larger balance against you than what you would have to answer for at present: And from what would be your destiny, were you to be judged this moment, you may almost decide upon what will take place at your departure from life. Now I ask you, (and connecting my own lot with yours, I ask it with dread), were Jesus Christ to appear in this temple, in the midst of this assembly, to judge us, to make the dreadful separation between the goats and sheep, do you believe that the greatest number of us would be placed at his right hand? Do you believe that the number would at least be equal? Do you believe there would even be found ten upright and faithful servants of the Lord, when formerly five cities could not furnish so many? I ask you. You know not: and I know it not. Thou alone, O my God! knowest who belong to thee.

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

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

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

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

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

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

At your departure from this temple, you go to enter into another Babylon: You go to see idols of gold and silver, before which all men prostrate themselves: You go to regain the vain objects of human passions, wealth, glory, and pleasure, which are the gods of this world, and which almost all men adore: You will see those abuses, which all the world permits; those errors, which custom authorises; and those debaucheries, which an infamous fashion has almost constituted as laws. Then, my dear hearer, if you wish to be of the small number of true Israelites, say in the secrecy of your heart, It is thou alone, O my God! whom we ought to adore. I wish not to have connection with a people, which knows thee not: I will have no
no other law than thy holy law: the gods, which this foolish multitude adores, are not gods; they are the work of the hands of men; they will perish with them: Thou alone, O my God! art immortal; and thou alone deservest to be adored. The customs of Babylon have no connection with the holy laws of Jerusalem: I will continue to worship thee with that small number of the children of Abraham, which still in the midst of an infidel nation composes thy people: With them, I will turn all my desires towards the Holy Sion: The singularity of my manners will be regarded as a weakness; but blessed weakness, O my God! which will give me strength to resist the torrent of customs, and the seduction of example: Thou wilt be my God in the midst of Babylon, as thou wilt one day be in Jerusalem.

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

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

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

Now to God the Father, &c.
THE DISGUSTS ACCOMPANYING VIRTUE.

John x. 31.

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

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

And we, my brethren, we, his members and his disciples; alas! the smallest disgusts, the smallest contradictions we experience in the practice of virtue, revolt our delicacy; from the moment we cease to relish those attractions, that sensibility which softens every thing to be found painful in duty, there is nothing but complaint and murmurs; troubled, discouraged, we are tempted almost to abandon God, and to return to the world, as a more agreeable and commodious master: In a word, we would wish to find nothing in the service of God, but pleasure and consolation.

But our divine Master, in calling us to his service, has he not declared, in express terms, that the kingdom of heaven is only to be gained by conquest; and that none but those who do violence upon themselves, can force it? And what do these words signify? Unless, that entering into the service of God, we are not to promise ourselves, that we shall always find in it a certain sweetness, a certain relish, which deprives it of all pain, and causes it to be loved; on the contrary, it is almost certain, that in it we shall experience disgusts, and contradictions which will exercise our patience, and put our fidelity to frequent trials; that we shall often feel
feel the weight of the yoke, without feeling theunction of grace, which renders it light andeasy; because piety essentially opposes thegratification of our former tastes, and originalinclinations, for which we always preserve someunhappy remains of tenderness, and which wecannot mortify, without making the heart suffer; that besides, we shall have to undergo theeternal caprices of an inconstant and volatileheart, so difficult to fix, that without reason orfoundation, it is disgusted in a moment with whatit formerly loved most. Behold, my brethren,what we ought to have expected, when we em-braced the cause of virtue: Here, it is the timeof combat and trials; peace and felicity are on-ly for heaven; but notwithstanding this, I say,that it is unjust to form from the disagreeablecircumstances which may accompany virtue inthis life, a pretext either to abandon God, whenwe have begun to serve him; or to be afraidto serve him, when we have begun to knowhim.

Behold my reasons: In the first place, becausedisgusts are inevitable in this life: Secondly, be-cause those of piety are not so bitter as we ima-gine them to be: Thirdly, because they are les softhan those of the world: Fourthly, because,were they equally so, they yet possess resourceswhich those of the world have not. Let us in-vestigate these edifying truths, and implore theassistance
assistance of divine grace towards their proper explanation.

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

Were it possible to be happy in this world, we should undoubtedly be so in serving God; because,
because grace calms our passions; moderates our desires, consoles our sufferings, and gives us a foretaste of that perfect happiness we expect; and which we shall not enjoy, but in a blessed immortality. Of all the situations in which man can find himself in this life, that of righteousness undoubtedly brings him nearest to felicity; but as it always leaves him in the path which conducts to it, it leaves him likewise still uneasy, and in one sense miserable.

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

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

I feel within me (says the Apostle) a fatal law in opposition to the law of God; the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Behold the most natural effect which the disgusts attached to virtue ought to operate in a Christian heart: Hatred of ourselves; contempt of the present life; a desire for eternal riches; an eager anxiety to go and enjoy God, and to be delivered from all the miseries inseparable from this mortal life.
Besi"es, were virtue always to be accompa-
nied with sensible consolations; did it contin-
uously form for man an happy and tranqu"l state
in this world, it would become a temporal re-
compense; in devoting ourselves to God, we
should no longer seek the good of faith, but the
consolations of self-love; we would seek our-
selves, while pretending to seek God; we would
propose to ourselves in virtue, that conscious
tranquillity, in which it places the heart, by de-
levering it from those violent and restless passions
which tear it continually, rather than the ob-
servance of the rules and the duties which the
law of God imposes on us. The Lord would
then have only mercenary and interested wor-
shippers, who would come, not to carry his yoke,
but to repose themselves under the shadow of
his voice; workmen, who would offer them-
selves not so much to labour in his vineyard,
and support the fatigues of the day, and the
oppression of the heat, as in order to taste in tran-
quillity the fruits: Servants, who, far from im-
proving their talent for the benefit of their mat-
ter, would turn it to their own utility, and em-
ploy it only for their own advantage.

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

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

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

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

Secondly, If virtue does not protect us from the afflictions and disgraces inevitable upon this earth, it at least softens their asperity; it makes our heart submissive to God; it makes us kiss the hand which is raised up against us; it discovers in the blows with which the Lord afflicts us, either a cure for our passions, or the just punishment of our crimes. And were virtue to have only the privilege of diminishing our griefs, by diminishing our attachments; of rendering us less feeling to our losses, by gradually detaching us from
from all the objects which we may one day lose; of preparing our soul for affliction, by keeping it continually submissive to God; were virtue to possess this consolation alone; alas! ought we to lament and complain of any bitterness which attends it? What more can be desired in this miserable life, where almost all our days are distinguished by new afflictions and adversities; where every thing escapes our grasp; where our relations, friends, and protectors, are every moment snatched from us, and continually falling around us; where our fortune has no settlement, but changes its appearance every day; alas! what more can be desired than a situation which consoles us on these events; supports us in these storms; calms us in these agitations; and which, in the eternal changes which take place here below, leaves us at least always the same?

Thirdly, Those reluctances and disgusts which revolt us so strongly against virtue, in reality consist only in repressing the passions which render us unhappy, and are the source of all our pains; they are remedies a little grievous to be sure, but they serve to cure evils which are infinitely more so; it is a constraint which fatigue us, but which, in fatiguing, delivers us from a slavery which weighed us down; it is a bitterness which mortifies the passions, but which in mortifying, weakens and calms them; it is a sword which pierces the heart to the quick; but which makes the corrupted and defiled mat-
ter to flow out from it; in so much, that in the very moment of the wound's greatest agony, we experience the comfort and certainty of a cure: These are maxims which revolt our nature and inclinations; but which, in revolting, recal them to order and rule. Thus, the bitterness and the thorns of virtue have always at least a present utility, which recompenses their harshness; in disgusting, they purify us; in probing, they cure us; in paining, they calm us. These are not like the disgusts of the world, of which nothing remains to us, but the bitterness of those fatigues, of those constraints which our passions impose on us; and whose only fruit is, that of augmenting our miseries, by fortifying our iniquitous passions: these are not the worldly violences which lead to nothing; are of no value; and frequently serve only to render us hateful to those whom we would wish to please; which remove to a greater distance from us, the favours we wish to merit by them; which always leave us our hatreds, our desires, our uneasinesses, and our pains: These are violences which advance the work of our sanctification, which by degrees destroy within us the work of sin; which perfect, which adorn us; which add every day a new splendour to our soul, a new solidity to our virtues, a new force to our faith, a new facility to our approaches towards salvation, a new firmness to our good desires, and which
which bear along with them the fruit that re-
wards and confoles us.

I do not add, that the source of our disgusts
is in ourselves rather than in virtue; that it is
our passions which give birth to our repugnances;
that virtue has nothing in itself but what is ami-
able; that were our hearts not depraved through
love for the flesh, we would find nothing sweet and
consoling but the pleasures of innocence; that
we are born for virtue and righteousnes; that
these ought to be our first inclinations, as they
are our first distinction; and if we find different
dispositions within us, at least we have not vir-
tue, but only ourselves to blame. I could add,
that perhaps it is the peculiar character of our
heart, which spreads for us so much bitterness
through the detail of a Christian life; that be-
ing born perhaps with more lively passions, and
a heart more sensible to the world and to plea-
sure, virtue appears more melancholy and in-
supportable to us; that not finding in the ser-
vice of God the same attraction which we have
found in that of the world, our heart, accustom-
ed to lively and animated pleasures, is no longer
capable of reconciling itself to the expected drea-
riness of a Christian life; that the endless dissi-
pation in which we have lived, renders the uniform-
ity of duties more irksome to us; the agitation
of parties and pleasures, retirement more disguist-
ing; our total submission to the passions, prayer
more painful; the frivolous maxims with which
our minds are occupied, the truths of faith more insipid, and more unknown; that our mind being filled with only vain things; with fabolous reading, if nothing worse; with chimerical adventures, and theatrical phantoms, is no longer capable of relishing any thing solid; that never having accustomed ourselves to any thing serious, it is rare that the seriousness of piety does not disgust us, and that we find God to our taste, if I dare speak in this manner, we who have never relished any thing but the world and its vain hopes. This being the case, what happiness when we bring back to virtue, a heart yet incorrupted by the world! What happiness to enter into the service of God, with happy inclinations, and some remains of our original innocence! When we begin early to know the Lord; when we return to him in that first season of our life, when the world has not yet made such profound and desperate impressions; when the passions still in their growth, bend easily towards good, and make virtue, as it were, a natural inclination to us! What happiness when we have been able to put an early check upon our heart; when we have accustomed it to bear the yoke of the Lord; and when we have arrested, almost in their infancy, passions, which render us miserable in our guilt, and which likewise occasion all the bitterness of our virtues! How many unealinefles, how many pangs does it prevent! How many consolations does it prepare! How many com-
forts
forts spread through the rest of life! and what a difference for the ease and tranquillity of our future years, betwixt days whose primitive ones have been pure, and those which, infected in their source, have felt flow from thence a fatal bitterness which has blasted all their joys, and spread itself through all the remainder of their career! It is ourselves alone, says a holy Father, who render virtue disagreeable; and we are wrong to complain of an evil, in which we have such a share ourselves, or to attribute faults to virtue, which are our own handywork.

But granting these reflections to have even less solidity; were it even true, that we are not the first and original cause of our disgusts at virtue; it is at least incontestible, that the longer we defer our return to God, the more invincible do we render that distaste which separates us from him; that the more we shrink and draw back, the more do we fortify that repugnance within us to virtue; that if the Christian life offers at present only melancholy and tedious duties, they will appear more insupportable in proportion as we grow old in the ways of the world, and in the taste for its iniquitous pleasures. Could the delay of our conversion sweeten the bitter and painful portion of virtue; by holding out a little longer against grace, could we obtain a more favourable composition, as I may say, and as an article of it, stipulate, that piety should afterwards be presented
presented to us with more charms and graces, and with conditions more agreeable and flattering: alas! whatever risks we may run by deferring it, the hopes of softening our pains and sufferings might serve in some measure to excuse our delays. But delay only prepares new sorrows for us; the more we accustom our heart to the world, the more do we render it unfit for virtue: It is no longer, says the Prophet, but a polluted vale, to which the passions we have allowed to settle in it, have communicated a taste and smell of death, which generally last the remainder of life. Thus, my brethren, when after a long course of crimes, and deeply-rooted passions, we must return to God, what obstacles do not these frightful dispositions present! What insensibility towards good do we not find within ourselves! Those hearts, which the world has always engrossed, and who afterwards wish to consecrate to God the remains of a life entirely mundane; what a buckler of brass, says the Prophet, do they not oppose to grace! What hardness of heart to the holy consolations of virtue! They may find it just; but it is impossible, they say, to find it amiable: They may return to God; but they enjoy him no more: They may nourish themselves with the truth; but it is no more for them but the bread of tribulation and bitterness: They may seek the kingdom of God, and the treasure of the gospel; but it is like unfortunate slaves, condemned to search for gold in
in the bowels of the earth, and waste their strength against the opposing rocks: They may draw for water from the wells of Jacob; but they can only reap the toil; they can never partake of those comforts and consolations which bear peace and refreshment to the soul: They wish to draw near to God, yet every thing separates them from him; they wish to fly from the world, yet wherever they go, there they carry it with them in their heart: They seek the society of virtuous people, yet in their company they find a weariness, and a melancholy stiffness, which disguises them with piety itself: They apply themselves to holy books; and alas! it is only a tiresome and fatiguing decency which supports their patience. It appears, that in virtue, they act a borrowed character, so little does it become them, and so much does their part constrain and tire them: and although, in reality, they seek salvation, yet there appears a something so foreign and constrained in their efforts, that we believe they only assume the semblance of it; and that feeling themselves not born for virtue, they wish at least to give themselves the appearances of it.

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

Nevertheless, should they venture to say, that they weary in our service; that they reap not the smallest satisfaction from it; that they feel no inclination for us, and that every service they perform, is disgusting to a degree scarcely supportable: Alas! We would regard them as fools; we would find them too happy in having to support our humours and caprices; we would think them sufficiently honoured, by being permitted to be near us; and fully recompensed for all their fatigues. Ah, my brethren! And God, does he not sufficiently recompense those who serve him, that they should support any little disgusts or wearinesses which may be found in his service? Are we not still too happy, by his acceptance of our services, in spite of the repugnances which render them cold and languid?
languid? Does he not sufficiently load us with blessings, to be entitled to exact our sufferance of a few flight sorrows for his sake? Does he not promise us still more, sufficiently precious to sweeten the trifling disquiets attached to the fulfilment of his ordinances? Must not he find it strange, that vile creatures, who hold all from him, who exist only through him, and who expect all from him, should complain of dislike to his service? That worms of the earth, whose only boast is the honour of belonging to him, dare complain of feeling no inclination for him, and that it is both melancholy and wearisome to serve or to be faithful to him? Is he then a master like us; fanciful, intolerant, indolent, entirely occupied with himself, and who seeks only to render himself happy, at the expense of the peace and comfort of those who serve him? Unjust that we are! We dare offer reproaches to the Almighty, which we would regard as outrages upon ourselves, from the mouths of our slaves!

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

Reflect. III. But even were they so, I have said, in the third place, that they would still be infinitely less than those of the world: And it is here, my brethren, that the testimony of the world
world itself, and the self-experience of worldly souls, answer every purpose of a proof. For if you continue in the ways of the world, and of the passions, what is your whole life but a continual weariness, where, by diversifying your pleasures, you only diversify your disgusts and uneasinesses? What is it but an eternal void, where you are a burden to yourself? What is it but a pompous circulation of duties, attentions, ceremonies, amusements, and trifles, which incessantly revolving, possess one single advantage, that of unpleasantly filling up moments which hang heavy upon you, and which you know not otherwise to employ? What is your life but a flux and reflux of desires, hatreds, chagrins, jealousies, and hopes, which poison all your pleasures, and are the cause that, surrounded by every thing which ought to ensure your happiness, you cannot succeed in being contented with yourselves?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sixthly, The tranquillity of the life, and the uniformity of the duties, which have succeeded to the phrenses of the passions, and the tumult of a worldly life; which have provided for us much
much more happy and peaceful days than those we had ever passed in the midst of dissipation; and which, though they still leave us something to suffer, yet occasion us to enjoy a more tranquil and supportable lot.

Lastly, Faith, which brings eternity nearer to us; which discovers to us the insignificancy of worldly affairs; that we approach the happy term; that the present life is but a rapid instant; and consequently, that our sufferings cannot endure long, but that this fleeting moment of tribulation assures to us a glorious and immortal futurity, which will endure as long as God himself. What resources for a faithful heart! What disproportion betwixt the sufferings of virtue and those of guilt! It is in order to make us feel the difference that God often permits the world to possess us for a time; that in youth we deliver ourselves up to the sway of the passions; on purpose, that when he afterwards recals us to himself, we may know by experience how much more easy is his yoke than that of the world: I will permit, says he in the Scriptures, that my people serve the nations of the earth for some time; that they allow themselves to be seduced by their prophané superstitions, in order that they may know the difference betwixt my service and the service of the kings of the earth; and that they may feel how much more easy is my yoke than the servitude of men.
Happy the souls, who, in order to be undeceived, have had no occasion for this experience, and who have not so dearly bought the knowledge of this world's vanity, and the melancholy lot of iniquitous passions. Alas! since at last we must be undeceived, and must abandon and despise it; since the day will come, when we shall find it frivolous, disgusting, and insupportable; when of all its foolish joys, there shall no longer remain to us, but the cruel remorse of having yielded to them; the confusion of having followed them; the obstacles to good which they will have left in our heart; why not anticipate and prevent such melancholy regrets? Why not do today, what we ourselves allow must one day be done? Why wait till the world has made such deep wounds in our heart, to run afterwards to remedies, which cannot re-establish us without greater pain, and costing us doubly dear? We complain of some slight disguists which accompany virtue; but alas! the first believers, who, to the maxims of the gospel, sacrificed their riches, reputation, and life; who run to the scaffolds to confess Jesus Christ; who passed their days in chains, in prisons, in shame and in sufferance, and to whom it cost so much to serve Jesus Christ; did they complain of the bitterness of his service? Did they reproach him with rendering unhappy those who served him? Ah! they glorified themselves in their tribulation.
tion; they preferred shame and disgrace with Jesus Christ to all the vain pleasures of Egypt; they reckoned as nothing, wheels, fires, and every instrument of torture, in the hopes of a blessed immortality, which would amply compensate their present sufferings: In the midst of torments, they chanted hymns; and regarded as a gain, the loss of all, for the interests of their master. What a life, in the eyes of the flesh, is that of these unfortunate men, prescribed, persecuted, driven from their country, having only dens and caverns for their habitation, regarded everywhere as the horror of the universe; become execrable to their friends, their fellow-citizens, and their relations! They esteemed themselves happy in belonging to Jesus Christ; in their opinion, they could not too dearly purchase the glory of being his disciples, and the consolation of pretending to his promises: And we, my brethren, in the midst of too many of the conveniences of life; surrounded by too much abundance, prosperity, and worldly glory; finding, perhaps for our misfortune, in the applause of the world, which cannot prevent itself from esteeming worth, the recompense of virtue; in the midst of our relations, our children, and our friends; we complain, that it costs us too much to serve Jesus Christ; we murmur against the slight bitterness we experience in virtue; we almost persuade ourselves, that God requires too much
of his creatures: Ah! when the comparison shall one day be made betwixt these little disgusts which we exaggerate so much; and the crosses, the wheels, the fires, and all the tortures of the martyrs; the austerities of the anchorites; the fasts, the tears, and sufferings of so many holy penitents; alas! we shall then blush to find ourselves almost single before Jesus Christ; we, who have suffered nothing for him; to whom his kingdom has cost nothing; and who individually bearing before his tribunal more iniquities than a number of saints together, cannot, however, in assembling all our works of piety, compare them united to a single instance of their exertions.

