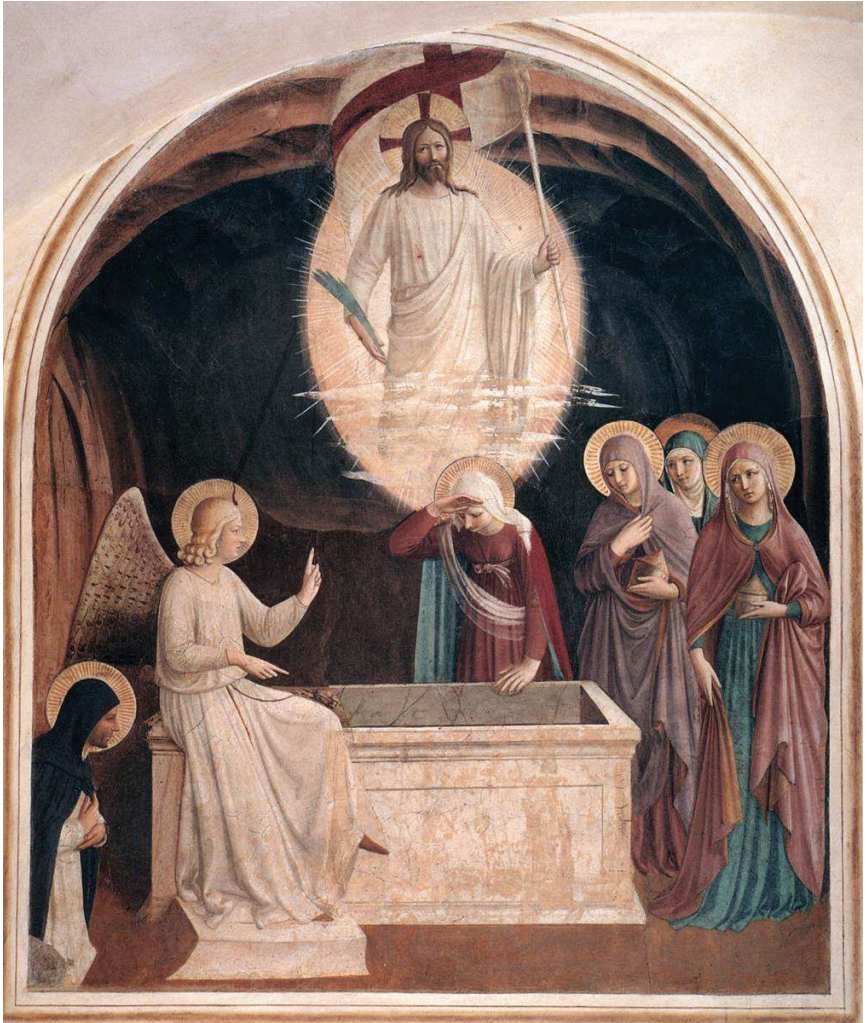


THE SERAPH

March 2016

Vol. XXXVI No. 7



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The **SERAPH** is published monthly except July and August by the Franciscan Friars at 3376 Mt. Read Blvd. Rochester, NY 14616.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES
USA: Free upon request.
Suggested donation \$20.00.
FOREIGN: Air Mail: \$40.00 per year

ALL CORRESPONDENCE
SHOULD BE SENT TO:

The SERAPH
3376 MOUNT READ BLVD
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14616
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franciscanfathers.com

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Publishers
Order of St. Francis of Assisi, Inc.
Rochester, New York 14616 USA

In essentia - Unitas. In dubio - Libertas.
In omnibus - Caritas.

Prudence

Bishop Giles OFM

Prudence is sometimes very much misunderstood. We are given in the Book of Proverbs (Chapter 31), the illustration of the prudent wife. She labors and works so that everyone in her home will have sufficient material goods to protect them and supply all their needs, especially during the hard and scarce times of winter. She labors constantly from early morning until late in the evening. She is praised as a valiant, prudent, wife, and is held up as an ideal to be imitated and followed. On the other hand, we are given the example of the man whose barns were filled and had a bountiful crop in the field with no place to store it. (Luke 12, 16-21) He decided to tear down his existing barns and build larger ones to store up his existing bounty as well as the coming bounty from the fields. This man is not praised for being prudent or wise, but is condemned. He thought he could rest and relax after he had stored up such supplies for far into the future. His condemnation was because he laid up treasure here on earth

rather than in Heaven. Once again, Jesus has given us the example of the birds of the air and the lilies of the fields. (Luke 12, 22-24) They are so insignificant, and God watches over them and takes care of them, surely He watches over us and takes care of us with even greater love than He does over birds and flowers. We may also consider Joseph of Egypt who prudently stored up supplies during the seven years of plenty so that there would be something during the seven years of scarcity. (Genesis 41)

In our own day, we come upon many “survivalists” who are stocking up and preparing for one tragedy or another. They will present their actions as being prudent and wise, and consider those who do not do as they are doing to be foolish or imprudent. Some may, perhaps, argue against them saying, that this shows a lack of trust and confidence in Divine Providence.

We may also consider this from the secular perspective. We see

those who work and toil to accumulate property and wealth and are indeed a great benefit to society; and we see the opposite with people who will not work or toil, but expect to be cared for and provided for by the state (the hard working tax payers).

As with all things, we must remember that virtue is in the middle. We must strive to avoid both extremes. It is not prudent to put our hope and trust in material things. These material things are always at risk of being lost, stolen, eaten by moths or rust, etc. (Matt 6, 19-21) Our souls were not made for these things. Nor is it prudent to ignore the necessity of using our intelligence and the gifts that God has given us to make provisions in case of future need.

God has given us the command

to labor. From the creation of Adam to the end of time, God has given mankind dominion over the earth to subdue it, and thus give greater honor and glory



to God. Man was made to labor, both spiritually and physically. Many of modern men's ailments are brought about because of a lack of working (exercising). Our bodies were made to labor; when they sit idly by they become weak, grow weary and sick. The

soul soon follows the body in this malady.

If we are given the grace of good health, and opportunity, we are generally able to produce more than the needs of ourselves and our families demand. With this super-abundance, God would have us assist those who have not been given the graces of physical ability or opportunity.

This is to be done, not with the desire of vain glory or praise, nor for the purpose of manipulating and controlling those we are able to aid. Rather, we should seek nothing (materially) in return. However, we may request the spiritual help of prayers from those we materially assist.

Those who are unable to labor or provide for themselves, must not sit idly by, but must make good use of the grace of time to make offerings to God in prayers and sacrifices. They must avoid idleness, they must avoid bitterness because of the situation they find themselves in, and they must avoid imagining that they are owed things from society. The virtues of Job need to be constantly recalled and implemented in our own lives.

