

GOD THE TEACHER

OF

MANKIND:

A PLAIN, COMPREHENSIVE EXPLANATION OF CHRISTIAN
DOCTRINE.

THE GREATEST and the FIRST COMMANDMENT.

BY

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ON THE HONOR AND INVOCATION OF THE SAINTS.

26. May we honor the saints of God?

Yes: 1, because we honor God in them; 2, because we may obtain many graces through their prayers.

1. WHY WE HONOR THE SAINTS.

We read in Holy Scripture that, after Joseph, the son of the holy patriarch Jacob, had explained the two dreams of Pharaoh, the king rose and said to his servants: "Can we find such another man filled with the spirit of God?" And as no one replied, Pharaoh turned to Joseph, and said: "Seeing God hath showed thee all thou hast said, can I find one wiser and like to thee? Thou shalt be over my house, and thy word all the people shall obey; only in the throne will I be before thee." And he took his

own ring from his own hand, and gave it into his hand, and he put upon him a robe of fine linen, and a chain of gold round his neck, and caused him to mount up into the second royal chariot, and ordered the crier to go before him, proclaiming to all the people that they should bow their knee, and know that Joseph was made governor over the whole land of Egypt. Moreover he changed his name, and called him, in the Egyptian language, "Saviour of the world." And when the people cried to Pharaoh for food, he said to them: "Go to Joseph, and do all that he shall say to you." (Gen., xli.)

It is thus that the king of Egypt honored Joseph for the great gifts and excellent qualities which he discovered in him; and it was for the same reasons that he also wished all his subjects to bestow upon him all possible honors except the honor due to his royal majesty alone. "Only in the throne will I be before thee." Now, it is for similar reasons that we worship the angels and saints of God. When non-Catholics use the word "worship," they generally mean divine worship; for they do not worship the Blessed Virgin and the saints. Hence they object to Catholics that they pay divine worship to creatures, and thereby become guilty of idolatry. This calumny proceeds from their ignorance of the different meanings of the word "worship," and of the Catholic doctrine.

When the word "worship" is applied to God, it means *supreme* worship, which consists in giving God the honor of divine adoration. This worship is rendered to God alone.

When the word "worship" is applied to the saints of God, it means an *inferior* worship, or homage, which consists in honoring, in a suitable manner, the angels and saints of heaven. Finally, when the word "worship" is

applied to the Blessed Virgin Mary, it means a *superior* homage, rendered to her on account of her supereminent dignity and sanctity as mother of God. There is, therefore, an immense difference between the worship of God and the worship of the saints. We bestow upon the saints all such honors as we possibly can, except the honor of divine adoration, which we give to God alone.

The natural prompting of our heart impels us to respect and honor those who are renowned for their talents, learning, bravery, the dignity of their office, great charity, and other virtues. And we show this esteem outwardly in our words and actions. Good children honor and respect their parents; servants show respect to their masters, and subjects to their superiors. In like manner, the Catholic Church honors those servants of God who are crowned with grace and glory in heaven.

Now, the first faithful servants of God are the holy angels. We honor them—

- 1, For their natural and supernatural gifts;
- 2, For their virtues;
- 3, For the high dignity of their office; and
- 4, For their numberless benefits and services.

1. *We honor the angels for their natural and supernatural gifts.*

“It is more than probable,” says St. Thomas, “that God did not let a long interval of time pass between the creation of spirits, or angels, and the creation of bodies.” “At the beginning of time,” says the council of Lateran, “God simultaneously created two kinds of beings—the one spiritual, the other corporal.”

There is, indeed, no reason to suppose that when God

created heaven, he did not, at the same time create also those who were to inhabit it, and he did not create these inhabitants of heaven as a world apart; he created them to constitute, together with all other created beings, the beauty and perfection of one universal world. God created them as intermediate spiritual powers between himself and mankind. They are pure spirits, that is, intelligent spiritual beings. They have no bodies, nor were they created to be united to bodies, as our souls are. They have no size, no figure, no head, no hands, no feet. They cannot be seen or felt by our senses.

They are simple beings, that is, they are not composed of parts. Hence they are immortal, as every spirit is; for a being that is not composed of parts can never perish except by the omnipotence of God.

The angels are endowed with beauty, power, agility, with subtlety and quickness of penetration, and with a knowledge and science of natural things, which are beyond all human conception.

Beauty is a ray emanating from the Divinity. Hence it is honored by all spirits and loved by all hearts. Now, the angels possess a two-fold beauty—They have a natural and supernatural beauty.

Their natural beauty comes from the very purity of their being which, as it is spiritual, surpasses in dignity and perfection, all other beings; for everything beautiful, contained in inferior beings, is also found in superior beings. Hence an angel of the lowest order is far more beautiful than anything, even the most charming in the whole universe.

The angels do not, like men, derive their existence one from another. They are the first works of God's hands,

the first productions of his omnipotence, the first masterpieces of his wisdom, the first rays of his beauty.

This is but a very imperfect description of the natural gifts of the good spirits. Unspeakably more wonderful is their supernatural beauty, which is derived from their noble spiritual endowments of grace and the riches of immortal glory. St. John the Evangelist, upon seeing an angel in his supernatural beauty, fell prostrate to adore him, thinking that he was the Son of God himself. St. Anselm assures us that, if an angel could make himself visible in all his glory in place of the sun, the light of the sun would altogether disappear in the light and splendor of the angel. St. Bridget said that, at the sight of an angel, we would die of joy. St. Lidwine, who became one of the most extraordinary saints of the Church by her heroic patience in her most excruciating pains which she suffered for thirty-five years, was vouchsafed to see her guardian angel in a bodily shape. She tells us that, at the sight of the angel, every pain of soul and body disappears.

Now the holy angels have all their natural and supernatural gifts from God. By honoring them for these gifts we honor God himself as the Author of them. He who praises a great work of art, praises the artist himself who made it. In like manner, he who honors and praises the angels, honors and praises at the same time God who created the angels.

2. *We honor the holy angels for their virtues.*

God created the angels in a state of natural happiness, and destined them to reach supernatural happiness in heaven by means of his grace and their own merit.

“As the vegetation of plants,” says St. Augustine,

“did not spring forth from the earth at its original formation, but received at first the virtue of germinating, and then acquired the full development and perfection of which they were capable by time and culture, so the angels were created in natural, but not supernatural beatitude. They acquired supernatural beatitude afterwards by their knowledge of the Word, and the contemplation of the Divine Essence.

The angels, however, could not reach their supernatural end without the assistance of divine grace or supernatural means, which can be obtained only by perfect love, merit and the mercy of God.

All that Divine Providence has produced in the course of ages existed, as St. Augustine says, at the beginning of creation, in the so-called seminal, radical, fundamental causes, such as vegetation of every kind—animals, and material bodies. So that all things in creation attain their perfection in virtue of this imperishable seed, which exists in their nature since the beginning of the world.

Now, as the angels were destined for supernatural happiness, it was necessary that the imperishable seed of divine grace should be in them. St. John alludes to this divine seed when he says: “Whoever is born of God, committeth not sin, for his (God’s) seed (divine grace) abideth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.” (Chapt. iii., 9.)

A rational being can obtain an object only by some act which it makes, and that act cannot have the power of putting him in possession of an object which is of a supernatural order. Now, eternal beatitude is a good of a supernatural order, God alone has always enjoyed that perfect glory and happiness. No matter, how great the

natural perfection of the angels was, they could not, by an act of their own natural perfection, put themselves in possession of an object of supernatural perfection. It is only by divine grace that they could merit and obtain it. It is, therefore, evident that the angels were blessed with divine grace before they merited heavenly beatitude.

They merited and obtained that beatitude, not long after their creation, by their first act of perfect love. An angel acts not as man does. The intellectual faculties of an angel are far superior to those of man. He perceives things in a moment. We, on the contrary, are slow in perceiving things. Hence, we take time to reflect and to deliberate before we act. We accomplish things only by degrees. We are wavering and inconstant in our choice. It is not so with an angel. When he makes his choice, he makes it irrevocable for ever by the first act of his will. That first act of the will of the good angels was an act of perfect love of God and of obedience to him. This act was sufficient to merit eternal beatitude, and to fix them in goodness and in love for God for all eternity.

By being submissive to God and adhering to his holy will, the good angels have set a great example of humility and obedience to all men; they have shown us the only true road to eternal happiness, which is no other than the road of perfect submission to the divine teaching interpreted, not by private judgment, but by the Church of Jesus Christ, the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Roman Church.

3. *We honor the holy angels for the high dignity of their office.*

God created various beings to manifest his perfections. Now, the grander and the more perfect he made certain

creatures, says St. Thomas, the more numerous they are in kind. How prodigiously grand are not the heavenly bodies! Terrestrial bodies are but points scarcely perceptible in comparison with them. Even the whole globe of the earth is but a very small portion of the creation. Almost numberless planets are thousands of times larger than our globe.

As to angels, who hold the first rank amongst all created beings, and are the most perfect, they outnumber all other things in the whole universe. "Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him." (Dan., vii., 10.)

"But you are come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels." (Heb., xii., 22.) "And I beheld and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the ancients: and the number of them was thousands of thousands." (Apoc., v., 11.)

Now the angels do not all enjoy the same perfections. Some of them are more privileged than others. The natural spiritual faculties as well as the supernatural gifts of grace of some of them are greater than those of others. God communicates his supernatural gifts and graces to his rational creatures in proportion to their natural perfections. The higher the angels are in natural perfection, the more abundantly they are endowed with the supernatural gifts of grace and glory. Those angels who were endowed by God with a more perfect substance, a more active and penetrating understanding in their natural state, says the Master of Sentences, were also endowed with greater gifts of grace in their supernatural glorification. Grace is the

perfection of nature, and glory the final perfection of grace. The nature of an angel as well as that of man is the foundation of the spiritual edifice; grace and glory are its supernatural and everlasting ornament.

Though the angels are not in the highest degree of beatitude, yet they cannot rise higher in the glory which they enjoy by the irrevocable decree of divine Predestination. However their joy can be increased by the salvation of those whom they assisted during their pilgrimage on earth; for we are told in the Gospel: "I say to you, there will be more joy amongst the angels in heaven for one sinner doing penance, than for ninety-nine just who do not need penance." (Luke, xv., 7.) These transports of joy of the angels are but accidental rewards. They are more the result of their beatitude than of their merit; hence they can increase even to the day of general judgment.

From the difference of the natural and supernatural gifts of the angels arises the difference of the orders of the angels.

There are three hierarchies of angels. Each hierarchy consists of a superior, intermediate and inferior order of angels.

The first hierarchy is composed of the orders of Cherubim, of Seraphim and, of Thrones; the second, of the orders of Dominations, Virtues and Powers; and the third, of the orders of Principalities, Archangels and Angels.

In creating heaven and earth, says St. Thomas Aquinas, God established an immutable law, a marvellous order, a universal harmony among all his creatures. This order or law is that the good of inferior beings is to be effected

by means of superior beings, that beings of an inferior order are to be led to God by beings of a higher order, receive from them the knowledge of divine things, and be governed by them.

According to this divine law and order, the Lord of heaven and earth enlightens and governs the angels of a lower order by those of a higher order.

The angels of the first hierarchy who are nearest to God, enjoy the plenitude of beatific vision. They surpass all the other angels in the knowledge of God and divine things, in power and in glory. They enlighten the angels of lower orders; that is, they communicate to them the knowledge of divine things. They are to them what a teacher is to his pupils. These angels had even a foreknowledge of the mystery of the Incarnation, and God will never cease even to the day of general judgment, to reveal to them things concerning the human race, and thus they will always have new things to communicate to the angels of the lowest order of the divine hierarchy; nay, even after the day of general judgment, they will never cease casting light and splendor on those of the lowest order, and on the souls of the elect.

We read in Holy Scripture that a Seraphim purified by fire the lips of the prophet Isaias. However, the Seraphim did not go himself. He commissioned an angel of a lower order to represent him, and so he is said to have fulfilled this office himself, just as we say that the Pope gives absolution when his legate gives it.

The privilege of the angels of the second hierarchy is to participate in the divine government of the universe. In a well organized administration, there are some who receive orders from the king; others, who take necessary

measures for the execution of the king's orders, and others, who determine the manner in which the orders of the king are to be carried out.

In the divine government the angels, called the *Dominations*, receive the orders of the King of heaven and earth; there are others, called the *Virtues*, who take proper measures for the execution of these orders; and there are others again, called the *Powers*, who determine the manner of executing the orders of the Lord of heaven and earth.

To secure the faithful execution of an order, there must be men to direct the execution. Every choir has a director, and every army has higher officers. There must be other men, who, as simple instruments of the will of others, execute the order, and there must be others, who are subaltern officers between the higher officers and soldiers.

In the divine government, the angels of the third hierarchy, called the *Principalities*, direct the execution of the divine orders; the angels of the lowest order are the simple instruments that execute the orders.

Between the *Principalities* and the angels are the Archangels, as subaltern officers are between the staff and simple soldiers.

It is the opinion of all the Doctors of the Church that the angels exercise a universal power in the government of the moral and physical world. "In this world," says St. Augustine, "nothing can be perfectly accomplished without the intervention of an invisible being." St. Gregory says, "that the angels, called the Powers, have control over the evil spirits, and that those angels, called the Virtues, preside over human affairs." The angels called the

Principalities have charge of provinces and kingdoms; those called the *Virtues*, perform great miracles and extraordinary things in nature; and those called the *Dominations*, are charged with the spiritual government of grace.