Let us cease, therefore, to complain of God, since he has so many reasons to complain of us; let us serve him as he wishes to be served by us; if he softens our yoke, let us bless his goodness, which prepares these consolations for our weakness; if he makes us feel the whole extent of its weight, let us still esteem ourselves happy, that he deigns at that price to accept of our works and homage: With equal gratitude, let us receive from his hand consolation or affliction, since everything which proceeds from him alike conducts us to him: Let us learn, to be as the Apostle, in want or abundance, provided we belong to Jesus Christ; the essential part is not, to serve him with pleasure, it is to serve him with fidelity. In reality, my brethren,
ren, in spite of all the disgusts or repugnances which may accompany virtue, there is no real or true pleasure but in serving God; there is no solid consolation to be reaped, but by attaching ourselves to him. No, said the Sage, it is still better to feed upon the bread of wormwood and gall, with the fear of the Lord, than to live in the midst of pleasures and profane joys, under the lash of his wrath and indignation. Alas! of what pleasure can we be capable, when we are the enemies of God? What pleasure can we taste, when we bear in our heart only the anguish and bitterness of guilt? No, says the Sage once more, the fear of God can alone charm our weariness; soften our moments of melancholy; soothe our endless anguishes; and enable us to find a certain degree of sweetness, even in the evils incident to our nature. It is that which renders retirement sweet, and enables us to enjoy repose, far from the world and its amusements: It is that which makes days pass quickly, and occupies in peace and tranquillity every moment; and though apparently it allows us more leisure than a worldly life, yet it leaves a much smaller portion to weariness.

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

Now to God, &c.
SERMON IV.

THE UNCERTAINTY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IN A STATE OF LUKEWARMNESS.


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

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

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

Our exemption from open irregularity gives us confidence; the external regularity of conduct, which attracts from men those praises due only to virtue, flatters us; and the secret comparison we make of our morals with the exemples of those avowed sinners, whom the world and their passions govern, unites to blind us: We regard our situation as a state, less perfect indeed, but always certain of salvation; seeing our conscience can only reproach us with indolence and negligence in the discharge of our duties; too lenient a correction of our appetites; self-love, and some slight infidelities, which do not bring death to the soul. Nevertheless, since the holy writings represent the adulterous and the lukewarm soul as equally rejected by God; and as they pronounce the same anathema against those who despise the works of the Lord, and those who perform them with negligence, this state of coldness and languor in the ways of God, must necessarily be very suspicious with regard to salvation, both from the present dispositions which it gives to the soul; and from those,
STATE OF LUKEWARMNESS.

those to which, sooner or latter, it never fails to lead it.

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

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

From these I wish to establish two capital truths in this matter, which expose the danger of a lukewarm and infidel life; and which, from their importance, will furnish us with subject for two discourses. The first, that it is very doubtful, whether in this habitual state of coldness and languour, the lukewarm soul (as it believes), preserves the righteousness and sanctifying grace upon which it grounds its security.

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

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

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

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

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

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

For the life, according to faith, which the
just man leads, is only an uninterrupted desire,
that the kingdom of God may be accomplished
in our hearts; a holy eagerness, to form a per-
fected resemblance in us to Jesus Christ, and to
increase even to the plenitude of the new man;
a continual lamentation, excited by the internal
sensibility of our own miseries, and by the load of
corruption which oppresses the soul, and makes it
to bear so many marks still of the worldly man;
a daily struggle between the law of the Spirit,
which continually wishes to raise us above our
sensual appetites, and the dominion of the flesh,
which incessantly draws us back towards our-
elves: Such is the state of faith, and of Chris-
tian piety. Whoever you be, great, or of hum-
ble rank, prince or subject, courtier or recluse,
behold the perfection to which you are called;
behold the ground-work, and the spirit of your
vocation. The austerities of an Anchorite; the
silence and solitude of the desert; the poverty
of the cloister, are not demanded of you; but
you are required to labour incessantly towards the

repression
repression of those internal desires, which oppose themselves to the law of God; to mortify those rebellious inclinations, which so unwillingly submit to order and duty; in a word, to advance as much as possible your perfect conformity with Jesus Christ: Behold the degree of perfection to which Christian grace calls you, and the essential duty of a just soul.

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

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

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

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

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

O man! How little art thou acquainted with the illusions of the human heart, and the terrible judgments of God upon those souls which resemble thee! Thou sayest to thyself; I am rich, I am loaded with the good things of this world; (with this, our Saviour formerly reproached a cold and unbelieving soul): And thou perceivest not, continued he, (for blindness and presumption are the distinguishing character of coldness), that in my sight, thou art poor, miserable, blind, and lost to every thing. It is the destiny, therefore, of a lukewarm and unfaithful soul, to live in error and illusion; to believe himself just, and acceptable to God; while alas!
alas! before him, he is lost, without knowing it, to both grace and righteousness.

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

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

Now in this situation, who has told you, that in the judgment which you form on the nature of your infidelities, and your daily departure from virtue, you do not deceive yourselves? Who has told you, that the errors which you think so slight, are in reality so; and that the distant boundaries which you prescribe to guilt, and within which every thing to you appears venial, are really the limits of the law? Alas! the most enlightened guides know not how to distinguish clearly in a cold and unbelieving conscience. These are what I may call the evils of that languor in which we know nothing; where the wisest of us can say nothing with certainty; and of which the secret cause is always an enigma. You are sensible yourselves, that in this state of relaxation, you experience in your hearts certain doubts and embarassments, which you can never sufficiently clear up: That in your consciences there always remains something secret and inexplicable, which you never wish to search into, or above half expose. These are not exaggerations; it is the real state and bottom of your soul which you feel a reserve to lay open: You are sensible, that even when prostrating yourselves before
before the Almighty, the confession of your guilt never entirely corresponds with the most intimate dispositions of your heart; that it never paints your internal situation such as in reality it is; and, in a word, that there always exists in your heart something more criminal, than what in any statement of it you can bring yourselves to avow. And, indeed, how can you be certain, that in those continual self-gratifications; in that effeminacy of manners which composes your life; in that attention to every thing which may flatter the senses, or remove disquiet from you; to sacrifice to indolence and laziness, all which appears not essential in your duties; how can you be certain, I say, that your self-love is not arrived at that fatal point, which serves to give it dominion over your heart, and for ever banish from it Christian charity? Who is able to inform you, in these frequent and voluntary infidelities, where, comforted by their pretended insignificancy, you oppose the internal grace which endeavours to turn you from them; you continually act contrary to your own reason and judgment; whether this internal contempt of the voice of God; this formal and daily abuse of your own lights and grace from God be not an outrage upon the divine goodness; a criminal contempt of his gifts; a wickedness in your deviations from virtue, which leaves no excuse; and a deliberate preference to your passions and yourselves over Jesus Christ, which can alone proceed
proceed from a heart where the love of all order and righteousness is extinguished? Who can tell you, if in these recollections where your listless mind has a thousand times dwelt upon objects or events dangerous to modesty, your indolence in combating them has not been criminal; and if the efforts which you afterwards made, were not an artifice of self-love, in order to disguise their criminality, and quiet you on the indulgence you had already yielded to your crimes? Who would dare to determine, if, in these secret antipathies and animosities, which you give yourselves but little trouble to restrain, (and that always more for the sake of appearances than through piety), you have never exceeded that slippery line, beyond which dwell hatred, and death to the soul! If, in that excess of sensibility, which in general accompanies all your afflictions, infirmities, losses, and disgraces, those which you call feelings, attached and inevitable to nature, are not irregularities of the heart, and a revolt against the decrees of Providence? If, in all those attentions, and eagernesses with which we see you occupied, to manage either the interests of your worldly affairs, or the preservation of a vain beauty, there is not either as much forwardness as may amount to the crime of illegal ambition, or complaisance for yourself, and desire of pleasing, as may fully your heart with the guilt of sensuality? Great God! who hast well discerned, as thy
thy servant Job formerly remarked, the fatal limits which separate life from death, and light from darkness, in the heart; these are the gulfs and abysses over which mankind, little instructed in them, must tremble; and of which Thou reservest the manifestation till the terrible day of thy vengeance shall arrive. Second reason, drawn from the uncertainty of the rules, which leaves the state of a lukewarm soul very suspicious, and even renders it incapable of knowing itself.

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

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

Now, the attention alone with which a lukewarm soul examines whether an offence be venial, or extends further; of disputing with God every article he may refuse him, without actual guilt; of studying the law, only for the purpose of knowing to what degree it may be violated;
lated; of unceasingly preferring the interests of his own cupidity to those of grace; and always justifying those things which flatter the passions, in opposition to the rules which check or forbid them; this attention, I say, can only proceed from a heart destitute of faith and charity; from a heart in which the Spirit of God, that spirit of love and kindness, apparently no longer reigns. For no children but the prodigal, are capable of quibbling in this manner with their father and protector; of exercising to the utmost length of severity any claims they may have, and of seizing all they may think themselves entitled to.

Now, in order to give this reflection all its weight: That disposition, which deliberately allows itself every infidelity, which will not, it believes, be followed by eternal punishment, is the disposition of a slave and hireling; that is to say, that could they promise themselves the same impunity and indulgence from the Almighty, for the transgression of the essential points of the law, they would violate them with the same indifference as they violate the least; for, were cruel and avowed revenge, calumny of the blackest nature, and criminal attachments, to be attended in futurity with no worse consequences than flight and momentary resentments, accidental and careless evil-speaking, or too much self-love, they would feel no more horror in the commission of the former, than the last mentioned crimes; that is to say, that when faithful
faithful to the commandments, it is not from a love of righteousness, but the dread of that punishment, which would attend their infraction; it is not to order and to the law that they submit themselves, it is to their chastisements; it is not the Lord they have in view, it is themselves: For while his glory alone is interested, and no serious consequences may be expected to follow our inidelities, from their apparent lightness, we are not afraid of displeasing him; we even justify to ourselves in secret these kind of transgressions, by saying, that notwithstanding they offend, and are displeasing to the Lord, yet they bring not death, nor eternal punishment to the soul: We are not affected by what regards only him; his glory goes for nothing in the distinction we make between actions allowed or forbidden; our interest alone regulates our fidelity; and nothing can warm our coldness, but the dread of everlasting punishment. We are even delighted at the impunity of those trivial transgressions; of being able to gratify our inclinations, without any greater misfortune attending, than the displeasure of the Almighty: We love this wretched liberty, which seems to leave us the right of being unpunished, though unfaithful: We are the apologists of it; we carry it even further, than in reality it goes: We wish all to be venial; gaming, dress, sensual pleasures, passion, animosities, public spectacles, what shall I say? we would
would wish this freedom to be universal; that nothing which gratifies our appetites should be punished; that the Almighty were neither just, nor the avenger of iniquity; and that we might yield ourselves up to the gratification of every passion, and violate the sanctity of his law, without any dread of the severity of his justice. Provided a lukewarm soul will descend to an examination of itself, it will feel, that this is truly the principle of its heart, and its real disposition.

Now, I ask you, is this the situation of a soul in which the sanctifying charity and grace is still preserved; that is to say, a soul which loves its Maker more than the world, more than all created beings, more than all pleasures or riches, more than itself? Of a soul which can feel no joy but in his possession; which dreads only his loss; and knows no misfortune but that of his displeasure? Does the charity you flatter yourselves still to preserve, seek, in this manner, its proper interest? Does it regard, as nothing, the displeasure of him it loves, provided its infidelities remain unpunished? Does it think of disputing, like you, every day, to what degree it may safely offend him, in order to take its measures accordingly, and then allow itself every transgression, to which impunity is attached: Does it see nothing amiable in its God, or capable of attaching the heart, but his chastisements? Were
he not even an Almighty and an avenging God, would it be less affected by his infinite mercies, his truth, holiness, wisdom, fatherly tenderness, and protection? Ah! lukewarm and infidel soul, Thou lovest him no longer: Thou lovest, thou livest only for thyself. The small remains of fidelity, which still keep thee from sin, are nothing but a fund of sloth, timidity, and self-love. Thou wishest to live in peace with thyself: Thou dreadest the embarrassments of a passion, and the remorse of a fullied conscience; iniquity is become a fatigue, and that alone displeases thee with it: Thou lovest thine own ease; and that is thy sole religion: Indolence is the only barrier which stops thee, and all thy virtue is limited to thyself. Assuredly, thou wouldst wish to know, whether this infidelity be a venial transgression, or if it extends further. Thou acknowledgest, that it displeases God, (for that point admits of no doubt), yet is that not sufficient to turn thee from it? Thou wouldst wish to know, whether it so far displeases him, as to provoke his everlasting wrath? Ah! Thou feest very well, that this investigation tends to nothing by thyself; that thy disposition leads thee to think guilt nothing, as an offence and a displeasure to God; a powerful reason, however, why it should be detestable to thee: That thou no longer servest the Lord in truth and in charity; that thy pretended virtue is only a natural timidity, which
dare not expose itself to the terrible threatenings of the law; that thou art nothing but a vile and wretched slave, to restrain whom, it is necessary to keep scourges continually in thy sight: that thou resemblest that unfaithful servant, who secreted his talent, because he knew that his master was severe; and, but for that reason, would have wasted it in dissipation; and that in the preparation of the heart, to which alone the Almighty looketh, thou hatest his law: Thou lovest every thing it forbids: Thou art no longer in charity: Thou art a child of death and perdition.

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

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

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

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

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

Alas! nothing, however, reanimates you. Even the holy Sacrament leaves you all your coldness: The words of the gospel which you listen to, fall upon your heart, like corn upon a sterile land, where it immediately dies: The sentiments of salvation, which grace operates within you, are never followed with any effect, in the melioration of your morals; you continually drag on in the same indolence and languor; you depart from the holy altar equally cold, equally insensible, as you approached it: We see not in you those renewals of zeal, piety, and fervour, so common in just souls, and of which the motives are to be found in their deviations from duty. What you were yesterday, you are to-day: The same infidelities, the same weaknesses: You advance not a single step in the road to
to salvation; all the fire of heaven could scarcely rekindle in the bottom of your heart this pretended charity, upon which you depend so much. Ah! my dear hearer, how much I dread that it is extinct, and that you are dead in the fight of the Lord! I wish not to anticipate the secret judgments of God upon the consciences; but I must tell you, that your state is very far from being safe; I even tell you, that if we are to judge by the rules of faith, you are in disgrace with, and hated of the Lord: I tell you likewise, that a coldness so durable and constant, cannot subsist with a principle of heavenly and eternal life, which always, from time to time at least, betrays external movements and signs, raises, animates itself, and takes wing, as if to disengage itself from the shackles which weigh it down; and that a charity so mute, so indolent, and so constantly insensible, exists no more.

But the great danger of this state, my brethren, is, that a lukewarm soul is so without scruple: It feels that it might carry its fervour and fidelity to a much greater length, but it looks upon that zeal, and that exactitude, as a perfection, and a grace, reserved only for certain souls, and not as a general duty; in this manner they fix themselves in that degree of coldness into which they are fallen; they have not made, nor scarcely attempted, the smallest progress.
progress in virtue, since the first ardours of conversion. It would appear, that having exhausted all their fervour against the criminal passions with which they had at first to combat, they imagine, that nothing now remains, but to enjoy in peace the fruits of their victory; a thousand damages which still remain from their first shipwreck, they think no more of repairing: So far from endeavouring to repress a thousand weaknesses, and corrupted inclinations, left them by their first irregularities, they love and cherish them. The Holy Sacrament no longer reanimates or invigorates their faith; it only amuses it. Conversion is no longer the end they propose; they believe it already done: And, alas! their confessions even to the Almighty, are more for the purpose of amusing and lulling their consciences, than the effects of piety, and real contrition.

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

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

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

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

Why
Why should you have renounced the world, and all its criminal pleasures, only to find in piety the same rock, which by flying from sin you thought to have escaped? And would it not be lamentable, if, after having sacrificed to God the principal parts, you should lose yourselves, by wishing still to dispute with him a thousand little sacrifices, much less painful to the heart and to nature?

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

Now to God, &c. Amen.
SERMON V.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE LOSS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IN A STATE OF LUKEWARMNESS.


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

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

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

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

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

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

To this load of corruption, which renders duty so difficult and irksome, and iniquity so natural, add the snares which surround us, the examples which entice us, the objects which effeminate us, the occasions which surprise us, the compliances which weaken us, the afflictions which discourage us, the properties which corrupt us, the situations which blind us, and the contradictions which we experience; every thing around us is indeed only one continued temptation. I speak not of the miseries which are natural to us; or the particular opposition to order and righteousness, which our past morals, and our first passions have left in our hearts: That love for the world and its pleasures; that dislike to virtue and its maxims; that empire of the senses, fortified by a voluptuous life; that invincible indolence, to which every thing is a burden, and to which, whatever is a burden, becomes almost impossible; that pride, which
knows neither how to bend or break; that in-
constancy of heart, incapable of end or uniformi-
ty, which presently tires of itself; which cannot
submit to rule, because that is always the same;
which wishes, and wishes not; passes in a mo-
ment from the lowest state of dejection, to a
vain and childish joy, and leaves scarcely the in-
terval of a moment betwixt the sincerest refo-
lution, and the infidelity which violates it.

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

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

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

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

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

I know that this state of relaxation and insideliety troubles and disturbs you; that you say every day, that nothing can bestow greater happiness, than a detachment from every thing worldly; and that you envy the destiny of those Christians, who give themselves up to God without reserve, and no longer keep any terms with the world. But you are deceived; it is not the faith, or the fervour of these faithful Christians, you envy; you only covet their lot; that happiness and peace, which they enjoy, in the service.
vice of their Maker, and which you are incapable of partaking; you only envy them that insensibility, and happy indifference to which they have attained, for the world and every thing it esteems; your love for which occasions all your troubles, remorses, and secret anguish; but you envy them not the sacrifices they were under the necessity of making, to arrive at their present state of peace and tranquility: You envy them not the trials they have undergone, in order to merit the precious gift of a lively and fervent faith: You envy the happiness of their state; but you would not wish it to cost you the illusion and sensuality of your own.

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

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

I know it, my brethren, but I likewise know, that this indolence of heart defends us only from crimes which would cost us trouble; makes us avoid only those pleasures which we would be obliged to purchase, at the expence of our tranquillity, and which the love of ease alone prevents
vents us from enjoying. It leaves us virtuous only in the eyes of men, who confound the indolence which dreads embarrassment with the piety which flies from vice; but it does not defend us against ourselves; against a thousand illicit desires; a thousand criminal compliances; a thousand passions, more secret, and less painful, because shut up in the heart; from jealousies, which devour us; ambition, which domineers over us; pride, which corrupts us; a desire of pleasure, which engrosses us; an excess of self-love, which is the principle of all our conduct, and infects all our actions; that is to say, that this indolence delivers up our heart to all its weaknesses; at the same time, that it serves as a check against the more striking and tumultuous passions, and that, what appears only indolence in the eyes of men, is always before God a secret ignominy and corruption.

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

The first is, That a faithful Christian, in spite of his repugnancies, preserving a firm and solid faith,
faith, finds his state, and the exemption from guilt in which he lives, since touched by God, a thousand times more happy, than that in which he lived when delivered up to his passions; and penetrated with horror at his former excesses, he would not change his lot, or re-in- gage himself in his former vices, for all the pleasures of the earth: In place of which, the lukewarm and unfaithful heart, disgusted with virtue, enviously regards the pleasures, and vain happiness of the world; and his disgusts being only the consequence and sufferings of his weakness, and the lukewarmness of his faith, to plunge into sin, begins to appear as the only resource left him, from weariness and the gloominess of piety.

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

The last reason is, That the disquiets of the faithful Christian being only trials, to which, for his purification, God exposes him, he supplies, in a thousand ways, the sensible consolations of virtue which he refuses him; he replaces them by a more powerful protection; by a merciful attention to remove every danger which might seduce him; and by more abundant succours of grace; for the Almighty wishes neither to lose nor discourage him; he wishes only to prove him; and make him expiate by the afflictions and hardships of virtue, the unjust pleasures of sin: But the disquiets of an infidel soul are not trials, they are punishments: It is not a merciful God who suspends the consolations of grace, without suspending grace itself: It is not a tender father, who supplies by the solidity of his tenderness, and by effectual assistances, the apparent rigours he is under the necessity of using: It is a severe judge, who only begins to deprive the criminal of a thousand indulgences, because the sentence of death is prepared for him. The hardships of virtue find a thousand resources in virtue itself; those of lukewarmness, can find them only in the deceitful pleasures of vice.