The important perspective appears to be that those who labor and produce above and beyond their own immediate needs, need to do so with the good intention of assisting others who have not been as blessed as they have with these material blessings. Those who selfishly amass things for themselves and have no concern for others; or even for God's Will are acting very

imprudently, because they are bringing forth the anger of God against themselves. The souls who are less blessed with the material blessings, or the grace of physical strength and health, need to remember that it is particularly to the poor that God has shown His pleasure. All too often, the riches and pleasures of this world are great obstacles to our spiritual progress.

In the parable of the sower who went out to sow his seed, we see that the seed that fell among the thorns represents the riches and cares of this world. (Matt 13) These riches and cares of this world make life much more difficult. The rich young man went away sad after Jesus told him what was necessary for him: "Go sell all that you have and give to the poor; and come follow Me." (Mark 10, 17-22) The rich man was cast into Hell; while the poor man, Lazarus, was taken to Heaven. (Luke 16, 14-31)

The things of this earth are good things and they are blessings from God. The material things, themselves, are not bad or evil. It is truly our own disposition towards these things that is either good or bad. The riches of this

world when put to work providing for and caring for those who cannot provide or care for themselves; become great sources of merit and grace. When these same gifts of God are locked away and hoarded, they become, for this man, a source of great evil. We have often heard that “money is the root of all evil.” This is not the truth of the matter. The correct idea is: “The love of money is the root of all evil.” (1 Timothy 6, 10) Money is a good thing and a great gift (grace) from God. Money was created as a means of exchange, not to be hidden away. Money is good when it is fulfilling its purpose for existing (a means of exchange), it is evil when it is not. This is the same for everything God has made, including ourselves.

When God asks a sacrifice of us, He expects us to give our best. When we consider the requirements of sacrifices in the Old Testament, we see that any sick,

Those in Heaven who have the capacity of a thimble, are filled with love and can hold no more; they are completely happy. Those who have the capacity of ocean tanker, are likewise filled with love and can hold no more; and are completely happy.

deformed, weak animal was unacceptable. Only the most perfect and best was suitable to offer to God. The same is true today; God does not desire or need our sacrifices, yet they are necessary for us. And our offering is not really an offering unless it is something special. We cannot benefit from offering God our “left-overs” or our “junk.” If we desire to have true blessings, we must give to Him the best we have to offer. The offering of material things is good because material things are good. If they were not good then they would not make suitable offerings or sacrifices.

The reward of Heaven is on the surface equal for everyone that obtains it. Every person in Heaven is completely and fully happy and at peace; yet we know there are many mansions in Heaven. We must therefore conclude that not all things are equal. They are the same, yet greatly different. The difference, we might imag-

ine, comes from the capacity of love that each soul in Heaven is given. If we may make a physical comparison we can consider various vessels and their capacities. Those in Heaven who have the capacity of a thimble, are filled with love and can hold no more; they are completely happy. Those who have the capacity of ocean tanker, are likewise filled with love and can hold no more; and are completely happy.

We have been made to: know, love, and serve God. God is infinite. We, therefore, have been given the potentiality to continually increase our capacity of knowing and loving and serving God. The volume of our vessels can continually increase while we are here on earth. After we die, our final capacities will have been reached, and if we get into heaven, we will be filled to overflowing with the knowledge and love of God. To the small vessel they will have a small amount, to the large vessel they will have a large amount.

Prudence suggests to us that we should strive to become the largest vessel possible to give God as much room to fill our souls as we are able. We accomplish

this by conforming ourselves to God's Will as completely as possible while we are here on earth. If we are given riches, we must ask ourselves, what God would have us do with these riches that He has entrusted to us. All too often, we treat these riches as if they belonged to us, rather than just being entrusted to us for a time. It is God's Will that those who have should share with those who have not. In this way of showing our love for one another, we show our love for God. When we labor we likewise must remember that our health and ability to labor is a gift from God and we must do so for His honor and glory. Nothing that we have, is truly our own; everything belongs to God. Recall the parable of the servants and the talents. (Matt 25, 14-30) Each was entrusted by the master with certain talents. They were each expected to use these talents in a suitable way so that they would provide a profit for the master. God is that Master and we are the servants. If we use our God given talents well, He will entrust even greater ones to our care. And in this manner, the capacity of our vessels are increased.

Because God is not in any need of our gifts and we have no way to directly give to Him, He has given us the directive to give to one another in His Name. "Whatsoever to do to the least of My Brethren, you do to Me." (Matt. 25, 40) Thus, when we labor unselfishly for others in the love of God, we are truly wise or prudent. And if we have not been given these graces of being able to physically labor, we are then obliged to suffer the cross patiently, but also to make

good use of the time allotted to us. There is no better thing to do than pray. There is no need for us to squander the time spent in illness or disability. We need not only pray for ourselves that we may gain the grace of health and ability, but we must remember to pray for those who help us, we may pray for sinners who do not pray for themselves, we may also pray for the Poor Souls in Purgatory. In this, the poor may also act wise and prudently.

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The Sunday Sermon is a biweekly paper that offers a few spiritual thoughts for each Sunday throughout the year.

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Sister Agnes' Favorites

Holy Cross

Anonymous

Steadfast Cross, among all other
Thou art a tree mickle of price,
In branch and flower such another
I ne wot none in wood nor rys.
Sweet be the nails
And sweet be the tree,
And sweeter be the burden that hands upon thee.

From the Old English

Before Sleeping

Old English Prayer

<i>Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,</i>	<i>I go by sea, I go by land,</i>
<i>Bless the bed that I lie on.</i>	<i>The Lord made me with His right</i>
<i>Before I lay me down to sleep,</i>	<i>hand.</i>
<i>I give my soul to Christ to keep.</i>	<i>If any danger come to me,</i>
<i>Four corners to my bed,</i>	<i>Sweet Jesus Christ deliver me.</i>
<i>Four angels there aspread,</i>	<i>He's the branch and I'm the</i>
<i>Two to foot and two to head,</i>	<i>flower,</i>
<i>And four to carry me when I'm</i>	<i>Pray God send me a happy hour,</i>
<i>dead.</i>	<i>And if I die before I wake,</i>
	<i>I pray that Christ my soul will</i>
	<i>take.</i>

It is never too early to consider or prepare ourselves to fulfill the vocation to which God has called us.

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Franciscans and the Protestant Revolution In England

Francis Borgia Steck, O.F.M.

PART SECOND

UNDER THE STUARTS 1603-1649

CHAPTER IV

VENERABLE JOHN BAPTIST
BULLAKER, O. F. M.