It is true, God could take care of and direct and govern all things in person, but he wishes to make use of his angels in order to show us the greatness of his Kingdom, and the majesty and magnificence of the Celestial Court, and that he has established in the world a most wise and admirable government, in which superior beings have the office of directing inferior ones.

4. *We honor the angels for their numberless benefits and services.*

The angels are intermediate powers between God and mankind—they are higher in dignity and power than we are. Hence God makes use of them to procure our temporal and spiritual good. “Are not all the angels ministering spirits,” says St. Paul, “sent to minister for those who shall receive the inheritance of salvation.” (Heb., i., 14.)

It was through his angels that God enlightened the prophets to know and announce future events. The angel Gabriel was sent by God to the prophet Daniel, to tell him the precise time of the coming of the promised Redeemer, the mighty works which the Redeemer would perform, and the terrible punishments which would fall upon the ungrateful city of Jerusalem.

The same angel was afterwards sent to Zachary, to tell him of the birth of St. John the Baptist; and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to announce to her that she was chosen by God to become the Mother of the Redeemer.

It was by an angel that God showed to St. John the future state of the Catholic Church. An angel of the Lord removed the stone from the sepulchre of Jesus Christ, and announced to the holy women that our Saviour was risen.

An angel of the Lord told St. Philip the Apostle to go and teach the Christian religion to the eunuch of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. "And the apostle went and instructed him on the way from Jerusalem to Gaza, and baptized him." (Acts, viii.)

The angels present our prayers and good works to God. The angel Raphael said to Tobias that he had treasured up his alms, his abstinences and his prayers, like so much heavenly perfume, and presented them to God: "When thou didst pray with tears. . . . I offered thy prayer to the Lord." (Tob., xii., 12.)

"Behold," says St. John, "an angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer: and there was given him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God, *from the hand of the angel.*" (Apoc., viii., 3, 4.)

The angels do not only present our prayers to God, but they also pray themselves for us.

The prophet Zacharias heard an angel pray for Israel in these words: "O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, with which thou hast been angry so long." (Zach., i., 12.) And immediately afterwards the Lord comforts the angel by granting his prayer, and promises to bestow again his mercies upon Jerusalem. The angels console the afflicted.

An angel from heaven strengthened our Saviour in his agony. (Luke, xxii., 43.)

We read in Holy Scripture that Abraham dismissed Agar and her son from his house. Agar went into the wilderness of Bersabee. When the water which she took along was spent, she cast the boy under one of the trees and went away some distance; "for," said she, "I will not see the boy die." She cried and wept bitterly. God heard the voice of the boy. And an angel of God said to Agar: "What art thou doing, Agar? fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the boy. Arise, take up the boy, and hold him by the hand, for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water, and she went and gave the boy to drink." (Gen., xxi., 14, 19.) An angel of the Lord said to Habacuc: "Carry the dinner which thou hast into Babylon to Daniel, who is in the lions' den." And Habacuc said: "Lord I never saw Babylon, nor do I know the den." And the Angel of the Lord took him by the hair of his head, and set him in Babylon over the den, in the force of his spirit. Daniel arose and ate. And the Angel of the Lord presently set Habacuc again in his own place." (Dan., xiv., 33, 38.) An angel of the Lord descended at a certain time into the pond, called Probation, and the water was moved. And he that went down first into the pond after the motion of the water, was made whole of whatever infirmity he lay under. (John., v., 4.)

When Abraham, at the command of God was on the point to sacrifice his son, an angel of the Lord from heaven called to him saying: "Lay not thy hand upon the boy, neither do thou anything to him. Now, I know that thou fearest God, and hast not spared thy only-begotten son for my sake." (Gen., xxii., 11, 12.)

The angels perform great miracles for men. An angel of the Lord delivered Lot and his family from the burning of Sodom. "The wicked inhabitants of Sodom, who beset the house of Lot, were struck with blindness by two angels." (Gen., xix., 11.)

At the time of David, the Lord slew, by means of an angel, seventy-two thousand men of the city of Jerusalem. (II. Kings, xxiv., 16.)

The King Ezechias was assured by the prophet Isaias that the king of the Assyrians would not take the city of Jerusalem. "Thus saith the Lord of the king of the Assyrians: He shall not come into the city, nor shoot an arrow into it, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a trench about it. By the way he came he shall return, and into this city he shall not come, saith the Lord. And I will protect this city, and will save it. . . . And it came to pass that night that an angel of the Lord came, and slew in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand." (IV. Kings, xix., 32, 35.)

An angel of the Lord delivered the three children from the flames of the fiery furnace, and Daniel from the lions. (Dan., iii., 49; vi., 22.)

God has appointed the angels as guardians of his Church.

No sooner had Lucifer and his adherents raised the standard of revolt against God, than St. Michael and all the faithful angels entered upon a war against them, executed the sentence which God had passed upon them, and expelled them from their blessed abodes.

Satan is the sworn enemy of God's holy Church. St. Michael is appointed by God to be her special protector against his assaults and stratagems. As such he was the defender of the Jewish synagogue. (Dan., xii.) He was

always so looked upon by the Jews. This holy archangel has ever been honored in the Catholic Church under the same title, as her guardian under God and as the protector of the faithful.

According to tradition, St. Michael appeared to Constantine, and said to him: "It was I who, when you fought against the impiety of tyrants, rendered your arms victorious."

During the time of the persecution of Antichrist, this valiant guardian and protector of the Church will powerfully stand up in her defence: "At that time shall Michael rise up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people." (Dan., xii., 1.) (See Apostles' Creed, p. 166.)

St. Peter was delivered from his chains and prison by an angel of the Lord; (Acts, xii.) and an angel saved St. Paul, and all who were with him, from shipwreck. (Acts, xxvii., 23.) "An angel of the Lord also, by night, opened the door of the prison, and led the Apostles out." (Acts, v.)

Almighty God has also given to every man an angel to guard and protect him. Divine Providence protects and preserves especially what is everlasting. As the soul of man is immortal, God has given it an angel to watch over it. "The Lord has given his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways." (Ps., xc, 11.)

A messenger who is sent on a dangerous journey needs an escort to protect him. We are all on a dangerous journey towards eternity. Hence it is that our Lord gives to every man an angel to stay with him and protect him in all the danger of soul and body, from the moment of his birth until death. "Take heed," says our Lord,

“that you despise not one of these little ones: for I say to you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.” (Matt., xviii., 10.)

He who dies a faithful child of the Church will be carried by his guardian angel to heaven, there to partake of the eternal glory of the angels. “And it came to pass that the beggar (Lazarus) died, and he was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” (Luke, xvi., 22.)

We know from Holy Scripture that angels have appeared in human form. Three angels appeared to Abraham, Lot, and the inhabitants of Sodom. They condensed and transformed the air so as to make it resemble a human body. They took that form, not by their own power and will, but by the power and will of him who sent them, for the instruction of men and to give us an evident foreknowledge of his mercy and glory.

When young Tobias was seeking a guide for his journey, the angel Raphael presented himself in the shape of a man, and declared himself ready to accompany him on his dangerous journey. “He conducted me,” says young Tobias to his parents, “and he brought me safe back. He delivered me from being devoured by the fish; thee, also, he hath made to see the light of heaven; he chased the evil spirit from the wife whom he caused me to have; he gave joy to her parents; and we are filled with all good things through him.” (Tob., xii.)

Overberg was once travelling in a carriage with two nuns. Night overtook them as they were passing through a lonely moor. The night was very dark, they lost their way, and the coachman drove on, he knew not whither. After wandering about for some hours, they at last noticed a light glimmering in the distance. Full of joy they

hastened to the spot of the light, and at last came to a neat farm house. Overberg entered the house and enquired the way to the neighboring town. The master of the house and his wife received Overberg and his companions very kindly, and offered them an agreeable repast. Overberg was so pleased with the kindness of the good people, that he resolved to stay there over night, especially as he feared to go astray again on that inhospitable moor. After speaking together for some time the host and hostess retired to rest; the two nuns also retired to their room, and Overberg remained up alone to recite part of his office. As he was saying his breviary he happened to notice a little picture of the guardian angel, which he had in his breviary. He took the picture in his hand, and began to meditate on the happiness of having a bright angel from heaven to be our continual protector and guide. As he was quite absorbed in the thought of his guardian angel, he heard distinctly a knock at the door. He answered; "Come in!" The door opened and a beautiful youth stood before him. The youth bowed respectfully and said: Good sir, you must leave this house with your companions before one o'clock this night—you must leave quietly without awakening the inmates of the house. To-morrow morning you will find out the reason of this.

As soon as he had said this the youth disappeared. Overberg was filled with astonishment. "What can this mean? Am I awake or am I dreaming? Was this really a vision, or was it but the effect of a heated imagination?" He could not give a decided answer. He looked at his watch. It was just 11:30 P. M. He stood up, he walked through the house, he went into the kitchen. All the inmates of the house were sound asleep. The coachman alone remained,

sitting near the fire, waiting for Overberg and his companions. Overberg spoke first about indifferent matters, in order not to excite the suspicions of the coachman, and finally asked him where the young man had gone who had spoken to him a few minutes ago. The coachman replied, that he had not seen any one enter or leave the house. "Perhaps you were asleep or went out to the stable to see after the horses," said the priest. "Why Father," said the man, "I have been sitting here all the time waiting for you." "Have the nuns gone to sleep?" asked the priest again. "They went nearly an hour ago," answered the coachman. "Where is their room?" asked the priest. "Here," answered the coachman, pointing with his finger to the place where they slept. "And where will you sleep?" asked the priest. "Here in the kitchen," replied the man. "And where have they prepared the bed for me?" asked the priest once more. "It is here, near mine," answered the driver. "Very well!" said Overberg, "Do not wait for me, you may go to bed now. I will go to sleep too as soon as I have finished my office."

The coachman obeyed, and Overberg went back to his room. He sat down full of strange misgivings. Did he really see anything or was it only a vivid dream? He took the picture of the guardian angel again in his hand. He was again absorbed in meditation on the happiness of having an angel guardian. Suddenly a human face appeared a few feet from him. His first feeling was, naturally enough, one of terror but, he soon overcame his fears and gazed friendly at the apparition. On looking attentively at the features of this strange being, he noticed that it bore a close resemblance to the countenance of the angel on the picture. This strange

apparition continued for some time to gaze friendly at him and at last disappeared. Overberg now looked at his watch; it was just 12:15, A. M.

He now resolved to heed the strange warning, and act without delay. He went to the room where the nuns slept, called them and told them to get ready and leave the house as quickly and noiselessly as possible. He then roused the coachman, helped him to harness the horses; then placing some money on the table to reward the people for their hospitality, he hastily left with his companions. They travelled on, recommending themselves to the protection of God, and in about two hours they arrived safely at their destination, the town to which they were travelling.

On arriving at the inn, they ordered some refreshments, but scarcely had they begun to rest from the fatigues of the night, when a young man arrived in post-haste at the hotel. He seemed to be greatly agitated. He wrung his hands, walked to and fro with hurried steps, and seemed to be in the greatest distress. At last Overberg spoke to him, and inquired into the cause of his troubles. "Ah, Father!" said the young man, "I am afraid that some horrible murder was committed last night. Yesterday evening, said he, I left this town to go to a neighboring city on business. While passing through the lonesome moor some miles from here, I lost my way. After riding about in the darkness for some hours, I came to a farmhouse. As I had a large sum of money with me, I did not wish to enter the house, but hoped I would find some path leading from it to the main road. There was a light in one of the rooms. I went to the half-opened shutter and looked in. There, to my horror, I saw four savage-looking ruffians, sitting at a table. One of them took out his watch

and said to his companions: It is now one o'clock. They are surely all sound asleep by this time. Let us go and despatch them without delay. So saying they arose, and went out of the room, while I, full of terror, put spurs to my horse and rode off as fast as he could carry me. Ah, Father! these villains must have committed some terrible murder." On hearing this, the priest took the young man by the hand, and said: "My good friend, do not be troubled. Thank God! Those persons whom you supposed murdered are safe. They are here before you." He then related to the young man the particulars of his miraculous escape, and all returned thanks to God and to the good Guardian angel. Truly, holy writ assures us, "God has commanded his angels to guard us in all our ways." (Ps. 90.)

Finally, on the day of the general judgment of the world, all the angels will come with Jesus Christ in his majesty; they will gather all the nations together before him, and separate the wicked from the just. And after Jesus Christ has pronounced his irrevocable sentence upon the just and the wicked, the angels will accompany the just into life everlasting, while the wicked will be accompanied by Lucifer and all the rebellious angels, and enter with them into everlasting punishment. (Matt., xxv., 31, 32, 46.)

We have seen what the angels are, and for what reasons we honor and love them. Let us now see what the saints are, and for what reasons we should honor and love them.