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

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

But I tell you from God, that to persevere in his ways, we must give ourselves up to him without reserve: That in order to support the fidelity due to the essential parts of our duty, we must unceasingly endeavour to weaken the passions which oppose it; and that keeping terms with these passions, under the pretext of not going too far, is to dig for ourselves a grave. I tell you, that it is only the faithful and fervent Christians, who, not contented with shunning sin, shun also every thing which can lead to it; that it is these alone who persevere, who sustain themselves, who honour piety by a supported, equal and uniform conduct; and, on the contrary, it is lukewarm and relaxed souls, who
have begun their penitence, by limiting their piety, and accommodating it to the pleasures and maxims of the world; it is these souls who draw back, who belie themselves, and who dishonour piety, by their inconstancy and inequality of conduct; by a life, sometimes blended with virtue and retirement, and at others devoted to the world and weakness: And I appeal to yourselves, my brethren, if, when you see in the world a person relax from his first fervour, gradually mingle himself in the pleasures and societies he had lately so scrupulously and severely denied himself; insensibly abate his love of retirement, his modesty, circumspection, prayers, and exactitude to fulfil his religious duties, you say not to yourselves, that he is not far from returning to what he formerly was? Are not these relaxations regarded by you as a prelude to his ruin; and that virtue is nearly extinct, when once you see it weakened? Do you even require so much to rouse your censures, and malicious presages against piety? Unjust that you are, you condemn a cold and unfaithful virtue, while you condemn us for requiring of you a virtue faithful and fervent! You pretend, that in order to continue, you must begin with moderation, while you prophecy that a total departure from virtue is not far distant, when once it begins to be followed with coolness and negligence! From
From a relaxation alone, therefore, we are to dread a return to our former courses, and a departure from virtue: It is not by giving ourselves up without reserve to God, that we become disgusted with piety, and are forsaken by him: The way to come gloriously off in battle, is not by sparing, but overcoming the enemy: There is no dread, therefore, of doing too much, lest we should be unable to support it; on the contrary, to merit the grace necessary to our support, we ought, from the first, to leave nothing undone. What illusion, my brethren! We dread zeal, as dangerous to perseverance; and it is zeal alone which can obtain it: We fix ourselves in a lukewarm and commodious life, as the only one which can subsist; and it is the only one which proves false: We shun fidelity, as the rock of piety; and piety without fidelity is never far from shipwreck.

It is thus that lukewarmness removes from the infidel soul the grace of protection; of which the absence depriving our faith of all its strength, and the yoke of Jesus Christ of all its consolations, leaves us in a state of such imbecility, that to be lost, innocence requires only to be attacked. But if the loss of righteousness is inevitable, on the part of grace which is withdrawn, it is still more so, on account of the passions which are fortified within us.
PART II. What renders vigilance so necessary to Christian piety, is, that all the passions which oppose themselves in us to the law of God, only die, as I may say, with us. We undoubtedly are able to weaken them, by the assistance of grace, and a fervent and lively faith; but the roots always continue in the heart; we always carry within us the principles of the same errors our tears have effaced. Guilt may be extinguished in our hearts; but sin, as the Apostle says, that is to say, the corrupted inclinations which have formed our guilt, inhabits and lives there still: And that fund of corruption which removed us so far from God, is still left us in our penitence, to serve as a continual exercise to virtue; to render us, by the continual occasions of combat it raises up for us, more worthy of an eternal crown; to humble our pride; to keep us in remembrance that the duration of our present life is a time of war and danger; and, by a destiny inevitable to our nature, that there is only one step between relaxation and guilt.

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

In a word, my brethren, we are not to imagine, that in pushing our indulgence for our passions, only to certain lengths permitted, we appease them, as I may say, that we allow sufficient to satisfy them, and not enough to stain our soul, or carry trouble and remorse through our conscience; or fancy that we can ever attain a certain degree of equilibration betwixt virtue and sin, where, on the one side, our passions are satisfied by the indulgence allowed them; and on the other, our conscience is tranquil, by the absence of guilt, which we shun. For such is the plan adopted by the lukewarm soul: Favourable to his indolence, because he equally banishes every thing, either in virtue or in sin, which can disturb him; To the passions, he refuses whatever might trouble his conscience; and to virtue, whatever might be disagreeable to
to, or mortify his self-love: But this state of equilibrium is a perfect chimera. The passions know no limits or bounds in guilt; how, therefore, could they possibly be restrained to those of the lukewarm soul? Even the utmost excess cannot restrain or fix them; how then could simple indulgences do it? The more you grant, the more you deprive yourself of the power to refuse them any thing. The true secret of appeasing, is not by favouring them to a certain degree; it is by opposing them in every thing; every indulgence only renders them more fierce and unmanageable; it is a little water thrown upon a great fire, which, far from extinguishing, increases its fury: Every thing which flatters the passions, renders them more keen, and diminishes the probability of being able to conquer them.

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

In the first place: All the inclinations within us, which oppose themselves to order and duty, being continually strengthened, order and duty at last find in us unsurmountable difficulties; in so much, that to accomplish them on any essential occasion, or when required by the law of God, is like remounting against the stream of a rapid flood, where the current drags us down, in spite of every effort to the contrary; or like a furious and unmanageable horse, which it is necessary to stop short on the brink of a precipice. Thus your insensibility and pride, are nourished to such a degree of strength, that you abandon your heart to all their impressions: Thus your care and anxiety, have so fortified in your heart, the desire of worldly praise, that on any important occasion, where it would be necessary to sacrifice the vanity of its suffrages to duty, and expose yourself, for the good of your soul, to its censure and derision, you will always prefer the interests of vanity to those of truth, and the opinions of men will be much more powerful than the fear of God. Thus those anxieties with regard to fortune and advancement, have rendered ambition so completely so-
vereign of your heart, that in any delicate conjuncture, where the destruction of a rival would be necessary towards your own elevation, you will never hesitate, but will sacrifice your conscience to your fortune; and be unjust towards your brother, least you fail towards yourself. Thus, in a word, to avoid a long detail, those suspicious attachments, loose conversations, ridiculous compliances, and desires of pleasing, too much attended to, have filled you with dispositions so nearly allied to guilt and debauchery, that you are no longer capable of resistance against any of their attacks; the corruption prepared, by the whole train of your past actions, will be lighted up in an instant: Your weakness will overcome your reflection: Your heart will go against glory, duty, and yourself. We cannot long continue faithful, when we find in ourselves so many dispositions to be otherwise.

Thus you will yourself be surprized at your own weakness: You will ask at yourself, What are become of all those dispositions of modesty and virtue, which formerly inspired you with such horror at sin? You no longer will know yourself: But this state of guilt will gradually appear less frightful to you: The heart soon justifies to itself, whatever pleases it: Whatever is agreeable to us, does not long alarm us; and to the misery of a departure from virtue, you will add the misery of ignorance and security.
Such is the inevitable lot of a lukewarm and unfaithful life: Passions which we have too much indulged; "Young lions," says a prophet, "which have been nourished without precaution, at length grow up, and devour the careless hand, which has even assisted to strengthen and render them formidable:" The passions arrived to a certain point, gain a complete ascendancy: In vain you then try to regain yourself: The time is past; you have fostered the profane fire in your heart; it must at last break out; you have nourished the venom within you; it must now spread and gain upon you; and the time is past for any application to medicine; you should have taken it in time; at the commencement the disease was not irreparable; you have allowed it to strengthen; you have irritated it by every thing which could inflame, and render it incurable; it must now be conqueror, and you the victim of your own indiscretion and indulgence.

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

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

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

A second reflection to be made on this truth is, That the passions, daily strengthening in a lukewarm and infidel life, not only duty finds in
us unsurmountable repugnancies, but guilt likewise, as I may say, polishes itself; and at last we feel no more repugnance to it, than to the simplest fault. Indeed, by these daily infidelities inseparable from lukewarmness, the heart, as if by insensible steps, at last arrives at those dangerous limits, which, by a single line, separate life from death, guilt from innocence, and makes the final step, almost without perceiving it; only a little way remaining for him to go, and having no occasion for any new exertion to accomplish it, he does not believe he has exceeded his former bounds. He had replenished himself with dispositions, so nearly bordering on guilt, that he has brought forth iniquity without pain, repugnance, visible movement, or even perceiving it himself: Similar to a dying person, whom the languors of a long and painful malady have so extenuated, and so nearly approached to his end, that the departing sigh resembles those which have preceded it; costs him no greater effort than the others, and even leaves the spectators uncertain, whether his last moment is come, or if he still breathes: And this is what renders the state of a lukewarm and infidel soul still more dangerous, that they are commonly dead to grace, without knowing it themselves: They become enemies to God, while they still live with him as with a friend: They are still in the commerce of holy things, when they have
loft the grace, which entitles us to approach them.

Thus, let those souls whom this Discourse re-
gards, no longer deceive themselves, because they believe to have hitherto avoided a gross departure from virtue: Their state before God, is undoubtedly only more dangerous: Perhaps the most formidable danger of lukewarmness, is, that already dead in the fight of God, they live in their opinion, without any visible or marked guilt; that they compose themselves tranquilly in death, depending on an appearance of life which comforts them; that to the danger of their situation, they add a false peace, which confirms them in this path of illusion and darkness; it is in a word, that the Lord, by terrible and secret judgments, strikes them with blindness, and punishes the corruption of their heart, by permitting them to be ignorant of it. A gross fall from virtue, if I may venture to say so, would to them be a mark of the goodness and mercy of God: They would then at least open their eyes: Naked and manifest guilt would then carry trouble and uneasiness through their conscience: The disease at last discovered, would perhaps induce them to have recourse to the remedy; in place of which, this life, apparently regular, composes and calms them; renders useless the example of fervent Christians; persuades them that this great favour is unnecessary; that
it is much more the effect of temperament than of grace; that it is an emotion of zeal, rather than a duty; and makes them listen to, as vain exaggerations, all that we say, with regard to a lukewarm and infidel life. Second reflection.

In a word, the last reflection to be made on this great truth, is, that such is the nature of our heart, always to remain much below what it at first proposed. A thousand times we have formed pious resolutions; we have projected to carry to a certain point, the detail of our duties and conduct; but the execution has always much diminished from the ardour of our projects; and has rested at a degree much below the one to which we wished to raise ourselves: Thus, the lukewarm Christian, proposing to himself no higher point of virtue, than to shun guilt; looking precisely to precept, that is to say, to that rigorous and precise point of the law, immediately below which is prevarication and death: He infallibly rests below, and never reaches that essential point, which he had proposed to himself: It is, therefore, an incontrovertible maxim, that we must undertake much, to execute little; and look very high, to attain at least the middle. Now, this maxim, so sure with regard even to the most just, is much more so with respect to the lukewarm and infidel soul: For coldness, more strongly binding all his ties, and augmenting
ing the weight of his corruption and misery, it
is principally him, who ought to take this grand
flight, in order to attain at least the lowest de-
gree; and in his counsels with himself, propose
perfection, if he wishes to rest, even at the ob-
servance of precept: Above all, it is to him that
we may truly say, that by settling in his mind,
only to shun guilt, loaded as he is with the weight
of his coldness and infidelities, he will always
alight at a place very distant from the one he ex-
pected to reach; and the line of guilt being im-
mediately below this commodious and sensual vir-
tue, the very same efforts he made, as he thought
to shun it, will only serve to conduct him to it.
These are reasons, drawn entirely from the weak-
ness the strengthened passions leave to the luke-
warm and infidel soul; and which inevitably
lead it to ruin.

The only reason, however, you allege to us,
for persevering in this dangerous state, is, that
you are weak, and totally unable to support a
more retired, limited, mortified, and perfect man-
ner of life: But surely, it is because you are
weak, that is to say, full of disgust for virtue,
of love for the world, and of subjection to your
appetites, that a retired and mortified life be-
comes indispensible: It is because you are weak,
that with more caution, you ought to shun every
danger; take a greater command over yourself;
pray, watch, refuse yourself every improper gra-
tification
tification, and attain even to holy excesses of zeal and fervour, in order to accomplish a barrier against your weakness. You are weak? And because you are weak, you think you are entitled to expose yourself more than another; to dread danger less; with more tranquillity and indifference, to neglect the necessary remedies; to allow more to your appetites; to preserve a stronger attachment to the world, and everything which can corrupt the heart? What illusion! You make your weakness then the title of your security? In the necessities you have to watch and pray, you find then the privilege of dispensing with them! And since, when is it, that the sick are authorized to allow themselves greater excesses, and make use of less precaution, than those who enjoy a perfect health? Privation has always been the way of the weak and infirm; and to allege your weakness as a right of dispensation from a more fervent and Christian life, is like enumerating your complaints, in order to persuade us that you have no occasion for medicine. Second reason, drawn from the passions, which are strengthened in a state of lukewarmness, and which proves, that this state always ends in a departure from virtue, and the loss of righteousness.

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

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

Thus, my brethren, the grace of this soul, being continually attacked and weakened, either by the practices of the world, which it allows itself, or by those of piety, which it abuses; either by sensual objects which nourish its corruption, or by those of religion, which increase its disgusts; either by the pleasures which enervate it, or by the duties which fatigue it; all uniting to make it bend towards ruin, and nothing supporting it: Alas! what fate can it promise itself! Can the lamp without oil, long continue to give light? The tree which no longer draws nourishment from the earth, can it fail to wither, and be devoted to the fire? Now, such is the situation of the lukewarm Christian; entirely delivered up to himself, nothing supports him; surrounded by weariness and disgusts, nothing re-animates him; full of weakness and of languor, nothing protects him; every consolation of the just soul, is to him an increase
increase of languor; every thing which gives support to a faithful Christian, disguists and overpowers him; whatever renders the yoke more easy to others, makes his more burdensome; and the succours of piety are no longer but his fatigues, or his crimes. Now, in this state, O my God! almost abandoned by thy grace, tired of thy yoke, disgusted with himself, as well as with virtue, weakened by diseases and their remedies, flagging at every step, a breath overturns him; he himself leans towards his fall, without any additional or foreign impression; and to see him fall, there is no necessity for his being attacked.

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

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

What then, my dear hearer, can confirm or comfort you, in this life of negligence and infidelity? Is it that exemption from guilt you have hitherto preserved? But I have shewn you, that it is either guilt itself, or that it will not fail, soon to lead you to it: Is it the love of ease? But in that, you enjoy neither the pleasures of the world, nor the consolations of virtue: Is it the assurance that the Almighty requires no more of you? But how can the lukewarm and unfaithful soul satisfy or please him, when from his mouth he rejects him? Is it the irregularity in which the generality of men live, and who carry it to an excess which you avoid? But their fate is perhaps
perhaps less to be mourned, and less desperate than your own: They at least know their malady, while you regard your own as a state of perfect health. Is it the dread of being unable to support a more mortified, watchful, and Christian life? But since you have hitherto been able to support some remains of virtue and innocence, without the comforts and consolations of grace, and in spite of the wearinesses and disgusts which your lukewarmness has spread through all your duties, what will it be when the Spirit of God, shall soften your yoke, and when a more fervent and faithful life, shall have restored to you all the grace and consolations, of which your lukewarmness has deprived you? Piety is never sad, or insupportable, but when it is cold and unfaithful.

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

ON EVIL-SPEAKING.

John ii. 24.

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

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

N 3 Now,
Now, although this be perhaps the only vice, which no circumstance can palliate, it is the one we are most ingenious in concealing from ourselves, and to which piety and the world at present show the greatest indulgence. Not, that the character of a slanderer is not equally odious to men, as, according to the expression of the Holy Spirit, it is abominable in the sight of God; but in that number, they comprise only particular defamers of a blacker and more avowed malignity, who deal their blows indiscriminately, and without art; and who, with sufficient malice to ensure, are destitute of the wit necessary to please: Now, the defamers of that description are more rare; and had we only them to address ourselves to, it would be sufficient at present to point out, how much unworthy of reason and religion this vice is, to inspire with a just detestation of it, those who feel themselves guilty.

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

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

Now, what are the pretexts, which, in your eyes, soften, or justify the vice of evil-speaking? In the first place, It is the lightness of the faults you censure: We persuade ourselves, that as it is not a matter of culpability, there cannot likewise be much harm in censuring it. 2dly, It is the public notoriety, by which those to whom we speak, being already informed of what is reprehensible in our brother, no loss of reputation can be the consequence of our discourses. Lastly, Zeal for truth, and the glory of God, which does not permit us to be silent on those disorders which dishonour him. Now, to these three pretexts, let us oppose three incontrovertible truths.

N 4 To
To the pretext of the lightness of the faults; that the more the faults which you censure are light, the more is the slander unjust: First Truth. To the pretext of the public notoriety; that the more the faults of our brethren are known, the more cruel is the slander which censures them: Second Truth. To the pretext of zeal; that the same charity, which, in piety, makes us hate sinners, makes us likewise cover up the multitude of their faults: Last Truth.

PART I. The tongue, says the Apostle James, is a devouring fire, a world of iniquity, an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. And behold, what I would have applied to the tongue of the evil-speaker, had I undertaken to give you a just and natural idea of all the enormity of this vice: I would have said, that the tongue of the slanderer is a devouring fire, which tarnishes whatever it touches; which exercises its fury on the good grain, equally as on the chaff; on the profane, as on the sacred; which, wherever it passes, leaves only desolation and ruin; digs even into the bowels of the earth, and fixes itself on things the most hidden; turns into vile ashes, what, only a moment before, had appeared to us so precious and brilliant; acts with more violence and danger than ever, in the time when it was apparently smothered up, and almost extinct; which blackens, what it cannot consume; and
and sometimes sparkles and delights, before it destroys. I would have told you, that evil-speaking is an assemblage of iniquity; a secret pride, which discovers to us the mote in our brother's eye, but hides the beam which is in our own; a mean envy, which hurt at the talents or prosperity of others, makes them the subject of its censures, and studies to dim the splendour of whatever outshines itself; a disguised hatred, which sheds in its speeches, the hidden venom of the heart; an unworthy duplicity, which praises to the face, and tears in pieces behind the back; a shameful levity, which has no command over itself, or words, and often sacrifices both fortune and comfort, to the imprudence of an amusing conversation; a deliberate barbarity, which goes to pierce your absent brother; a scandal, where you become a subject of shame and sin to those who listen to you; an injustice, where you ravish from your brother, what is dearest to him. I would have said, that slander is a restless evil; which disturbs society; spreads dissention through cities and countries; disunites the strictest friendships; is the source of hatred and revenge; fills, wherever it enters, with disturbances and confusion; and, everywhere, is an enemy to peace, comfort, and Christian good breeding. Lastly, I would have added, that it is an evil full of deadly poison; whatever flows from it is infected, and poisons whatever
whatever it approaches; that even its praises are imposed; its applause, malicious; its silence, criminal; its gestures, motions and looks, have all their venom, and spread it each in their way.

Behold, what in this discourse, it would have been my duty, more at large, to have exposed to your view, had I not proposed only to paint to you, the vileness of the vice, which I am now going to combat; but as I have already said, these are only general invectives, which none apply to themselves. The more odious the vice is represented, the less do you perceive yourselves concerned in it; and though you acknowledge the principle, you make no use of it, in the regulation of your manners; because, in these general paintings, we always find features which resemble us not. I wish, therefore, to confine myself at present, to the single object of making you feel all the injustice of that description of flander, which you think the most innocent; and least you should not feel yourselves connected with what I shall say, I shall attack it, only in the pretexts which you continually employ in its justification.

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

I say, in the first place, the motives. I know
that it is above all by the innocency of the in-
tention, that they pretend to justify themselves;
that you continually say, that your design is not
to tarnish the reputation of your brother, but
innocently to divert yourselves with faults which
do not dishonour him in the eyes of the world.