(Continued)

The next day, Fr. John Baptist was informed that parliamentary proceedings against him would begin on Tuesday, and that his two former schoolmates would preside as commissioners of parliament. Accordingly, on the following morning at seven o'clock, he was led from Newgate to Westminster. On a table in the courtroom, Wadsworth had spread out the sacred vestments and other articles he had seized in the house of Lady Powel. After examining them, one of the bystanders remarked that they were of rather ordinary grade.

“By my troth, much too precious for those who now possess them,” returned the friar; “I’d have you know, however,” he continued good-humoredly, “that I could have procured more costly things,



had I not apprehended what has already come to pass.”

“Despite the inferior quality of those vestments,” sneered the presiding judge, “idolatry can be practiced as well in them as in more precious ones.”

“Prithee, what sort of idolatry art thou referring to?” “Is it not, indeed, criminal idolatry to worship bread as God?”

“We do not worship bread and wine in the august sacrifice of Mass. Under the appearances of bread and wine, we rightly

adore and pay homage to Christ our Lord. Such, from the days of the Apostles down to the time of Martin Luther, has ever been the unanimous teaching and practice of the entire Church.”

Just then, while rummaging the articles on the table, someone accidentally discovered the altar stone. After closely examining the inscribed crosses, he shouted triumphantly that he had found the number of the beast.¹ All eyes were turned on the speaker, while the friar could hardly refrain from laughing at the man’s stupidity.

“Since there is such intimacy between thee and the beast,” he quizzed, “have the goodness to tell me openly and plainly the beast’s name.”

The judge was evidently vexed at the prisoner’s playful and fearless manner.

“On what grounds,” he demanded sternly, “hast thou ventured to violate the laws of the country?”

“No other answer suggests itself to me just now than the one St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, and St. John the Evangelist offered on a similar occasion. When they were called upon to account for having preached the name of Jesus contrary to the command of

the Jews, they replied: ‘Decide for yourselves, whether it is right in the sight of God to hear you rather than God.’”

“Mr. Bullaker,” Cauley interposed, “knowest thou not that it is written : ‘Fear God and honor the king?’”

“In faith, I do know it; but I know, too,” the martyr added, “that the same parliament which declared the priesthood treason, also established by law the episcopate, liturgy, and ecclesiastical offices and ceremonies, all of which you in the present parliament are undoing.”

“What was wrongly ordered we are warranted to adjust.”

“I certainly see you have tried and schemed to do so. But take my word for it, the very next parliament after this will reject and remodel the religion you are now striving to frame and establish.”

“That day thou wilt never live to see.”

“Fully do I realize that the time of my dissolution is at hand; yet, what I have just foretold will come to pass.”²

“A traitor! a traitor! Who are to be blamed for the present

1 He refers to Apoc. 13:18, where the Evangelist portrays the antichrist.

2 What he foretold came to pass in 1660, when the Puritan reign of terror ceased, and Charles II mounted the throne.

disturbances in England but thou and others like thee?"

"Would to God there were in this kingdom no other sort of traitors who will put it in more real and serious dangers. Of a truth, it matters little how many treasonable practices base calumny has laid to the charge of Catholics; I defy you to point out to me one case that has been proved against them."

Not daring to accept the challenge, they quickly retreated to safer ground.

"How old art thou," asked the judge, "and when didst thou receive holy orders?"

"There are a number of orders," the friar observed, "of which four are termed minor; then follow sub-deaconship, deaconship, and priesthood."

"We are speaking and inquiring about the last."

"That gentleman there, Mr. Cauley, knows my age better perhaps than I do."

"Thou are thirty-seven or thirty-eight years old."

"Deduct twenty-four, and the remainder will tell you how many years I've been a priest."

"How long hast thou been in England?"

"About twelve years."

"How many Franciscans are there in England?"

"Think you I'm going to turn traitor to my brethren? Take it for granted, herein you shall never succeed. If I answer freely to what concerns my own life, it is because I would have you know that I do not esteem my life more than myself. But in all that might injure others or imperil my brethren, I shall try to be extremely cautious."

"My lords," broke in Wadsworth, "this man is so obstinate and so resolute in what pertains to his duty and office, that if you were to send him into exile by one port, he would not hesitate to come back by another."

"You are quite correct in your conjecture," replied the martyr with a smile.

After putting a few more questions, the court officials sent a written account of the proceedings to the chief justice and remanded the martyr to Newgate, to await his final trial and sentence.

When the general sessions opened, Fr. John Baptist was summoned before the judges. On entering the court, he blessed himself with the sign of the cross, saying in a loud voice: *By the sign of the cross deliver us from our enemies, O*

God! Then the clerk ordered him to raise his hand, and having read the indictment, he asked:

“Guilty or not guilty?”

“If by *guilty* you mean a person that is harmful or criminal, I positively deny that I am guilty. I do not deny, however, that I am a priest.”

“Sayest thou then thou are not guilty?”

“If the force and meaning of the term *not guilty* designates one wholly innocent of a crime, then I swear that I am not guilty. But, never shall I plead *not guilty* if you take it as a denial of my having been ordained priest; for I admit without reserve that I am a priest.”

“Thou art a traitor! a traitor!”

“If besides such as I am, the kingdom harbored no other traitors, traitors who in very deed are enemies and subverters of their country, it would be now in a far better and happier condition than it is.”

This bold rebuke struck home. For a moment there was deathlike silence, until someone broke the spell by calling him a seducer. At this, the martyr’s countenance beamed with joy.

“Thou makest me exceedingly happy by bestowing upon me the same title that the Jews bestowed

upon Christ. In sooth, thus was our Savior once reproached by the Jews. There have always been priests in England. Saint Austin, the Apostle of England, was a priest; hither he was sent by the Sovereign Pontiff, Saint Gregory the Great. I too, am a priest, just as Saint Austin was.”

“Thou hast come to this place not to preach, nor to insult and disgrace our laws, but to answer whether thou art guilty or not.”

“I have never made myself guilty of a crime against my country or of a capital offence, and I shall never admit it. I do not deny, however, that I am a priest and that I was arrested while saying Mass. If you are trying to make me plead *not guilty* and thus gainsay my priesthood, you will never succeed; because I will never comply, even should I suffer a thousand deaths. At no time, will my conscience permit me to stoop so low as to admit that the priesthood is a crime. Of a truth, far from being a crime, it ought, I *think, be held by all in high reverence and esteem.*”

“What, thou, miserable wretch, hast never sinned?”

“By your leave, this honorable assembly strains and misapplies the meaning of my words. Readily do I own that I am the greatest sinner on earth. What I maintained

was that my being a priest or saying Mass does not make me guilty of a sin or crime. This is the sense in which my words were to be taken.”

