

# THE SERAPH

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# The Trap of Superstition

Bishop Giles, OFM

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The difference between superstition and true faith are sometimes blurred by the world in which we live. In the social media of today, we find many types of “chain” prayers that promise success or blessings when they are participated in. While it is well and good to promote approved devotions and practices, there appears to be more superstition than faith in many of these.

Superstition is attributing divine powers to specific objects or actions. Seeking the advice of a “fortune teller” or consulting “horoscopes” are both examples of superstition. Only God knows the future and can tell us the future. The position of the stars and planets in the sky, have no control over our actions here on earth (unless we give them that power). Clicking “like” or “share” or responding with “amen” on social media, likewise has no power to bring us wealth, success, or blessings.

Superstition is against the first Commandment and is an act of idolatry. Adam and Eve believed that in eating the forbidden fruit they would receive knowledge and become like God. The fruit

did not have such a power. They did come to know evil, which they had never known before, but they lost much more in the good which they soon lost. There was not any power in the fruit to do this; these consequences came about because of the sin. In putting their faith in the fruit, they gave to the fruit the honor of power that only belongs to God. This is idolatry.

Moral Theology instructs us that there are two forms of idolatry. We may commit idolatry by worshiping a creature; or by worshiping God with a false worship. Examples of false worship are worshiping God with the rites of the Old Testament, or adding unapproved or unbecoming prayers, ceremonies, or actions to the true acts of worship.

When the performance of a particular thing is promised to give us: blessings, fortunes, or success we need to be very cautious – even if these things are prayers or devotions that have been approved by the Church. The praying of the Rosary is good and obtains for us many blessings – not because we hold blessed rosary beads, or because

we said all the prayers well – but, rather, because we have begged these graces of God through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We may petition God for blessings, fortunes, or success, but we must understand that it is God that gives these and not the beads, or the prayers. It is also good to remember that these petitions may also be refused by God. They are not guaranteed to anyone. God owes us nothing, we deserve nothing, and we cannot merit anything. True and humble prayer often obtains God’s mercy and grace for us – but this is from the pure benevolence of God – not any merit of our own.

There are some forces of nature that have certain attributes that God has connected to them. We may look at the sky and consult the position of the sun to determine the time of day. This in no way implies that the sun makes time. We may examine the phases of the moon in a similar fashion – and this does not imply that the moon has divine powers. Science suggest to us that the gravitational and magnetic influences of the moon impart certain reactions upon the earth (for example tides, waves, weather). It is not considered superstition to study the phases of the moon so that we may understand the cycles

of the life around us and use this information to better our lives. It is God who has done these things, not the sun or the moon. The sun and the moon are merely instruments or tools that are made to accomplish God’s Will.

The use of the divining rod to locate underground streams of water, or minerals also has some scientific merit to it. There is known to be certain magnetic variations in the earth caused by these types of streams that can be detected with various instruments – one of them being the divining rod. It is not the rod that has any power and so we must not attribute any such power to it. The ability of certain people to detect these variations in nature is from God and not from the stick or even from devils. Magnetism is not visible to the eye, but it is a creation of God and is constantly affecting us. We may measure and manipulate it within the limits set by God, as with any other creature, but we must not attribute any divine power to it.

In dealing with humans and the human psychology, we introduce a spiritual element. This is a little more complicated than the purely material things like the sun, the moon, gravity, or magnetism; however, the soul is still a creation of God

and we must not attribute divine power to the soul. Lucifer, who is pure spirit, made this mistake of attributing divinity to himself because of the powers that he found that God had placed in him. Humans are also subject to this temptation because we too have a spiritual aspect about us in our souls.

With the power of our minds or souls, we can manipulate and control many things – both physical and spiritual. There are many truly psychic phenomena that we are capable of. However, we must remember that this is a power instilled in us by God, and that we are not gods simply because we can do this or that. Lie detection tests have real bases in science. There is nothing mystical or supernatural in this. In a similar manner, hypnotism has a scientific basis; and is a tool that God has given us. We must avoid giving any divine authority or power to these creations of God.

Moral theology states: “Hypnotism is not a sin against the worship due to God as long as it is not associated with superstitious intentions or a pantheistic philosophy of life. Hypnotism is often forbidden by reason of its being dangerous to health and morals. Hence, for the lawfulness of hypnotic practices,

these conditions must be verified: a serious reason must be had (e.g. to cure certain ills); other unobjectionable means must not be available; furthermore, a thoroughly skilled and morally reliable hypnotist must conduct the hypnotizing; if possible it ought to be done in the presence of witnesses, and, finally, none of the participants may have superstitious intentions. The same principles apply to the modern practice of narcotherapy. Patients with the use of reason must first give consent to such treatment.” (Narcotherapy is psychotherapy conducted while the patient is under the influence of a sedative or narcotic drug.)

Even though many causes are beyond our normal perception range this does not necessarily make them supernatural or even divine. We must never attribute divine power to these effects or to the agents that assist in bringing about these effects. Sadly, even many true miracles of God’s grace become temptations to idolatry for us. It is too easy for our fallen nature to worship the being by whom God works miracles, rather than give the honor and glory to God. Thus, we find the saints by whom God worked miracles, humbly protested against any honor for themselves.

## **Correction**

In the January issue of THE SERAPH on page 13 we printed: "In the New Testament, we have been given the command not to eat flesh meat on Fridays." We intended to say: "From the days of the New Testament (Apostolic Times), we have been given the command not to eat flesh meat on Fridays." There is no direct command in the New Testament Scriptures forbidding the eating of meat on Fridays – this is of Apostolic origin.

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# The Family in 2017

Fr. Joseph Noonan, OFM

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## Part II

### The Failure of the U. S. Bishops

It can clearly be shown that Catholic laity is very much in need of proper moral guidance from their bishops. This has always been the situation, but in the last 100 years, it has especially been the case. Recent moral issues which were either not in existence in the distant past, or not questioned by the average Catholic until, the 20<sup>th</sup> century when they became a growing dilemma in the Church. These issues have had a direct and profound effect upon the family.

In Part I of this article, it was explained how the enemies of the Church planned the moral destruction which has been witnessed. Part II will provide examples of the failure of the U. S. Catholic bishops.

Popes Pius XI and XII condemned birth control / contraception in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Looking back, it seems as though these measures were effective at the time, but eventually were ignored by a growing number of clergy.

Popes Pius XI in his encyclical *Casti Connubi* (On Christian Marriage),

Dec. 31, 1930, twice condemned birth control:

54. *But no reason, however grave, may be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good. Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.* (Emphasis ours)

56. *Since, therefore, openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition some recently have judged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine regarding this question, the Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the defense of the integrity and purity of morals, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her; in order that she may preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through Our mouth proclaims anew: any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that **the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to***

*generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin.* (Emphasis ours.)