You,
You, my dear hearer, to divert yourself with his faults! But what is that cruel pleasure, which carries sorrow and bitterness to the heart of your brother? Where is the innocence of an amusement, whose source springs from vices, which ought to inspire you with compassion and grief? If Jesus Christ forbid us in the gospel, to invigorate the languors of conversation by idle words, shall it be more permitted to you, to enliven it by derisions and cenfures? If the law curfe him, who uncovers the nakedness of his relations, shall you, who add raillery and insult to the discovery, be more protected from that malediction? If whoever call his brother fool, be worthy, according to Jesus Christ, of eternal fire; shall he who renders him the contempt and laughing-stock of a profane assembly, escape the same punishment? You, to amuse yourself with his faults? But does charity delight in evil? Is that rejoicing in the Lord, as command-ed by the Apostle? If you love your brother as yourself, can you delight in what afflicts him? Ah! The church formerly held in horror the exhibitions of gladiators, and denied that believers, brought up in the tenderness and benignity of Jesus Christ, could innocently feast their eyes with the blood and death of these unfortunate slaves, or form an harmless recreation of so inhuman a pleasure. But you renew more de-testable shows, to enliven your languor: You bring
bring upon the stage, not infamous wretches devoted to death, but members of Jesus Christ, your brethren; and there you entertain the spectators, with wounds, which you inflict on persons rendered sacred by baptism.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the first place, it is a person, perhaps of a sex, to whom, especially on certain points, the slightest slanders are important; to whom it is a dishonour to be publicly spoken of; to whom raillery becomes an insult, and every suspicion an accusation; in a word, a person, whom not to praise becomes an outrage, and a disgrace to their station: Thus St Paul would have every woman to be adorned with bashfulness and modesty; that is to say, he would wish those virtues
tues to be as conspicuous in them, as the ornaments with which they are covered; and the highest eulogy which the Holy Spirit makes on Judith, after speaking of her beauty, youth, and great wealth, is, that in all Israel, not a person was to be found who had aspersed her conduct; and that her reputation corresponded with her virtue.

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

3dly, It is a person, perhaps consecrated to God, and established in the church, whom you censure; who, engaged by the sanctity of his vocation,
vocation, to more exemplary, pure, and irreproachable manners, finds himself stained and dishonoured by censures, which would not affect the reputation of persons of the world. Thus the Lord, in the scriptures, curseth those who shall even meddle with his anointed. Nevertheless, the traits of flander are never more animated, more brilliant, or more applauded in the world, than when directed against the ministers of his holy altar; the world, so indulgent to itself, seems to have preserved its severity only on their account; and for them, it has eyes more censorious, and a tongue more empoisoned, than for the rest of men. It is true, O my God, that our conversation amongst the people is not always holy, and free from reproach; that we frequently adopt the manners, luxury, indolence, idleness, and pleasures of the world, against which we ought to struggle; that we hold out to believers, more examples of pride and negligence, than of virtue; that we are more jealous of preeminence, than of the duties of our calling; and that it is difficult for the world to honour a character, which we ourselves disgrace. But as I have often said, my brethren, our infidelities ought rather to be the subject of your tears, than of your pleasantry and censures: God generally punishes the disorders of the people, by the corruption of the priests; and the most dreadful scourge with which he strikes kingdoms
On Evil-speaking.

Doms and empires, is that of not raising up in them venerable pastors, and zealous ministers, who may stem the torrent of dissipation; it is that of permitting faith and religion to become weakened, even amongst those who are its defenders and depositaries; that the light, which was meant to instruct you, should be changed into darkness; that the co-operators in your salvation, should assist, by their example, towards your destruction; that even from the sanctuary, from whence ought to proceed only the good favour of Jesus Christ, there should issue a smell of death and scandal; and, in a word, that abominations should find their way even into the holy place. But what alteration does the relaxation of our manners, make in the sanctity of the vocation which consecrates us? Are the sacred vases, which serve on the altar, though composed of a mean metal, less worthy of your respect? And even granting the minister may merit your contempt, would you be less sacriligious, in not respecting his ministry?

What shall I say? Your detractions and cen.sures, are perhaps directed against persons, who make a public profession of piety, and whose virtue your hearers formerly respected. You then persuade them, that they had been too credulous; you authorise them to believe, that few worthy, and intrinsically good characters, are to be found on the earth; that all those held out
as such, when narrowly examined, are like the rest of men: You confirm the prejudices of the world against virtue, and give fresh credit to those discourses, so usual, and so injurious to religion, with regard to the piety of the servants of Jesus Christ. Now, do all these appear so very light to you? Ah, my brethren! The just on this earth are like the holy ark, in the midst of which the Lord dwells, and any contempt or insult to which, he most rigorously avenges: They may stagger in their road, like the ark of Israel, while conducting in triumph to Jerusalem; for the purest and most shining virtue, has its spots and eclipses; and even the most solid, cannot always equally support itself; but the Lord is incensed, when rash and impure hands, like those of Uzzah, shall venture to put them right; and scarcely have they touched them, when they are smote by his wrath: He takes to himself the slightest insults with which they dishonour his servants, and he cannot endure that virtue, which has found admirers, even amongst tyrants, and the most barbarous nations, should frequently among believers, find only censures and derisions. Thus the little children of Israel, were devoured on the spot, for having mocked the small number of hairs of the man of God; nevertheless these were only the puerile indiscretions, so pardonable at their age. Fire from heaven, fell upon the officer of the impious Ahabiah.
ziah, and in a moment consumed him, for having in derision called Elijah the Man of God; nevertheless it was a courtier, from whom little regard might be expected, for the austerity and simplicity of a prophet, or for the virtue of a man, rustic in his appearance, and hateful to his master. Michal was struck with barrenness, for having too harshly censured the holy excesses of joy and piety of David before the altar; nevertheless, it proceeded merely from female delicacy. But to meddle with those who serve the Lord, is, according to the Scripture, to meddle with the apple of your eye: He invisibly curses those rash censures on piety; and though he may not strike them as formerly, with instant death, yet he marks on their forehead, from this life forward, the stamp of reprobation, and denies to themselves, that precious gift of sanctity and grace, which they had despised in others; nevertheless, it is the upright who are now become the general butt of the malignity of public discourses; and we may safely say, that virtue gives birth to more censurers in the world, than vice.

I do not add, that if these flanders, which you term light, be highly criminal in their motives and circumstances, they are still more so in their consequences: I say their consequences, my brethren, which are always irreparable. You may expiate the crime of voluptuousness, by mortification
mortification and penitence; the crime of hatred, by love for your enemy; the crime of ambition, by a renunciation of the honours and grandeurs of the age; the crime of injustice, by a restoration of what you had unjustly ravished from your brother; even the crime of impiety and freethinking, by a religious and public respect for the worship of your fathers; but what remedy, what virtue, can repair the crime of detraction? You revealed to only one person the vices of your brother: It may be so; but that unlucky confident will soon, in his turn, have communicated it to others, who, on their part, no longer regarding as a secret, what they have just heard, will relate it to the first comers; in the relation of it, every one will add new circumstances; each, in his way, will empoison it with some new trait; in proportion as they publish, they will increase, they will magnify it: Similar to a spark of fire, says St James, which wafted by an impetuous wind, to different places, sets in flames, the forests and countries it reaches: Such is the destiny of detraction.

What you had mentioned in secret, was nothing at first, and seemed stifled and buried under its own ashes; but this fire, lies hid for a while, only in order to burst forth with redoubled fury; that nothing soon acquires reality by passing through a diversity of mouths; every
one will add to it, whatever his passion, interest, disposition of mind, and his own malignity, may hold out to him as probable: The source is hardly perceptible; but, assisted in its course, by a thousand foreign streams, the united torrent will overwhelm the court, city, and country; and that, which at its birth, was only a private and imprudent pleasantry, but a simple idea, but a malicious conjecture, will become a serious affair, a public and formal dishonour, the subject of every conversation, and an eternal stain upon the character of your brother. Repair, now, if you can, the injustice and scandal; restore to your brother the good name, of which you have deprived him. Will you pretend to oppose the public inveteracy, and fingly hold forth his praise? But they will regard you as a new comer, who is ignorant of what has taken place in the world; and your praises, come far too late, will serve only to draw upon him fresh satires. Now, what a multitude of crimes, proceeding from only one! The sins of a whole people become your’s: You defame through the mouths of all your fellow-citizens: You are likewise answerable for the guilt of all who listen to you. What penitence can expiate evils, to which it can no longer afford relief? And will your tears be able to blot out, what shall never be effaced from the memory of man? Again, were the scandal to end with you, your death, by
by terminating it, might be its expiation before God. But it is a scandal which will survive you; the shameful histories of courts never die with their heroes. Lascivious writers have transmitted to us, the anecdotes, and irregularities of the courts which have preceded us; and licentious authors will be found amongst us, to acquaint the ages to come, with the public rumours, the scandalous circumstances, and the vices of our own.

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

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

Now, to apply this maxim to my subject: What are the rules in the gospel, which constitute slander a crime to the disciples of Jesus Christ? In the first place, it is the precept of Christian humility, which, as it ought to establish in us, a profound contempt of ourselves, and to open our eyes on the endless multitude of our own wants, should, at the same time, shut our eyes on those of our brethren. In the second place, it is the duty of charity; that charity, so recommended in the gospel; the grand precept of the law; which covers the faults it cannot correct; excuses those it cannot cover; delights not in evil; and, with difficulty, believes, because it never wishes it to happen. Lastly, It is the inviolable rule of justice, which, never permitting us to do to others, what we would not have done to ourselves, condemns whatever goes beyond these equitable bounds. Now, the scandalous discourses, which turn upon those faults you term public, essentially wound these three rules: Judge, then, of their innocency.
They wound the precept of Christian humility. Indeed, my dear hearer, were you feelingly touched with your own wants, says a holy father; were your own sin incessantly before your eyes, like the penitent David, you would find neither sufficient leisure nor attention, to remark the faults of your brethren. The more they were public, the more would you in secret thank the Lord, for averting from you that scandal; the more would you feel your gratitude awakened, when you considered, that though fallen perhaps into the same errors, he hath not permitted them to be proclaimed from the house-tops, like those of your brother; that he hath left in obscurity your deeds of darkness; that he hath covered them, as I may say, with his wings; and that, in the eyes of men, he hath preserved for you, an honour, and an innocence, which you have so often forfeited before him: You would tremble, while saying to yourself, that perhaps he hath spared your confusion in this world, only to render it more bitter and more durable, in the next.

Such is the disposition of Christian humility towards the public disgraces of our brethren: We should often speak of them to ourselves, but almost never to others. Thus, when the Scribes and Pharisees, presented to our Saviour, the woman caught in adultery, and eagerly pressed him to give his judgment; though the guilt of
of the sinner was public, Jesus Christ kept a profound silence; and to their insidious and pressing entreaties, to explain himself, he simply answered: "He that is without sin amongst you, let him first cast a stone at her;" as if he thereby meant to make them understand, that sinners, like them, were little entitled to condemn, with so high a hand, the crime of that woman; and that to acquire the right of casting a single stone at her, it was necessary the individual should himself be free from reproach.

And behold, my brethren, what I wish to say to you at present: The evil conduct of such a person is become notorious: Very well! Whoever of you is without sin, let him cast the first stone: If, before God, you have nothing, perhaps more criminal, with which to reproach yourself, speak with freedom; condemn, in the severest manner, his fault, and open upon him the whole flood of your derisions and censures; it is permitted to you. Ah! you, who so hardly speak of it, you are more fortunate; but are you more innocent than he? You are thought to possess more virtue, and more regard for your duty; but God, who knoweth you, will he judge like men? Were the darkness, which conceals your shame, to be dissipated; would not every stone you throw, recoil upon yourselves? Were an unexpected circumstance to betray your secret, would not the audacity and malicious joy with which
which you censure, add additional ridicule to your confusion and disgrace? Ah! It is only to artifices and arrangements, which the justice of God may disconcert and lay open in an instant, that you are indebted for this phantom of reputation, on which you pride yourselves so much: You perhaps border on the moment, which shall reveal your shame; and far from blushing in secret and in silence, when faults, like your own, are made known, you speak of, and relate them with pleasure; and you furnish the public with traits, which, one day, it will employ against yourself: It is the threat and prediction of our Saviour. All they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword: You pierce your brother with the sword of the tongue; with the same weapon, shall you be pierced in your turn; and though you were even exempted from the vices you so boldly censure in others, the just God will deliver you up to it.

Disgrace is the common punishment of pride. Peter, on the evening of the Lord's Supper, never ceased to exaggerate the guilt of the disciple, by whom his master was to be betrayed: He was the most anxious of them all to know his name, and the most forward to express his detestation of his perfidy; and immediately after, he falls himself into the infidelity which he had so lately blamed with such pride and confidence. Nothing draws down upon us the wrath and curse of God,
so much as the malicious pleasure with which we magnify the faults of our brethren; and his mercy is incensed, that these afflicting examples, which he permits, for the sole purpose of recalling us to our own weaknesses, and awakening our vigilance, should flatter our pride, and excite only our derisions and censures.

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

Besides,
ON EVIL-SPEAKING.

Beside, the more your brother's disgraces are public, the more affected ought you to be with the scandal, which they necessarily occasion to the Church; with the advantage which the wicked and the free-thinkers will draw from them, to blaspheme the name of the Lord, to harden themselves in impiety, and to persuade themselves, that these are weaknesses common to all men, and that they are most virtuous, who best know how to conceal them: The more ought you to be afflicted, at the occasion which these public examples of irregularity give to weak souls, to fall into the same disorders; the more does charity oblige you to grieve over them: the more ought you to wish, that the remembrance of these faults should perish: that the day, and the places of their revealment, should be effaced from the memory of men: and lastly, the more ought you, by your silence, to endeavour to suppress them. But the whole world speaks of them, you say; your silence will not prevent the public conversations; consequently, you may make remarks in your turn. The inference is barbarous: Because you are unable to repair the disgrace, are you permitted to augment it? Because you cannot save your brother from shame, shall you assist to overwhelm him with confusion and infamy? Because almost every one casts a stone at him, shall it be less cruel in you, to throw one in your turn, and to unite with

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with those who bruise, and beat him in pieces? Setting religion aside, how beautiful it is, to declare for the unfortunate? How much real dignity and greatness of soul, in sheltering under our protection, those abandoned by the world! And even admitting the rules of charity were not to make it a duty to us, the feelings alone, of glory and humanity, should in this case be sufficient.

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

But I go further: when your brother's disgrace, should even be certain, and the malignity of reports should have added nothing to its criminality; how can you know, that the very shame of seeing it so public may not have recalled him to himself; and that a sincere repentance, and tears of compunction, may not have already effaced, and expiated it before God? Years are not always required for grace to triumph over a rebellious heart: there are victories which it leaves not to time; and a public disgrace often turns out the moment of mercy, which decides upon the conversion of the sinner. Now, if your brother is in a state of repentance, are you not unjust and cruel to revive faults which his penitence has effaced, and which the Lord hath ceased to remember? Do you recollect the sinful woman in the gospel? Her irregularities were notorious, seeing she had been known through the whole city as a prostitute: nevertheless, when the Pharisee reproached her with
with her sins, her tears and love had effaced them, at the feet of our Saviour; the goodness of God had remitted her errors, yet the malignity of men, was unable to obliterate them.

_Lastly, Your brother's disgrace was public; that is to say, it was confusedly known, that his conduct was not free from reproach, and you come to particularise the circumstances, to proclaim his deeds, to explain the motives, and to lay open the whole mystery; to confirm what they but imperfectly knew; to tell them of what they knew not at all; and to applaud yourself, for appearing better instructed in your brother's misfortune, than those who listen to you: Some degree of character, though waver ing, yet remained to him; he still preserved, at least, some remains of honour, a spark of life, and you completely extinguish it. I do not add, that these public reports perhaps originated from people of no character; persons of neither reputation nor consequence to convince; hitherto none durst yield credit to rumours so poorly supported; but you, who by your rank, birth, and dignities, have acquired an influence over the minds, remove every shadow of doubt or uncertainty: Your name alone, will now serve as a proof against the innocency of your brother; and in future it will be cited in justification of the general reports. Now, can any thing be harder, or more unjust, both on account of the
injury you do to him, and of the service you fail to perform? Your silence on his fault might alone perhaps have flopt the public defamation; and you would have been cited to clear his innocence, as you now are to blacken it: And what more respectable use could you have made of your rank and influence? The more you are exalted in the world, the more ought you to be religious, and circumspect on the reputation of your brethren; the more ought a noble decency to render you reserved on their errors: The discourses of the vulgar are soon forgot; they expire in coming into the world; but the words of the great never fall in vain; and the public is always a faithful echo, either to the praises they bestow, or to the censures they allow themselves to utter. My God! thou teacheft us, by concealing thyfelf the sins of men, to conceal them on our part; to reveal our faults, thou waiteft with a merciful patience, the day when the secrets of our hearts fhall be manifested: And we, by a rash malignity, anticipate the time of thy vengeance; we who are fo interefled, that the freccecies of our hearts, and the mystery of the conffiences, fhould not as yet be laid open to thee.

Thus, you particularly, my brethren, whom rank and birth exalt above others, be not satisffied with putting a check upon your tongue; according to the advice of the Holy Spirit, pre-
sent a melancholy and severe countenance, a silence of disapprobation and indignation, to every defamatory discourse; for the crime is exactly equal, between the malignity of the speaker, and the satisfaction of those who listen to them. Let us surround our ears with thorns, that they may not be accessible to poisonous insinuations; that is to say, let us not only shut them against these words of blood and gall, but let us return them on their author in a manner equally bitter and mortifying. Were flander to find fewer approvers, the kingdom of Jesus Christ would soon be purged of that scandal: Slander is pleasing; and a vice which pleases soon becomes a desirable talent: We animate flander by our applaudes; and as there is no person but wishes to be applauded, there are few likewise who do not study it, and endeavour to make a merit of flandering with skill.

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

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

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

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

3dly, Remember, that the zeal regulated by wisdom, seeks the salvation, and not the defamation of the brother it wishes to edify; that it loves not to injure; that in order to render itself useful, it studies to render itself amiable; that it is more affected with the misfortune and loss of its brother, than irritated against, or scandalised by his errors; that, far from going to publish them to others, it would wish to be enabled to conceal them from itself; and that the zeal which censures them, far from lessening the evil, serves only to augment the scandal.

4thly,
4thly, Remember, that the censorious zeal which you display, is useless to your brother, seeing he witnesses it not; that, far from being of service, it is even hurtful to his conversion, to which you raise up obstacles, by irritating him against your censures, should he happen to be informed of them; that it is injurious to his reputation, which you wound; and lastly, to those that listen to you, who respecting your pretended virtue, never entertain a doubt that they can err, while following your steps; and no longer place slander among the number of vices.

Zeal is humble, and has eyes for nothing but its own wants; it is simple, and much more disposed to be credulous with regard to good than evil; it is merciful, and is always indulgent to the faults of others, in the same proportion as it is severe to its own weaknesses; it is gentle and timorous, and prefers to have failed in sufficiently blaming vice, to rashly exposing itself to go too far in censuring the sinner.

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

"A tongue which has confessed Jesus Christ; " which has renounced the errors and splendours
of the world; which every day blesses the
God of peace, at the foot of the altar; and is
often consecrated, by participation of the holy
mysteries, should no longer be intolerant, dan-
gerous, and full of gall and bitterness against
its brethren. It is disgracing religion, after
having offered up pure prayers and thanksgiv-
ings to the Lord, in the assembly of believers,
to go and spit out the venomous traits of the
serpent, against those whom the unity of faith,
charity, the sacrament, and even their very
errors, should render more endeared and more
respectable to you."