“Mr. Bullaker,” ventured the registrar, “hast thou not time and again declared and confessed that thou art a priest? Now tell us, art thou guilty or not?” “I consider myself innocent of a capital crime; that I am a priest, I readily grant.” “Art thou not aware that thou hast infringed the law and that according to the tenor of the law, thou art accused of treason?”

“The law that opposes and conflicts with the law of God, should be made light of, I imagine, seeing that I am annointed a priest of Christ, according to what the Royal Prophet, inspired by the Holy Spirit, foretold regarding priests, to wit: *Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech*. But, forsooth, as you have set down *the priesthood of Christ as treason, so logically you are apt to make the same provision regarding the faith in Christ Jesus himself*.”

“But such happens to be the law; and to violate the law is a sin against God, the author of all law.”

“A very sound argument, indeed: it is the law, and to violate the law is a sin. Consequently, the

Turks did right in passing a law that prohibits under pain of death the preaching of Christ or the promulgation of Christianity among them. Now, may I not from the form of your argument infer thus: therefore, whoever preaches the name of Christ among them is a traitor, inasmuch as he acts contrary to the law.”

“If such were contrary to the law, it were indeed wrong to attempt it.”

“Thou art a good partisan of Mohammed, my lord mayor, and a staunch defender of the Koran.³ But, if such be the case, then we must conclude that the Apostles by preaching Christ contrary to the laws and edicts of the princes and emperors not only acted illegally, but actually committed sin, an assumption that offends pious ears.”

“Thy reasoning is unsound; a distinction must be made between the Christian religion and the Catholic or papistical, between promulgating the former and promulgating the latter.”

“As Saint Austin, the Apostle of our nation, came hither to convert the people, with the same

3 For obvious reasons, the martyr does not recount this apt and witty retort in his letter. Hope (p. 149) seems to have found it in the manuscript of De Marsys, who witnessed the trial.

intention and for the same purpose have I come hither, to convert the country to the true faith and to unite it to the Catholic Church.”

“Ah, then perhaps thou art Saint Austin?”

“I am a priest of the same priestly order as Saint Austin, and for the conversion of the country have I been sent hither by the same Apostolic See which supported and empowered him.”

Not knowing what to reply, they laughed and again asked him whether he was guilty or not. The undaunted friar distinguished as before between the guilt of treason and the guilt of being a priest, denying the first but admitting the latter, if guilt it could be called. Then stepping forward with an air of bold defiance, he exclaimed: “Whether the priesthood is a capital crime, Mr. registrar and thou, my lord mayor, I place before the tribunal of God, whose countenance beholds justice, and who will one day be our judge.”

“We hope to do nothing that we can not render an account of,” was the rejoinder.

“Never will I admit the priesthood to be a crime,” repeated the martyr. “If it were such, then to be a priest were the same as being a traitor, and consequently every priest, inasmuch as he is a priest,

is guilty of treason and must be put down as an enemy and betrayer of his country.”

“And such, forsooth, he is; for to be a priest is contrary to the law.”

“The parliament,” he contended, “that enacted such a law against priests is far from being infallible, since it denies this prerogative to the universal Church of Christ, the pillar and ground of truth.”⁴

Finally, realizing that they would never succeed in making their victim admit himself guilty of treason, they removed him from the bar and had him taken back to prison. In the afternoon of the same day, Fr. John was again summoned to court. When told by the judge to acknowledge himself guilty of treason, he replied:

“This morning I proved my innocence; it is for thee now to acknowledge thyself guilty on account of the iniquitous sentence thou art about to pass.

4 Here the martyr’s account breaks off. – Lady Powel, we learn from De Marsys, freely admitted that she was a Catholic, and that she had harbored priests in her house. Eager to gain the crown of martyrdom, she steadfastly refused to renounce her faith. Hence, she was imprisoned and finally condemned to death. But, on the day set for her execution, when she was about to lie down on the hurdle, a messenger arrived from parliament with orders that she be taken back to prison and kept there till further notice. Shortly after, she was pardoned. See Stone, pp. 150 seq.: Hope, p. 150.

One day thou wilt have to give an account before the Judge of judges. Then every drop of blood thou art about to shed will rise up against thee, and death, far from being for thee, as it will be for thy victim, a passage to glory, will be an entrance to darkness and punishment that will last for all eternity.”

“The punishment,” laughed the impious judge, “matches its duration. But that’s a long way off. Meanwhile I will pass upon thee a sentence which will send thee to pave the place with which thou dost threaten me.”

“I hope in the mercy of God,” declared the friar, “and I pray Him to grant a better lot even to my persecutors.”⁵

Now the judge turned to the twelve jurymen and said :

“The prisoner is convicted of treason by his own confession. More evidence you need not. As to the rest, remember well your oath and duty to return a just verdict, having God in your mind.”

After a brief deliberation, the jury unanimously declared that they were for referring the case to parliament, since the prisoner had sufficiently established his innocence. This angered the judge. Urging the friar’s admission that

he was a priest, he ignored the jury’s verdict and sentenced the prisoner to death.

“According to the law,” he said, “thou shalt return whence thou camest; thereupon, thou shalt be drawn on a hurdle to the place of execution, namely, to Tyburn, and put to death: thou shalt be hanged, cut down alive, disembowelled, and quartered.”

At this, the friar fell on his knees, raised his eyes to heaven and intoned the *Te Deum*. Then rising, he thanked the assembly and accompanied the guards back to Newgate. Although the day for his execution had not been fixed, Fr. John realized that the long desired martyr’s crown would soon be his. We can imagine how zealously he used his last days in prison to prepare himself for the final struggle. The time not spent in prayer and meditation he devoted to works of charity. The Capuchin friars, who had a convent near the royal palace, came to ask his prayers; they were living in great fear and anxiety, for the hatred of the Puritans had of late become more insolent and aggressive. Catholics from all parts of the city risked their own safety and visited him to ask his counsel and to obtain his priestly blessing. It was apparently during one of these visits that he was

5 See Hope, p. 150.

informed of the day appointed for his martyrdom.

“I thank thee heartily, my friend,” he rejoined, smiling gently, “for these long desired and most happy tidings. Believe me, were it not for my utter lack of money, I should not let thee depart unrewarded; but thou shalt not be without compensation.”

Great was the joy of his heart, when on Wednesday morning, October 16, the officers came and led him from prison. On passing out, he met Fr. Francis Bel, one of his confrères.⁶

“Brother,” said the latter playfully, “I made profession before thee. Why takest thou precedence of me?”