Pope Pius XII further confirmed the condemnation of birth control when he addressed the participants at the Congress of the Italian Catholic Union of Midwives on October 29, 1951.

The address confirmed all aspects of Catholic doctrine on human life - and the firm lessons taught by his predecessor in *Casti Connubii*. What makes this allocution particularly noteworthy is the following passage:

*The matrimonial contract, which confers on the married couple the right to satisfy the inclination of nature, constitutes them in a state of life, namely, the matrimonial state. Now, on married couples, who make use of the specific act of their state, nature and the Creator impose the function of providing for the preservation of mankind. This is the characteristic service which gives rise to the peculiar value of their state. The individual and society, the people and the State, the Church itself, depend for their existence, in the order established by God, on fruitful marriages. Therefore, to embrace the matrimonial state, to use continually the faculty proper*

*to such a state and lawful only therein, and, at the same time, to avoid its primary duty without a grave reason, would be a sin against the very nature of married life.*

When looking at the combination of the Modernists working underground and Americanism prevailing among most clergy in the United States, it helps us to understand, in hindsight, that it was only be a matter of time before the moral battle was compromised. You will usually find when a person's faith is weak or compromised, their morality is similarly compromised.

It would seem as though it did not take long for the compromising to begin. It is known now that Catholic couples began to use contraception in the 1960's. Once again a member of the hierarchy is referenced, but this time it is to illustrate a tragic downfall.

The following excerpt is taken from an article written by Seth Meehan, *Catholic and Contraception: Boston, 1965* on March 15, 2012:

*In 1948, Cushing, then an archbishop, led a public charge against Referendum No. 4, a statewide ballot measure designed to relax the ban on contraception. From the pulpit and on the radio, the Catholic campaign argued that*



birth control was “still against God’s law.” Cushing defined contraception at the time as “anti-social and anti-patriotic, as well as absolutely immoral.” The campaign was a bitter one. In the end, 57 percent of voters rejected the referendum.

The cardinal had won but it was at a “great price.” Non-Catholics in and outside of the state were offended.

It was not until the 1960s that another attempt was made to amend the state’s birth control restrictions. This time it was clear that Cardinal Cushing had changed his mind on the appropriateness of laws like the state’s birth control restrictions, which sought to impose moral behavior at odds with individual conscience. More generally, he had adopted a conciliatory tone. Two days before a fellow Massachusetts Catholic won the first primary of the 1960 presidential campaign, Cushing argued that a Christian must engage in “friendly discussion with those whose views of life and its meaning are different than his own.”

In 1963, while a guest on WEEI radio, Cushing took a question from an unidentified female caller who asked if he considered the birth control ban to be “bad law.” “Yes,” Cushing replied, “I have no

right to impose my thinking, which is rooted in religious thought, on those who do not think as I do.” (The anonymous caller, discovered decades later, was Hazel Sagoff, executive director of Planned Parenthood of Massachusetts. A month earlier, she had learned from a Cushing confidant that support for the state’s ban was dwindling within the local church hierarchy.) It was the first time that the cardinal publicly announced a willingness to accept revisions to the state’s contraception law.

Poor health prevented Cardinal Cushing from appearing before the legislative panel considering the Dukakis bill in March 1965, (that would greatly compromise the ban) but he dominated the hearing nonetheless. In a written statement, he declared that “Catholics do not need the support of civil law to be faithful to their own religious convictions and they do not seek to impose by law their moral views on others of society.” He found it unreasonable to “forbid in civil law a practice that can be considered a matter of private morality.” “What’s more,” he observed, “laws needed a ‘reasonable correspondence’ to community standards to be effective and enforceable.” Cushing, however, could not endorse the proposed change to the ban because he felt that it lacked “proper safeguards” for the young. He requested

that Gov. John Volpe appoint a commission to craft a repeal to “satisfy the conscientious opinions of the whole community.” A bill was signed into law in 1966.

Cardinal Cushing apparently did not object to the laws against contraception and birth control for Catholics, but would no longer support civil laws for all citizens. This public compromise would serve to undermine Church Law as well.

By the mid-1960’s, the moral floodgate had been opened and an increasing number of Catholic couples were using birth control. “Paul VI’s” *Humanae Vitae* was not enough to stop the moral collapse.

Since then, birth control, although it is still against Church Law, has continued to increase among Catholics. An article written within the past five years has estimated that 90% of Catholics have used or are still using artificial birth control.

The damage done to the family and married life from contraception can hardly be calculated. The end of marriage is to have children. If there are no children or fewer than what God Wills for a family, the marriage will not be a happy one. Sin and the resulting frustration will divide the family. The only

proper way for a Catholic couple to conduct themselves in a Catholic marriage is to be willing to have as many children as God Wills for them. It might be two children, or it might be ten.

The legalization of abortion took place because of the acceptance of contraception. If contraception had been rejected, *Roe v. Wade* would not have happened. Furthermore, if the bishops had risen up together and preached against abortion from coast to coast prior to the Supreme Court decision, it is this writer’s opinion, *Roe v. Wade* would not have become the law of the land. Sixty million lives to date (2016) would have been saved.

It is clear the bishops in this country did not do all they could to stop the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion. May one conclude from the information above about Cardinal Cushing that the American bishops were continuing to compromise in this all-important question of morality? Many of the bishops held powerful political positions as bishops, archbishops and cardinals. Were they not willing to use their political influence to stop this case from being heard, or in some way to morally influence a different outcome?

What is known, about those years and the men who held a

considerable power and influence in the U. S. hierarchy is: the late Fr. Joseph Bernadine was making his presence felt. It was he who would become well-known for his “seamless garment theory.” For those not acquainted with this theological and moral nonsense, he considered all issues to be of equal value.

Imagine trying to explain to your eighth grade religion class that abortion is no more important than immigration; or the so-called same-sex marriage issue has the same value as the minimum-wage issue. Fr. Bernadine apparently was quite adept at passing off this immoral non-common sense to his fellow bishops. He was clearly the most influential clergymen in the U. S. in the last-half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are, at least, a few Modernists clergymen who continue to promote this seamless garment silliness in 2016, twenty years after Fr. Joseph Bernadine’s death. Now you know why the bishops conference spends so much time with secondary “social justice” issues such as the minimum-wage or immigration.

A second question must be asked here: how many of these bishops actually believe abortion is morally justified? It has been learned over the years that more of them accept it than you would expect. Then again, ALL of them should stand

strong against the slaughter of the unborn. This, though, is not the case.

How many of the laity have been wrongly guided in the confessional about whether to have an abortion in the same way the laity were told contraception was acceptable? Some Modernist clergy are so clueless (faithless) on one hand and brazen on another that they are willing to admit their immoral treason from the pulpit and believe all is well!