The Catholic Church is holy in her divine Founder, Jesus Christ. She is holy in her doctrine, which is the doctrine of Christ and his holy Apostles; and his doctrine

is the expression of the will of his heavenly Father: "My doctrine is not mine, but of him that sent me." (John, vii., 16.) As the will of God is most holy, so also the doctrine, expressing the holy will of God, must be holy. Hence, the book containing the word of God is called the *holy Bible*, or *holy Scripture*. Every action and every word of our Saviour breathes holiness, inspires holiness, and leads to holiness. Therefore, he calls those blessed who learn his doctrine: "Blessed are your ears, because they hear. For, amen I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them." (Matt., xiii., 16.) Hence, all those who live up to this doctrine are called saints: "You are a chosen generation—a holy nation," says St. Peter of the Christians. (1 Pet., ii., 9.)

The very enemies of the Catholic Church bear witness to the holiness of her doctrine. Why have so many fallen away from her faith? It is because they had not courage enough to live up to her holy precepts. Why is it that so many do not embrace the Catholic faith who know that the Catholic Church is the only true Church of Christ? It is because they are afraid of her holy morals. Even the most wicked feel naturally convinced that the Catholic religion is holy: a fault in a Catholic is considered, and considered rightly, more grave than in one who is not a Catholic.

The Church is holy in her means of grace. It is her office to make men holy. She holds out to her children not only the holy example and doctrine of her divine Founder as the pathway to holiness; she also offers to them the means of grace, which enable them to live up to her holy doctrine. By his divine example and holy

doctrine, Christ showed us the narrow road that leads to heaven. But what would it avail us to know the road to heaven, if we had no strength to walk on that strait, and, to fallen humanity, hard road? This strength we have not of ourselves. God is the greatest supernatural good. We can, then, acquire this good only by supernatural strength, that is, by the help of Almighty God. By his sufferings and death, Christ obtained for us all the graces necessary to live up to his holy doctrine, to overcome all the evil inclinations of fallen nature, all the temptations, all the trials and struggles of life. These graces he wished to be applied to our souls by means of the sacraments and prayer, and he appointed his Church to sanctify her children by these means of grace.

The child is born in sin; the Church cleanses it in baptism, and makes it a child of God. The child is weak; the Church strengthens it in confirmation, makes it a brave soldier, to battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil. The child is wounded, falls into sin; the Church, like the good physician, probes the wounds, and pours into the bleeding heart the oil and wine of hope and consolation, in the sacrament of penance. The child is hungry and weary; the Church feeds it with heavenly food, nourishes and refreshes it with the precious body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ. The heart of the young man feels the fire of that love which first came from God, and which has become unholy only by abuse; and the Church, like a fond mother, sanctifies and preserves this natural love of the bridegroom and the bride. In the holy sacrament of marriage she blesses this love before the altar of God, and declares its bonds perpetual. And should the heart of the young man aspire to a higher and

holier destiny ; should he desire, in his inmost soul, to soar high above the weakening tenderness of mere human love ; should he desire to become the saviour of his fellow-men, the coöperator with God himself in the great work of redemption, the holy Church leads him by the hand, she "blesses, sanctifies, and consecrates" him before the altar of God ; she makes him a priest forever, a priest of the most High God.

At last, when her child is dying, the holy Catholic Church comes to his bedside with sanctifying oil, and the prayer of faith ; she administers to him the sacrament of extreme unction, to strengthen and console him in his fearful death-struggle. But her love does not end at the bed of death. She opens wide the doors of her temple ; she offers an asylum even to the dead body of her child. She blesses that body which was once the temple of the living God ; and she even consecrates the very ground in which that body is laid to rest.

The love of the Church for her children does not pause even at the grave. Day after day she offers up her prayers ; day after day she offers up the holy sacrifice of the altar for the souls of her children departed. The husband may forget the wife of his bosom, the mother may forget the child of her heart, but the holy Church does not forget her children, not even in death : her love is divine, it is eternal. And in this love the Church is impartial : she is just to all. As the holy spouse of Christ, she loves justice, and hates iniquity. She has spurned the anointed king from the temple of God until he repented of his crime ; and on the head of the lowly monk, who spent his days in labor and prayer, she has placed the triple crown.

The Church is holy in many of her members. What

is more natural than this? A mother that teaches her children so holy a doctrine, sets before them constantly the example of her divine Founder, that they may live and die as he did. A mother that has such powerful means to sanctify her children, cannot but be holy in the fruits of sanctity, in the saints, and in the sacred institutions which she has produced.

To be convinced of the personal sanctity of millions of her children, we have but to open the best authenticated *Lives* of the Saints, the Acts of the martyrs, the history of religious Orders, and of charitable Institutions, and the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith. There we read of thousands of men and women who fulfilled the saying of Christ: "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel, shall save it." (Mark, viii., 35.)

Oh! how many great tribulations did not the apostles and martyrs suffer for Christ's sake! Thousands of ways were invented by devilish malice to torture them. "Some," says St. Paul, "had trial of mockeries and stripes, of bands and prisons; others were stoned to death; others were cut to pieces; others were put to death by the sword; others wandered about in sheep-skins, in goat-skins, being in want, distressed, afflicted, wandering in deserts, in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth." (Heb., xi., 36.)

Such was the havoc made during the early persecutions of the Church, that her martyrs alone amount to thirty thousand for every day in the year.

How many thousands of the children of the Church have followed that saying of our Lord: "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow me!" (Matt., xix., 21.) And, "Everyone that

hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting." (Matt., xix., 29.) Astonishing, indeed, is the number of those who have followed this saying of our Lord, by embracing the religious life.

St. Athanasius writes that in his time there were monasteries like tabernacles, full of heavenly choirs of people, who spent their time in singing psalms, in reading and praying; that they occupied a large extent of land, and made, as it were, a town among themselves. Such immense numbers resorted to the religious life in Palestine, that Isidore was the superior of one thousand monks, and his successor, Apollonius, of five thousand in the same monastery. In the cloistered community of Oryrynchus there were ten thousand monks. Upon a hill in Nitria, about twenty miles from Alexandria, there were five hundred monasteries under one superior. Palladius relates that he saw a city in which there were more monasteries than houses of seculars, "so that, every street and corner ringing with the divine praises, the whole city seemed a church." He also testifies to having seen multitudes of monks in Memphis and Babylon, and that not far from Thebes he met with a Father of three thousand monks. St. Pachomius, who lived about three hundred years after Christ, had seven thousand disciples, besides one thousand in his own house; and Serapion had ten thousand monks under his jurisdiction.

Theodoret records that there were also multitudes of religious women throughout the East—in Palestine, Egypt, Asia, Pontus, Cilicia, Syria, and also in Europe: "Since our Saviour," he says, "was born of a Virgin Mother, the fields of holy virgins are everywhere multiplied."

Nor was the great increase of religious houses confined to the early ages of the Church, for Trithemius, who died about the year 1516, says that, in his time, the province of Ments alone contained one hundred and twenty-four abbeys; and that there was a time when they had fifteen thousand abbeys, besides priories and other small monasteries, belonging to his order.

St. Bernard, in his *Life of St. Malachy*, records that, in Ireland, there was a monastery out of which many thousands of monks had come forth: "A holy place indeed," he says, "and fruitful in saints, bringing forth abundant fruit to God, insomuch that one man alone of that holy congregation, whose name was Luanus, is reported to have been the founder of one hundred monasteries. And these swarms of saints have not only spread themselves in Ireland and Scotland, but have also gone into foreign parts; for St. Columba, coming from thence into France, built the monastery of Luxovium, and raised there a great people, their number being so great that the divine praises were sung by them day and night without intermission. St. Columba founded one hundred monasteries, of which thirty-seven were in Ireland, a country, which was, for centuries, known all over Europe as the *Island of Saints and Doctors*." According to Archdall, there were in Ireland seven hundred and forty-two religious houses.

St. Bernard, in the space of thirty years that he was abbot, founded one hundred and sixty monasteries. So rapid was the progress of his order, that, in the space of fifty years from its establishment, it had acquired five hundred abbeys; and at one time no fewer than eight hundred were dependent on Clairvaux.

The Franciscans seem to have been particularly blessed in the speedy and extensive propagation of their order, for, about the year 1600, one branch of this order, called the Observantines, is said to have numbered one hundred thousand members. This order reckons at present two hundred thousand men and three hundred thousand sisters, including the tertiaries. It possesses two hundred and fifty-two provinces, and twenty-six thousand convents, of which five are in Palestine, and over thirty in Turkey. More than eighty-nine emperors, kings and queens have been admitted into the order, which has, moreover, the glory of having furnished three thousand saints, or beatified persons, of whom seventeen hundred are martyrs.

Nor is the Church less holy in many of her members, in our day. Who really takes Christian care of the poor, the sick, and the friendless, but the Catholic Church? She has founded such orders as the Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of Mercy, the Sisters of St. Joseph, and so many others, in order to administer to their wants.

Where can you find, outside of the Catholic Church, that young and beautiful virgin, who lays at the foot of the cross her youth, her wealth, and her beauty; who sacrifices all earthly hope and love, to spend her days in a loathsome hospital, and to watch, during the long, dull night, by the bedside of the sick and dying? The charitable, heroic deeds of these holy virgins have already brought conviction to the minds and hearts of many non-Catholics.

St. John, the Evangelist, tells us that our Saviour cured one day a young man who had been born blind. The Pharisees heard of this, and were filled with rage and envy. They took the young man aside, and said to him :

“Give glory to God; that man that cured you is a sinner.” “Well,” said the young man, “whether he be a sinner or not, I cannot say. But one thing I do know, and that is, that he has cured me. God does not hear sinners. If this man were not from God, he could not do such things.” (John, ix.) This was the argument of the young man in the Gospel; this, too, is the simple argument of every honest non-Catholic. The bigots and Protestant preachers say to the returned soldier, to the young man who has just come forth from the hospital, where he suffered during a long and painful illness: “The Catholic Church is sinful and corrupt.” “Well,” the young man answers, “whether she is corrupt or not, I do not know; but one thing I do know, and that is, that I was at the point of death, now I am well; and I owe it, after God, to the good Sisters of the Catholic Church. They waited on me in the hospital, on the battle-field; they nursed me as tenderly as a mother or a sister could have done; and they did it without pay, without any human motive or reward. Now, a bad tree cannot bring forth such good fruit. If the Catholic Church were as sinful and corrupt as you say, God would not give her children such heroic devotedness.”

Behold, again, the holy charity of the Catholic Church toward the very outcasts of society,—those poor, fallen creatures, that have become the dishonor of their sex! See how closely she imitates her divine spouse, our Lord Jesus Christ! Jesus is present at a great feast. A poor, sinful woman, notorious on account of her wicked life, falls prostrate at his feet. She washes his feet with her tears, and wipes them with her hair. The Pharisees are shocked and scandalized. They say in their hearts:

“This man is no prophet; if he were a prophet, he would know what kind of a woman that is who kneels at his feet; he would spurn her from him.” But Jesus knows well the sinful life of Magdalen, and yet he does not reject her. On the contrary, he defends her before them all, and says to her: “My child, go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee!”

Ah, how full of mercy and compassion is the heart of Jesus Christ! Now look upon his spouse, the holy Catholic Church, and see if she is not worthy of her heavenly Bridegroom! The unfortunate woman whom many have helped to drag into destruction, has not now a hand stretched out to save her. The world that allured and ruined her despises her, and laughs her to scorn. The proud, self-righteous Pharisee turns away from her in horror and disgust. The grace of God at last touches her heart. She sees herself abandoned by all, she turns her despairing eyes to God. Friendless, homeless, and alone, she wanders through the dark by-ways of this valley of tears till at last she stands at the ever-open portals of the holy Catholic Church. She enters, she falls at the feet of the priest of Jesus Christ. She weeps, she repents, she is forgiven.

See those pure virgin nuns, who are justly called the Daughters of the Good Shepherd! They have sworn, before the altar of God, to devote their whole life to the reformation of these poor outcasts of society—these unhappy victims of a heartless world. See how gently they receive the fallen one, how kindly they treat her! See how she enters the convent chapel, and at the very feet of Jesus, in the blessed sacrament, she pours out her prayers, and sighs, and tears! She experiences at last

that there is rest for the weary, that there is hope for the sinner ; that there is, indeed, a heaven on earth, in the holy Catholic Church.

In every age, and in every country through which the Catholic religion has spread, there have been many Catholics who showed, in their daily conduct, that they complied with the words of St. Paul: "This is the will of God, your sanctification." (I. Thess., iv., 3.) They were scrupulous keepers of the commandments of God, fulfilling the whole law and the prophets. How could it be otherwise ? Jesus Christ, in the blessed sacrament,—this divine food, the source of all sanctity,—never ceases to bring forth holy bishops, like St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis de Sales, St. Alphonsus Liguori ; holy priests, like St. Vincent de Paul, St. Francis Xavier, St. Peter Claver ; holy virgins like St. Teresa, St. Catharine of Siena, St. Zita, St. Rose of Lima ; holy widows, like St. Frances de Chantal ; holy martyrs, like Borie, Gagelin, and so many others.

What strict and self-renouncing life did not all holy confessors and virgins lead ! What long and grievous temptations did they not bear ! How often were they not harrassed by the enemy ! What frequent and fervent prayers have they not offered up to God ! What rigorous abstinence have they not practised ! What great zeal and fervor have they not shown for their own spiritual advancement and that of their fellow-men ! How cruel and long was not the war which they waged to subdue their passions ! What purity of intention did they not keep up towards God !