“Such is the will of God,” the martyr replied sweetly; “but thou wilt follow soon after me.”

Since the day of his condemnation, it was observed, the sun had not shone over London. That morning, however, as if rejoicing over the friar’s triumph, it burst forth in full splendor. With brutal violence, the officers thrust him upon the hurdle and tied him to it, with his face upward. The trip to Tyburn over the rough stony streets was attended by the usual sufferings and indignities. At last they came to the place of

execution. Fr. John was unbound from the hurdle and brought to the scaffold. Far from trembling with fear at sight of the dreadful instruments of torture lying by, the martyr turned his eyes to heaven, knelt down, and prayed aloud. But he was soon interrupted by the sheriff, who asked him whether he had anything to say.

“Only this,” came the calm reply, “I am greatly indebted to you and to my country for the very singular and unexpected favor I have received.”

“What favor is it that so affects thee?”

“A favor of which I deem myself most unworthy, a favor for which I always yearned, but never dared to hope : to wit, to die in defense of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman faith. Yet, despite my unworthiness, the goodness of God has privileged me to prove my loyalty by the shedding of my blood.” Then, having mounted the ladder in compliance with the sheriff’s orders, he turned to the assembled multitude and discoursed to them on the words of the Psalmist: *Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech*. Fearing that he might mention the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament, one of the Protestant ministers interrupted him saying he was doing wrong

6 Mason, p. 178.

in seducing the people with his false and pernicious doctrine. To this the martyr replied with sweet composure:

“Sir, patiently grant me leave to speak for the space of one brief hour. Thou art, indeed, a minister of the king of the English (*Anglorum*), but I am, though most unworthily, a minister of the King of Angels (*Angelorum*). Never had I a more sacred and exalted pulpit than the one I now occupy. Thou leavest no stone unturned to undo and pervert a simple and untutored people, blinded in dark ignorance. Let me then, I pray, owe thee this little favor, that at least from the scaffold I may extend a helping hand to them, and that my tongue may be unto them a plank by means of which they can escape shipwreck and destruction.”

He had not yet finished his discourse, when the sheriff, who was listening with impatience and disgust, suddenly gave orders that the sentence of the court be carried out. While the executioners were making the final preparations, Fr. John raised his hands, as a sign to one of his brethren⁷ in the throng, that he was prepared to receive absolution. Then, commending himself to the mercy of God, he was rudely thrust from the

ladder, cut down while still alive, and subjected to the usual barbarities. Seizing his heart, the brutal executioner held it up to the frenzied multitude. “Behold the heart of a traitor!” he exclaimed and threw it into the fire. Having beheaded and quartered the body, they exposed the parts to public view, the head on London Bridge and the quarters on four gates of the city.⁸ “But,” concludes Mason, “the fetters, as it were, being broken, his most holy soul, freed from its narrow prison and escorted by a host of angels, winged its flight to heaven, where decorated with the victor’s palm in token of his triumph, it exults in enduring peace, in undisturbed rest, and in the splendor of never-ending glory.”⁹

8 We are told that the afore-mentioned Franciscan rescued the martyr’s heart from the flames. Other relics were either snatched from the fire or bought from the executioner by the servants of Count Egmont, who was present and later drew up a formal statement establishing the authenticity of the relics. The Franciscan nuns of the Convent of Our Lady of Dolors at Taunton have a forearm of the martyr, a corporal which was dipped in his blood, and another which he used at Mass on the morning of his arrest. See Hope, pp. 154 seq.

9 His name appears on the list of December 4, 1887. He is likewise reckoned among the companions of Venerable Francis (Arthur) Bel, whose cause of beatification was again taken up in 1900. See Ortolani, *De Causis Beatorum et Servorum Dei Ordinibus Minorum*, p. 14.

7 Very likely, it was Ven. Francis Bel.

Christ the King

Fr. Joseph Noonan, OFM



Part III

Society has been imbued or permeated with naturalism for many decades and the end result is that far too many of the non-thinking masses consider this spiritually dangerous way of life to be perfectly acceptable. Once the “religious” leaders of the various sects and denominations denied Original Sin and promoted the error that men are born basically good and do not need supernatural grace in order to overcome sinful temptations,

man’s fall took on a precipitous fall.

This attitude directly opposes the traditional and doctrinal position of Holy Mother Church, which over the centuries has clearly taught not only the Dogma of Original Sin and its consequences, but has warned the faithful of the need to be cautious and not be misled in our daily life.

It is here that I would like to quote again Fr. Denis Fahey, C. S.

Sp. who has in great detail and length described the horrendous effects of the naturalistic outlook within society. As the reader proceeds through his explanation one is asked to understand that this was written in 1934, and, yet, it is as though it was written in the last few years. Society has been so overwhelmed with error it knows little of how it ought to be, and, therefore, the dangers of these errors.

“... But the Naturalists go further still, for having rashly taken a completely erroneous course in regard to the most important questions, they are carried headlong to the ultimate consequences of their principles, either on account of the weakness of human nature or because God thus upon them the just punishment of their pride. Hence it comes about that even those truths that are attainable by the natural light of human reason (such as most assuredly are, the existence of God, the immateriality or spirituality of the human soul, and its immortality) are no longer held by them to be certain and unquestionable.”

“Steering a similar erroneous course, the Freemasons have

the same rocks. Although as a rule, they admit the existence of God, they themselves openly admit that they do not all firmly assent to this truth and hold it with unwavering conviction. For they do not attempt to hide the fact that this question of God is the chief source and cause of discord amongst them: nay, it is well known that recently it has been the subject of a serious disagreement in their ranks. As a matter of fact, however, they allow their members the greatest licence on the point, so that they are at liberty to hold that God exists or that God does not exist, and those who obstinately affirm that there is no God are admitted just as readily as those who, while indeed asserting that there is a God, nevertheless, have wrong ideas about Him, like the Pantheists. This is purely and simply the suppression of the truth about God, while holding on to an absurd caricature of the Divine Nature.”

“When once this most fundamental truth of all has been overthrown or weakened, the human mind inevitably begins to lose hold on other principles that can be known by the light of human reason, namely, that all things have been brought into

existence by a free and sovereign act on the part of the Creator; that the world is governed by Divine Providence, that human souls are immortal, and that, after this life here on earth, human beings will live another life that will last for ever. The loss of these truths, which are the foundation of the natural order and which are so vital for the rational guidance of life and the practical conduct of men, will have a serious repercussion on public and private morality. We need not dwell upon the effect of this collapse upon the supernatural virtues which no one can either exercise or acquire without a special gift and grace from God. Of these virtues it is of course impossible to find any trace in those who contemptuously reject as unknown, the redemption of the human race, Divine Grace, the sacraments and the happiness to be attained in Heaven. We speak only of those duties which follow from the principles of natural morality.”