A third question must now be asked: how many of these clergy are homosexual, and because of this moral degradation openly accept “a woman’s right to choose?” If a person is willing to live an unnatural sinful life, it is highly unlikely he will take the correct position on the most significant moral issue of our time-abortion. It is estimated by Modernists statistics that about one-half of the U. S. Catholic clergy are homosexual. How would anyone expect these sodomistic men to make the right decision?

There is yet another point which must be considered here because it has involved so many Catholic families in the past 40 years, i.e., sex education, especially in the Catholic classroom.

I clearly recall reading of many

complaints of Catholic parents in 1980's and 1990's. The material that was used, and may still be used in certain dioceses, was claimed to be more explicit than that used in the public school system. We are reminded of the warning and admonition of Pope Pius XI of the dangers of so-called sex education in his Encyclical on Christian Education.

*65. Another very grave danger is that naturalism which nowadays invades the field of education in that most delicate matter of purity of morals. Far too common is the error of those who with dangerous assurance and under an ugly term propagate a so-called sex-education, falsely imagining they can forearm youths against the dangers of sensuality by means purely natural, such as a foolhardy initiation and precautionary instruction for all indiscriminately, even in public; and, worse still, by exposing them at an early age to the occasions, in order to accustom them, so it is argued, and as it were to harden them against such dangers.*

*66. Such persons grievously err in refusing to recognize the inborn weakness of human nature, and the law of which the Apostle speaks, fighting against the law of the mind; and also in ignoring the experience of facts, from which it is clear that, particularly in young*

*people, evil practices are the effect not so much of ignorance of intellect as of weakness of a will exposed to dangerous occasions, and unsupported by the means of grace.*

*67. In this extremely delicate matter, if, all things considered, some private instruction is found necessary and opportune, from those who hold from God the commission to teach and who have the grace of state, every precaution must be taken. ...*

This pope and Pope Pius XII explained further:

Here is a statement issued by the Holy Office on March 31, 1931:

*QUESTION: May the method called 'sex education' or even 'sex initiation' be approved?*

*ANSWER: No. In the education of youth the method to be followed is that hitherto observed by the Church and the Saints as recommended by His Holiness the Pope in the encyclical dealing with the Christian education of youth promulgated on December 31, 1929. The first place is to be given to the full, sound and continuous instruction in religion of both sexes. Esteem, desire and love of the angelic virtue must be instilled into their minds and hearts. They must be made fully*

*alive to the necessity of constant prayer; and assiduous frequenting of the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist; they must be directed to foster a filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin as Mother of holy purity, to whose protection they must entirely commit themselves. Precautions must be taken to see that they avoid dangerous reading, indecent shows, conversations of the wicked, and all other occasions of sin.*

*Hence no approbation whatever can be given to the advocacy of the new method even as taken up recently by some Catholic authors and set before the public in printed publications. [Decree of the Holy Office, dated March 21, 1931]*

Another Pope, Pius XII in 1951, speaks on this same issue. On September 18, in a solemn address delivered to French fathers of families, His Holiness said:

*Even the principles so wisely illustrated by Our Predecessor Pius XI, in the Encyclical Divini Illius Magistri, on sex-education and questions connected thereto are set aside — a sad sign of the times! — with a smile of compassion: “Pius XI”, they say, “wrote twenty years ago for his times! Great progress has been made since then!”*

In contrast to these wise cautions, Jorge Bergoglio (a.k.a. “Pope

Francis”) sanctioned a video this past summer (2016) at “World Youth Day” openly advocating sex education for the youth in the presence of the youth! Quite a “papal” admonition to virtue!

The result of this clerical treachery is the Catholic Family in 2016 is in moral shambles. There are exceptions, but generally the parents do not know their faith well enough (or care enough) to teach it to their children. It truly is the blind leading the blind! The clergy rarely preach modesty, chastity or purity from the pulpit or in the classroom. The children are plunged into a faithless and immoral world of immodesty and worldliness. Promiscuity is applauded; homosexuality is now a simple choice of lifestyle; and transgenderism is a personal preference; and all of this can now occur before the child reaches puberty! Aren’t we supposed to be teaching our children the way to Heaven?

The serious Catholic Family is left to find their way on their own, with little or no clerical help. We end up where we began - the laity have rarely been able to overcome the obstacles of the world, Satan, and Fallen Nature on their own. Why do you suppose Our Lord provided us with the Mass and Sacraments?

To be Continued

# The “Sabbatine Privileges”

Bishop Giles, OFM

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There are many superstitious beliefs and practices in the world around us today and sadly there appear to be some that even well-intentioned Catholics fall into. It sometimes seems that Catholics attribute superstitious powers to statues, rosaries, and blessed objects. These objects and many others like them are sacramentals and their use is not only permitted, but encouraged by the Church. What the Church does not promote or accept is the belief or the practice of attributing divine power to these things.

A saint Christopher medal in our car does nothing of itself to protect us in our journeys. It is not the medal that has any power or influence, but rather Saint Christopher, himself, that has power or influence; but even this is not his, but it is God’s power and influence acting through him; and from him through the blessed medal to us. St. Christopher intercedes on our behalf to God because we have invoked him – not because his image is kept and forgotten on the sun visor in our automobile.

The same is to be said with the other sacramentals and devotions

to other saints. There are some, that it would make no difference if they carried a pocket full of rocks in their pockets or a blessed rosary. It makes no difference, simply because they do not pray the rosary or invoke the Blessed Mother, or even think about Her or God. Yet, they carry this sacramental with them in the hope that it will be a protection for them. This is superstition and is not pleasing to God or the Blessed Mother. It is an insult and abuse.