By day they labored, and much of the night they spent in prayer ; though while laboring they were far

from leaving off mental prayer. They renounced riches, dignities, honors, and all that was near and dear to them, to follow Jesus Christ more closely, and resemble him every day more and more.

Outwardly they were poor in earthly things, and suffered great wants; but inwardly they were rich in grace, and abounded in divine consolation. To themselves they seemed as nothing, and the world despised them; but they were precious and beloved in the eyes of God.

They persevered in true humility; they lived in simple obedience; they walked in charity and patience: and so they daily gained great favor with God to the end of their lives.

As they glorified God by the holiness of life, God also glorified them, even during their life-time on earth; he showed how great and powerful they were with him by granting their prayers, and endowing them with the gifts of miracles and prophecy.

Were I to ask you whether there be any power in the world to which God himself submits, most undoubtedly you would answer: "No, there is not, and to maintain the contrary is to incur the guilt of heresy and blasphemy." Nevertheless, I dare assert, without the slightest fear of committing the sin either of heresy or of blasphemy, that there is a power to which Almighty God himself submits. What, then, is this power? you will eagerly ask. It is the power of the prayers of just. Innumerable passages in Holy Writ, and in the lives of the saints, prove this great truth. I have selected several to prove my assertion. We read in holy Scripture that God one day said to the friends of Job: "Go to my servant Job. . . . and my servant Job shall pray for you, his face I will accept,

that your folly be not imputed to you ;” and they went and requested Job to pray for them. “And the Lord accepted the face of Job.” (Job, xlii., 8, 9.)

We read in Exodus, (xxxii., 20,) that the Jews, notwithstanding the astounding miracles which God had wrought in their behalf, when freeing them from the galling yoke of the Egyptian tyranny, had fallen into the most heinous crime of idolatry. Exasperated at this most provoking offence, the Lord resolved to blot out this ungrateful people from the face of the earth. He was on the point of pouring out his wrath upon them, when Moses, the holy and faithful servant of God, the leader of the Israelites, interceded for them, and, by dint of earnest entreaty, arrested the arm of God, uplifted to smite this ungrateful people. “Let me alone,” said the Lord to Moses, “that my wrath may be enkindled against them, and that I may destroy them.”

Behold the struggle between an angry God and his suppliant servant ; between justice and prayer. “Let me alone,” says the Lord, “let me destroy this ungrateful people, and I will make thee the leader of a great nation.” Now as St. Jerome (Ezech., xiii.) remarks, “he who says to another : ‘Let me alone,’ evidently shows that he is subject to the power of another.”

But Moses would not yield ; on the contrary, he confidently entreated the Lord to pardon the Jews : “Why, O Lord,” he asked, “is thy indignation aroused against thy people whom thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt, with great power and with a mighty hand ? Let not the Egyptians boast, I beseech thee : He craftily brought them out, that he might kill them in the mountains and efface them from the earth ; let thy anger cease,

and be appeased upon the the waywardness of thy people." Now what was the issue of this struggle between the justice of God and the confident prayer of Moses? God yielded at last, to the power of the prayer of Moses; for "the Lord was appeased," says Holy Scripture, "and did not the evil which he had spoken against his people."

Something similar took place at the time of the prophet Jeremias. Again the Jews had committed atrocious crimes, and the wrath of the Lord was enkindled anew. Again he resolved to reject and destroy them: "And I will cast you away from before my face, as I have cast away all your brethren." (Isaias, vii., 15.) Before inflicting this punishment, the Lord entreated his servant Jeremias not to intercede in behalf of the victims of his just indignation. "Therefore, do not thou pray for this people, nor take unto thee praise and supplication for them, and *do not withstand me*;" (Verse 16,) for if thou dost, the Lord means to say, I shall not be able to pour out my wrath upon this people.

Again, God visited this perverse people with a destructive fire in punishment of their sins. Great, indeed, must have been the anger of God to send this frightful plague; yet still greater was the power of Aaron's prayer, since it prevailed on the Lord to quench the fire instantly. Moses said to Aaron: "Take the censer, and putting fire in it from the altar, put incense upon it, and go quickly to the people to pray for them, for already wrath is gone out from the Lord, and the plague rageth." (Num., xvi., 46.) "And Aaron, the blameless man," says Holy Writ, "made haste to pray for the people, bringing forth the shield of his ministry—prayer—and by incense making supplication, *withstood the wrath and put an end to the calamity, show-*

ing that he was thy servant." (Num., xvi., 48.) Thus Aaron checked this devouring flame, which had already consumed fourteen thousand and seventy men; he checked it not indeed by water, but by placing himself between the living and the dead, offering fervent prayer to the Lord. "And standing between the dead and the living, he prayed for the people, and the plague ceased." (Wis., xviii., 21.)

We read in the book of Ecclesiasticus, (xliv., 17,) that God, on account of the prayer of Noah, put an end to the deluge, and saved in him and his family the whole human race. "Noah was found perfect, just." Hence it was that he could appease the wrath of God: "And in the time of wrath, he was made a reconciliation."

What made Attila, the scourge of God, retreat so suddenly, and give up his plan of invading Italy? It was the prayer of the Pope St. Leo, in deference to which God sent so great a consternation upon Attila, that he felt himself forced to withdraw. What put an effectual check to the ravages of pestilence at the time of St. Gregory? It was the fervent prayer of this saint. Do we not come across similar examples in almost all the lives of the saints? The hands of God are, then, so to speak, bound by the prayer of men of great sanctity; but God feels free to act, if such men cannot be found. He himself has declared by the prophet Ezechiel: (Xxii., 30.) "And I sought among them a man that might set up a hedge and stand in the gap before me in favor of the land, that I might not destroy it; and I found none. And I poured out my indignation upon them; in the fire of my wrath I consumed them."

The terrible fate of Sodom, as related in the Book of

Genesis, is an evident proof of this truth. No sooner had Abraham learned that God intended to destroy this city, with its inhabitants, than he commenced to intercede for it, saying to the Lord: "Wilt thou destroy the just with the wicked? If there be fifty just men in the city, shall they perish withal? and wilt thou not spare that place for the sake of the fifty just, if they be therein? Far be it from thee to do this thing, and to slay the just with the wicked, and for the just to be in like case with the wicked, this is not beseeching thee: thou who judgest all the earth, wilt not make this judgment." And the Lord said to him: "If I find in Sodom fifty just within the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake." And Abraham answered and said: "Seeing I have once begun, I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am but dust and ashes. What if there be five less than fifty just persons! wilt thou for five and forty destroy the whole city?" And he said: "I will not destroy it if I find five and forty." And again he said to him: "But if forty be found there, what wilt thou do?" He said: "I will not destroy it for the sake of forty." "Lord," saith he, "be not angry, I beseech thee, if I speak: What if thirty shall be found there?" He answered: "I will not do it if I find thirty there." "Seeing," saith he, "I have once begun, I will speak to my Lord: What if twenty be found there?" He said: "I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty." "I beseech thee," saith he, "be not angry, Lord, if I speak yet, once more: What if ten should be found there?" And he said: "I will not destroy it for the sake of ten." (Gen., xviii., 23, 32.)

And the Lord departed, fearing as it were, Abraham might ask him to spare the city if but four, or three, or even one just soul could be found there; for there was that

number to be found there, viz. : Lot, his wife and two children. But in order that Lot and his family might not perish with the rest, God, through the ministry of his angels, led them out of the city. But had the Lord found there but ten just men, surely he would have spared the city. Nay, at the time of Jeremias, God declared, through this prophet, that he would be propitious to the city of Jerusalem, if but one man eminently just could be found therein. "Go about through the streets of Jerusalem and see, and consider, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man that executeth judgment and seeketh faith, *and I will be merciful unto it.*" (Jeremias, v., 1.) God seeks men to whom may be applied what is said of St. John the Baptist : "He was great before Lord ;" that is, great with God by holiness of life and by the power of prayer.

Such was St. Athanasius, who for God, and for the sake of religion, opposed the dreadful heresy of Arius, and triumphed over it. Such were St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, who, to the end of their lives, fought the battles of the Lord. In what great esteem must the just be held, though despicable and wretched exteriorly, because, for their sake, God spares whole cities sunk in vice ; they are the stays and pillars of realms. Such was David, of whom God said to Ezechias : "I will protect this city, and will save it for my own sake, and *for David, my servant's sake.*" (IV. Kings, xix., 34.)

Such was St. Paul, to whom, when in danger of shipwreck, the angel of the Lord said : "Fear not, Paul, for thou must be brought before Cæsar : and behold, God hath given thee all that sail with thee." (Acts, xxxii.,

24.) "God," says Cornelius à Lapide, "values one just man more than a thousand sinners, than heaven and earth"; "nay," says St. Alphonsus, "God esteems one eminently just man more than a thousand ordinary just men. As one sun imparts more light and warmth to the whole world than all the stars united, so also a holy man benefits the world more than a thousand ordinary just men." "Who will call into doubt that the world is sustained by the prayers of the saints," says Ruffinus, (*Præfat. in vit. Patr.*)

"Oh!" says St. Gregory, "how I am grieved to the very heart when I see that God banishes holy men and women from one country into another, or summons them to himself. This is to me an evident sign that he intends to punish such a country, and this will be, indeed, very easy for him, when there is no one left to stay his anger." "The prayer of the just man," says St. Augustine, "is a key to heaven; let his prayer ascend to heaven, and God's mercy will descend on earth." (*Serm. 226, de tempore.*)

Now if the prayers of the just, while living in this world, were so powerful with God, what must be the saints' power of intercession with God in heaven, where they share in his divine happiness and in the joy and glory of the holy angels. "The children of God and of the resurrection shall be equal to the angels in heaven." (*Luke, xx, 36.*) The nature of man, it is true, differs from that of an angel; but the glory of heaven does not depend on the human or angelic nature; it depends on the goodness and liberality of God, whose power and goodness are infinite. The joint felicity of the angels and saints consists in their eternal union with God. Hence, arises the glorious equality between the angels and saints. There they reign as kings and

queens of an everlasting kingdom. It is utterly impossible to write down all the divine blessings, both spiritual and temporal, which God has granted to mankind at the intercession of his saints in heaven. When Judas Maccabeus wished to encourage his countrymen to fight valiantly against their enemies, he related to them a vision which Holy Scripture calls "worthy to be believed." He had seen the holy high priest, Onias, stretching out his hands in supplication towards God, and begging grace and mercy for Israel. After this, Onias showed him another man, resplendent with great beauty and majesty, and said, this is a lover of his brethren and of the people of God; this is he that prayeth much for the people and all the holy city, Jeremias, the prophet of the Lord. Thereupon, "Jeremias had stretched forth his right hand, and given Judas a golden sword, saying. Take this sword, a gift from God, wherewith thou shalt overthrow the adversaries of my people Irsael." (2 Macc., xv., 12, 16.)

St. John, the Evangelist, tells us in the Apocalypse how he saw the saints in heaven "fall down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints." (Apoc., v., 8.) Thousands of similar divine favors and miracles are recorded in the lives of the saints.

It has been judicially proved that, since the death of St. Francis Xavier, twenty-seven dead persons in the Indies were restored to life by the intercession of this saint. The bishop of Malacca has solemnly declared that at least eight hundred miracles were wrought in his diocese alone by the intercession of St. Francis Xavier.

The Gift of Miracles.

When our dear Saviour commissioned his apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations, he added: "And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark, xvi., 17, 18.) On another occasion our Lord declared in still stronger terms, that miracles would attest the sanctity of those who believe in him. "Amen, amen, I say to you, he that believeth in me, the works that I do, he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do." (John, xiv., 12.) Hence, the occurrence of miracles in the Catholic Church is so natural that there are regular tribunals before which alleged miracles are examined, and minute rules are laid down for distinguishing true from false miracles. But as miracles do not exist out of the Catholic Church, non-Catholics, for the most part, ridicule the very idea of a miracle happening in our days. It will, therefore, be well, to speak here of the gifts of miracles and prophecy.

Now, what is a miracle? A miracle is an extraordinary work or effect which happens contrary to the common course of nature. Some of such works are greater than others. Hence, they are divided into first-, second-, and third-class miracles. A first-class miracle is such a stupendous work as can be performed by the power of God alone; as, for instance, to stop the sun in its course, or to make a soul come back to its body.

A second-class miracle is a prodigy produced by the agency of a holy angel; as, for instance, when the angel of the Lord prevented the fire from burning the three

children in the fiery furnace; or when an angel restores sight or life which is despaired of. In this case, a natural cause—an angel, operates on a different substance, and produces a thing equal to a miracle. But no such case can give life to a corpse which is already in a state of putrefaction, nor sight to an eye which is entirely destroyed.

A miracle of the third-class is an effect that does not surpass the powers of nature, but is only miraculous in the manner in which it happens; as, for instance, when a person is all on a sudden cured of a fever or dangerous disease, or when an extraordinary occurrence takes place in the weather, as happened through the prayer of Elias.

But here an infidel may object that God cannot act contrary to the general order of nature? We answer, that one cause can have several effects, and these effects can produce secondary causes, subordinate one to the other. We see a proof of this principle in the subordination of a civil government, from the sovereign to the humblest subject of the nation. The lowest in power depends on the chief by intermediate causes.