By the wisdom and moderation of our dis-
courses, let us deprive the enemies of virtue, of
every occasion to blaspheme against it; let us
correct our brethren, by the sanctity of our ex-
ample, rather than by the keenness of our cen-
fures; let us recal them, by living better than
they, and not by speaking against them; let us
render virtue respectable by its sweetness, rather
than by its severity; let us draw sinners towards
us by compassionating, rather than censuring
their faults; in order that our virtue may be
conspicuous to them, only through our charity
and indulgence, and that our tender care to co-
ver and excuse their faults, may induce them to
accuse and condemn themselves with more seve-
rity, when they perceive the difference of our
conduct: By these means, we shall regain our
brethren;
brethren; we shall honour piety; we shall overthrow impiety and freethinking; we shall deprive the world of all occasion for those discourses, so common, and so injurious to real virtue: And, after having used mercy towards our brethren, we shall with more confidence go to present ourselves before the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation, to ask mercy for ourselves.
ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

SERMON VII.

ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF TIME.

John vii. 33.
Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent me.

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

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

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

PART I. Three circumstances, in general, decide upon the value of things among men: The great advantages which may accrue to us from them: The short space we have to enjoy them: And, lastly, every hope destroyed of ever regaining them, if once lost. Now, behold, my brethren, the principal motives which ought to render time precious and estimable, to every wise man: In the first place, it is the price of eternity: In the second place, it is short; and we cannot make too much haste to reap the benefit of it: And lastly, it is irreparable; for, once lost, it can never be regained. It is the price of eternity: Yes, my brethren, man, condemned to death by the sin of his birth, ought to receive life, only to lose it, even from the moment he has received it. The blood alone of Jesus Christ has effaced this sentence of death and punishment, pronounced against all mankind, in the person of the first sinner: We live, though the offspring of a father condemned to death, and inheritors ourselves of his punishment, because the Redeemer died for us: The death of Jesus Christ is, therefore,
therefore, the source, and the only claim of right we have to life; our days, our moments, are the first blessings, which have flowed to us from his cross; and the time which we so vainly lose, is the price, however, of his blood, the fruit of his death, and the merit of his sacrifice.

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

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

I even speak not of the diseases, accidents, and numberless dangers, which so often have menaced our life; which so often we have seen to terminate that of our friends and nearest connections; and from which, his goodness has always delivered us. The life which we enjoy, is like a perpetual miracle, therefore, of his divine mercy: The time which is left to us, is the consequence of an infinity of tender mercies and grace, which compose the thread and the train, as it
it were, of our life: Every moment we breathe, is like a new gift we receive from God; and to waste that time, and these moments, in a deplorable inutility, is to insult that Infinite Goodness, which has granted them to us; to dissipate an inestimable grace, which is not our due; and to deliver up to chance the price of our eternity. Behold, my brethren, the first guilt attached to the loss of time: It is a precious treasure left to us, though we no longer have any right to it; which is given to us, for the purpose alone of purchasing the kingdom of heaven; and which we dissipate, as a thing the most vile and contemptible, and of which we know not any use to make.

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

But, my brethren, time is that precious treasure, which we have inherited from our birth, and which the Almighty leaves to us through pure compassion: It is in our possession, and it depends upon ourselves to make a proper use of it. It is not in order to exalt ourselves to frivolous dignities.
dignities here below, or to worldly grandeur: Alas! whatever passes away, is too vile to be the price of time, which is itself the price of eternity: It is in order to be placed in the heavens above, at the side of Jesus Christ: It is in order to separate us from the crowd of the children of Adam, above all the Caesars and Kings of the earth, in that immortal society of the happy, who shall all be kings, and whose reign shall have no bounds, but those of eternity.

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

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

To the little time, my brethren, we have to live upon the earth, add the number of past crimes, which we have to expiate in this short interval. How many iniquities are collected upon our heads, since our first years: Alas! Ten lives, like ours, would scarcely suffice to expiate a part of them: The time would still be too short; and it would be necessary to call upon the
the goodness of God, to prolong the duration of our penance. Great God! What portion can remain to me for pleasures and indolence, in a life so short and so criminal as mine? What place, then, can frivolous sports and amusements find in an interval so rapid; and which altogether would not suffice to expiate a single one of my crimes?

Ah! my brethren, do we even think upon it? A criminal condemned to death, and to whom a single day is only allowed to endeavour towards obtaining his pardon, would he find hours and moments still to trifle away? Would he complain of the length of the time, which the humanity and goodness of his judge had awarded him? Would he be embarrassed how to use it? Would he search for frivolous amusements to assist him to pass those precious moments, which were left him to merit his pardon and deliverance? Would he not endeavour to profit by an interval so decisive with regard to his destiny? Would he not replace, by the anxiety, vivacity, and continuance of his exertions, what might be wanting from the brevity of the time allowed to him? Fools that we are! our sentence is pronounced; our guilt renders our condemnation certain: We are left a single day to shun the evil, and to change the rigour of our eternal decree: And this only day, this rapid day, we indolently pass in occupations vain, slothful, and puerile.
This precious day is a burden to us, wearies us; we seek to abridge it; scarcely can we find amusements sufficient to fill the void; the evening arrives, without our having made any other use of the day left to us, than that of rendering ourselves still more worthy of the condemnation we had already merited. And besides, my brethren, how do we know, that the abuse of the day, left to us by the Almighty’s goodness, will not oblige his justice to abridge, and to cut of a portion of it? How many unexpected accidents may arrest us in a course so limited, and crop, in their fairest blossoms, the hopes of a longer life! How many sudden and astonishing deaths do we see; and generally the just punishment of the unworthy use they had made of life! What age has ever witnessed more of these melancholy examples? Formerly these accidents were rare and singular; at present, they are events which happen every day. Whether it be, that our crimes have drawn down upon us this punishment; whether it be, that excesses unknown to our forefathers lead us to them; but at present they are the deaths most common and frequent. Number, if you can, those of your relations, friends, and connections, whom a sudden death has surprised without preparation, repentance, or a moment allowed them to reflect upon themselves, upon that God whom they have offended, and upon those crimes which, far from detesting, they
they never had leisure sufficiently to be acquainted with.

Will you tell us after this, that there are many spare moments in the day: That we must contrive to amuse ourselves some way or other? There are many spare moments in the day? But your guilt consists in leaving them in that frightful void: The days of the upright are always full. Spare moments in the day: But are your duties always fulfilled? Are your houses regulated, your children instructed, the afflicted relieved, the poor visited, the works of piety accomplished? Time is short: Your obligations so infinite; and you can still find so many spare moments in the day? My God! How many holy characters have in solitude complained, that their days passed too rapidly away; have borrowed from the night, what the brevity of the day had taken from their labours and zeal; have lamented, even in the calm and leisure of their solitude, that sufficient time remained not for them to publish thy praises, and eternal mercies: And we, charged with a multiplicity of cares; we, in the midst of the solicitudes and the engagements of the age, which absorb almost all our days and our moments; we, responsible to our relations, to our children, to our friends, to our inferiors, to our superiors, to our stations, to our country, for such an infinity of duties; we still find a void in our life; and the little
little which remains to us, we think too long to be employed in serving and blessing thy holy name?

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

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

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

Ah! my brethren, how many of the reprobate, in the midst of their anguish and punishments, entreat from the mercy of God, only one of those moments, which we know not how to employ; and could their request be granted, what use would they not make of that precious moment? How many tears of compunction and penitence! How many prayers and supplications, to soften the Father of Mercies, and to induce his parental feelings to restore to them his affection!
affection! This only moment is nevertheless refused: Time, they are told, exists no more for them; and you find yourselves embarrassed with the little you are left? God will judge you, my brethren; and on the bed of death, and in that terrible hour which shall surprise you, in vain shall you demand a little more time: In vain shall you promise to God, a more Christian use of what you will endeavour to obtain: His justice, without pity, will cut the thread of your days: And that time, which now oppresses and embarrasses you, shall then be denied.

But in what our blindness here is still more conspicuous, is, that not only the time which we lose with so much indifference and insensibility, is short and precious, but likewise irreparable; for once lost, it is for ever gone, without resource.

I say irreparable: For, in the first place, riches, honours, reputation, and favour, though once lost, may again be retrieved. We may even replace each of these losses, by other acquirements, which will repay us with usury: But the moments lost in inutility, are so many means of salvation, which we never again can possess, but which are for ever cut off from the number, which God, in his compassion, had allotted to us. Indeed, in a space so short as we have to live, there cannot be a doubt, but that the Almighty had his particular designs, with regard to each of our
our days and moments; that he hath marked the use we ought to have made of them; the connection they were to have with our eternal salvation; and that to each of them he hath attached assistances of grace, in order to consummate the work of our sanctification. Now, these days and moments being lost, the grace attached to them must be equally so: The moments of God are finished, and return no more: The course of his mercies is regulated: We believed they were only useless moments we had lost; and with them we have lost inestimable succours of grace; which we find deducted from those the goodness of God had destined for us.

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

In the last place, Irreparable, with respect to the works of penance and reparation, of which, in a certain period of life, we are capable, but are no longer so, when we wait the infirmities of a more advanced age. For, after all, it is in vain to say then, that God expects not impossibilities; that there is a penance for every age; and that religion does not wish us to hasten our days, under the pretext of expiating our crimes: It is you who have placed yourselves in this state of impossibility: Your sins diminish not your obligations: Guilt must be punished, in order to be effaced. The Almighty had allowed you both time and strength, to satisfy this immutable and eternal law: This time you have wasted in accumulating new debts: This strength you have exhausted, either by new excesses, or at least, without making any use of it, to further the designs of God respecting you: The Almighty must therefore do, what you have never done yourselves, and punish, after your death, the crimes you have never been inclined to expiate during your life.

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

Great God! Thou who art the sovereign dispenser of times and moments: Thou, in whose hands are our days and our years, with what eyes must thou behold us losing and dissipating the moments, of which thou alone knewest the duration; of which, in irrevocable characters, thou hast marked the course and the measure; moments, which thou drawest from the treasure of thine eternal mercies, to allow us time for penitence: Moments, which every day, thy justice presses thee to abridge, as a punishment for their abuse; moments, which, every day before our eyes, thou refusest to so many
many sinners, less culpable than we, whom a terrible death surprises, and drags into the gulf of thine eternal vengeance: Moments, in a word, which we shall not perhaps long enjoy; and of which thou soon intendedst to terminate the melancholy career! Great God, Behold the greatest, and the best part of my life, already past, and wholly lost: In all my days, there has not hitherto been a single serious one: A single day for thee, for my salvation, and for eternity: My whole life is but a vapour, which leaves nothing real or solid in the hand of him who recalls it. Shall I, to the end, drag on my days in this melancholy inutility; in this weariness which pursues me, in the midst of my pleasures, and the efforts which unavailingly I make to avoid it? Shall the last hour surprise me, loaded with the void of my whole years? And in all my course, shall there be nothing serious or important, but the last moment, which will terminate it for ever, and decide my everlasting destiny? Great God! what a life, for a soul destined to serve Thee, called to the immortal society of thy Son, and thy saints, enriched with thy gifts, and in consequence of them, capable of works worthy of eternity! What a life, is that life, which, in reality, is nothing, has nothing in view, and fills up a time which is decisive of its eternal destiny, in doing nothing, and
and reckoning as well passed, those days and hours which imperceptibly slip away!

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

PART II. To every thing we have hitherto said, my brethren, the majority of those who listen to me, have no doubt secretly oppossed, that their life is anything but slothful and useless; that scarcely can they suffice, for the duties, good offices, and endless engagements of their stations; that they live in an eternal vicissitude of occupations and business, which absorbs their whole life; and that they think themselves happy, when they can accomplish a moment for themselves, and enjoy at leisure, the situation of their fortune denies to them.

Now this, my brethren, is a new way of abusing time, still more dangerous than even inutility and indolence. In effect the Christian use of time, is not merely the filling up of all its moments; it is that of filling them up in order, and according to the will of the Lord, who gives them to us: The life of faith, is a life of regularity and wisdom: Fancy, passion, pride, and cupidity, are fall
false principles of conduct, since they themselves are only a derangement of the mind and heart; and that order and reason ought to be our only guides.

Nevertheless the life of the majority of men, is a life always occupied, and always useless; always laborious, and always void: Their passions give birth to all their motions: These are the great springs which agitate men; make them run here and there like madmen; and leave them not a single moment's tranquillity; and in filling up all their moments, they seek not to fulfil their duties, but to deliver themselves up to their restlessness, and to satisfy their iniquitous desires.

But in what doth this order consist, which ought to regulate the measure of our occupations, and to sanctify the use of our time? It consists, in the first place, in limiting ourselves to the occupations attached to our stations: In not seeking places and situations which may multiply them; and in not reckoning among our duties, the cares and embarrassments, which anxiety, or our passions, alone generate within us. Secondly, However agitated may be our situations, amidst all our occupations, to regard as the most essential, and the most privileged, those we owe to our salvation.

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

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

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

R 2 whole
whole life is but a diversified art, to shun weariness, and a miserable talent to find it. Wherever order is not, weariness must necessarily be found: and far from a life of irregularity and confusion being a remedy, on the contrary, it is the most fruitful source, and universal cause of it.

The just souls who live in regularity; they who yield nothing to caprice and temper; whose every occupation is exactly where it ought to be; whose moments are filled up, according to their destination, and to the will of the Lord who directs them, find in order, a perfect remedy against, and protection from weariness. That wise uniformity in the practice of duties, which appear so gloomy in the eyes of the world, is the source of their joy, and of that happy equality of temper, which nothing can derange: Never embarrassed with the present time, which stated duties occupy: Never in pain with regard to the future, for which new duties are arranged: Never delivered up to themselves, by the change of occupations, which succeed each other: Their days appear as moments, because every moment is in its place: Time hangs not upon them, because it always has its distinction and use: and in the arrangement of an uniform and occupied life, they find that peace, and that joy, which the rest of men in vain search for in the confusion of a continual agitation.
Reftleffness, by multiplying our occupations, leaves us, therefore, a prey to wearinefs and difguft; nor yet does it fanctify the ufe of our time: For if the moments, not regulated by the order of God, are moments loft, however occupied they may otherwise be; if the life of man ought to be a life of wisdom and regularity, where every occupation has its allotted place; what can be more opposite to fuch a life than this inconfiftency, these eternal fluctuations in which reftleffness makes us pafs our time? But the passions which keep us in perpetual motion, do not form for us more legitimate employmenfs.

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

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

Indeed, we sometimes hear them complaining of the endless agitations inseparable from their places; sighing for rest, and envying the lot of a tranquil and private station; repeating, that it should indeed be time to live for themselves,
after having so long lived for others. But these
are merely words of course: They seem to groan
under the weight of affairs; but with much
more uneasiness and grief, would they support
the weight of leisure and of a private condition:
They employ one part of their life, in strug-
gling against each other for the tumult of places
and employments, and the other they employ
in lamenting the misfortune of having obtained
them. It is a language of vanity: They would
wish to appear superior to their fortune; and
they are not so, to the smallest reverse, or the
lightest symptom of coldness which threatens
them. Behold how our passions create occupa-
tions and embarrassments, which God required
not: and deprive us of a time, whose value we
shall be ignorant of, till we reach that last mo-
ment, when time finishes, and eternity begins.
Yet still my brethren, in the midst of the end-
less occupations attached to your stations, were
you to regard as the most privileged, those con-
ected with your salvation, you would in some
measure at least, repair the dissipation of that
portion of your life, which the world and the
cares of this earth entirely occupy. But it is
still in this point that our blindness is deplor-
able: We cannot find time for our eternal sal-
vation. That which we bestow on fortune, the
duties of a charge, the good offices expected
from our station, the care of the body, and at-
tentions
tentions to dress; that which we give to friendship, society, recreation, and custom, all appear essential and indispensable: We even dare not encroach upon, or limit these: We carry them beyond the bounds of even reason and necessity; and as life is too short, and our days too rapid, to suffice for all, whatever we retrench, is from the cares of our salvation: In the multiplicity of our occupations, we are sure to sacrifice those which we ought to bestow on eternity. Yes, my brethren, in place of retrenching from our amusements; from the duties which ambition multiplies; from the ceremonies which idleness alone has established; from the cares and attentions we bestow on a vain dress, which custom and effeminacy have rendered endless: In place of retrenching from these, at least some little time every day, scarcely do they leave us some accidental remains, which by chance have escaped from the world and pleasure: Some rapid moments, the world wishes not; with which we are perhaps embarrassed; and which we know not how to dispose of otherwise. So long as the world chooses to engage us; so long as it continues to offer pleasures, duties, trifles, and complaisances, we yield ourselves up to it with delight. When all is over, and we no longer know how to fill up our vacant hours, we then consecrate to some languid practices of religion, those outcast moments, which weariness,
ness, or a deficiency of pleasures, leaves us: Properly speaking, they are moments of recreation, which we bestow upon ourselves rather than upon God: An interval, we place between the world and us, in order to return to it with more relish; and breathe a little from the fatigue, the disgust, and the satiety, which are the necessary consequences of a life devoted to the world and pleasures, which, prolonged beyond a certain measure, are immediately followed by weariness and lassitude.

Such is the use, which even persons, who deck themselves out with a reputation for virtue, make of their time. Their whole life is one continued and criminal preference, given to the world, fortune, ceremony, and pleasures, above the business of their salvation: All is filled up by what they give to their masters, friends, places, and appetites, and nothing remains for God and for eternity. It would appear, that time is given to us, in the first place, for the world, ambition, and earthly cares; and should any portion of it happen afterwards to remain, that we are entitled to praise, when we bestow it on our salvation.

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

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

Thus, my brethren, how different are the judgments of God from those of the world! In the world, we call beautiful that splendid life, in which great actions are numbered, victories gained, difficult negociations concluded, undertakings
takings successfully conducted, illustrious employments supported with reputation, eminent dignities acquired by important services, and exercised with glory; a life which passes into history, fills the public monuments, and of which the remembrance shall be preserved till the latest posterity: Such, according to the world, is a beautiful life. But if, in all this, they have fought more their own, than the glory of God; if they have had nothing more in view than to erect to themselves a perishable edifice of grandeur on the earth, in vain shall they have furnished a splendid career to the eyes of men; in the sight of God, it is a life lost: In vain shall history record us; we shall be effaced from the book of life, and from the eternal histories; in vain shall our actions be the admiration of ages to come; they shall not be written on the immortal columns of the Heavenly Temple. In vain shall we have acted a dignified part upon the stage of all earthly ages; in the eternal ages we shall be as those who never were: In vain shall our titles and dignities be preserved upon the marble and brass; as the fingers of men have written them, they shall perish with them; and what the finger of God shall have written, will alone endure as long as himself. In vain shall our life be proposed as a model to the ambition of our descendants; its reality existing only in the passions of men, from the moment they shall cease to have passions,
passions, and the objects which inflame them shall be annihilated, this life shall be nothing, and shall be plunged into non-entity, with the world which admired it.

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

And what will you be able to say to him, on the bed of death, when he shall enter into judgment with you, and demand an account of the time, which he had only granted you, to be employed in glorifying and serving him? Will you say to him: Lord, I have gained many victories; I have usefully and gloriously served my prince and country; I have established to myself a great name amongst men? alas! you have never been able to gain a victory over yourself: You have usefully served the kings of the earth, and you
you have neglected, with contempt, the service of the King of kings. You have established to yourself a great name amongst men; and your name is unknown amongst the chosen of God:

Time lost for eternity. Will you say to him: I have conducted the most difficult negotiations, I have concluded the most important treaties; I have managed the interests and fortunes of princes; I have been in the secrets, and in the councils of Kings? alas! you have concluded treaties and alliances with men, and you have a thousand times violated the holy covenant you have entered into with God: You have managed the interests of princes, and you have never known how to manage the interests of your salvation: You have entered into the secrets of kings, and you have ever been ignorant of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven: Time lost for eternity. Will you say to him: My whole life has been only an incessant toil, and a painful and continued occupation? alas! you have always toiled, and you have never been able to do anything to save your soul: Time lost for eternity. Will you say to him: I have established my children in the world: I have exalted my relations; I have been useful to my friends; I have augmented the patrimony of my ancestors? alas! you have bequeathed great establishments to your children, and you have not left them the fear of the Lord, by bringing them up, and establishing them in faith and in piety: You have
have augmented the patrimony of your ancestors, and you have dissipat
ed the gifts of grace, and the patrimony of Jesus Christ: Time lost for eternity. Will you say to him: I have made the most profound studies; I have enriched the public with useful and curious works; I have perfected the sciences by new discoveries; I improved my great talents, and rendered them useful to mankind? alas! The great talent confided to you, was that of faith and grace, of which you have made no use: You have rendered yourself learned in the sciences of men, and you have always been ignorant in the science of the Holy: Time lost for eternity. In a word, will you tell him: I have passed my life in fulfilling the duties, and good offices of my station: I have gained friends; I have rendered myself useful and agreeable to my masters? alas! You have had friends to boast of on the earth, and you have acquired none to yourself in heaven: You have made every exertion to please men, and you have done nothing to please the Almighty: Time lost for eternity.