All the pious books and pamphlets promoting devotion to the Rosary are often taken out of context or to extremes. Even the phrase “devotion to the rosary” is a misnomer. It is devotion to the Blessed Mother through the use of the rosary. Our devotion to the Blessed Mother is not worship, but it is seeking her intercession on our behalf before God. We honor her, and are devoted to her, *but we worship only God.*

Many Catholics (especially “Traditionalists”) promote what have become known as the “Sabbatine Privileges.” This devotion was begun by the Carmelites and the following is the story told of its origin:

*The Blessed Virgin appeared at Cambridge to Simon Stock, general of the Carmelite order, when it was in great trouble. She gave him a scapular which she bore in her hand, in order that by it, "the holy [Carmelite] order might be known and protected from the evils which assailed it," and added, "this will be the privilege for you and for all Carmelites; no one dying in this scapular will suffer eternal burning." Another marvel is related by John XXII in the famous Sabbatine bull. The Blessed Virgin, he says, appeared to him, and speaking of the Carmelites and those associated to them by wearing the scapular, promised that, if any of them went to Purgatory, she herself would descend and free them on the Saturday following their death. "This holy indulgence," says the Pope, "I accept, corroborate, and confirm as, Jesus Christ for the merits of the glorious Virgin Mary granted it in heaven." To gain this privilege it is necessary to observe fidelity in marriage or chastity in the single state. Those who read must recite the office of the Blessed Virgin, unless already bound to the Divine Office, those who cannot, must abstain from flesh meat on Wednesdays and Saturdays, unless Christmas falls on one*

*of these days. So the Sabbatine bull, as given in the Carmelite "Bullarium."*

History is unable to verify the authenticity of these statements. Original documents apparently do not exist, and there are many internal suggestions that the bull of John XXII is "a clumsy forgery, and that of Alexander V another forgery made to cover the former." (Launoy in the second volume of his collected works 1731). However, there is no doubt that the scapular of the Carmelites is a sacramental. Bossuet says: "The scapular is no useless badge. You wear it as a visible token that you own yourselves Mary's children, and She will be your Mother indeed if you live in Our Lord Jesus Christ." (*Sermon pour le Jour du Scapulaire*, vol xi. P. 369 in the last edition of Bossuet)

What is objectionable is the belief that having two pieces of cloth bound with cords and suspended over the shoulders is sufficient to open the gates of heaven for us. Even the alleged papal documents mentioned above do not suggest this. The alleged documents tell us that we must live chastely in our station of life, we must pray the office, abstain on Wednesdays and Fridays, etc. We often see

written very boldly on brown scapulars of the Carmelites the words: “Whosoever dies wearing this scapular will not suffer the fires of Hell,” or words to this effect. The literal interpretation of this is superstitious. It is attributing to this cloth the power to save us from Hell. Only God can save us from Hell. The simple wearing of this cloth is not enough. What is implied in these promises, is that if we die as faithful Carmelites or children of Mary, we will be saved from Hell. There is no doubt that faithful Carmelites (including all those enrolled in the scapular of the Carmelite Order) who live up to the life that is dictated by the Carmelite Order will never suffer the fires of Hell. It is not the cloth that does this; it is the faithfulness of their life to God, Mary, and their rule. The cloth is merely a symbol of the promises made and the life being led.

It is similar to saying that all those who keep the commandments of God will never suffer the fires of Hell. All the religious orders, approved by the Holy Ghost through the Church, can say the same thing. If you are faithful and true to the vocation you have been called to, you will never suffer the fires of Hell. It is not the wearing of the habit, or the scapular that saves

or protects, it is faithfulness to the life professed. The clothing does not make the saint – it is the saint that wears the clothing. The habit and the scapular of all the various religious orders is an outward sign of the profession to a particular life. The symbol does not make the life – but, merely gives testimony of the life.

We need to be careful that we do not allow ourselves to fall into superstitions – especially with the blessed sacramentals. These are given to us as supports and aids, but if we do not use them correctly, they easily become talismans or occasions for the practice of superstition. These symbols of our faith are aids and reminders to us of the life that we are to live, and are meant to direct our thoughts to God through the saints. God and the saints speak to us through them, and often our consciences are struck when in a quiet moment we reflect on the disparity between the sins we have committed and the life that these sacramentals give testimony to. In this, we are blessed with having and using the sacramentals – in hoping for them to produce miracles of themselves, we become guilty of idolatry.



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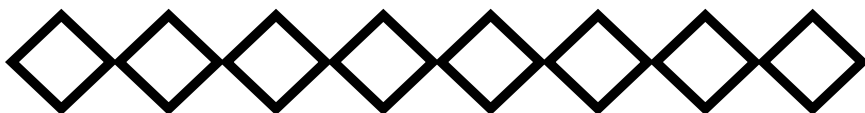
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# A Chance to Live

Monsignor John P. Carroll-Abbing

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## II

### FLASHBACK

“The fathers and mothers of the war, killed and wounded and maimed have handed on a sacred trust to protect the orphans and the homeless. . . .” V.M.C.

I had had my first awakening to the Great War 1940. I often went to the railroad station in Rome to bid farewell to the students who were leaving to join their families in the countries of their origin before Italy’s entry into the great conflict.

Uniforms, uniforms everywhere and people with vacant looks in their eyes. A mother’s tears and the sad songs of the Alpine troops, their knapsacks stuffed with socks and scarves knit by loving hands, with biscuits, with sweets. Self-control here, despair a few steps away. A guard who with infinite patience answers the questions three blond gray-eyed giants from Venetia put to him. A tall man, a straight martial figure embracing his young son, white, tearless. “Do your duty, son,” I heard him say. And finally a captain calling his men to order.

The train is ready, the doors click closed, a more noticeable blowing of noses, a murmur of voices rising gradually and becoming almost a roar in the final farewell. Two sharp blasts of a trumpet and the train rushes off, taking with it the dreams of a father, the hopes of a mother, the youth of men who may return ... some of them ... with wrinkles on their faces, wrinkles in their hearts.

Across the passageway on another track, a second train slowly fills up with young college boys, they, also, caught in the mighty avalanche that is sweeping them from Rome toward an unknown destination.

The two iron monsters gave me a sad forecast of the coming struggle, of the abandonment of all that is dear and precious to the human heart, of fond studies delayed, of family ties broken. Thoughts welled up in my heart, which later matured in prayer and led me toward my future work.

From that day I knew in the innermost recesses of my heart that war had struck.

War. It was among us, in our cities, in the sparsely scattered, humble cottages of the mountains and hillsides, in the wide stretches of the sea, in the clear blue of the skies, in dark clouds, on high, white, piercing peaks. It was in the words we exchanged with one another, in our actions. We found it in the Roman square where a huge black mass of silent, closely packed humanity heard the declaration of war on June 10, 1940.

The rumors that had assailed the city in the painful waiting and steeled souls to meet the inevitable had quieted down, but for a short time only, as if everyone was too stunned with grief even to think. Then life and death reigned again, but in their worst aspects.

I continued to work in the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities where I had originally been appointed. My work tended to increase rather than diminish. I felt, like everyone else, the preoccupations, the anxieties, the difficulties the war was fostering.

However, in those long months, Rome still seemed an oasis of peace. Returning home at night, walking along the Lungotevere Boulevard, under the great,

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shadowy, century-old trees, the setting sun slowly moving toward the majestic cupola of St. Peter's as it sank to its rest, listening to the intermittent ringing of hundreds of church bells, I was at peace although a vague feeling of oppression sought to dim the incomparable vision of beauty I beheld.