God is the primary cause, and all secondary causes and their effects depend on that infallible, eternal cause. The order subsisting in this universal cause is immutable and irrevocable. But he can change the order existing in secondary causes; for, as he could establish it in another form, so he can alter it, either by doing things which secondary causes could not possibly produce, or by suspending the exercise of the powers he had given them.

When first he established the natural order of things, he foresaw and reserved the power of doing what he had to accomplish in succession of time. God acts sometimes against the usual order of Nature, says St. Augustine, but

never contrary to the supreme and absolute law of divine justice. The order of justice implies an essential connection with the primary cause, which is the rule and foundation of all justice; and so God never interferes with that inviolable order; but, as we have just said, he can change the order existing in secondary causes, or suspend the exercise of the powers which he gave them. Hence, we see the cause and possibility of miracles. "If then," says the Vatican Council, 'anyone shall say that miracles are impossible, and that, therefore, all the accounts regarding them, even those contained in Holy Scripture, are to be dismissed as fabulous or mystical, or that miracles can never be known with certainty, and that the divine origin of Christianity cannot be proved by them, let him be accursed.' (iii. Can. 3 and 4.)

As it is not in the power of any creature, man, angel, or demon, to change the established order of nature without God's will and power from him, it is evident that, when a miracle takes place, God acts and manifests his power.

Now, God has reserved to himself this power of performing miracles for the purpose of leading man to the supernatural knowledge of himself by the supernatural effects of miracles. Man, it is true, can acquire the knowledge of God by the effects of divine power, as manifested in the works of creation. They speak to our reason and convince us of the truth that they come from God as their original cause. But this knowledge of God, acquired from the contemplation of the works of creation, is rather deficient. God wished us to know him as perfectly as possible. So he revealed himself to men.

Now God is true. He can neither deceive nor be

deceived, and therefore he can reveal nothing but the truth. But he did not speak to every man. He spoke to men through the patriarchs and prophets, and at last, as St. Paul says, through his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who continues to speak to men through his Church. Now, in order to induce men to believe those who taught them his will, he wrought, through them, miracles in confirmation of the truth of their teaching. "In order that the obedience of our faith," says the Vatican Council (c. iii.) "might be in harmony with reason, God willed that to the interior help of the Holy Ghost there should be joined exterior proofs of his revelation, to wit, divine facts, and especially miracles and prophecies, which, as they manifestly display the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, are most certain proofs of his divine revelation, adopted to the intelligence of all men. Wherefore Moses and the prophets . . . showed forth many and most evident miracles and prophecies."

As a letter, bearing the seal of a king, evidently comes from the king, so a true miracle, performed in confirmation and support of the truth of a doctrine, is a clear proof that such a doctrine comes from God and is infallibly true. Miracles are, as it were, credentials, signed by the hand of God himself; they are the strongest and most striking proofs which God can furnish in order to make people believe those whom he sends to teach them in his name. "If, then," says the Vatican Council, "anyone shall say that divine revelation cannot be made credible by outward signs, and that, therefore, men ought to be moved to faith solely by the internal experience of each, or by private inspiration, let him be accursed." (Vat. Council, iii. can. 3 and 4.)

God cannot permit the performance of a miracle in confirmation and support of error, deception or lying. He may, it is true, grant the gift of miracles and prophecy to impious men. "Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works in thy name? And then will I profess unto them: I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity." (Matt., vii., 22, 23.) From these words of our lord it is clear that God can make use of the wicked to perform miracles and to foretell future events, as he did by Judas, (Luke, x., 17,) and by Caiphas, (John, xi, 49,) and by Balaam, (Numb., xxiv., 3, for "the performance of a miracle," says St. Jerome, "is not owing to the merit of the performer of the miracle, but to the invocation of Christ, which performs it for the benefit of others." Hence, St. Gregory remarks, (Lib. 20, Moral 8,) "that the evidence of holiness of life is not to be drawn from the performance of miracles, but from true love of God and our neighbor." There is a great difference between divine gifts, gratuitously granted for the benefit of others, such as the gifts of miracles, prophecy, etc., and those which make us holy and pleasing in the sight of God.

God may grant permanently the gift of miracles; and a person who has received this gift may abuse it to acquire vain glory, or temporal gain. In this case God, it is true, coöperates to the miracle, but not to the bad end which the performance of it has in view. This bad end he only permits. A bad priest may say Mass, and use the sacred host for perverse purposes; he may give it to sorceresses to obtain money, to wicked people to ridicule it, etc. It is evident that God did not give the power

of consecration for such a wicked purpose, but may permit the abuse of this power.

I say an impious man who has the gift of miracles, may abuse this gift for a perverse purpose, but God cannot permit him to use it in confirmation of a false doctrine, when such an abuse is hidden from men so that it could not be discovered by them. For, if God permitted the abuse of such power in confirmation of false doctrine, he himself would confirm men in error, and he would have no other means left to correct the error, not even by a miracle, because people could say: If the first miracle was wrought in confirmation of error, why should not the second in the same way. Thus God would deprive himself of all possibility to attest to the truth. Hence, it is that God can never permit the performance of a real miracle in confirmation of false doctrine. No instance can be mentioned to prove the contrary.

There were false prophets and teachers both before and after the coming of the Redeemer. They pretended to be sent by God; and to prove their pretended divine mission, they tried to perform miracles, but never succeeded. In some instances they succeeded, by the help of the devil, whose ministers they were, in performing certain wonderful things, or false miracles.

When Moses performed great miracles before Pharaoh in Egypt, the magicians of the king tried to imitate the miracles of the great servant of God. They cast their rods before the king, and by devilish enchantments, their rods seemed to be changed into serpents, as that of Moses was; they produced, as Moses did, frogs, etc. But their prodigies greatly differ in character from the miracles of Moses. God, indeed, never permits satan to perform

wonderful things for the seduction of the just and the faithful; and whenever satan is permitted to perform any kind of prodig'es, he is obliged to confess his wicked artifice and malice. Hence, when Moses continued to perform miracles, the magicians were constrained to acknowledge that they were unable to do what Moses did. Satan was obliged to declare through his agents: "This is the finger of God."

One day the prophet Elias came to all the people of Israel and said: "How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people did not answer him a word. And Elias said again to the people: I only remain a prophet of the Lord: but the prophets of Baal are four hundred and fifty men. Let two bullocks be given us, and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces and lay it upon wood, but put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. Call ye on the names of your gods, and I will call on the name of my Lord: and the god that shall answer by fire, let him be God. And all the people answering said: A very good proposal. Then Elias said to the prophets of Baal: Choose you one bullock, and dress it first, because you are many: and call on the names of your gods, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which he gave them, and dressed it: and they called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And when it was now noon, Elias jested at them, saying: Cry with a louder voice, for he is a god, and perhaps he is talking, or is in an inn, or on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be waked. So they

cried with a loud voice . . . but there was no voice heard, nor did anyone answer, nor regard them as they prayed. Elias said to all the people: Come ye unto me. And the people coming near unto him, he repaired the altar of the Lord, that was broken down. And he built with twelve stones an altar to the name of the Lord, and he made a trench for water of the breadth of two furrows round about the altar. And he laid the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it upon the wood, and he said: Fill four buckets with water, and pour it upon the burnt-offering, and upon the wood. And he said, do the same the second and the third time. And the water ran round about the altar, and the trench was filled with water. And when it was now time to offer the holocaust, Elias the prophet came near, and said: O Lord, God of Abraham, and Isaac and Israel, show this day that thou art the God of Israel, and I thy servant, and that according to thy commandments I have done all these things. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that thy people may learn that thou art the Lord God. Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the holocaust, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw this they fell on their faces, and they said: The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God.” (III. Kings, xviii.)

It was thus that God, on this occasion, confounded the false prophets before the people and proved to them that Elias was his prophet whom they should believe. As the false prophets of the Old Law were confounded by the true prophets of the Lord, so, also, were the false prophets of the New Law confounded, on many occasions, by the true ministers of Jesus Christ.

Simon, the magician, broached many errors. The principal ones were that the world was created by angels; that when the soul leaves the body it enters into another body; that man had no free will, and consequently, that good works were not necessary for salvation. To induce the people to believe him, he performed lying wonders in their presence. By means of magic spells he one day caused the devil to raise him in the air; but God confounded the devil, and his agent by Saints Peter and Paul, who were present, and invoked the name of Jesus Christ. In that very moment, the devil lost his magic power over Simon, who fell down and broke both his legs. His friends carried him away, but, in his great sufferings and despair, he cast himself out of a high window and perished. Thus died the first heretic that disturbed the Catholic Church, and denied certain truths of her holy teaching.

We read in the life of St. Dominic, that the heretics of his time and the Catholics put together in writing the strongest arguments in defence of their religion; those of the Catholics were the work of St. Dominic. It was proposed that both writings should be committed to the flames, in order that God might declare by his own interposition which religion was the only true one. Accordingly, a great fire was made, and the two writings were cast into it; that of the heretics was immediately consumed to ashes, whilst the other remained unhurt after it had been cast into the fire three times and taken out again.

This public miracle happened at Fanjaux; the fruit of it was the conversion of great numbers of heretics of both sexes. The same kind of miracle happened at Montreal. St. Dominic drew up in writing a short exposition of the

Catholic faith, with proof of each article from the New Testament. This writing he gave to the heretics to examine. Their ministers and chiefs, after much altercation about it, agreed to throw it into the fire, saying that if it burned they would regard the doctrine which it contained as false. Being cast thrice into the flames, it was not damaged by them.

At the time of Martin Luther, a certain man, named William, was drowned. Luther was requested to raise him again to life as a proof of the truth of his doctrine. He commanded him repeatedly to rise from the dead. It was all in vain. (Bredenbach, L. vii., c. 1.) Calvin wished to prove the truth of his doctrine by a miracle. So he begged a man to feign death and have himself carried as a corpse to the church, and then rise at his bidding, so that the people might believe he had been raised again to life by the prayer of Calvin, as a proof of the truth of his doctrine. That man complied with Calvin's request. He was carried to the church, apparently dead. Calvin approached the coffin and said in a loud voice: I command you to rise in the name of Christ, whose Gospel I preach. But alas! the man never arose again. He was dead. God had punished him, and by the sudden death of this deceiver God manifested his detestation of Calvin's heresies, and the truth of the Catholic religion. (Franc-Torrianus, L. i. De Dogmatibus.) Thus Almighty God has never permitted, and will never permit, a real miracle in confirmation of an heretical doctrine; should he bestow the gift of miracles even on an impious man, yet he will never permit him to use this gift in confirmation of a false doctrine. Were God to perform a real miracle in support of an heretical doctrine he would

thereby lead the people into error, and become guilty of the sin of wilful lying and deception. But it would be impious to think that God could do such a thing. He is Eternal Truth itself, and he has reserved to himself the power of performing miracles, in order that he might use it whenever necessary and profitable to prove that the truths revealed by him really come from him.

Hence, our dear Saviour made use of this power to prove to the world that God was in him, not by the grace of adoption, but by that of hypostatic union. He referred the Jews to his miracles as incontestable proofs for his Divinity and divine doctrine. "If you do not believe me" said he to the Jews, "believe my works, that you may know and believe thereby that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." (John, x., 38).

His miracles did, indeed, sufficiently prove his Divinity. "The works which I do, give testimony of me, that he (the Father) hath sent me." (John, v., 36.)

Christ performed his miracles, not like the prophets and all others. These performed miracles by the interposition or assistance of another. But Christ performed his miracles by his own power. "And all the multitude sought to touch him, for divine power proceeded from him, and healed all." (Luke, vi., 19.) "Jesus touched the leper and said to him: I will, be thou made clean, and instantly his leprosy was cleansed." (Matt., viii., 3.) "He cast out the evil spirits by his word, and all that were sick he healed." (Matt., viii., 16.) He said that he was God, and that his power was the same as that of the Father. "Whatsoever things the Father doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. As the Father raiseth up the dead and giveth life, so the Son also giveth life to whom he wills." (John. v., 19, 21.)

This particular circumstance that Christ performed his miracles by his own power, without the assistance or interposition of another, distinguishes him from the patriarchs, prophets, and all others.

Now, Jesus Christ performed miracles on spiritual substances, on celestial bodies, on men, and on irrational and inanimate beings. All his miracles were a most evident proof of the truth of his infallible doctrine.

The time came when the power of satan was to be overcome by the doctrine of our divine Saviour. So it was necessary for our Lord to make a beginning of the total ruin of the wicked empire of satan. He made this beginning of the destruction of satan's power over man by delivering from evil spirits those who were possessed by them. "Now is the judgment of the world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (John, xii., 31.)

Jesus Christ performed miracles on celestial bodies. "And it was almost the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth, for the sun was eclipsed until the ninth hour." (Luke, xxiii., 44.) It is evident that that eclipse took place in an extraordinary manner, in order to cover the earth in mourning for the death of Jesus Christ.

Many things can influence terrestrial bodies, but celestial bodies cannot be influenced in the same way, for God created them, as it were, in a state of immutability. Hence, a phenomenon which takes place in immovable bodies, such as the sun, is more prodigious, and presents to all who witness it, incontestable evidence of the Saviour's Divinity.