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

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

THE CERTAINTY OF A FUTURE STATE.

Matt. xxv. 46.

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

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

Nevertheless, the view of this grand object, which formerly had been able to startle the fer-
cocity of tyrants; to shake the fortitude of philo-
sophers; to disturb the effeminacy and voluptu-
ousness of Cæsars; to soften the most barbarous
nations; to form so many martyrs; to people the
deserts, and to bring the whole universe submissive
to the yoke of the cross: This image, so terrify-
ing, is now almost destined to alarm the timi-
dity of merely the common people: These grand
objects are become like vulgar paintings, which
we dare no longer expose to the false delicacy
of the great, and connoisseurs of the world; and
the only fruit we generally reap from this sort of
discourses, is to make it be inquired, perhaps,
after quitting them, whether every thing shall
take place, as we have said.

For, my brethren, we live in times in which the
faith of many has been wrecked; in which a
wretched philosophy, like a mortal venom, spreads
in secret, and undertakes to justify abominations
and
SERMON VIII.

and vices, against the belief of future punishment and rewards. This evil has passed from the palaces of the great, even to the people, and everywhere the piety of the just is insulted by the discourses of irreligion, and the maxims of free-thinking.

And certainly, I am not surpried that dissolute men should doubt of a future state, and endeavour to combat, or to weaken a truth, so capable of disturbing their criminal sensualities. It is horrible to look forward to everlasting misery. The world has no pleasure, which can endure a thought so shocking; consequently, it has always endeavoured to efface it from the heart and mind of man. It well knows, that the belief of a future state, is a troublesome check on the human passions, and that it will never succeed in making tranquil and resolute libertines, without having first made unbelievers.

Let us deprive, then, the corruption of the human heart of so wretched and weak a support: Let us prove to dissolute souls, that they shall survive their debaucheries; that all dies not with the body; that this life shall finish their crimes, but not their misery; and more completely to confound impiety, let us attack it in the vain pretexts on which it depends.
Ifly, Who knows, say the impious, that all

dies not with us? Is that other life, of which we

are told, quite certain? Who has ever returned,
to inform us of it?

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

him?

Lastly, What likelihood, add they, that God,
having made man such as he is, will punish as

crimes, inherent inclinations to pleasure, which
Nature has given us. Behold the philosophy of
the voluptuary: The uncertainty of a future

state: The majesty of God, which a vile crea-
ture cannot offend; and the weakness of man,
which, being born with him, he would be unjust,
of it, to constitute a crime.

Let us then prove, in the first place, against
the uncertainty of the impious, that the truth of

a future state is justified by the purest lights of
reason: Secondly, against the unworthy idea,
grounded upon the greatness of God, that this

truth is justified by his wisdom and glory: Last-
ly, against the pretext, drawn from the weak-
ness of man, that it is justified, even by the tes-
timony

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

Part I. It surely is melancholy to have to justify before believers, the most consolatory truth of faith: to come, to prove to men, to whom Jesus Christ has been declared, that their being is not a wild assemblage, and the wretched offspring of chance: that a wife, and an Almighty artificer, has presided at our formation and birth; that a spark of immortality animates our clay; that a portion of us shall survive ourselves; and that, on quitting this earthly mansion, our soul shall return to the bosom of God, from whence it came, and go to inhabit the eternal region of the living, where to each one shall be rendered according to his works.
It was with this truth that Paul began to announce faith, before the Athenian judges. We are the immortal race of God, said he to that assembly of sages, and he has appointed a day to judge the universe. By that, the Apostles spread the first principles of the doctrine of salvation, through infidel and corrupted nations. But we, who come after the revolution of ages, when the plenitude of nations has entered into the Church, when the whole universe has professed to believe, when all the mysteries have been cleared up, all the prophecies accomplished, Jesus Christ glorified, the path of heaven laid open; we, who appear in these latter times, when the day of the Lord is so much nearer than when our fathers believed; Alas! what ought our ministry to be, unless to dispose believers for that grand hope, and to instruct them to hold themselves in readiness, to appear before Jesus Christ, who will quickly come; far from having still to combat these shocking and foolish maxims, which the first preaching of the gospel had effaced from the universe.

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

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

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

At his birth, the impious man bore the principles of natural religion, common to all men: He found written in his heart, a law, which forbade violence, injustice, treachery, and every action to another, which he would not have done to himself: Education fortified these sentiments of nature: He was taught to know a God; to love and to fear him: Virtue was shewn to him in the rules; it was rendered amiable to him in the examples; and though, within himself, he felt inclinations, in opposition to duty, yet, when he yielded to their seductions, his heart secretly espoused the cause of virtue against his own weaknesses.

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

Listen, my brethren, and adore the justice of God, on these corrupted hearts, whom he delivers up to the vanity of their own judgment. In proportion as his manners became dissolute, the rules have appeared suspicious; in proportion as he became debased, he has endeavoured to persuade himself, that man is like the beast. He is become impious, only by shutting up
up every avenue which might lead him to the truth; by no longer regarding religion as an important concern; by searching into it, only for the purpose of dishonouring it, by blasphemies and sacrilegious witticisms; he is become impious, only by seeking to steel himself against the cries of his own conscience, and delivering himself up to the most infamous gratifications. It is by that path, that he has attained to the wonderful and sublime science of unbelief: It is to these grand efforts, that he owes the discovery of a truth, of which the rest of men, before him, had either been ignorant, or detested.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But I go still further. When, even in the doubt, formed by the unbeliever, of a future state, the arguments should be equal, and the trifling uncertainties, which render him incredulous, should balance the solid and evident truths which promise immortality to us; I say, that, even in an equality of proofs, he at least ought to wish, that the opinion of faith, with regard to the nature of our soul, were true; an opinion which is so honourable to man; which tells him, that his origin is celestial, and his hopes eternal; he ought to wish, that the doctrine of impiety were false; a doctrine so melancholy, so humiliating to man; which confounds him with the beast; which makes him live only for the body; gives him neither purpose, destination, nor hope; and limits his lot to a small number of rapid, restless, and sorrowful days, which he passes on the earth: All things equal, a reason born with any degree of elevation,
tion, would prefer being deceived by what is honourable to itself, rather than adopt a fide so disgraceful to its being. What a soul, then, must the unbeliever have received from nature, to prefer, in so great an inequality of proofs, the belief, that he is created only for this earth, and favourably to regard himself, as a vile assemblage of dirt, and the companion of the ox and bull! What do I say? What a monster in the universe must be the unbeliever, who mistrusts the general belief, only because it is too glorious for his nature; and believes, that the vanity of men has alone introduced it on the earth, and has persuaded them that they are immortal.

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

Besides, not only is the freethinker foolish, because, that even in an equality of proofs, his heart and glory should decide him in favour of faith, but likewise his own interest: For, as I have already said, What does he risk by believing? What disagreeable consequence will follow his mistake? He will live with honour, probity, and innocence; he will be mild, affable, just, sincere, religious, a generous friend, a faithful husband, and an equitable master; he will moderate his passions, which would otherwise have occasioned all the misfortunes of his life; he will abstain from pleasures and excesses, which would have prepared for him a painful and premature old age, or a deranged fortune; he will enjoy the character of a virtuous man, and the esteem of mankind:—Behold what he risks. When all should even finish with this life, that surely is still the way to pass it with happiness and tranquillity; such is the only inconvenience
I can find. If no eternal recompense shall follow, what will he have lost by expecting it? He has lost some sensual and momentary gratifications which would soon have either fatigued him by the disgust which always follows their enjoyment, or tyrannised over him, by the new desires they light up; He has lost the wretched satisfaction of being, for the instant he appeared on the earth, cruel, unnatural, voluptuous, without faith, morals, or constancy, perhaps despised and disgraced in the midst of his own people. I can see no other misfortune; he sinks back to his original non-existence, and his error has no other consequence.

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

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

Now, if all shall finish with us, if man have nothing to expect after this life, and that here is our country, our origin, and the only happiness we can promise ourselves, why are we not happy? If only created for the pleasures of the senses, why are they unable to satisfy us; and why do they always leave a fund of weariness and sorrow in the heart? If man have nothing su-

flow
flow on without care, uneasiness, disgust, or sorrow, in sensual and carnal enjoyments? If man have no other felicity to expect, than merely a temporal happiness, why is he unable to find it on the earth? Whence comes it, that riches serve only to render him uneasy; that honours fatigue him; that pleasures exhaust him; that the sciences, far from satisfying, confound and irritate his curiosity; that reputation constrains and embarrasses him; that all these, united, cannot fill the immensity of his heart, and still leave him something to wish for? All other beings, contented with their lot, appear happy in their way, in the situation the Author of Nature has placed them; the stars, tranquil in the firmament, quit not their station to illuminate another world; the earth, regular in its movements, shoots not upwards to occupy their place; the animals crawl in the fields, without envying the lot of man, who inhabits cities and sumptuous palaces; the birds carol in the air, without troubling themselves, whether there be happier creatures in the earth than themselves; all are happy, as I may say; every thing in nature is in its place: Man alone is uneasy and discontented; man alone is a prey to his desires, allows himself to be torn by fears, finds his punishment in his hopes, and becomes gloomy and unhappy in the midst even of his pleasures: Man alone can meet with nothing here to fix his heart.
Whence comes this, O man? Must it not be, that here thou art not in thy place; that thou art made for heaven; that thy heart is greater than the world; that the earth is not thy country; and that whatever is not God, is nothing to thee? Answer, if thou can, or rather question thy heart, and thou wilt believe.

2dly, If all die with the body, who has been able to persuade all men, of every age, and of every country, that their soul was immortal? From whence has this strange idea of immortality descended to the human race? How could an opinion, so distant from the nature of man, were he born only for the functions of the senses, have pervaded the earth? For if man, like the beast, be created only for the present, nothing ought to be more incomprehensible to him, than even the idea of immortality. Could machines of clay, whose only object should be a sensual happiness, have ever been able to form, or to find in themselves, an opinion so exalted, an idea so sublime? Nevertheless, this opinion, so extraordinary, is become that of all men; this opinion, so opposite even to the senses, since man, like the beast, dies wholly, in our sight, is established on the earth; this opinion, which ought not to have even found an inventor in the universe, has been received with an universal docility of belief, amongst all nations; the most savage, as the most cultivated; the most polished, as the most brutal;
brutal; the most incredulous, as the most submissive to faith.

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

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

Lastly, and with this proof I conclude: The universal fellowship of men, the laws which unite one to the other, the most sacred and inviolable duties of civil life, are all founded only on the certainty of a future state. Thus, if all die with the body, the universe must adopt other laws, manners, and habits, and a total change must take place in every thing. If all die with the body, the maxims of equity, friendship, honour, good faith, and gratitude, are only popular
popular errors; since we owe nothing to men, who are nothing to us, to whom no general bond of worship and hope unites us, who will to-morrow sink back to their original non entity, and who are already no more. If all die with us, the tender names of child, parent, father, friend, and husband, are merely theatrical appellations, and a mockery; since friendship, even that springing from virtue, is no longer a lasting tie; since our fathers, who preceded us, are no more; since our children shall not succeed us; for the non-entity in which we must one day be has no consequence; since the sacred society of marriage is only a brutal union, from which, by a strange and fortuitous concurrence, proceed beings who resemble us, but who have nothing in common with us but their non-entity.

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

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

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

The uncertainty of the believer is then sus-
picious in its principle, foolish in its proofs, and horrible in its consequences. But after having shewn you, that nothing can be more repugnant to sound reason, than the doubt which he enter-
tains of a future state, let us completely confound his pretexts, and prove, that nothing is more op-
posite to the idea of a wise God, and to the opi-
ion of his own conscience.

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

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

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

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

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

What, my brethren! It would become His greatness to leave the world he has created, in a general confusion; to see the wicked almost always prevail over the upright; the innocent crushed
crushed by the usurper; the father, the victim of an ambitious and unnatural son? From the height of his greatness, God would amuse himself with these horrible transactions, without any interest in their commission? Because He is great, he should be either weak, unjust, or cruel? Because men are insignificant, they should have the privilege of being dissolute without guilt, or virtuous without merit?

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

For, lastly, If there be no future state, what design, worthy of his wisdom, could God have proposed, in creating man? What, in forming them, He had no other view, than in forming the beast? Man, that being so noble, who is capable of such sublime thoughts, such vast desires, and such grand sentiments; susceptible of love, truth, and justice: Man, of all creatures, alone worthy of a great destination, that of knowing and loving the Author of his being; that man should be made only for the earth, to pas
pass a small portion of days, like the beast, in trifling employments, or sensuous gratifications; he should fulfil his purpose, by acting so risible and so pitiable a part; and afterwards, should sink back to non-entity, without any other use having been made of that vast mind, and elevated heart, which the Author of his being had given him? O God! where would here be thy wisdom, to have made so grand a work, for the duration only of a moment; to have exhibited men upon the earth, only as the playful essays of thy power; or to amuse thy leisure, by a variety of shews! The Deity of the freethinker, is not grand, therefore, but because he is more unjust, capricious, and despicable than men? Pursue these reflections, and support, if you can, all the extravagance of their folly.

How worthy, then, of God, my brethren, to watch over the universe; to conduct man, whom he has created, by the laws of justice, truth, charity, and innocence; to make virtue and reason the bond of union, and the foundation of human society! How worthy of God, to love in his creatures, those virtues which render himself amiable; to hate the vices, which disfigure in them his image; not to confound for ever, the just with the impious; to render happy, with himself, those souls, who have lived only for him; and to deliver up to their own misery, those
those who believed they had found a happiness independent of him!

Behold the God of the Christians; behold, that wise, just, and Holy Deity, whom we adore; and the advantage we have over the free-thinker is, that ours is the God of an innocent and pure heart; the God, whom all creatures manifested to us; whom all ages have invoked; whom the sages, even of Paganism, have acknowledged; and of whom, nature has deeply engraven the idea on the very foundation of our being!

But, since God is so just, ought he to punish as crimes, inclinations for pleasure, born with us; nay, which he alone has given us? Last blasphemy of impiety, and last part of this Discourse: I shall abridge it, and conclude.

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

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

Nature alone led them to this truth; and taught them, that blind instinct ought not to be the sole guide of the actions of men: This instinct, therefore, either is not the original institution of nature, or it must be a corruption of it; since all the laws, ever framed on the earth, have avowedly been made to restrain it; that all those, who, in every age, have borne the character of wise and virtuous, have rejected its impressions; that, amongst all nations, those infamous individuals, who yielded themselves up, without reserve or shame, to brutal sensuality, have been always considered as monsters, and the disgrace
disgrace of humanity: and the maxim once established, that our inclinations and desires cannot be considered as crimes, society can no longer exist; men must separate to be in safety, must bury themselves in the forests, and live solitary like the beasts.

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

Lastly, were all men corrupted; and, like the animals not gifted with reason, did they blindly yield themselves up to their brutal instinct, and to the empire of the senses and passions; you then, perhaps, might have reason to say, that these are inclinations inseparable from nature, and, in example, find a sort of excuse for your excesses. But look around you: Do you no longer find any upright characters on the earth? There is no question here of those vain discourses you so frequently hold against piety, and of which you feel yourselves the injustice: Speak candidly, and render glory to the truth. Are there no longer chaste, faithful, and righteous souls, who live in the fear of the Lord, and in the observance of his holy law?

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

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

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

But, what punishment would it be to the freethinker to exist no more? He wishes that annihilation; he looks forward to it, as his sweetest hope: Amidst his pleasures, he lives tranquil, only in that expectation. What! The just God would punish a sinner, by according him a destiny to the summit of his wishes. Ah! It is not thus that God punisheth. For, what would the freethinker find so shocking in a return to non-entity? Would it be, in the deprivation of his God? But he loves him not; he knows him not;
not; he desires no communication with him: for his only God is himself. Would it be, to exist no more? But what could be more desirable to a monster, who knows, that, beyond the term of his crimes, he cannot live but in sufferance, and in the expiation of the horrors of an infamous life? Would it be, by having for ever lost the worldly pleasures he enjoyed, and the different objects of his passions? But when he exists no more, the love of these must equally be extinguished. A more desirable fate cannot therefore be pointed out to the freethinker. It indeed would be the happy conclusion of all his excesses, horrors, and blasphemies. No, my brethren! The hopes of the freethinker, but not his crimes, shall perish: his torments shall be as eternal as his debaucheries would have been, had he been master of his own destiny. He would willingly have eternized himself on the earth, in the practice of every sensual vice. Death has bounded his crimes, but has not limited his criminal desires. The just and upright Judge, who fathoms the heart, will therefore proportion the punishment to the guilt.

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

O man! I will point out to thee a much surer way to render thyself tranquil, and to enjoy the sweets of internal peace. Dread that futurity thou forcest thyself to disbelieve. Question us no more, what they do in that other world, of which we tell thee; but ask thyself, without ceasing, what thou art doing in this; quiet thy conscience, by the innocency of thy life, and not by the impiety of thy unbelief: Give repose to thy heart, by calling upon God, and not by doubting that he pays attention to thee: The peace of the unbeliever is despair. Seek, then, thy happiness, not by freeing thyself from the yoke
yoke of faith, but by tasting how sweet and agreeable it is. Follow the maxims it prescribes to thee, and thy reason will no longer refuse submission to the mysteries it commands thee to believe. A future state will cease to appear incredible to thee from the moment thou ceasest to live like those who centre all their happiness in the fleeting moments of this life. Then, far from dreading a futurity, thy wishes will anticipate it. Thou wilt figh for the arrival of that happy day, when the Son of Man, the Father of all future ages, shall come to punish the unbelieving, and to conduct thee to his kingdom, along with those who have lived on the earth, in the expectation and hope of a blessed immortality.

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

ON DEATH.

LUKE vii. 12.

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

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

To similar examples, we every day bring the same dispositions. The feelings which an unexpected death awakens in our hearts, are the feelings of a day, as though death itself ought to be the concern of a day. We exhaust ourselves in vain reflections on the inconstancy of human things; but the object which struck us, once out of sight, the heart become tranquil, finds itself the same. Our projects, our cares, our attachments to the world, are not less lively, than if we were labouring for eternal ages; and at our departure from a melancholy spectacle, where we have sometimes seen birth, youth, titles, and fame, wither

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in a moment, and for ever buried in the grave, we return to the world more occupied with, and more eager than ever, after all those vain objects, of which we so lately had seen with our eyes, and almost felt with our hands, the insignificancy and meanness.

Let us at present examine the reasons of so deplorable a mistake. Whence comes it, that men reflect so little upon death; and that the thoughts of it make such transitory impressions? It is this: The uncertainty of death amuses us, and removes from our mind its remembrance: The certainty of death appals, and forces us to turn our eyes from the gloomy picture: The uncertainty of it, lulls and encourages us; whatever is awful and certain, with regard to it, makes us dread the thoughts of it. Now, I wish at present to combat the dangerous security of the first, and the improper dread of the others. Death is uncertain: You are therefore imprudent not to be occupied with the thoughts of it, but to allow it to surprise you: Death is certain: You then are foolish to dread the thoughts of it, and it ought never to be out of your sight: Think upon death, because you know not the hour it will arrive: Think upon death, because it must arrive. This is the subject of the present discourse.
PART I.—The first step which man makes in life, is likewise the first towards the grave: From the moment his eyes open to the light, the sentence of death is pronounced against him; and, as though it were a crime to live, it is sufficient that he lives, to make him deserving of death. That was not our first destiny: The Author of our being had at first animated our clay with a breath of immortality: He had placed in us a seed of life, which the revolution of neither years nor time could have weakened or extinguished: His work was so perfect, that it might have defied the duration of ages, while nothing external could have dissolved, or even injured its harmony. Sin alone withered this divine seed, overturned this blessed order, and armed all created beings against man: And Adam became mortal, from the moment he became a sinner: "By sin," said the Apostle, "did death enter into the world."