“Now, that God is the Creator of the World and its provident Ruler, that there is an eternal law which ordains respect for the natural order and forbids its

being disturbed, that the final end of man is to be found in a sphere far removed from human things and beyond this earthly sojourn: these are the sources and the principles of all justice and morality. If these are done away with, as the Naturalists and the Freemasons desire, it will be straightway impossible to distinguish accurately between justice and injustice or discern what is the foundation of that distinction. And in fact the moral formation which alone finds favour with the Freemasons and which, they hold, should be given to youth, is that which they call civil and emancipated and independent. From this formation all religion is excluded. But how insufficient this training is, how lacking in firmness and how easily blown about by every gust of passion, can be easily seen from the regrettable results which have already begun to make their appearance. For, wherever this training has ousted Christian moral formation and begun to enjoy more or less undisturbed sway, there uprightness and moral integrity have quickly begun to decay, the most monstrous opinions have sprung up and waxed strong, and the

effrontery of evil-doers has grown apace. These evils are today the subject of widespread complaints and regrets, and these complaints are frequently corroborated by those of many men who are compelled to acknowledge the evidence of the truth, though it is the last thing they would wish to do, in regard to the matter in question.”

“Besides, since human nature is stained by original sin and is therefore more inclined to vice than to virtue, in order to lead a virtuous life, it is indispensable to restrain the disorderly movements of the soul and bring the passions into subjection to reason. In this struggle, what appeals to nature must very often be despised, and the greatest labours and sufferings must be endured that reason may always remain in triumphant control. Now, the Naturalists and the Masons, not accepting by faith those truths which have been made known to us by God’s revelation, deny that the first Adam fell. Consequently, they hold that free will is in no way ‘weakened and inclined to evil.’ On the contrary, exaggerating the virtue and goodness of our nature and considering it to

be the only source and rule of justice, it does not occur to them that continual effort and unremitting attention are necessary to bridle rebellious passions and keep them under steady control. This the reason why we see human beings beset with so many temptations to indulge in the pleasures of the senses. This is the explanation of the publication of journals and pamphlets that are both unrestrained and indecent, as well as the shocking licentiousness of the stage and the scandalous treatment of artistic subjects according to the shameless laws of so-called realism. This is, too, the pretext under which are excused or justified the systematic pandering to effeminacy and luxury, and the continual pursuit of every form of pleasure by which virtue may be weakened and lulled to sleep. In all this those who take away from men all hope of the joys of heaven, and lower the whole ideal of happiness to the level of fleeting pleasure, and make it of the earth earthy, are certainly gravely guilty, but they are quite consistent.”

“What We have said can be confirmed by a fact that is astounding not so much in itself,

as in its open admission. Since, in general, no one obeys cunning and crafty schemers so readily as those whose courage and self-control have been sapped and broken by subjection to the yoke of their passions, there have been found in Freemasonry men who have claimed their determination to strive skillfully and cunningly to saturate the masses with every form of vice. They hope that the masses thus debased will be like putty in their hands to carry out their future projects, no matter what may be their nature.”

“With regard to family life, the teaching of the Naturalists may be summed up as follows: marriage belongs to the class of commercial contracts and can therefore be rightly revoked at will by those who have contracted it. The enactments of the State have power over the marriage bond. In the education of the youth, nothing that concerns religion is to be taught systematically or prescribed methodically. When each one has attained to man’s estate, he must be left free to follow whatever religion he may prefer. All these points are fully assented to by the Freemasons, and not only

do they accept them, but they have long been endeavouring to introduce them into manners and customs. Already in many countries, even in those that pass for Catholic, it has been enacted that no marriages other than civil marriages will be considered lawful; in others, the law allows divorce; while in others, every effort is being made to introduce legislation for the purpose as soon as possible. Thus the time is rapidly approaching when the nature of the matrimonial contract will have been completely perverted. It will come to be considered an unstable union entered into under the passing influence of passion and liable to be dissolved when that influence has grown weak.”

“In their efforts to secure control of the education of youth, the Freemasons show the greatest unity and cohesion. They expect that they can easily form those soft and malleable minds according to their own ideas and mould them to their purposes. They are well aware that nothing can be more efficacious than the training of youth to prepare for the State a race of citizens of the type they long for. Accordingly, they will not allow Catholic

priests to have any share either in the actual teaching in or in the management and control of schools for the education and instruction of children. In many places they have already succeeded in placing the training of youth exclusively in the hands of laymen, and they excluded from moral formation any mention of those all-important and most sacred duties of man towards God.”

“Next comes their political doctrine. In the sphere of politics, the Naturalists lay down that all men have the same rights and that all are equal and alike in every respect; that everyone is by nature free and independent; that no one has the right to exercise authority over another; that it is an act of violence to demand of men obedience to any authority not emanating from themselves. All power is, therefore, in the free people. Those who exercise authority do so either by the mandate or the permission of the people, so that, when the popular will changes, rulers of States may lawfully be deposed even against their will. The source of all rights and civic duties is held to reside in either in the multitude or in the ruling

power in the State, provided it has been constituted according to the new principles. They hold also that the State should not acknowledge God and that, out of the various forms of religion, there is no reason why one should be preferred to another. According to them, all should be on the same level.”

“Now that these views are held by the Freemasons also, and that they want to set up States constituted according to this ideal, is too well known to be in need of proof. For a long time they have been openly striving with all their strength and with all the resources at their command to bring this about. They thus prepare the way for those numerous and reckless spirits who, in their mad desire to arrive at equality and common ownership of goods, are ready to hurl society into an even worse condition, by the destruction of rank and property.”

Commentary on Fr. Fahey’s astute quotes will be the topic of next month’s article.

To be Continued



Franciscan Saints

MARCH 14

THE SERVANT OF GOD
APOLLONIA OF BOLOGNA

Widow, Third Order

Apollonia descended from a very noble family in the city of Bologna. Already as a child she was conspicuous for modesty and retirement. While other parents could not do enough to provide their children with beautiful garments and elegant attire, little Apollonia besought her mother not to dress her in that way. Even as a young woman she dressed as simply as her station in life permitted. She preferred being active at home, or entertaining herself with good books, to going abroad.

Already as a child, she was conspicuous for modesty and retirement.