As to the manner in which that eclipse appeared at the death of our Saviour, some of the theologians say that the

regular course of the planets which measure time, was not interrupted and that the sun continued to send its rays; but that the Divine Omnipotence prevented them from coming to the earth; others assert that it was an ordinary eclipse, *i. e.*, that the moon, placed between the earth and the sun, intercepted his rays. This is the opinion of St. Dionysius, who was an eye-witness of the eclipse, and St. Thomas Aquinas thinks it to be the most probable.

But how is it that profane writers said nothing on the subject? All calculations of human science being unable to foretell supernatural events, the most learned astronomers did not expect to see an eclipse at that period, and when it occurred, it was useless to calculate its appearance. So they could not explain that phenomenon, and thought it was only some alteration in the atmosphere, and therefore, only a thing of no importance. Origen, however, tells us that a certain historian, Phlegon, mentions it in his chronicles. It was seen by St. Dionysius and his companions, who were at that time in Egypt, a country where the sky is generally clear; and this saint wrote to St. Polycarp: "We saw the moon suddenly placed between the sun and the earth." In another place of his works he says that the eclipse was a miraculous phenomenon which took place in consequence of the position of the sun and the moon at that period. This passage explains the words just mentioned: "We saw the moon *suddenly placed* between the sun and the earth."

Jesus Christ performed miracles also on men. Our Saviour came into this world for the salvation of the human race. "God sent not his Son into the world to judge it, but that the world may be saved by him." (John, iii., 17.)

It was, therefore, necessary for Jesus Christ to show to men, by miracles, that he was their Saviour. So he miraculously delivered many from their corporal and spiritual infirmities. Most undoubtedly, his divine mission appears with as much splendor and evidence when he restores sight to the man born blind; life to a son to console his afflicted mother; health to the leper etc, as it appears when he casts out evil spirits, or works prodigies in the heavens. By healing bodies of their incurable diseases, and by bringing man from the darkness of death to a spiritual life, he clearly proved that he was also able to sanctify souls and to bring them from the darkness of sin and death to the light of grace and glory.

Christ also performed miracles on inanimate things. The water changed into wine at the marriage of Cana; the multiplication of five loaves of bread and two fishes to feed a multitude of people; the miraculous draught of fishes, the storm appeased, the fig-tree rendered barren, the graves opened and the dead coming to life; the trembling of the earth, the veil of the temple torn, the rocks split asunder etc., evidently prove that all things in the universe belong to him, and are therefore, submissive to his Omnipotence, and are at the same time sublime and everlasting lessons and evident proofs for all generations to the consummation of the world, that he is their God and Saviour, and Judge, and that his doctrine is infallibly true, and leads to everlasting life all those who live up to it.

As our dear Saviour established his divine mission, by working miracles, so he also wished his Apostles to establish their divine mission by miracles. "Going," said he to them, "preach, saying: The kingdom of

heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils." (Matt., x., 7, 8.) Christ knew that the heathen nations, blinded as they were, with superstition and idolatry, sunk in sensuality, governed by their brutal passions, and having no distinct ideas regarding supernatural things, could not, without any other force or power than the preaching of poor fishermen, be induced to forsake their false gods and worship an invisible God, nor renounce their carnal passions, in the hope of a spiritual reward in another world. Therefore, when he imparted to his apostles the great commission to convert the world to his religion, he granted them, at the same time, the power of miracles, thus to show that they were really God's ministers, and that he spoke and wrought through them. Hence, we find that the apostles continued to work miracles after the ascension of their Divine Master. The first preaching of the Gospel in Jerusalem, after the day of Pentecost, was accompanied, and rendered effectual, by the miraculous healing of the lame man, at the gate of the temple, by St. Peter and St. John. St. Peter also cured Eneas of the palsy, and raised Tabitha to life. His very shadow cured the sick (Acts, v., 15); and even the handkerchiefs of St. Paul were the instruments employed by God for signal manifestations of divine power. In a word, the Gospel was introduced and everywhere established by miracles, as St. Mark tells us at the end of his Gospel: "And the Apostles, going forth, preached everywhere: the Lord working withal, and confirming their doctrine with miracles that followed."

If we open the books of the Old Testament, we find, in almost every page, accounts of miracles worked by God

in behalf of *his* people. In every great emergency, and whenever it was expedient to warn, to protect, to teach, or to chastise them we find the hand of God stretched out for the performance of miracles ; and since the establishment of the Catholic Church, there is no period, in which our dear Saviour has not attested by miracles to the sanctity of his servants. We have but to open the Lives of the Saints, and we find that, through them, he performed miracles even during their life-time. St. Paphnucius, St. Remigius, St. Otto, Bishop, St. Robert, St. Dominic, and many other saints expelled the evil spirits from those persons who were possessed by them. St. Bernardine, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Francis Xavier, and many other saints were endowed with the gift of languages. When they preached to an audience composed of people from different countries, every one believed he heard his own tongue spoken.

They spoke in their own mother tongue and were understood by people of different languages. St. Hilary, St. Magnus, St. Patrick, etc., banished snakes and other reptiles. St. Gregory, Thaumaturgus (worker of miracles,) St. Annanias, Bishop, moved mountains. St. Martin, St. Patrick, St. Benedict, St. Dominic, St. Anthony, St. Francis of Paula raised the dead to life. St. Francis Xavier, raised twenty-four, and St. John Capistran, thirty dead persons to life. St. Stanislas, the martyr, restored a man to life who had died three years before, and presented him before the court to testify that he had bought from him a certain piece of ground for his church, and that he had paid him in full.

“ My dear Lord,” said St. Colletta, after the death of her prior, “ give me back my prior, for I need his aid still in

erecting some more convents ;” and our Lord was pleased to restore this saint—her prior—alive ; and he rendered her valuable services during the fifteen years he lived afterwards.

St. Alphonsus stemmed a lava-torrent of Mount Vesuvius, and turned its destructive course from the city of Naples, by the sign of the cross. St. Raymond Pennafort, standing on his mantle, traversed the sea for a distance of one hundred and sixty miles.

The Gift of Prophecy.

As God endowed the saints with the gift of miracles, so also did he endow many of them with the gift of prophecy. Now what is the meaning of prophecy? The word *prophecy* means the prediction or revelation of such a future event, or of such a supernatural or natural truth as is beyond all human knowledge. Hence, the Jews called the prophets “Seers,” and the Gentiles called them *Vates*, a word which is derived from *vis mentis*, the power of the mind.

It is by means of natural light that we can discern all the objects in nature and the diversity of their colors ; and it is by the light of reason that we are enabled to acquire intellectual knowledge. In like manner, it is by supernatural light, which surpasses the natural powers of human reason, that a person may obtain the knowledge of future events, and supernatural or natural truths, which otherwise could not be known by natural means. Hence, the prophet Micheas says : “I shall arise even while I sit in darkness, the Lord God is my light.” (vii., 7.) The light of prophecy, then, is not a permanent, habitual gift with prophets ; it is a divine inspiration communicated to their intellectual faculty, at certain times, places, and under

certain circumstances. Hence the prophet Isaias says: "In the morning the Lord wakeneth my ear, that I may hear him as a master." (L. 4.)

Now, future events may be known in two ways: either in themselves or in their causes. Man can, by his natural knowledge, discover future things in their causes. Thus a skilful physician knows from experience the certain death or recovery of his patient by the symptoms of his sickness. God alone, however, knows all future events in themselves and in the inevitable connexions which exist between the causes and their effects. Hence, the knowledge which is acquired by natural means, greatly differs from that which is obtained by divine revelation: the one is the result of general experience, whilst the other proceeds from divine inspiration; the one is liable to error, whilst the other is infallible. The spirit of prophecy, therefore, consists in the knowledge of future events, or supernatural or natural truths, inspired by divine revelation.

By the manifestation of such events or truths, God instructs holy men, as a master teaches his pupil, that which he knows. The knowledge which an intelligent scholar receives from a good master, does not differ in principle, but is quite the same in the mind of both. In like manner, the spirit of inspired prophecy is the spirit and infallible truth of God, who knows all things as they are.

The true prophets, therefore, announce what they have learned by divine inspiration, according to the words of Isaias: "That which I have heard of the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, I have declared unto you." (xxi., 10.)

Now God instructs his prophets in two ways: he some-

times instructs them by express revelation in clear, intelligible words, which then produce a full conviction in the prophet's mind that they come from the infallible Source of all truth and light. "In truth the Lord sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing," says the prophet Jeremias. (xxv., 15.) "Thus saith the Lord: Take order with thy house, for thou (Ezechias) shalt die and not live." (Isaias, xxxviii., 1.)

A similar revelation was made to Abraham, for otherwise he could never have been induced to immolate his only son; but as he was quite certain that it was the will of God, he consented to make the sacrifice.

At other times the prophet experiences a confused sentiment, and is not certain that it is a divine inspiration. In this case, he cannot sufficiently distinguish his own private knowledge from the voice of God. Does it then follow that his prediction is false? No; for God never leads his holy prophets into error of any kind, as this would be contrary to his divine Majesty, and to the enlightenment of others. He inspires him with sentiments of truth, and directs his prophetic spirit by new light and grace.

Now, the mind must be prepared to receive such supernatural light and grace; it must be given to the contemplation of spiritual things. "The sons of the prophets dwelt in solitude and deserts with Eliseus." (IV. Kings, iv., 38,) so that, their spirit being free from all temporal cares, they might be more docile to prophetic inspirations and more attentive to divine revelations. "Wisdom conveyeth herself into holy souls, she maketh the friends of God, and prophets." (Wisd. vii., 27.) We must then say with St. Peter: "Prophecy came not by

the will of man at any time ; but the *holy men* of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost." (II. Pet. i., 21.)* Prophecies, therefore, are no less than miracles, divine attestations not only of the sanctity of individual members of the Catholic Church, but also of the holiness of their faith and practices of religion. Hence, our dear Saviour proved his Divinity and divine doctrine not only by miracles, but also by the prophecies concerning him, and by his own prophecies. There is one of his prophecies by which he has especially shown to the whole world that he is the Lord of heaven and earth, and the Redeemer, and Teacher of mankind. It is related in the Gospel of St. Luke, (Chapter xix., 41, 42, 43,) "When Jesus drew near (Jerusalem), seeing that city, he wept over it, saying: If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace ; but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, and

* REMARKS.—1. No previous disposition is absolutely necessary to receive that supernatural light of prophecy, for the spirit of prophecy depends on the will and operation of the Holy Ghost. "But all these things one and the same spirit worketh, giving to everyone according to his will." (I. Cor. xii, 11.) God acts in spiritual things as he does in material things. In the latter, he can create both substance and form, and give them such natural disposition as he thinks proper. He could also, if he wished, create a soul endowed with a prophetic spirit. It is not even necessary for the accomplishment of prophecy to employ certain images in order to express it, for divine operation does not change man's natural disposition on that account, but only removes from his mind whatever might be contrary to the spirit of prophecy. Hence, it is that every prophet has a peculiar style of his own, notwithstanding divine inspiration.

2. A man may be a prophet without leading a holy life "Many will say to me on that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied and done many miracles in thy name? And I will then tell them, I never knew you; depart from me you that work iniquity." (Matt. viii, 22.) But St. Paul says: "The Lord knows who are his." (II. Tim., ii., 19.) Prophecy,

thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straighten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground and thy children who are in thee; and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." This prophecy was literally fulfilled A. D. 70, when the city with its magnificent temple was destroyed by the Roman soldiers, after eleven hundred thousand Jews had lost their lives and ninety-seven thousand were sold as slaves. Such was the end of the Hebrew nation. The temple, the sacrifices, the legal priesthood, the distinction of tribes—all disappeared before the sword of Titus, who proclaimed himself the instrument of divine vengeance,

therefore, may be found in those who are not his by grace. Balaam was not a holy man and, yet he prophesied (Num., 22.); neither was Caiphas, but being high priest of that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation. (John xi, 51.)

The principal source of a holy life is sanctifying grace, which submits man's will to God; but prophecy being the manifestation of divine light, can enlighten his intellect without the coöperation of the will. But as a general rule, sanctity is absolutely and morally necessary for a true prophet.

Again, it is well to know that the devil can never be the author of real prophecy.

All angels, both the good and the bad, being of a spiritual substance, are endowed with greater intelligence and perspicacity than we are. Hence, they can discover future events in their causes much better than we can. So by their natural power and knowledge they can manifest their will and designs to men, not by illuminating the human mind, but in representing imaginary visions to us, and fascinating the sensitive powers. But as those wicked spirits cannot depart from the natural order of their existence, all their revelations are false, and therefore they cannot possibly be the author of real prophecy. Hence, it is that in the Scripture, they are called false prophets, or the prophets of idols. On this account St. Augustine says, that when the devil takes possession of the spirit of some men by delusive revelations, he makes demoniacs or false prophets of them.