Amid the chaos of war news that soon flooded the capital, I began to feel useless. Millions of men were dying, suffering, and I, we who lived "ad latere," on the side lines as it were, had no opportunity of alleviating their tortures, of coming to their aid, unless we did it with our prayers. But, was that enough?

Thus, when in January of 1941, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, following its ancient tradition in the founding of hospitals, opened its first home in Rome and I was asked to become part of it as voluntary chaplain, I welcomed the opportunity offered me of serving my fellow man.

A few months later, the Order of Malta had to its credit a great number of other hospitals in Italy and throughout the world. Its trains, its first-aid stations were ready and waiting. Yet it is with a sense of humble pride that I say

that our hospital, situated in the heart of medieval and baroque Rome, in the venerable English College of Via Monserrato, was second to none in the splendid work it carried on.

The four years within its walls were perhaps the happiest of my life. This may sound paradoxical, but it is true, for they were years in which, though witnessing the most frightful scenes, the most heart-rending tortures, I also beheld the spirit of man, luminous with faith and fortified by grace, rising triumphant over the weaknesses of the flesh. They were years I lived in direct contact with torn, bleeding humanity, when I experienced the full joy of being able to console, to be the instrument, humble and unworthy though it was, of an ever-loving, ever-merciful Father.

The Epiphany of 1941 was a real feast day for me, for on that day I was granted the privilege of assisting at the bedsides of men, sick, wounded, alone, and helpless, comforting them, lifting their hopes. From that day, a foggy gray day, I could not help noticing how in those long, white, silent wards, there was none of that typical coldness so often found in similar places.

In general, invalids lose part of their identity in a hospital ward and are identified only by a clinical card, a diagram, a number over their beds. Here in Monserrato there was an aura of family life, as it were, that broke the monotony of our duties and made us all brothers — doctors, nurses, sisters, patients, helpers — linking us into a better understanding of what human brotherhood should be when a common grief or a simple joy is shared. Everyone was animated by the same spirit of charity, all without exception showed how such a spirit never fails to work miracles.

The doctors, all close friends of mine, were as fathers and brothers to the men to whom they gave, not only medicine for their broken bodies, but encouragement for their shattered souls. The nurses of the Order of Malta, all volunteers and most of them belonging to some of the oldest families of Italy, had adapted themselves to their arduous task with an ease that showed the serene and joyous spirit within. They had no thought of spending their days in the social halls of the capital between a cocktail party and a game of bridge. They moved silently from cot to cot, real angels of mercy and love.

The patients themselves, even from the first days of their stay, felt this atmosphere of peace, of friendship and easy comradeship, and thrived under it. There were some, of course, who, embittered by their painful experiences, shied away from any attention. They were the ones who nurtured within their souls too deep a resentment against the fate that had deprived them of their youth, lost somewhere on the barren wastes of a battlefield, or on the craggy peaks of an Alpine pass. As a rule, however, the warmth that surrounded them did not fail, before too long, to conquer even these. At times they were almost gay.

The wounded came from Albania, where the battles had been fought amid the most cruel privations and sudden, unexplained orders. Caught in the piercing cold of the bleakest regions, utterly unprepared and poorly clad, they were brought in suffering from frostbite and gangrene.

On his return from an operating room, a crippled lad opened weary eyes and spoke in a halting, intense voice.

“... we crawled on that night across a field ... over barbed wire

... under our clutching fingers, the face of a dead man fell apart. We went on ... in our minds thoughts of home ... wives, mothers, sons. ... We barely saw the sergeant as he beckoned an order to us in the dark. The profile of an enemy sentinel stood out against the sky. ... On and on still ... a hand grenade and another and another burst into flame and lit up the whole place ... explosions, shouts, mortars rumbled. I felt a prickling in my leg ... it was like a hundred needles. ... I flattened out behind a friendly rock ... lucky for me it was there. ... The fire kept on ... lessened ... then stopped. I dug my nails into the rocky soil. ... If only I could have disappeared into the ground ... away from it all ... rotting bodies ... no longer to smell ... no longer to feel the helmet of a dead buddy digging into my belly. ... Dawn broke ... I started to crawl again ... blood, dead eyes, bodies ... more bodies ... the stench of bodies falling apart ... the piercing needles were gone ... the med at last. ... I passed out. ... I woke up here. ... I asked questions ... well, Father, here I am, but no leg ...”

We had one hundred and fifty major amputation cases and most of them had received first-aid only upon reaching the hospital.

Albania stuck in their minds as their most bitter hour.

Even in Rome that year the winter was severe. We had little coal and the windows were kept closed. This intensified the suffocating foulness of the gangrenous flesh. From early morning till far into the night the doctors operated silently, efficiently, the only sounds the muffled roll of the stretcher wheels, the labored breathing of the patients, the steady puffing of the anesthetic bag. I often asked myself if this could possibly be a hospital in the center of Rome. Was it not rather a field tent in some lost land?

The work went on incessantly. The doctors looked more dead than alive.

“I can’t take this much longer, Father. I feel like a butcher. ...”

It was a weariness of the spirit rather than of the body. They were sick of it all, sick with the horror that never ended, that kept on and on under their red-rimmed eyes, their dripping fingers.

Those men became as my own sons to me. Each one of them, even the most mature, was in need of affection, of someone upon whom he could lean for strength,

in whom he could confide, and I felt I wanted to be near them if they should ever ask for me. I had a deep admiration for them, they were so patient and so brave in spite of their terrible fate. One thing touched me particularly. Never a word of hate for the enemy, only a sadness, a feeling of utter helplessness face to face with the proof of the futility of war.

Some revealed their characters between a joke and a sigh. They opened hearts and minds to me and I was grateful, as grateful as were the hospital wards when the warmth of the spring sunshine finally invaded them and the sun broke through the gray.

In one room lay two men from Naples, one a young boy about twenty, tall, thin, his oval face still smooth. He was innately good, but a typical *scugnizzo* (Neopolitan street boy), who had not lost the sly, mordant wit of his kind. Coupled with his evident candor, this made him appear at times slightly unbalanced. He was suffering from a strange ailment which the doctors had been unable to diagnose. One foot was slowly decaying. His name was *Ciro*. The other was much older, stockier. A thick black mustache

and beard almost covered the lower part of his face. He was a non-commissioned officer and fairly well educated. We listened to him as he lectured *Ciro* with a ceremonious air that irritated his younger companion.

“That’s no way to act ... why don’t you do this? Why don’t you say that? You keep this up, son, and you’ll end up bad. ...”

“*Ciro*, what were you before the war?” I asked one day. “A rascal.”

“And your father?”

“A rascal.”

He might or might not have been telling the truth. As he spoke, his eyes had the badgering look of the *scugnizzo*. I felt he was poking fun at me.