In accordance with the wishes of her parents, she married a good young man of her social rank. Her husband agreed to

let her continue living a retired life even in the married state. He gave her free rein in the management of the household, and, as a result, everything in it was well ordered; for, although Apollonia was much devoted to practices of piety, she was no less diligent in the performance of the duties of a provident and prudent housewife. The maxim

of St. Frances of Rome can also be applied to her: "A Christian housewife must ever be prepared

to leave off her practices of piety if the needs of her house require her presence." She gave no thought to increasing her wealth, which was sufficient for their maintenance, but she was solicitous to obtain God's

blessing for her house and to acquire everlasting treasures for eternity through generosity and pious gifts.

When her husband died, she laid aside all marks of her distinguished rank and disguised herself in the ash-gray habit of the Third Order. She used her wealth to found several institutions for the poor and the sick, and thither she repaired each day to administer to the distressed whatever service Christian charity could suggest. Finally, she herself was visited by God with a severe illness. She used this opportunity further to purify her soul and to increase her merits, and bore it with admirable patience until death led her to her eternal reward on March 12, 1500. She was buried in the church of the Friars Minor just outside the gate of the city of Bologna, and was glorified by God with several miracles.

ON CURIOSITY

1. Behold in this servant of God how a young woman in the world, even a married woman, can serve God perfectly amid the varying cares of a large household. It is not the duties of their state that hinder young

women and housewives from serving God as Apollonia did; it is rather that very general curiosity which is so much at variance with Apollonia's retirement. That is what leads so many to see that they are kept well-informed on everything that occurs in their locality, to hear everything that others have said, to relate and have related to them everything that is thought about others or that is expected of them. That such hearts are not sufficiently composed to serve God with the fulfillment of their duties; that, on the contrary, they neglect many a point in these duties; and that even their prayers, if they do say any at all, do not amount to much — that is very obvious. Because curiosity is so destructive, our Lord chided St. Peter when he asked about the destiny of John: "What is it to thee? Follow thou me." (John 21:22) — How often would our Lord have to direct such a reproof to you?

2. Consider that because others interfere in our affairs, we are not, on that account, justified in examining into and criticizing their affairs. Thomas a Kempis (3:24) says: "Let the unquiet be as unquiet as he will. Whatsoever he shall do or say, will come

upon himself, because he cannot deceive me. Thou dost not need to answer for others, but thou shalt for thyself give an account; why, therefore, dost thou meddle with them?" — Would that all curious persons and such that are ever occupied with other people's concerns would take this advice to heart.

3. Consider the peace of heart that is our portion if we do not concern ourselves with the doings of others. "How can he long abide in peace," says Thomas a Kempis again, "who entangleth himself with other men's concerns? When thou didst follow after thy inclination to hear news, what didst thou derive therefrom but disquietude of heart? If thou wilt let men alone, they will leave thee alone

to do as thou wilt. If thou dost not entangle thyself in matters that do not concern thee, it will undoubtedly happen that interior peace will seldom and but little be disturbed." — How happy will he be who will behave accordingly! Pray to God that He may help you to acquire these sentiments during this holy season of Lent.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

(Monday of the Third Week in Lent]

Pour forth in Thy mercy, O Lord, we beseech Thee, Thy grace into our hearts, that as we abstain from bodily food, so we may also restrain our senses from hurtful excesses. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



THE PRUDENT CHRISTIAN;

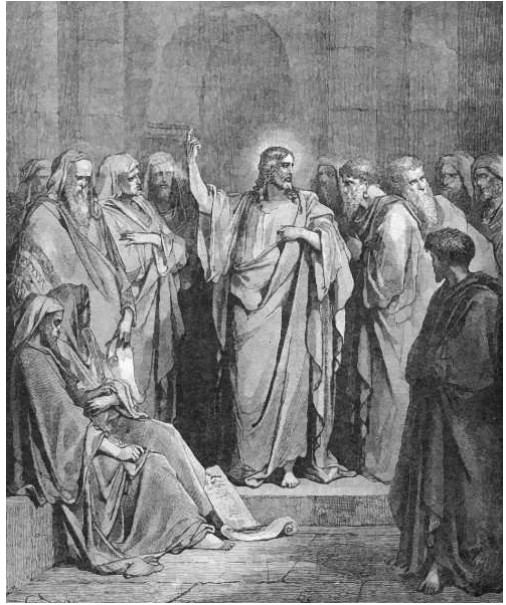
OR,

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.



THE PRUDENT CHRISTIAN'S CONSIDERATIONS.

CONSIDERATION I.

ON THE NECESSITY, AND BENEFITS, OF CONSIDERATION.

WHEN we take a view of the present state of society, and consider its conduct in relation to the business of salvation, we cannot, as Christians, but be sensible that the spectacle is hardly less astonishing in the eyes of reason, than it is distressing to the feelings of religion. We see men, everywhere, — the far larger portions of the public, — completely inattentive to the

important interests of eternity; and indifferent to all the great ends, for which they have been placed in this life. We see them advancing with blind, and stupid, security, to the very brink of the grave, without having, so much as once, asked themselves seriously the awful question, — what, most probably, will be the lot, which awaits them beyond that boundary, — whether the objects, which they will meet with there, are realities, or only phantoms. They see death, with all its long train of everlasting consequences, drawing close upon them, without either any precaution, or apprehension, — as if absolutely ignorant, whether these frightful things

relate to them or not. In short, insensible to the *future*, men now only regard the *present*: and whilst they are all solicitude for the benefits, and satisfactions, of this world, — for the immortal advantages, and delights, of the life to come they are all coldness, and indifference. Such, at present, is the general state of the Christian world. Where there is one, who attends carefully to the work of his salvation, there are thousands who neglect it.

It is owing to this unfortunate want of consideration, that there now prevails in all the walks of society, not only a general spirit of dissipation, but an almost universal reign of iniquity, and corruption. Never was this sentence of the prophet more exactly verified, than it is at the present day, — “*With desolation is the whole earth laid desolate, because there is no one, who thinks in his heart.*”

The consequence is only natural: — for, what we do not think on, is, in reality, almost as nothing in our regard. Whenever we allow, either our passions to hold the empire over our reason; or our worldly interests to prevail over our piety, we then look upon those objects and pursuits, as alone, deserving of our care, and

industry, which are gratifying to our senses, and pleasing to our desires: so that what we do not see, nor touch, nor feel, is little else in our esteem, than mere shadows or empty visions.

We do, indeed, profess to believe the articles of our religion; and to reverence the maxims of salvation. But then, the case is, we hardly ever reflect upon them. They subsist, laid up in our minds, neglected, and inanimate, — mere furniture, which is of little, or no service to us. For, the truths of religion, and the principles of salvation, in order to produce any beneficial effects, must be seriously, and often, ruminated. Without this, they remain powerless, and of no avail, — the ornaments at best of the memory; or as torches, which yield no light.