From our birth, therefore, we all bear it within us. It appears, that, in our mother's womb, we have sucked in a slow poison, with which we come into the world; which makes us languish on this earth, some a longer, others a more limited period, but which always terminates in death: We die every day; every moment deprives us of a portion of life, and advances us a step towards the grave: The body pines, health decays, and every thing which surrounds, affists to
to destroy us; food corrupts, medicines weaken us; the spiritual fire, which internally animates, consumes us; and our whole life is only a long and painful sickness. Now, in this situation, what image ought to be so familiar to man as death? A criminal, condemned to die, whichever way he casts his eyes, what can he see but this melancholy object? And does the longer or shorter period we have to live make a sufficient difference, to entitle us to think ourselves immortal on this earth?

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

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

Ah, my brethren! were the hour unalterably marked for each of us; were the kingdom of God, like the stars, to come at a known and fixed revolution; at our birth, were our portions written on our foreheads; the number of our years, and the fatal day which shall terminate them; that fixed and certain object, however distant, would incessantly employ our thoughts, would agitate, and deprive us of every tranquil moment; we would always regard the interval before us as too short; that object, in spite of us, always present to our mind, would disgust us with every thing; would render every pleasure insipid, fortune indifferent, and the whole world tiresome and a burden: That terrible moment, which we would no more lose sight of, would repress our passions, extinguish our animosities, disarm revenge, calm the revolts of the flesh, and mingle itself in all our schemes; and our life, thus limited to a certain number of days, fixed and known, would be only a preparation for
for that last moment. Are we in our senses, my brethren? Death seen at a distance, at a sure and fixed point, would fill us with dread, detach us from the world and ourselves, call us to God, and incessantly occupy our thoughts; and this same death, uncertain, which may happen every day, every instant; this same death, which must surprise us when we least expect it; which is perhaps at the gate, engages not our attention, and leaves us tranquil: What do I say! leaves us all our passions, our criminal attachments, our ardour for the world, pleasures, and fortune; and because it is not certain that we shall die today, we live as if we were to live for ever.

Observe, my brethren, that this uncertainty is in effect accompanied with all the circumstances most capable of alarming, or at least of engaging the attention of a prudent man, who makes any use of his reason. In the first place, the surprise of that last day you have to dread, is not one of those rare and singular accidents, which befall only some unfortunate wretches, and which it is more prudent to disregard than to foresee. In order to be surprised by death, the question at present is not, that the thunder should fall upon your heads, that you should be buried under the ruins of your palaces, that you should be swallowed up by the waves, nor many other accidents, whose singularity renders them more terrible, though less dreaded; it is
a common evil; not a day passes, without furnishing some examples; almost all men are surprised by death; all see it approach, while they believe it yet at a distance; all say to themselves, like the foolish man in the gospel, "Why should " I be afraid; I have many years yet to come?"

In this manner have you seen depart, your relations, friends, and almost all those whose death you have witnessed; every instance surprised you; you expected it not so soon; and you endeavour to account for it by human reasons; such as the imprudence of the patient, or the want of proper advice and medicines; but the only and true reason is, that the hour of the Lord always takes us by surprise.

The earth is like a vast field of battle, where we are every day engaged with the enemy; you have happily escaped to-day; but you have witnessed the fall of many, who, like you, expected to survive; to-morrow you again must enter the lists; and who has told you that fortune, so capricious with regard to others, to you alone will continue favourable? And since you at last must perish there, are you prudent in building a fixed and permanent habitation, on the very spot, perhaps, intended for your tomb? Place yourselves in any possible situation, there is not a moment but may be your last, and has actually been so to some of your brethren; no brilliant action, but may terminate in the eternal
nal shades of the grave; and Herod is struck in the midst of the servile and foolish applause of his people: No day set apart for the solemn display of worldly magnificence, but may conclude with your funeral pomp; and Jezebel was precipitated the very day she had chosen to show herself in her greatest pride and ostentation, from the windows of her palace: No festival, but may be the feast of death; and Balthazar expired in the midst of a sumptuous banquet: No repose, but may conduct you to an everlasting sleep: and Holofernes, in the heart of his army, and conqueror of so many kingdoms and provinces, fell under the stroke of a simple Jewish woman: No disease, but may be the fatal term of your course; and every day you see the slightest complaints deceive the opinions of the most skilful, and the expectations of the patient, and almost in an instant take the turn of death: In a word, figure yourselves in any possible stage or station of life, and with difficulty can you number those who have been surpised in a similar situation; and what right have you to expect, that you alone shall be exempted from a lot common to all? You allow, you confess this: but these confessions are merely words of course, and are never followed by a single precaution, to secure you from the danger.

2dly, Did this uncertainty turn only on the hour, the place, or the manner of your death, it would
would appear less shocking: for, after all, says a Holy Father, what matters it to a Christian, whether he shall expire in the midst of his connections, or in the country of strangers; in the bed of sorrow, or the abyss of the waves; provided he dies in piety and righteousness? But what renders this terrible, is, the uncertainty, whether you shall die in the Lord, or in sin; that you shall know not what will be your lot in that other region, where conditions change no more; into whose hands, at its departure from the body, your soul trembling, a stranger and alone, shall fall: whether it shall be surrounded with light, and carried to the foot of the throne on the wings of blessed and happy spirits, or enveloped in darkness, and cast headlong into the gulf: You hang betwixt these two eternities: You know not to which you shall be attached: Death alone will disclose the secret; and in this uncertainty, you remain tranquil, and indolently wait its approach, as though it were a matter of no importance to you, nor to determine your eternal happiness or misery? Ah! my brethren, were it even true, that all ends with us, the impious man would still be foolish in saying, "Let us think not on death; let us eat "and drink, for to-morrow we die:" The more he found life agreeable, the more reason would he have to be afraid of death, which to him, would however be only a cessation of existence. But
But we, to whom faith opens prospects of punishment, or eternal rewards, beyond the grave; we who must reach the gates of death, still uncertain of this dreadful alternative, is there not a folly, What do I say? a madness (not to be sure in professing the sentiments of the impious, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"); in living as though we thought like him! Is it possible we can remain a single instant unoccupied with that decisive moment, and without allaying, by the precautions of faith, that trouble and dread into which this uncertainty must cast a soul, who has not yet renounced his eternal hopes?

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

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

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

Once more, then, Upon what do you found your hopes? On the strength of your constitution?
tion? But what is the best established health? A spark which a breath shall extinguish: A single day's sickness is sufficient to lay low the most robust. I examine not after this, whether you do not even flatter yourselves on this point: If a body, exhausted by the irregularities of youth, do not announce to your own minds the sentence of death; if habitual infirmities do not lay open before you the gates of the grave; if disagreeable indications do not menace you with some sudden accident. I wish you to lengthen out your days even beyond your hopes. Alas! my brethren, can any period appear long which must at last come to an end? Look back, and see where now are your youthful years? What trace of solid joy do they leave in your remembrance? Not more than a vision of the night; you dream that you have lived, and behold all that is left to you of it: All that interval, elapsed from your birth to the present day, is like a rapid flash, whose passage the eye, far from dwelling on, can with difficulty see: Had you begun to live, even with the world itself, the past would now appear to you neither longer nor more real; all the ages, elapsed down to the present day, you would look upon as fugitive instants; all the nations which have appeared and disappeared on the earth; all the revolutions of empires and kingdoms; all those grand events which embellish our histories, to you would be only the different scenes of a

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threw, which you had seen concluded in a day. Recollect the victories, the captured cities, the glorious treaties, the magnificence, the splendid events of the first years of this reign; most of you have not only witnessed, but have shared in their danger and glory; our annals will convey them down to our latest posterity; but to you, they are already but a dream; but a momentary flash which is extinguished, and which every day effaces more and more from your remembrance. What, then, is this small portion you have still to accomplish? Can you believe that the days to come have more reality than those already past? Years appear long, while yet at a distance; arrived, they vanish, they slip from us in an instant; and scarcely shall we have looked around us, when, as if by enchantment, we shall find ourselves at the fatal term, which still appeared so distant, that we rashly concluded it would never arrive. View the world, such as you have seen it in your youthful days, and such as you now see it: New personages have mounted the stage; the grand parts are filled by new actors; they are new events, new intrigues, new passions, new heroes in virtue as well as in vice, which engage the praises, derisions, and censures of the public; a new world, without your having perceived it, has insensibly risen on the wrecks of the first; every thing passes with and like you; a velocity which nothing can stop, drags
ON DEATH.

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drags all into the gulf of eternity: Yesterday our ancestors cleared the way for us; and to-morrow, we shall do the same for those who are to follow. Ages succeed each other; the appearance of the world incessantly changes; the dead and the living continually replace and succeed each other: Nothing stands still; all changes, all wastes away, all has an end: God alone remaineth always the same: The torrent of ages, which sweeps away all men, flows before his eyes; and, with indignation, he sees weak mortals carried down by that rapid course, insult him while passing; wish, of that transitory instant, to constitute all their happiness; and at their departure from it, fall into the hands of his vengeance and wrath. Where, says the Apostle, amongst us, are now the wise? And a man, were he even capable of governing the world, can he merit that name from the moment that he forgets what he is, and what he must be?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For, in the first place, I grant, that you have reason to dread that last hour; but, as it is certain, I cannot conceive why the terrors of it should prevent your mind from dwelling upon,
and endeavouring to anticipate its evils: on the contrary, it seems to me, that in proportion as the danger is great to which you are exposed, you ought more constantly to keep it in view, and to use every precaution, that it may not take you unawares. What! The more the danger alarms you, the more it should render you indolent and careless! The excessive and improper terrors of your imagination should cure you, even of that prudent dread, which operates your salvation; and because you dread too much, you should abandon every thought of it! But, where is the man, whom a too lively sense of danger renders calm and intrepid? Were it necessary to march through a narrow and steep defile, surrounded on all sides by precipices, would you order your eyes to be bound, that you might not see your danger, and left the depth of the gulf below should turn your head? Ah! my dear hearer, you see the grave open before you, and that spectacle alarms you; but, in place of taking all the precautions, offered to you by religion, to prevent you falling headlong into the gulf, you cover your eyes, that you may not see it: You fly to dissipation, to chase its idea from your mind; and like those unfortunate victims of paganism, you run to the stake, your eyes covered, crowned with flowers, and surrounded by dancing and songs of joy, that you may not have leisure to reflect on the fatal term,
to which this pomp conducts, and least you should see the altar, that is to say, the bed of death, where you are immediately to be sacrificed.

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

But, when that thought should even disquiet, and fill you with impressions of dread and sorrow, where would be the disappointment? Are you,
you, upon the earth, to live only in an indolent case, and solely engrossed by agreeable and smiling objects? We should lose our reason, say you, were we to devote our attention to this dismal spectacle, without the relaxation of pleasures. We should lose our reason! But so many faithful souls, who in all their actions mingle that thought; who make the remembrance of that last hour the check to curb their passions, and the most powerful inducement to fidelity; so many illustrious penitents, who have buried themselves alive in their tombs, that they might never lose sight of that object; the holy, who every day suffered death, like the Apostle, that they might live for ever, have they, in consequence of it, lost their reason? You should lose your reason! That is to say, you would regard the world as an exilement; pleasures as an intoxication; sin as the greatest of evils; places, honours, favour, and fortune, as dreams; and salvation as the grand and only object worthy of attention: Is that to lose our reason? Blessed folly! And would that you, from this moment, were amongst the number of these foolish sages. You would lose your reason! Yes, that false, worldly, proud, carnal, and mistaken reason, which seduces you; that corrupted reason, which obscures faith, authorises the passions, makes us prefer the present moment to eternity; takes the shadow for the substance, and leads all men astray:
aftray: Yes, that deplorable reason, that vain philosophy, which looks upon as a weakness the dread of a future state, and because it dreads it too much, seems, in appearance, or endeavours to force itself, not to believe it at all. But that prudent, enlightened, moderate, and Christian reason, that wisdom of the serpent, so recommended in the gospel, it is in that remembrance that you would find it: That wisdom, says the Holy Spirit, preferable to all the treasures and honours of the earth; that wisdom so honourable to man, and which exalts him so much above himself; that wisdom which has formed so many Christian heroes, it is the image always present of your last hour, which will embellish your soul with it. But that thought, you add, should we take it into our head to enter deeply into, and to dwell continually upon it, would be fit to make us renounce all, and to form the most violent and overstrained resolutions; that is to say, would detach you from the world, your vices, passions, the infamy of your excesses, and make you lead a chaste, regular, and Christian life, alone worthy of reason: These are what the world calls violent and overstrained resolutions. But likewise, under pretence of shunning pretended excesses, would you refuse to adopt the most necessary resolutions? Make a beginning at any rate; the first transports soon begin to abate; and it is much more easy to moderate the excesses
cesses of piety, than to animate its coldness and indolence. Dread nothing from the excessive fervour and transports of your zeal; you can never, in that respect, go too far. An indolent and sensual heart, such as your's, nursed in pleasures and effeminacy, and void of all taste for whatever pertains to the service of God, does not promise any very great indiscretions in the steps of a Christian life. You know not yourselves; you have never experienced what obstacles all your inclinations will cast in the way of your simplest exertions in piety. Take measures only against coldness and discouragement, which are the only rock you have to dread. What blindness! In the fear of doing too much for God, we do nothing at all; the dread of bestowing too much attention on our salvation, prevents us from labouring towards it; and we lose ourselves for ever, left we should too surely attain salvation: We dread chimerical excesses of piety, and we are not afraid of a departure from, and an actual contempt of piety itself. Does the fear of doing too much for fortune and rank, check your exertions, or cool the ardour of your ambition? Is it not that very hope which supports and animates them? Nothing is too much for the world, but all is excess for God: We fear, and we reproach ourselves, left we never do enough for an earthly establishment; and we
check ourselves, in the dread of doing too much for an eternal fortune.

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

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

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

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

Besides, death is the only object he looks forward to; it is the only consolation which supports the fidelity of the just. Do they bend under afflictions? They know that their end is near; that the short and fleeting tribulations of this life shall soon be followed by a load of eternal glory; and in that thought they find an inexhaustible source of patience, fortitude and joy. Do they feel the law of the members warring against the law of the spirit, and exciting commotions, which bring innocence to the very brink of the precipice? They are not ignorant, that after
after the dissolution of the earthly frame, it shall be restored to them pure and celestial; and that delivered from these bonds of misery, they shall then resemble the heavenly spirits; and that remembrance soothes and strengthens them. Do they groan under the weight of the yoke of Jesus Christ; and their faith, more weak, is it on the point of relaxing and sinking under the rigid duties of the gospel? Ah! the day of the Lord is nigh; they almost touch the blessed recompense; and the end of their course, which they already see, animates, and gives them fresh vigor. Hear in what manner the Apostle consoled the first Christians: My brethren, said he to them, time is short, the day approaches, the Lord is at the gate, and he will not delay; rejoice then; I again say to you, rejoice. Such was the only consolation of men, persecuted, insulted, prescribed, trampled upon, regarded as the scum of the earth, the disgrace of the Jews, and the scoff of the Gentiles. They knew that death would soon dry up their tears; that for them, there would then be neither mourning, sorrow, nor sufferance; that all would be changed; and that thought softened every pain: Ah! whosoever had told these generous justifiers of faith, that the Lord would never make them know death, but would leave them to dwell forever on the earth, would have shaken their
their faith, tempted their constancy, and, by robbing them of that hope, would have deprived them of every consolation.

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

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

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

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

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

Rev. xiv. 13.

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.

THERE is something peculiarly striking and incomprehensible in the human passions. All men wish to live; they look upon death as the most dreadful of all evils; all their passions attach them to life; yet nevertheless those very passions incessantly urge them towards that death, for which they feel such horror; nay, it should even seem, that their only purpose in life is to accelerate the moment of death.
All men flatter themselves, that they shall die the death of the righteous: They wish it; they expect it. Knowing the impossibility of remaining for ever upon this earth, they trust, that before the arrival of their last moment, the passions which at present pollute, and hold them in captivity, shall be completely overcome. They figure to themselves, as horrible, the lot of a sinner, who expires in his iniquity, and under the wrath of God, yet nevertheless they tranquilly prepare for themselves the same destiny. This dreadful period of human life, which is death in sin, strikes and appals them; yet, like fools, they blindly and merrily pursue the road which leads to it. In vain do we announce to them, that in general men die as they have lived: They wish to live the life of a sinner, yet nevertheless to die the death of the righteous.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now, my brethren, form to yourselves a destiny on this earth, agreeable to your own wishes: Lengthen out, in your own minds, your days to a term beyond your most fanguine hopes. I even wish you to indulge in the enjoyment of so pleasing an illusion: But at last, you must follow
low the track which your forefathers have trod: You will at last see that day arrive, to which no other shall succeed; and that day will be the day of your eternity: Happy, if you die in the Lord: Miserable, if you depart in sin. One of these lots awaits you: In the final decision upon all men, there will be only two sides, the right and the left; two divisions, the goats and the sheep. Allow me then to recall you to the bed of death, and to expose to your view the double spectacle of this last hour, so terrible to the sinner, and so consolatory to the righteous man.

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

For what can the past offer to a sinner, who, extended upon the bed of death, begins now to yield up dependence upon life, and reads, in the countenances of those around him, the dreadful intelligence, that all is over with him? What now does he see in that long course of days, which he has run through upon the earth? Alas! he sees only vain cares and anxieties; pleasures which passed away before they could be enjoyed, and iniquities which must endure for ever.

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

Alas! it is then that the sinner, overwhelmed, terrified at his own blindness and mistake, no longer finding, but an empty space in a life which the world had alone engrossed; perceiving, that, after a long succession of years upon the earth, he has not yet begun to live; leaving history, perhaps, full of his actions, the public monuments loaded with the transactions of his life, the world filled with his name, and nothing, alas! which deserves to be written in the book of eternity, or which may follow him into the presence of God: Then it is, though too late, that he begins to hold a language to himself, which we have frequent opportunities of hearing: "I have lived, then, only for vanity? Why have I not served my God, as I have served my masters? Alas! Were so many anxieties, and so much trouble, necessary to accomplish my own destruction? Why, at least, did I not receive my consolation in this world? I should have enjoyed the present, that fleeting moment which passes away from me; and I should not then have lost all. But my life has been always filled with anxieties, subjec-
tions, fatigues, and restraints; and all these in
order to prepare for me everlasting misery.
What madness, to have suffered more towards
my own ruin, than was required to have ac-
complished my salvation; and to have regard-
ed the life of the upright, as a melancholy and
an unsupportable one; seeing they have done
nothing so difficult for God, that I have not
performed an hundred-fold for the world,
which is nothing, and from which I have con-
sequently nothing to expect.”

Yes, my brethren, it is in that last moment
that your whole life will present itself to your
view; but in very different colours from those
in which it appears to you to-day. At present
you count upon services performed for the state;
places which you have filled; actions in which
you have distinguished yourselves; wounds,
which still bear testimony to your valour; the
number of your campaigns; the splendour of
your orders; all these appear objects of impor-
tance and reality to you. The public applau-
ses which accompany them; the rewards with
which they are followed; the fame which pub-
lishes them; the distinctions attached to them;
all these only recall your past days to you, as days
full, occupied, marked each by some memorable
action, and by events worthy of being for ever
preserved to posterity. You even distinguish
yourselves, in your own minds, from those ino-
dent
lent characters of your own rank, who have led an obscure, idle, and useless life, and dishonoured their names, by that slothful effeminacy, which has kept them always grovelling in the dust. But on the bed of death, in that last moment, when the world flies off, and eternity approaches, your eyes will be opened; the scene will be changed; the illusion, which at present magnifies these objects, will be dissipated. You will see things as they really are; and that which formerly appeared so grand, so illustrious, as it was done only for the sake of the world, of glory, of fortune, will no longer appear of the least importance to you.