In the succeeding days I stopped often at their bedside. They both asked me to be present at the operating table. “You’ll bring us luck, Father,” urged *Ciro*.

Several days later another patient made the same request and then another and another. Soon it became a habit. I spent four or five hours a day in the operating room. Sometimes, at the end of a particularly long session, my

head reeled from the ether fumes as I emerged from the room.

I could not stay away. These boys wanted me. Far from their homes and their dear ones, they needed the words of a priest, a joke, a tear, a laugh, a prayer, someone with whom they could share their buried thoughts, a brother to whom they could turn, one who had no professional orders to obey, no scalpel in hand, no saws, no shears. Above all, one who could take the words of Christ and through them give suffering and pain their spiritual value.

They clung to my hand as they fell asleep under the anesthetic.

“Father ...” as they awoke.

“Steady, son, life is still good. ...”

“But, Father, my right arm is gone. How will I be able to work?”

The table again, the knife, more blood, more bandages. Will this ever stop? Will this slaughter go on forever?

The hearth, the center of the world for these boys was always in their minds. They told me of their parents, their wives, their children, their simple joys at

the village fair. They were naïve lads, with a naïve outlook upon life that was often disconcerting. Deep in their hearts and in their souls I found so much real goodness.

I recall one young fellow who proudly handed me a new book, straight out of a nearby store where one of the hospital aides had bought it for him.

“Father, will you find a good letter for me in there? I have to write to my *inamorata*.”

I looked at the book. *One Hundred Letters of Love*, I read.

The doctors enjoyed discussing their operations with me and the problems that confronted them. They seemed glad to find a priest with a technical interest in the daily routine. I was not for them just another colleague, whose cases were fixed within fixed and rigid lines. In my presence the outlines of small things faded into the whole and the operating table was forgotten. They often grumbled when patients refused to be operated on unless I was present, but at night as we paced up and down the long corridors we chatted and found time and energy for a laugh and a joke.

Along toward midnight I usually wandered around alone. Before entering a room, I would stand at the door listening. I often heard a patient battling aloud with future problems.

“Father, it’s hard to sleep,” they said to me.

We chatted. Words were hard to say. Their hearts were so filled with bitter thoughts, but their spirits won in the end. It was hard to smile, but they did.

One task stood out as one of the most difficult I had to face. Many refused to write and tell their fathers or mothers of their real condition. It was often my job to meet them and tell them of the loss of arms or legs when they came to visit their sons.

Such were perhaps the saddest moments of the long sad days.

A wife and her children came to see the husband and father. He was the cheerful one.

“What are *you* complaining about? Won’t I be home soon? Won’t everything be all right then? Minus a leg? With a good wooden one, I’ll be as good as new. ... do twice as much as before. ... I’m alive, eh? What more do you want?”



And strong women came who on hearing bad news gave their sons the smiles they had been waiting to see.

“Nothing matters now ... you are with us again ... that’s enough ... they can’t take you away now ... we’ll get along. ...”

The home. They focused their eyes upon it, near or far. All they asked for was to return there. They showed me photographs of their small cottages, their children ... they never stopped talking about them.

“He has black hair, Father, and the littlest, littlest nose,” Battista said to me each time I caught him studying the picture of his small son. “How he must have grown!”

The reunion was not to take place. One morning I received a telegram. The little fellow had died, from hunger probably. No one was willing to break the news to Battista. I had to go to him.

The room was bright with sunshine, the spring sunshine that in March pours so warmly over Rome. Battista was reading a newspaper. I sat down beside him and laid my hand on his shoulder. That was all. He

knew. A sixth sense must have prompted the questions he put to me.

“Bad news, Father? Something happen to him? What is it?”

“Yes ...”

He knew somehow. And we said nothing more. He grasped my hand, held on to it as sobs rocked his big frame.

“Why? Why?”

The sun shone on. One beam was reflected from the water in the bottle on the table near his cot. The Christ from the cross hanging above him seemed to cast a look of infinite pity upon the bowed head. ...

*(To be continued)*



## *Sister Agnes' Favorites*

### *The Beautiful Hands of a Priest*

We need them in life's early morning,  
we need them again at its close;  
We feel their warm clasp of friendship,  
we seek them when tasting life's woes.  
At the altar each day we behold them,  
and the hands of a king on his throne  
Are not equal to them in their  
greatness; their dignity stands all alone;  
And when we are tempted and wander  
to pathways of shame and sin,  
It's the hand of a priest that will absolve  
us - not once, but again and again;  
And when we are taking life's partner,  
other hands may prepare us a feast,  
But the hand that will bless and unite  
us is the beautiful hand of a priest.  
God bless them and keep them all holy  
For the Host which their fingers caress;  
When can a poor sinner do better than  
to ask Him to guide thee and bless?  
When the hour of death comes upon us  
may our courage and strength be increased.  
By seeing raised over us in anointing the  
beautiful hands of a priest!

*Author Unknown*



# Franciscan Saints

FEBRUARY 24

THE SERVANT OF GOD  
JACOBA OF SETTESOLI  
*Widow, Third Order*

Jacoba was a young noblewoman of Rome. After her husband died she remained a widow and reared her two sons in virtue and in the fear of the Lord. When she learned of the holy and penitential life of St. Francis, she desired to make his acquaintance and to seek his advice in the spiritual difficulties she encountered.

The desire was gratified when St. Francis came to Rome to obtain from the pope the sanction of his rule. The sermons and admonitions of St. Francis so affected her, and Jacoba was so filled with enthusiasm for the love of God and the renunciation of the world, that she transferred all her possessions to her two sons, the better to devote herself to the salvation of her soul and the practice of good works.

For this reason, too, she entered the Third Order and submitted entirely to the direction of the Friars. She arranged that a hospice in the Trans-Tiber section of Rome be furnished for them, and provided like a loving mother for their needs, especially for those of the sick brethren.

When St. Francis felt that his end was approaching, he sent her notice, as he had promised, by means of the following letter, which is still preserved to us: "Know, beloved sister in Christ, that God in His goodness has revealed to me the end of my life. It is very near at hand. If you wish to find me still alive, make haste, so that you will be at St. Mary of the Angels by next Sunday. Bring with you some ash-gray cloth to be used as a

shroud for my body, and wax candles for my burial.”

The letter was not yet dispatched when Jacoba with her two sons and a great retinue arrived at the convent. She was led to the bed of the dying saint and fell at his feet as if in ecstasy, until St. Francis bade her arise. Then she related: “In prayer last evening I heard a voice, which said: If you wish to see Brother Francis alive, go at once to St. Mary of the Angels; take with you whatever will be necessary for his burial as well as the refreshments that you used to provide for him when he was ill at Rome. So I came hither and brought everything with me.”