I. The great principle, then, of our salvation is serious consideration. It is this, that fills the mind with salutary thoughts; that warms, and inflames, the heart; and that nourishes in it holy, and exalted, sentiments; — and that, therefore, forms, — since our actions are but the effects of our thoughts, and feelings, — the real foundation of our future happiness. Whence,

that saying of St. Austin, — a saying, which is alike philosophic, as it is Christian: — “*A thoughtful mind is the very first principle of every good.*” It is, in fact, only by reflection, that we become impressed with a sense of the emptiness of all that passes away with time; and of the infinite importance of what lasts forever. It is by reflection, that we learn to know ourselves; to live secure amid the dangers of the world; to acquire a taste for piety, and a fear of sin. We are, even, assured by the Divine Wisdom that, provided we do reflect seriously, we shall never sin: “*Remember thy last end; and thou shalt NEVER sin.*”

Did we, indeed, only remember well the end, for which we have been created, and placed in this world, — that we are placed here, only for a few days, in order to fit ourselves for a life, which is destined to last forever, — that, at any instant of time, we may be suddenly called away to the grave; — that soon we must appear before the tribunal of God, there to undergo a rigid examination of our whole conduct, — to be there either condemned to eternal misery, or exalted to

everlasting happiness, — did we but carefully remember all this, how seldom, under the awful impressions, should we have the imprudence, — the frightful courage, — to sin! It was, accordingly, under the influence of this remembrance, imprinted deeply upon their souls by the practice of meditation, that the saints were induced, not only to avoid sin, as the greatest of all possible evils; but with the most fervent assiduity to devote their whole lives to the cultivation of innocence, and piety.

II. As thus it is consideration, that constitutes the main principle of our future happiness, — so, of course, it is the neglect of it, that forms the chief source of our eternal misery. In fact, without the aid of consideration, we are blind, ignorant, and incautious; and therefore, likewise, lifeless, torpid, and indifferent, — neither loving God, nor serving Him, as we should do; — neither feeling any relish for piety, nor any affection for the exercises of religion; — neither sensible of the evil of sin, nor apprehensive of its punishments. Unenlivened by the influences, and unenlightened by the lessons, of this instructive monitor, we are made the easy dupes of our passions, and the victims of dissipation. And then,

too, by a consequence, which is natural almost, as it is fatal, — in this alarming situation, although thus blind, we love the blindness; although thus sick, we are pleased with the malady. We go on heedless to the very grave, — as insensible almost to our future doom, as were those victims of the ancient pagans, which, crowned with garlands, proceeded to the scene of slaughter, unaware of their approaching sufferings.

But, were it even the case, that there did not exist within ourselves, — in our own passions, and propensities, — any urgent motives to make us feel the importance of serious consideration, — the mere circumstance of our living in the *world*, — *in* the midst of dangers, temptations, and distractions, is, alone, sufficient to convince us of its necessity. Here, everything calls away our thoughts from “the one thing necessary,” — almost everything being an invitation to *vice*, *vanity*, and pleasure: whilst, at the same time, there is little or nothing around us, that is calculated to excite us to the love of piety; or to awaken in our minds a sense of religion, or an interest for salvation. Under these circumstances, therefore, without the aid of consideration,

our ruin is inevitable. For, thus, unless we do call in its salutary assistance, — we live in the midst of dangers without a refuge; and in the atmosphere of contagion without an antidote.

Hence, if the security of our salvation be dear to us; — if we wish to entertain the reasonable hope of future happiness, — let us adopt, as the most effectual method, the habitual exercise of consideration. Let us make it one of our established rules, to set aside, each day, some little portion of our time for this sanctifying duty. For, if in our worldly prudence, we deem it necessary to employ study, and reflection, in order to conduct our temporal concerns with wisdom; and to ensure success, or the prospect of success, — to our undertakings, — we, surely, cannot but conceive, that the same kind of care must be at least equally required for the enlightened management of the momentous business of our salvation,

III. To some of us, the task of studious meditation would be, not only difficult, but impracticable. Where such is the case, let us then call in, and every day employ, the very simple, and easy exercise of reading pious

books. This, alike practicable to us all, — to the illiterate as much as to the learned, — will hold the place, and not unfrequently answer all the ends, of the deepest meditations. Pious books, attentively read, are the fountains of grace; and the sources often of distinguished blessings. They are mirrors, which show us the stains of our character, and the deformity of our hearts. “*Good books,*” says St. Austin, “*are so many letters, sent down to us from heaven.*” Accordingly, what a multitude of sinners do we not read of, who, to the happy circumstance of having piously attended to them, have owed the blessing of their conversion! Whilst again, how many saintly Christians are there not, in various situations, even now, who are indebted to these friendly counsellors for the health of their souls, and the stability of their virtue! In fact, they instruct, and animate, us in everything relating to the work of our salvation. Representing to us the goodness of God, they encourage us to love him. Exhibiting the ingratitude of sin, they prevail upon us to avoid it. They talk to us of the vanity of the world; of the emptiness of pleasure; of the shortness, and uncertainty, of human life. They describe to us alternately

the happiness of heaven, and the miseries of hell, — the joys, and delights, of the elect; and the torments, and ignominies, of the damned. They point out to us the road to heaven, — show us how the saints arrived there; and how they obtained their crowns. So that, as St. Austin observes, they may very properly be considered as “so many letters, sent down to us from heaven.” Let us, therefore, look upon them as such. Thus, we shall often read, and revere, them: and they will help to imprint thoughts upon our minds, and feelings upon our hearts, that will accompany us in all our conduct, — enlightening us in all our actions; animating us in the pursuit of virtue; and restraining us from everything, that is criminal, or wrong. Such as these will be the benefits, which we shall derive from the use of pious reading, — provided only that we are assiduous in the cultivation of the instructive practice.

Wherefore, let us earnestly adopt the salutary custom. And let us select as the themes, both of our pious reading, and meditations, those subjects principally, which, by moving the heart, are particularly adapted to interest the understanding.

To the dissipated, and the negligent, the business of meditation may seem, — as it unfortunately does seem, — a very tedious, and unpleasing, task. To the virtuous, and enlightened, Christian it is, however, directly the reverse. To him it is a delightful occupation. It is then, that God speaks to his heart; consoles the tenderness of his conscience; and soothes his fears. It is then, that he enlivens, and instructs, his mind; unfolds to him the benefits, and the sweets, of virtue; and the miseries, and the bitterness, of sin. Hence, then, once more, let us piously adopt, and assiduously cultivate, the useful exercise. It will prove the protection of our innocence here; and be the great source of our happiness hereafter.

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