August, 20, A. D. 70. The prophet Daniel also had foretold this demolition of the temple, and that its desolation would last to the end of the world. (Chap. ix, 24, 27.) It has already lasted for nearly two thousand years. Efforts were made at different times, especially under the emperor Julian, the Apostate, to rebuild the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, but in vain. This emperor was one of the most crafty and most dangerous instruments that the devil ever employed for the destruction of the Catholic religion. He was aware that several of his predecessors had used the utmost cruelty to extirpate the Christian name, but failed in their efforts; he knew that the Catholic faith increased under axes, and that the blood of the martyrs was a fruitful seed which multiplied the Church over all

3. It may happen, that the devil sometimes predicts certain truths.

Truth is to knowledge what goodness is to things; but there is nothing, however bad it may be, that has not some mixture of good; it has at least the good of existence, which is better than nonentity. Hence, let a knowledge be ever so false, it has something true. It is the appearance of this truth that seduces or actuates our intellect. The human intellect can receive but what is true or that which has the probability of truth, the same as the will chooses only what is good, or that which has the appearance of good. On this account the demon of malice and iniquity inspires his prophets with certain plausible truths in order to propagate false revelations. God sometimes permits those false predictions for the good of religion; for the weak and incredulous portion of mankind is often led to believe a testimony which is less suspicious. The sibyls even made predictions concerning the Messiah, which were confirmed by the event. Balaam, a soothsayer, had sometimes knowledge of future things by the ministry of demons and magic art, and announced true revelations; "A star shall rise out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel." (Num., xxiv., 17.) So the demon, notwithstanding his malice, sometimes inspires his prophets with true revelations concerning the glory of God and the Church of Jesus Christ. When false prophets are instructed by those wicked spirits, says St. Augustine, they predict some truths, sometimes by the power of their own nature, of which the Holy Ghost is the author, and sometimes by the revelation of holy angels.

nations; he was convinced that brute force was not able to destroy the religion of Christ. He, therefore, adopted quite a different plan in persecuting the Catholic Church. He tried to bring discredit upon the Christian religion by bringing the scandal of imposture upon its divine Founder, our Lord Jesus Christ. To succeed in this he conceived the plan of rebuilding the Jewish temple. He understood that if he could succeed in carrying out this plan, he would also easily succeed in his design of bringing the scandal of imposture upon Christ. To understand this wicked design, we must remember that our dear Saviour and the prophet Daniel had foretold in express terms not only the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem which was brought about by the Romans under Titus, but they had also foretold its final ruin and desolation.

The Jewish religion was but a temporary dispensation intended by its divine author, God himself, to prefigure a more complete and perfect religion, and prepare men to embrace it; it not only essentially required bloody sacrifices, but it is also commanded that these sacrifices should be offered in a certain place appointed by the law; and that place was the temple of Jerusalem. Hence, the final destruction of this temple was the abolition of the sacrifices; it annihilated the whole system of this religious institution. For this reason St. John Chrysostom says "that the destruction of Jerusalem is to be ascribed, not to the power of the Romans, for God often delivered the city from no less dangers, but to a special disposition of divine Providence which was pleased to put it out of human perversity to delay or respite the extinction of those ceremonial observances. As a physician, by breaking the cup, prevents his patient from indulging his ap-

petite in a noxious draught, so God withheld the Jews from their sacrifices by destroying the whole city itself, and making the place inaccessible to all of them."

Now, the emperor Julian's plan was to falsify the Scripture prophecies—those of Daniel and our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, he wrote a letter to the Jews, in which he declares them free from all exactions and taxes, and orders Julus (probably Hillel), their most reverend patriarch, to abolish the gatherers of the said taxes, begs their prayers (such was his hypocrisy), and promises, after his Persian expedition, when their temple should be rebuilt, to make Jerusalem his residence, and offer up his joint prayers together with them.

After this, he assembled the chiefs among the Jews, and asked them why they offered no bloody sacrifices, since they were prescribed by their law. They replied that they could not offer any except in the temple, which then lay in ruins. Thereupon he commanded them to repair to Jerusalem, rebuild their temple, and re-establish their ancient worship, promising them his assistance in carrying on the work. The Jews received the warrant with inexpressible joy; they were so elated with it, that, flocking from all parts to Jerusalem, they began to scorn and triumph insolently over the Christians, threatening to make them feel the fatal effects of their severity, as they themselves had heretofore felt those of the Roman powers. The news was no sooner spread abroad than contributions came in from all hands. The Jewish women stript themselves of their most costly ornaments to contribute towards the expense of the rebuilding of the temple. As the emperor himself was impatient to see it finished, he encouraged them by telling them that, according to their

mysterious sacred books, this was the time in which they were to return to their country, and see their temple and legal observances restored. He ordered his treasurers to furnish money and everything necessary for the building. He drew together the most able workmen from all quarters, and appointed persons of the highest rank as overseers, placing at their head Alypius, his intimate friend, who was formerly Pro-prefect of Britain. He charged him to make them labor in this great work without ceasing, and to spare no expense.

All things were in readiness; workmen had come together from all quarters; stone, brick, timber and other materials in immense quantities, were laid in. The Jews of both sexes and of all degrees bore a share in the labor; even women helped digging the ground and carried out rubbish in their aprons and skirts of their gowns. Even some of the pickaxes, spades, and baskets were made of silver for the honor of the work.

The good bishop, St. Cyril, beheld all these mighty preparations without any concern. Relying on the infallible truth of the prophecies: "That the desolation of the Jewish temple should last till the end (Dan., ix., 27,) and that one stone should not be left on another. (Matt., xxiv., 2.) He foretold, with the greatest confidence, that the Jews, far from being able to rebuild their ruined temple, would be even the very instruments whereby that prophecy of Christ would be still more fully accomplished than it had hitherto been, and that they would not be able to put one stone upon another; and the event proved the truth of the prediction.

Till then the foundations and some ruins of the walls of the temple had remained, and the inhabitants still carried away the stones for their private buildings.

These ruins were first removed by the hands of the Jews, who thus were the instruments for the full accomplishment of our Saviour's prediction. Then they began to dig the foundation. In this work many hands were employed. But what was thrown up in the day, was cast back again into the trench during night by repeated earthquakes. And when Alypius the next day pressed the work on more vigorously, with the assistance of the governor of the province, there issued such horrible balls of fire out of the earth, near the foundations, as rendered the place, from time to time, inaccessible to the scorched workmen. As the victorious element continued in this manner, and was, as it were, most firmly determined to drive all hands to a distance, Alypius thought proper to abandon the work. Besides the earthquake and eruption of fire, there were also storms and tempests, whirlwinds and lightning, crosses impressed on the bodies of the assistants, and a flaming cross in the heavens, surrounded with a luminous circle.

The order of these extraordinary things is as follows :

This judgment of God commenced by storms and whirlwinds, which carried away prodigious heaps of lime and sand, and other loose materials. After these followed lightning, which destroyed the more solid materials, and made the iron instruments melt. Then there came the impressing shining crosses on the bodies and garments of the assistants, without distinction. In these crosses there was something that, in art and elegance, surpassed all painting or embroidery. When the infidels perceived those crosses, they tried to wash them out, but could not succeed.

Then came the earthquake, which cast out the stones

of the old foundations, and shook the earth into the trench dug out for the new foundation; it also overthrew the adjoining buildings and porticos in which a large number of workmen were lodged. These were all either crushed to death, or at least maimed or wounded. The number of killed and wounded was increased by the eruption of fire, attended with storms and tempests above, and with an earthquake below. Many tried to escape the fiery eruption by flying into a neighboring church for shelter, but they could not enter it, the doors being closed by a secret invisible hand. This eruption of fire was frequently renewed till it overcame the rashness of the most obstinate, for it was repeated as often as the projectors renewed their attempt till it tired them out.

Lastly, on the same evening, there appeared over Jerusalem, a luminous cross, shining very bright, as large as that in the reign of Constantine, encompassed with a circle of light.

What is remarkable in these events is, that the eruption of fire was, contrary to its usual nature, confined to one small spot; it obstinately broke out by fits, and ceased with the project, and this in such a manner that it is attributed to an intelligent cause.

The cross in the air and the crosses on the garments were admirably fitted, as moral emblems, to proclaim the triumph of Christ over Julian, who had taken the cross out of the military ensigns which Constantine had put there to be a lasting memorial of that cross which he saw in the air, and which presaged his victory. The same was again erected in the heavens to confound the vanity of its impotent persecutor. The earthquake was undoubtedly miraculous, and though its effects were mostly such

as might naturally follow, yet they were directed by a special supernatural Providence, as the burning of Sodom by fire from heaven. This great event happened in the beginning of the year 363. It is related not only by Christian, but also by profane writers, and the Jewish Rabbins. St. John Chrysostom admires, in this event, the wonderful conduct of Divine Providence. He observes that, if the Jews had not set about to rebuild their temple, they might have pretended that they could have done it. God, therefore, permitted them three times to attempt it : once under Adrian, when they brought a greater desolation upon themselves ; a second time under Constantine, who dispersed them ; the third time "in our own time," as he says, "not above twenty years ago, when God himself visibly baffled their endeavors in order to show that no human power is able to reverse his decree ; and this at a time when our religion was oppressed, lay under the axes, and had not the liberty even to speak, that impudence itself might not have the least shadow of pretence." (A. Butler's Lives of the Saints, March 18.)

As God in the Old Law, which was figurative of the Christian Dispensation, sent prophets from time to time to rouse the faith and piety of the Jewish people, so, also, he mercifully vouchsafed to illustrate the church, from age to age, especially in times of trial and difficulty, by such clear manifestations of the Divine power as to make it evident that the finger of God was there ; he raised up saints in his church and endowed them with most extraordinary gifts of grace, to be powerful mediators between him and mankind.

There is, indeed, but one mediator of justice, Jesus Christ, our Lord. He alone redeemed us. He alone

satisfied for our sins. All graces come from him alone as their true source. But the saints are mediators between Jesus Christ and us by their intercession. It is through them as through channels that God makes his grace flow upon us.

The same reasons, then, which induce us to honor the angels, induce us also to honor the saints of God. Christ wishes all men to honor his priests for the great divine powers which he has given them, and he declares that the honor bestowed upon his priests is bestowed upon himself. "He that receiveth you," says Christ of his priests, "receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me." (Matt., x., 41.) If God then wishes all men to honor his servants on earth, he certainly wishes us also to honor those of his servants who are most intimately united with him in heaven; and if God considers the honor bestowed upon his servants on earth as bestowed upon himself, he undoubtedly, considers also the honor which we bestowed upon his servants in heaven as bestowed upon himself. Parents consider the respect shown to their children as shown to themselves. The saints in heaven are the most beloved children of God.—To honor and respect them is to honor and respect God himself, through whom they are what they are; it is to honor God the Father, who created them; it is to honor God the Son, who redeemed them, and it is to honor God the Holy Ghost, who sanctified them and strengthened them to remain faithful to God until death. Hence it is, that the honor paid to the saints, instead of diminishing God's honor, rather increases it in a great measure.

To honor the saints, then, for the reasons and in the manner we do, is not to commit the sin of idolatry, as

Protestants in their vincible or invincible ignorance assert. It is the sin of idolatry to give to any creature the honor of divine adoration. Now, no Catholic would ever dream of doing this. We honor the saints as the particular friends of God; we honor them as our intercessors with God; we honor them as our benefactors; we honor them for their ardent love for God and their neighbor; we honor them for the interest they take in our spiritual and temporal welfare; we honor them for the heroic, virtuous example which they have given us; we honor them because we hope to be one day sharers of their supernatural happiness for all eternity; we honor them because God himself commands us in Holy Writ to honor them. "Behold," said he to Moses, "I will send my angel who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. *Take notice of him and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned, for my name is in him.*" (Exod., xxiii., 21.) "Let us now praise," says the Wise Man, "these glorious men—men rich in virtue, men of mercy, whose godly deeds have not failed—Let the Church declare their praise." (Ecclus., xliv., 1, 6, 10, 15.)

II. *Why we invoke the saints.*

We invoke the saints, because we may obtain many graces through their prayer.

God, the eternal Sower, whose invisible hand fills the boundless space with suns and planets, who has produced out of nothing, the earth on which we live, the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal kingdoms—God, the creator of all the millions of human beings that have peopled the earth, and will dwell thereon till the day of doom, the creator of the countless millions of angels who people

heaven—this great God, whose power and wealth are unlimited, does not intend that a single atom should be lost in the immense regions of the universe. This is why he leaves nothing barren that is capable of production; this is why, over the entire extent of our globe, innumerable germs float in the air, and cover the earth wherever it is capable of vegetation, wherever there is room for a blade of grass or for the tiniest moss.

In like manner, the *graces of God*, like invisible but fruitful germs, float continually around our souls, seeking for some fertile spot. Now, God sows, as it were, by different hands, his graces and blessings upon all men. He has especially consecrated and appointed the priests of the Catholic Church to sanctify the people. It is by the priests that God the Father saves the world; by them God the Son applies the merits of his sufferings to the souls of men; it is by the priests that the Holy Ghost sanctifies souls when they receive baptism, or any other of the seven sacraments; by them he preaches to the people and shows to them the true road to heaven. “You are the light of the world,” says our Lord of his priests.

But God, as we have seen, is also accustomed to bestow many of his graces and blessings upon mankind by the hands of his holy angels and saints. Hence it is that we invoke them to ask of God, through Christ’s merits, those graces which are necessary for salvation.