Francis thanked God and partook of a little nourishment which she had brought him, in order to fortify himself for the final struggle. During the last four days of his life, Jacoba remained at St. Mary of the Angels in order to give the dying man whatever comfort and assistance she could.

After his death, the body of the saint was wrapped in the cloth Jacoba had provided. She also assisted the brethren in arranging the funeral, which she attended amid many tears.

Then Jacoba went back to Rome to put her affairs in order, after which she renounced the world completely, and returned to Assisi, where she spent the remaining days of her life watching and praying at the tomb of her spiritual father. On February 8, 1239, she, too, died a blessed death and was laid to rest in Assisi in the church of St. Francis.

### CONCERNING CHRISTIAN BURIAL

1. What Jacoba did for the burial of St. Francis was the corporal work of mercy called burying the dead. This act of mercy includes everything that is associated with the Christian burial of a deceased person. We may judge for ourselves how pleasing this was to God from the fact that God announced to Jacoba the approaching death of St. Francis by means of a heavenly revelation. And the archangel Raphael pointed out to Tobias how God rewards this pious act: “When thou didst pray with tears and didst bury the dead, I offered thy prayer to the Lord” (Tob. 12:12). How pleasing to God it must be when we honor with a Christian burial the bodies which were temples

of God here on earth and which will be clothed with eternal glory in heaven! — Have you performed this Christian act with such dispositions?

2. Consider that the honors of a Christian burial do not consist in worldly pomp and a grand funeral procession. Such things attract curiosity, but awaken very little devotion, and oftentimes the honor of the living rather than that of the dead is the real motive behind it all. It is much better to be mindful of the poor at a funeral, and come to the assistance of the departed by means of holy Masses. Think of how you yourself would wish the funeral to be conducted if you were the deceased person.

3. Consider that it is especially meritorious if from pious motives you accompany the remains of poor people to the grave — people of mean estate, who would otherwise have little honorable escort. It is like the funeral procession which Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and the pious women formed to bear Our Lord from Mount Calvary to His grave. The rule prescribes that Tertiaries should attend the funeral of a departed member and devoutly pray the rosary at the

time. A quiet and devout funeral procession is certainly the truest honor and the dearest tribute one can offer the deceased.

### **PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

(For Those Who Rest in a Cemetery)

*O God, of whose mercy it is that the souls of Thy faithful people do rest in peace, graciously grant unto Thy servants and handmaids and unto all that here and everywhere rest in Christ, the forgiveness of their sins; that, absolved from every offense, they may rejoice forever with Thee. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*



# THE PRUDENT CHRISTIAN

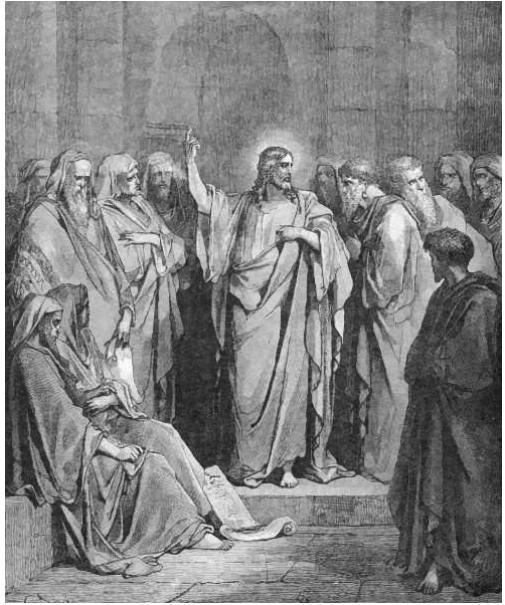
OR,

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE IMPORTANCE, AND HAPPINESS, OF ATTENDING TO THE CARE OF OUR SALVATION.

BY THE REV. J. FLETCHER, D.D.

“Give me understanding, and I shall live.” — PSALM cxix.

1834.



## CONSIDERATION IX.

### ON THE LAST SENTIMENTS, AND DEATH, OF THE SINNER.

THERE is no misfortune, that we dread so much as death, — that “king of terrors,” as we often call it: — and yet, there is no misfortune, against which we prepare, and guard, ourselves so little. There is no calamity, that we consider half so great as final impenitence, — the unprepared departure of the dying sinner; — and still, there is no calamity about which we appear more careless, and indifferent, — living on, as the generality of us do, precisely in that way, which conducts to the frightful issue. It is only when the

herald of death, — fell spectre, — comes to beckon us to the grave, that we become sensible of our imprudence; and lament the folly of our past neglect. Then is fulfilled, in regard of the unhappy sinner, that awful sentence of the prophet: “*The end is come; the end is now upon thee. I will send mine anger upon thee; and I will judge thee according to thy ways. ... And mine eye shall not spare thee; neither will I have pity. ... And thou shalt know, that I am the Lord. The end is come; the end is come; it awaketh against thee; behold, it is come. I will now shortly pour out my vengeance upon thee; and I will accomplish mine anger against thee; and recompense thee, according to*

*thy ways: and thou shalt know, that I am the Lord, that smiteth.”* Ezech. Such is the situation of the dying sinner. Surprised in the midst of his iniquities, and pleasures; — the victim of the divine displeasure, — oppressed with bodily pains, but still more with the distresses of his soul; — miserable at the thought of leaving this world and trembling at the horrors of the next, — he lies, in the eyes both of reason, and religion, the most wretched, and deplorable, of human beings. Therefore, in order that these misfortunes may not, one day, be ours, — let us meditate seriously upon the awful subject. None can better deserve our attention.

**I.** Let us, then, fix our eyes upon the suffering victim; and contemplate him in this last stage of his earthly career. Seized unexpectedly, while exulting, perhaps, in the full vigor of health; and in the enjoyment of prosperity, — he is hurried to the bed of sickness, — struck with a mortal disease. As for his corporal sufferings, — we will hardly consider these, because they are not so much the objects of the Christian’s interest, as are the disorders of the soul. It is, however, true, that even his corporal sufferings are awfully distressing; because, unlike the religious man, he has no consoling recollections to alleviate them;

no flattering prospects to soothe him into confidence, and calm resignation. No: racked, perhaps, with pain; burning with fever, and suffused with the sweats of death, he lies the melancholy victim of impatience; — feeling all the rigors of his situation; and afflicting by his groans, his murmurs, and complaints, the friends, or family, that stand round the couch of sorrows. Such as these are a few of the many evils, which assail the unhappy being from the sufferings of his body, — feeble images of the miseries which agitate him from the distresses of his soul.