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

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

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

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

Behold what the expiring sinner experiences in the remembrance of the past: Crimes, which shall endure for ever; the weakness of childhood; the dissipations of youth; the passions and the disorders of a more advanced period; what do I know, perhaps even the shameful excesses of a licentious old age. Ah! my brethren, whilst in health, we perceive only the surface of our conscience: We recall only a vague and confused remembrance of our life: We see only the passions which actually enchain us; a complete life, spent in the habits of iniquity, appears to us only a single crime. But on the bed of death, the darkness spread over the conscience of the sinner is dissipated. The more he searches into his heart, the more does he discover new stains; the deeper he enters into that abyss, the more do new monsters of horror present themselves to his sight. He is lost in the chaos, and knows not how to proceed. To enlighten it, an entire new
life would be necessary: Alas! and time flies; scarcely do a few moments now remain to him, and he must precipitate a confession, for which the greatest leisure would hardly suffice, and which can precede but an instant the awful judgment of the justice of God. Alas! we often complain, during life, of a treacherous memory; that we forget every thing; that the minister of God is under the necessity of remedying our inattention, and of assisting us to know and to judge of ourselves. But in that last moment, the expiring sinner shall require no assistance to recall the remembrance of his crimes: The justice of God, which had delivered him up, during health, to all the profundity of his darkness, will then enlighten him in his wrath.

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

Thus, the recollection of the past forms one of the most dreadful situations of the expiring sinner; because in it he finds nothing but labours lost; pleasures, which have been dissipated the moment almost of their existence; and crimes which shall endure for ever.

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

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

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

His surprises. — He is on the brink of the gulf, and the Almighty willeth that no one shall dare to inform him of his situation. His relations flatter him; his friends leave him undeceived: They already lament him, in secret, as dead, yet they continue to speak of his recovery; they deceive him, in order that he may deceive himself. The Scriptures must be fulfilled: The sinner must be taken by surprise in this last moment: Thou hast said it, O my God! and thy words are the words of truth.

His surprises. — Abandoned by all the succours of art, delivered up alone to anguish and disease, he still cannot persuade himself that death is near: He flatters himself — he still hopes: The justice of God, it would seem, leaves him a remnant of reason, for the sole purpose of seducing himself. From his terrors, his astonishment, his inquietudes, we see clearly that he still comprehends not the necessity of death. He torments, he agitates himself, as if by these means he could escape death; but his agitations are only occasioned by regret for the loss of life, and are not the effects of grief, for having wickedly spent it. The blinded sinner must be so to the end; and his death must be similar to his life.
In a word, his surprizes.—He sees now that the world has all along deceived him; that it has continually led him from illusion to illusion, and from hope to hope; that things have never taken place exactly as he had promised himself; and that he has always been the dupe of his own errors. He cannot comprehend how his blindness could possibly be so constant; that for such a series of years he could obstinately continue to make such sacrifices for a world, for masters, whose only payment has been vain promises; and that his entire life has been one continued indifference on the part of the world to him, and an intoxication on his to the world. But what overpowers him is, the impossibility of remedying the mistake; that he can die only once; and that after having badly run his race, he can no more recall the past, or, by retracing his steps, undertake a new trial. Thou art just, O my God! and thou willest that the sinner should in advance pronounce against himself, in order that he may afterwards be judged from his own mouth.

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

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

Separation from the magnificence which surrounds him: From his proud edifices, in whose stately walls he once fondly believed he had erected an asylum against death: From the vanity and luxury of his furniture, of all which no portion shall now remain to him, but the mournful cloth, which is to encircle him in the tomb: From that air of opulence, in the midst of which he had always lived. All escape from him; all abandon him; and he begins to look upon himself as a stranger in the midst of his palaces; where indeed he ought always to have considered himself as such; as an unknown, who no longer possesses any thing there; as an unfortunate wretch, whom they are on the point of stripping before his eyes, and whom they only allow
allow to gratify his sight with the spoils for a little while, in order to augment his regret, and his punishment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—Job xix. 17.

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

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

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

Then, the expiring sinner, no longer finding in the remembrance of the past, but regrets which overwhelm him: In all which takes place around him, but images which afflict him: In the thoughts of futurity, but horrors which appal him: No longer knowing to whom to have recourse; neither to created beings, who now leave him; nor to the world, which vanishes; nor to men, who cannot save him from death; nor to the Just God, whom he looks upon as a declared enemy, and from whom he has no indulgence to expect; a thousand horrors occupy his thoughts;
he torments, he agitates himself, in order to fly from death which grasps him, or at least to fly from himself: From his expiring eyes, issue something, I know not what of, dark and gloomy, which expresses the fury of his soul; in his anguish, he utters words interrupted by sobs, which are unintelligible, and to which they know not whether repentance or despair gives birth. He is seized with convulsions, which they are ignorant whether to ascribe to the actual dissolution of his body, or to the soul which feels the approach of its Judge: He deeply sighs; and they know not whether the remembrance of his past crimes, or the despair at quitting life, forces from him such groans of anguish. At last, in the midst of these melancholy exertions, his eyes fix, his features change, his countenance becomes disfigured, his livid lips convulsively separate; his whole frame quivers; and, by this last effort, his unfortunate soul tears itself reluctantly from that body of clay, falls into the hands of its God, and finds itself alone at the foot of the awful tribunal.

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

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

PART II.—I know, that even to the most upright souls, there is always something terrible in death. The judgments of God, whose profound secrecy they dread; the darknesses of their own conscience, in which they continually figure to themselves hidden stains, known to the Almighty alone; the liveliness of their faith, and of their love, which in their own sight magnifies their smallest faults; in a word, the dissolution itself of their earthly frame, and the natural horror we feel for the grave: All these occasions of death, to be attended by a natural sensation of dread and repugnance, in so much, that as St Paul says, the most upright themselves, who anxiously long to be clothed with that immortality promised to them, would yet willingly attain it, without being divested of the mortality which encompasses them.

It is not less true, however, that in them, grace rises superior to that horror at death, which springs from Nature; and in that moment, whether they recall the past, consider the present, or look
look forward to the future, they find, in the re-
membrance of the past, the end of their trou-
bles; in the consideration of the present, a no-
velty, which moves them with a holy joy; in 
their views towards the future, the certainty of 
an eternity, which fills them with rapture; in 
so much, that the same situations, which are the 
occasion of despair to the dying sinner, become 
then an abundant source of consolation to the 
faithful soul.

I say, whether they recall the past: And here, 
my brethren, figure to yourselves a righteous 
character on the bed of death, who has long, by 
the practice of Christian works, prepared him-
sell for this last moment; has amassed a treasure 
of righteousness, that he may not appear empty-
handed in the presence of his Judge; and has 
lived in faith, that he may die in peace, and 
in all the consolations of hope: Figure to your-
selves this soul, reaching at last that final hour, 
of which he had never lost sight, and with which 
he had always connected all the troubles, all the 
wants, all the self-denials, all the events of his 
mortal life. I say that nothing is more soothing to him, than the remembrance of the past; 
of his sufferings, of his mortifications, of all the 
trials which he has undergone.

Yes, my brethren, it appears frightful to you 
at present to suffer for God. The smallest exer-
tions upon yourselves required by religion, seem
to overpower you; you consider as unhappy those who bear the yoke of Jesus Christ, and who, to please him, renounce the world, and all its charms. But on the bed of death, the most soothing reflection to a faithful soul, is the remembrance of what he has suffered for his God. He then comprehends all the merit of penitence, and how absurd men are, to dispute with God, a moment of constraint, which will be entitled to the recompense of a felicity without end, and without measure. For then, his consolation is, that he has sacrificed only the gratifications of a moment, of which there would only remain to him now, the confusion and the shame; that whatever he might have suffered for the world, would in this moment be lost to him; on the contrary, that the smallest suffering for God, a tear, a mortification, a vain pleasure sacrificed, an improper desire repressed, will never be forgotten, but shall last as long as God himself. What consoles him is, that of all the human luxuries and enjoyments, alas! on the bed of death there remain no more to the sinner who has always indulged in them, than to the righteous man who has always abstained from them: that they are equally past to them both; but that the one shall bear eternally the guilt of having delivered himself up to them, and the other the glory of having known how to vanquish them.
This is what the past offers to a faithful soul; on the bed of death. Sufferings, afflictions, which have endured but a little while, and which are now to be eternally rewarded: The time of dangers and temptations past; the attacks made by the world upon his faith at last terminated; the trials in which his innocence had run so many risks, at last disappeared; the occasions in which his virtue had so nearly been shipwrecked, at last for ever removed; the continual combats which he had to sustain against his passions, at last ended; and every obstacle which flesh and blood had always placed in the way of his piety, for ever annihilated. How sweet it is, when safely arrived in port, to recall the remembrance of past dangers and tempests! When victorious in the race, how pleasing to retrace, in imagination, our exertions, and to review those parts of the course most distinguished by the toils, the obstacles, and the difficulties which have rendered them celebrated.

The righteous man then appears to me like another Moses, expiring on the holy mountain, where the Lord had marked out to him his grave: “Get thee up into the mountain Abarim, and die,” &c. Deut. xxxii. 49.; who before he expired, looking down from that sacred place, and casting his eyes over that extent of country, the nations and kingdoms he had traversed, and now leaves behind him, reviews, in imagination, the
the numberless dangers he had escaped; his battles with so many conquered nations; the fatigues of the desert; the snares of Midian; the murmurs and calumnies of his brethren; the rocks split in pieces; the dangers of Egypt avoided; the waters of the Red Sea got over; hunger, thirst, and weariness struggled against; and touching at last the happy term of so many labours, and viewing from afar that country promised to his fathers, he sings a song of thanksgiving and praise to God; dies transported with joy, both at the remembrance of so many dangers avoided, and at the prospect of that place of rest, which the Lord shews him from afar; and looks upon the holy mountain, where he is to expire, as the reward of his toils, and the happy term of his course.

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

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

"Awake, righteous soul," says then to him in secret, his Lord and his God; "Thou who hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, thou shalt no more drink it again; the days of thy tribulation are past. Shake thyself from the dust, arise, and sit down; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion: Put on thy strength, put on thy beautiful garments: Enter into the everlasting joy of thy Lord, where thou shalt obtain gladness and peace, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away." Isaiah li. 17. &c.
First consolation of the upright soul in the bed of death; the remembrance of the past.—But all which takes place around him; the world which flies from him; all created beings which disappear; all that phantom of vanity which vanishes; this change, this novelty, is the source still of a thousand consolations to him.

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

Nothing surprises him.—The hour of the Lord surprises him not; he expected, he longed for it. The thought of this last moment accompanied all his actions, entered into all his projects, regulated all his desires, and animated his whole conduct through life. Every hour, every moment, seemed to him the one which the upright Judge had appointed for that dreadful reckoning, where righteousness itself shall be judged. Thus had he lived, incessantly preparing his soul for that last hour. Thus he expires, tranquil, consoled, without surprise or dread, in the peace of his Lord; death never approaching nearer to him than he had always beheld it; and experiencing no difference betwixt the day of his death, and the ordinary ones of his life.

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

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

How sweet then, to a faithful soul, to say to himself, I have made the happiest choice; how fortunate for me, that I attached myself only to God, since he alone will endure to me for ever! My choice was regarded as a folly; the world laughed it to scorn, and found me whimsical and singular in not conforming myself to its ways; but now this last moment verifies all. It is death that decides on which side are the wise or the foolish, and which of the two has judged aright, the worldly or the faithful.
Thus does the upright soul, on the bed of death, view the world and all its glory. When the ministers of the church come to converse with him of God, and the nothingness of all human things, these holy truths, so new to the sinner in that last moment, are subjects familiar to him, objects of which he had never lost sight: These consolatory truths are then his sweetest occupation; he meditates upon, he enjoys them, he draws them from the bottom of his heart, where they had always been cherished, to place them full in his view, and he contemplates them with joy. The minister of Jesus Christ speaks no new or foreign language to him; it is the language of his heart; they are the sentiments of his whole life. Nothing soothes him so much then, as to hear that God spoken of, whom he had always loved; those eternal riches, which he had always coveted; that happiness of another life, for which he had always sighed; and the nothingness of that world, which he had always despised. All other subjects of conversation become insipid to him; he can listen only to the mercies of the God of his fathers, and he regrets the moments as lost, which must necessarily be devoted to the regulation of an earthly mansion, and the succession of his ancestors. Great God! What knowledge! What peace! What delicious transports! What holy emotions of love, of joy, of confidence,
dence, of thanksgiving, then fill the soul of this righteous character! His faith is renewed; his love is invigorated; his fervour is excited; his compunction is awakened. The nearer the dissolution of the earthly man approaches, the more is the new man completed and perfected! The more his mansion of clay crumbles, the more is his soul purified and exalted: In proportion as the body falls into ruin, the spirit is disengaged and renewed; like a pure and brilliant flame, which ascends and shines forth with additional splendour, in proportion as it disengages itself from the remains of matter which held it down, and as the substance to which it was attached is consumed and dissipated.

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

But let us not lose sight of the faithful soul; Not only he sees nothing on the bed of death which surprises him, but he is likewise separated from nothing which he laments or regrets. For what can death separate him from, to occasion either regret or tears? From the world? Alas! from a world, in which he had always lived as an exile; in which he had found only shameful excesses, which grieved his faith; rocks, at which his innocence trembled; attentions, which were troublesome to him; subjections, which, in spite of himself, still divided him between heaven and the earth: We feel little regret for the loss of what we have never loved. From his riches and wealth? Alas! his treasure was in heaven: His riches had been the riches of the poor: He loses them not;
he only goes to regain them for ever, in the bosom of God. From his titles and his dignities? Alas! it is a yoke from which he is delivered: The only title dear to him, was the one he had received in baptism, which he now bears to the presence of God, and which constitutes his claim to the eternal promises. From his relations and friends? Alas! he knows that he only precedes them by a moment; that death cannot separate those whom charity had joined upon the earth; and that, soon united together in the bosom of God, they shall again form the same church, and the same people, and shall enjoy the delights of an immortal society. From his children? He leaves to them the Lord as a father; his example and his instructions as an inheritance; his good wishes and his blessing as a final consolation: And, like David, he expires in entreating for his son Solomon, not temporal prosperity, but a perfect heart, love of the law, and the fear of the God of his fathers. From his body? Alas! from that body which he had always chastised, crucified; which he considered as his enemy; which kept him still dependent upon the senses and the flesh; which overwhelmed him under the weight of so many humiliating wants; from that house of clay, which confined him prisoner; which prolonged the days of his banishment and his slavery, and retarded his union with Jesus Christ: Ah! like St
St Paul, he earnestly wishes its dissolution: It is an irksome clothing, from which he is delivered; it is a wall of separation from his God, which is destroyed; and which now leaves him free, and qualified to take his flight towards the eternal mountains. Thus death separates him from nothing, because faith had already separated him from all.

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

How grand, my brethren, does faith render the righteous on the bed of death! How worthy of God, of angels, and of men, is the fight of the upright soul in that last moment! It is then that the faithful heart appears master of the world, and of all the created; it is then, that participating already in the greatness and the immutability of the God to whom he is on the eve of being united, he is elevated above all; in the world, without any connection with it; in a mortal body, without being chained to it; in the midst of his relations and friends, without seeing or knowing them; in the midst of the embarrassments and changes which his death opens to his sight, without the smallest interruption to his tranquillity: He is already fixed in the bosom of God, in the midst of the destruction of all things. Once more, my brethren, how grand it is to have lived in the observance of the law of the Lord, and to die in his fear! With what dignity does not faith then display itself in the righteous soul? It is the moment of his glory and triumph; it is the centre at which the whole luster of his life and of his virtues unite.

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

And behold, my brethren, what completely fills with joy and consolation the faithful soul on the bed of death: It is the thought of futurity. The sinner, during health, looks forward to a future state with a tranquil eye; but in this last moment, beholding its approach, his tranquillity is changed into shudderings and terror. The upright man, on the contrary, during the days of his mortal life, durst never regard, with a fixed eye, the depth and the extent of God's judgments: He wrought out his salvation with fear and trembling; he shuddered at the very thought of that dreadful futurity, where even the just, if judged without mercy, shall hardly be saved: But, on the bed of death, ah! The God of Peace, who displays himself to to him, calms his agitations; his fears immediately cease, and are changed into a sweet hope. He already pierces, with expiring eyes, through that cloud of mortality which still surrounds him, and sees the throne of glory, and the Son of Man at his Father's right hand, ready to receive him; that immortal country, for which he had longed so much, and upon which his mind had always dwelt; that Holy Zion, which the God
God of his fathers filleth with his glory and his presence; where he overfloweth the elect with a torrent of delights, and maketh them for ever to enjoy the incomprehensible riches which he hath prepared for those who love him; that city of the people of God, the residence of the saints, the habitation of the just, and of the Prophets, where he shall again find his brethren, with whom charity had united him on the earth, and with whom he will bless eternally the tender mercies of the Lord, and join with them in hallelujahs to his praise.

Ah! when also the ministers of the church come to announce to this soul, that the hour is come, and that eternity approaches; when they come to tell him, in the name of the Church, which sends them: "Depart, Christian soul: "Quit at last that earth, where you have so long been a stranger and a captive: The time of trial and tribulation is over: Behold, at last, the upright Judge, who comes to strike off the chains of your mortality: Return to the bosom of God, from whence you came: "Quit now a world, which was unworthy of you: The Almighty hath at last been touched with your tears: He at last openeth to you the "gate of eternity, the gate of the upright: "Depart, Faithful soul; Go, and unite thyself to the Heavenly Church, which expects thee: Only remember your brethren, whom you
you leave upon the earth, still exposed to temptations and to storms: Be touched with the melancholy state of the Church, here below, which has given you birth in Jesus Christ, and which envies your departure: Entreat the end of her captivity, and her reunion with her spouse, from whom she is still separated. Those who sleep in the Lord, perish not for ever: We only quit you on the earth, in order to regain you in a little time with Jesus Christ, in the kingdom of the Holy: The body, which you are on the point of leaving a prey to worms and to putrefaction, shall soon follow you, immortal and glorious. Not a hair of your head shall perish. There shall remain in your ashes, a seed of immortality, even to the day of revelation, when your parched bones shall be vivified, and again appear more resplendent than light: What happiness for you, to be at last quit of all the miseries which still afflict us; to be no longer exposed, like your brethren, to lose that God, whom you go to enjoy; to shut your eyes, at last, on all the scandals which grieve us; on that vanity, which seduces us; on those examples, which lead us astray; on those attachments, which engross us; and on those troubles, which consume us! What happiness, to quit at last a place, where every thing tires, and every thing suffices us; where we are a burden to ourselves,
ourselves, and where we only exist, in order to be unhappy; and to go to a residence of peace, of joy, of quiet, where our only occupation will be to enjoy the God whom we love!"

What blessed tidings, then, of joy and immortality, to this righteous soul! What blessed arrangement! With what peace, what confidence, what thanksgivings, does he not accept it! He raises, like old Simeon, his dying eyes to heaven; and viewing the Lord, who cometh inwardly, says to him, “Break, O my God, when thou pleast, these remains of mortality; these feeble ties, which still keep me here: I wait, in peace and in hope, the effects of thine eternal promises.” Thus, purified by the expiation of an holy and Christian life, fortified by the last remedies of the Church, washed in the blood of the Lamb, supported by the hope of the promises, and ripe for eternity, he shuts his eyes with an holy joy on all sublunary creatures: He tranquilly goes to sleep in the Lord, and returns to the bosom of that God from whence he came.

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

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

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