**II.** During the career of a worldly life, in the vigor of health; and amid the enjoyments of pleasure, the passions place a bandage upon the eyes of the sinner, — a dark veil, which either deprives him of his sight, or gives to every object a deceitful, and false, appearance. He sees nothing in its real attitudes, or form. Virtue, religion, piety, appear to him dull; and devoid of charms: and dissipation, the world, riches, honors, seem to him, alone, deserving of his esteem; and gratifying to his feelings. Such are the general ideas of the sinner, while engaged in worldly pursuits; and wantoning in the lap of pleasure. But; behold him now on the bed of death. Here the fatal bandage is

taken off; and a ray of reason, — a beam of the sun of divine justice, — comes suddenly to shed its piercing, but unwelcome, light upon him. He sees now, by it, in their true, but frightful colors, the folly, and imprudence, of his past misconduct; and the emptiness of all worldly things. These, — hitherto the fond objects of his solicitude, — appear to him now trifling, and insignificant. He is astonished at his own weakness for having suffered such trifles to seduce his reason; or absorb his care. He sees, — he still more painfully sees, — the vanity, and falsehood, of all worldly pleasures. The illusions of these being now destroyed, — he considers them, as senseless things, fit only to amuse the thoughtless levity of children; and disgraceful to the dignity, and exalted character, of the Christian. He weeps to think, that, for the sake of such nothings, he has sacrificed pleasures, which, had he been only prudent, he might easily have purchased; and enjoyed forever. This, therefore, is a reflection, which forms a bitter ingredient in the cup of his afflictions.

**III.** Painful, however, as are these considerations to the feelings of the unhappy sufferer, still it is not they, after all, that constitute the chief source of his distress. What now distresses him chiefly,

is the sight, and remembrance, of his sins. It is his sins, — the long, dark, list, and catalogue, of his crimes, and disorders, that now form the most excruciating portion of his mental agony. These, all, stare him in the face in every feature of deformity — affrighting him by their ugliness; and by their multitude exciting in his breast the most dreadful sensations of despondency, and terror. By the rays of that light, which is now reflected upon the hitherto dark caverns of his heart, he traces distinctly not only the grosser iniquities of his past life, but a countless variety of sins, which either his passions had concealed from his view; or his indifference had never, until now, so much as thought on. He sees, how grievously he has offended by the misuse of all his faculties; by the sensualities of his affections; and the errors, and illusions, of his thoughts. He sees the graces, which he has resisted; the favors, and special marks, of the divine goodness, which he has despised; the time, and talents, which he has squandered away; and the frequent opportunities of salvation, which he has ungratefully neglected. In short, by the brightness of this importuning, and terrific, light, he reads too plainly all the evils, and abuses, of his past unfortunate career. These now, like an army



ranged in battle; or like so many specters, surround his bed of sorrows, harrowing up his soul; and filling it with horrors, which human language would in vain endeavor to describe. He feels now, — alas, he too sensibly feels, — the truth of those words, — *“the sorrows of death have encompassed me; and the dangers of hell have found me.”*

IV. Yes; it is here, — it is when the expiring sinner looks forward to the grave, and to *“the dangers of hell,”* — to the dreadful consequences of his past imprudence, — it is then that his anguish is heightened, beyond the horrors of fear, — not unfrequently, into the agonies of despair. He considers himself, as summoned to appear before the tribunal of his Judge; — just ready to fall into the hands of an angry God, from whom he has merited neither mercy, nor compassion. He sees already, in the frightful visions of his imagination, the horrible executioners of the divine vengeance, standing prepared to seize upon his soul; — the fires, that are to burn him; and the tortures, that are to punish him. He thinks of that night, which will know no morning; — when no sun begins the day; when no season concludes the year. He feels himself just going to launch forth, with all his sins upon him, into an eternity of woe, — into an endless, bottomless, ocean of unutterable misery, whose farther shore, —

alas, it has no shore, — he shall never reach. Impressed with these forebodings, he, — amid the wild wanderings of his imagination, — exclaims: — “Wretch that I am! I have brought all this upon myself. I once was offered happiness; and I have chosen misery. I was offered the joys of heaven; and I have preferred to them the paltry pleasures of the earth. In his solicitude for my salvation, God has urgently, and often, invited me to love Him; has pressed me to accept His favors; and to receive His graces: and I, alike undutiful, and unkind, — regardless of all His tenderness, have shut my ears to His solicitations, and despised His blessings, — preferring to His friendship, the friendship of sinners; and to His benefits, the trifles of the world. And can He, then, love me, who have thus obstinately refused to love Him? Can He reward me, who have done nothing to deserve His favors? No; God is just: and I read clearly my impending doom. I feel already the hand of vengeance upon me; and I can see no place of refuge.” Such as these are the feelings; and such, not unfrequently, the lamentations, of the dying sinner. Sunk to despondence by the mountain weight of his sins; and by the recollection of his past folly, he looks forward to eternity, amid all the horrors, and throes, of

dissolution; with not one cheering ray to appease his fears; or one comfortable remembrance to soothe his griefs. "*The sorrows of death do indeed encompass him; and the dangers of hell have found him.*" And it is, accordingly, in the midst of all these conflicts, and alarms, that the unhappy being expires. Great God, what a death!

V. How true is that sentence of the prophet: "*It is an evil, and a bitter, thing to have abandoned the Lord, our God.*" — Sin, it is certain, leaves only bitterness behind it; — horrors in death; uneasiness in life. Whoever carries in his heart a weight of guilt, carries also along with it, a load of care, and apprehension. This is the order of God's justice: "*There is no peace for the wicked.*" We do, indeed, see around us individuals, — even a multitude of persons, — "wicked," and profane, whose lives may seem to us an exception from this law; — who apparently live in "peace;" and whose bark, wafted on by the gales of pleasure, and prosperity, glides gently down the stream of time. Ah; delusive notion! The peace of these men is not peace; nor is their prosperity happiness. Their peace is a fatal lethargy, — the effect of God's displeasure, who, in punishment of their crimes, and ingratitude, thus permits them to sleep on in the midst of their disorders. It is a calm, that prepares the heaviest storms, — a pause, which allowing the sinner to repose, for a few hours, serves only to give time to the winds, and waves, to gather up fresh fury, in order to overwhelm him with so much the greater misery. The law is indeed unvarying; — "*There is no*

*peace for the wicked.*"

Hence, then, let us consider seriously; and if we wish to avoid the above misfortunes, — if we wish to live happily, and to die comfortably, — let us flee from sin, and cultivate virtue. Let us live the life of the just; for, it is only thus, that we can reasonably expect to die the death of the just. "*What a man hath sown, that only shall he reap.*" Therefore, having, as yet, the means of salvation in our hands, let us not neglect the invaluable blessing. Possessing still the key of "the house of refuge," — the key even of the bright portals of heaven, — let us not be so imprudent, as to lose it; so mad, as to, throw it away.

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