But certain people, being ignorant of the ways of God, say: “Is not God infinitely superior to all the angels and saints in heaven? If they are merciful and powerful, is not God incomparably more so? Is it not much better to address our prayers to God alone, than to have recourse to the intercession or mediation of others?” Such is some-

times the language of ignorant, inconsiderate people who never reflect on the order established by God, nor on the means which he has given us to acquire temporal and eternal happiness.

In creating heaven and earth, says St. Thomas, God established a marvellous order, a universal harmony among all his creatures. This order, as we said above, is that the good of inferior beings is to be procured only by the generous interposition of superior beings,—that beings of a lower class are to be led to God by those of a higher class. By this order of his Divine Providence, God enlightens and instructs the angels of a lower rank by those of a higher rank. In like manner, he procures the spiritual and temporal good of men by the mediation of his angels and saints.

Now, it is not for want of power that God uses secondary causes for our spiritual and temporal good; it is rather to manifest both his infinite wisdom and goodness in the general government of his Divine Providence, and the merit and sanctity of some of his creatures whom he mercifully deigns to associate with him in the government of his Providence. It is our duty to conform, in all things, to this infallible order, and have, on this account, recourse to the intercession of the saints. Such is his holy law and will, says St. Thomas Aquinas.

We poor pilgrims, therefore, are under a certain obligation to invoke the saints, in order to obtain, through their intercession, the divine grace necessary for our salvation, not because God cannot save us without the intercession of the saints, but because the order established by God requires that, while we remain in this world, we be brought to God by the prayers of the saints. (St. Thom. in 4. Sent. dist. 45, qu. 3, a. 2.)

It is on this account that St. Augustine says: "There are many things that God does not grant without a mediator and an intercessor." (Quest. 149, super. Exod. serm. 2 et 4 de St. Steph.) The justness of this remark is confirmed by two examples—Abimelech and the friends of Job were pardoned, but it was only through the prayers of Abraham and Job. (Gen., xx.)

Our belief, then, concerning the honor and invocation of the angels and saints is, that all the efficacy of their prayers depends principally on the goodness and mercy of God, and on the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ who, as we have said above, is our only Mediator of Justice and merciful advocate at the right hand of his eternal Father; but we believe also that it is good and profitable to desire the intercession of the saints, to invoke them in fervent prayer, in order to obtain from God, through their intercession, spiritual and temporal blessings which Jesus Christ has merited for us by his death upon the cross. (Council of Trent, Sess. xxv.) Hence, our manner of praying to God is different from that of praying to the saints. We beg of God, to have mercy on us and to hear us; but we desire the saints only to pray for us, or to assist us by their prayers; and thus are understood all our prayers, under what form of words soever they are made.

Would to God that we honored and invoked the angels and saints oftener than we do; we would, no doubt, feel better for it; they then would obtain for us greater and more numerous spiritual and temporal blessings which would make our faith more lively, our hope more confident, our charity for God and our fellow-men more ardent, and our hearts more detached from this world, and

more desirous of everlasting goods. Were we to honor and invoke the holy angels and the saints more frequently than we do, they would prevent the evil spirits and wicked men to lay snares for our eternal ruin; they would prevent many blasphemous tongues and false teachers from cursing and ridiculing our holy religion, and even force them to acknowledge its sanctity and saving power, and bless those that live up to it.

When Balaam, a soothsayer of the children of Ammon, was sent by Balac, king of Moab, to curse the Israelites, he saddled his ass, and went with the princes of the king to curse the people of God. But an angel of God stood in his way with a drawn sword, and his ass turned aside. Balaam smote her; but the angel moved the tongue of the brute beast and rebuked Balaam for his folly. Balaam now saw the angel. He was struck with fear, and begged leave to return. But the angel said to him: "Go now with these men, and speak no other things than I shall command thee." The king commanded Balaam three times, but in vain, to curse the Israelites. Balaam was forced, by an irresistible power, to bless the people of God. "I came here," he said, "to curse, but I am forced to bless."

The mother superior of a certain convent of the Sisters of the Visitation wrote one day to St. Frances de Chantal that she had a novice who felt so greatly drawn to the simple contemplation of God alone that she was not able even to invoke the saints at her morning prayers. St. Frances de Chantal replied, "that the devil had a hand in that; that the novice should be thoroughly examined and taught that, how favorable soever the king may be to us, there are always times and circumstances, in which

we are obliged to apply to his ministers. Order, therefore, this novice sometimes to recite the Litanies of the Saints. If she does not do it, look upon her as a suspected person. Put her under the direction of some learned priest and let her be thoroughly tried." This advice was followed, and it was soon discovered that, as this novice had not long been converted from Protestantism, the devil gave her that absorption in false contemplation, in order to keep her in the heretical error that it was wrong to invoke the saints.

St. Frances de Chantal said to her sisters on this occasion: "I assure you, I dared not say to you anything more than advice you to have that novice thoroughly examined in our religion: But I felt in my heart that her soul had not been thoroughly cleansed from the leaven of heresy." To cure her of this wound, the saint advised the mother superior of the convent to make that novice recite the Litanies of the Saints every day during the time of her noviciate. By this means she was entirely cleansed from the leaven of heresy and became a very devout religious.

ON THE HONOR AND INVOCATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

27. Which of the saints should we honor most?

The Blessed Virgin Mary, because she is the Mother of God, and the queen of all saints.

One day the great king Assuerus asked one of his ministers, "How should he be honored whom the king desires to honor?" "He whom the king desires to honor," replied the minister, "should be clad in kingly robes; he

should be crowned with a kingly diadem and the first of the royal princes should go before him and cry aloud: 'Thus shall he be honored whom the king desires to honor.'" In this manner did an earthly king honor Mardochai, who had saved the monarch's life. And how should the King of heaven and earth honor the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom he had chosen, from all eternity, to coöperate with him in the redemption and sanctification of mankind?

We have already seen how God delights in honoring his saints on earth and in heaven. But there is one whom he has honored more than all the angels and saints together. This privileged creature is the Blessed Virgin Mary. She was chosen by God, from all eternity, to coöperate with him in saving and sanctifying mankind.

There was once a celebrated architect, who built a most magnificent palace. When the costly edifice was completed, he gave it to good people for their dwelling. But they soon behaved badly, and were a scandal to all their neighbors, who often said to one another: Why was so splendid a palace built for such wicked people? At last the king and queen arrived and took possession of the palace. They forgave the servants for their bad behavior, and tried to make them good again. Then the people said:—Now we understand why this magnificent building was erected; it was for the king and queen.

The architect in this parable is God the Father; he built a magnificent palace—the world. He put in it Adam and Eve. They soon behaved badly, and now it was said by the angels: Why was so splendid a palace,—the world—created for these wicked people? At last the King and the Queen arrived, that is, Jesus Christ

and the Blessed Virgin, his Mother. They pardoned the servants and tried to make them good again, and the angels exclaimed: Now we understand why this great and splendid palace—the world—was made: it was for Jesus Christ and his Mother—the King and Queen of the world.

God decreed from all eternity to create the world as a dwelling place for men, where they, by a holy life, should gain an eternal reward. He foresaw from all eternity that men would not live up to the end of their creation. God then would have been frustrated in his design in creating the world and men, had he not decreed from all eternity, the Incarnation, and consequently the creation of his Mother, for the redemption of men. It was then, principally for the sake of the Redeemer and his Mother that the world was created; for they were to come into this world for the justification and glorification of men, which was to be operated through Jesus Christ and his Mother: "*Ordo enim nature creatus est et institutus propter ordinem gratie,*" says St. Thomas Aquinas.

The principal end of the creation of the universe, I say, is Christ and his Mother, and the elect, that they, the elect, receive the grace of God here below through Christ and his Mother. Although it be true, that Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin are, so to speak, certain parts of this world, which is prior to them in material existence, yet if considered in their final end, they are prior to the world. For this reason St. Paul calls Jesus Christ the beginning, *the first born from the dead*, that in all things, he may hold the primacy: "because in him, it hath well pleased the Father, that all fulness should dwell, and through him to reconcile all things unto him-

self, making peace through the blood of the cross, both as to the things on earth, and the things that are in heaven." (Coloss., i., 18, 20.) In like manner the Holy Church applies to the Blessed Virgin the words of Ecclesiasticus: "*Ego ex ore Altissimi prodivi, primogenita ante omnem creaturam—Ego feci in caelis, ut oriretur lumen indeficiens.*" (C. 24, 5-6.) "I came out of the mouth of the Most High, the first born of all creatures. I made that in the heavens there should rise light that never faileth." She gave to the world that never-failing light, *i. e.* Christ the Sun of Justice, and through him, the light of faith. *Et qui creavit me, requievit in tabernaculo meo.*—(Verse 12.) "And he that made me, rested in my tabernacle."

The Rabbi of old, too, used to call the mother of the Messiah "*primum hominem,*" *the first man*, so that all the rest of men could be called her children.

I say first man; first, of course, not by creation and time, but by dignity, by predestination, and by the decrees of God, and on account of her destiny. Hence, St. Bernard (serm. I. in *Salve Regina*) says: "For her sake, every Scripture was made; for her sake, the whole world was created; and she is the one that is full of grace; and through her man was redeemed. *Verbum caro factum, Deus humilis, et homo sublimis;*" God created her, as a world apart, for himself.

In the revelations of St. Bridget, (in serm. angel. C. 5,) we read as follows: "When the visible world was created there was still existing in the mind of God, another less world with all its beauty and splendor, which was still to be created, and this world was the Blessed Virgin; from this world was to come greater glory for God, greater joy for the angels, and greater blessings for all those men

who wished to apply to, and enjoy her goodness, than there should come from the vast world you live in." And indeed, it is with truth, that the Blessed Virgin, in this revelation, is called "a less world," because she carried in her sacred womb, God himself, in whom all things are contained, and because, according to St. Bonaventure (in Spec. B. Virg. C. 6.) "whatever, after God, is most beautiful, most sweet and most attractive in glory, is found in Mary, and through Mary." Truly, he who is mighty, has done great things in her and for her. "*Fecit mihi magna qui potens est. Fecit potentiam in brachio suo.*"

There is, then, a certain mutual dependence between the creation of the world and the nativity of Christ and the Blessed Virgin.—For God did not wish that Christ and the Blessed Virgin should be born except in this world, and again, he did not wish that this world should exist without Jesus Christ and his Mother; nay, it was for them that he created it. They being, then, the final reason for the creation of the universe, God also wished that all men should be dependent on them, as he had decreed to institute, through them, the order of grace, of the *justification and glorification of the elect*.

The Blessed Virgin, then, is the tabernacle in which God concealed the created wisdom, nay, the uncreated and incarnate wisdom Itself. It was in her that the Son of God was conceived and made man and dwelt for nine months; so that, if we call him our Redeemer from all eternity, we may also, with great propriety, call his Blessed Mother our Redemptrix, that is, an instrument or *perpetual help* in the work of our redemption, and in the whole order of grace wrought and instituted by Jesus Christ.

It is impossible carefully to study the history of Jesus and Mary, as it is recorded by the evangelists, without perceiving a uniform law of Providence uniting them in the great events of their lives, and leading directly to the conclusions that may assist us in appreciating the importance of the part which she has ever since sustained in the extension and perfection of what was begun in the Incarnation.

To go back to the visit of the archangel to Mary. It was necessary to attract all her attention, to apprise her of the will of God, and obtain her free consent thereto. Hence, it is that the archangel saluted her in these amiable words: "Hail, Mary, full of grace." This extraordinary expression surprised her, and vividly excited her whole attention; for there is nothing that astonishes more an humble, holy person than the recital of her praises.

Then the angel said: "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, bring forth a son, and call his name Jesus." And how was the mystery of the Incarnation to be accomplished? The angel told her: "The Holy Ghost shall come over thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." (Luke, i., 31.) To put an end to all hesitation, and convince her of the fact, he represented to her the state of her cousin Elizabeth, to whom God granted a special privilege to conceive at a very advanced age. Holy Mary being fully convinced by this divine communication, did no longer refuse her consent, and said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word." At that moment was accomplished, in her virginal womb, the mystery of the Incarnation.

No doubt, unless Mary had consented to become the

mother of the Redeemer, he would not have been born. Divine grace, it is true, disposed her to acquiescence ; but the act was not the less one of her own free, unfettered will ; an act which she was able to have refused ; and, by refusing, to have thwarted the Divine plans. Omnipotence might have arranged it otherwise ; but as certainly as man has been redeemed by the Incarnation and Passion of Jesus, so surely did God make the whole depend, in the first instance, on the assent and coöperation of Mary. When he created the visible universe, he said "*Fiat*"—Let it be : and it was. When he wished to redeem the world, it was by a fiat ; but this word was uttered by the lips of Mary ; "*Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.*" But why did God not act as before, without any intermediate agent ; why did he make the execution of his plans of mercy depend on the will and the word of a feeble woman ? No one can say, because he has not revealed the reason ; we know that it is so ; and it is for us to accept it, and consider its significance.

The angel said to Mary, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." And in truth, it seems as if, from that day, he has never been separated from her. As he became man by her coöperation, he continued to act with her, and through her in his successive manifestations. Before his birth, when she visited Elizabeth, his presence in her chaste womb did not affect her pious relative till the voice of her salutation sounded in her ear ; then the babe leaped for joy in Elizabeth's womb, and she was filled with the Holy Ghost. (Luke, i., 41.)

In relating the circumstances of the Nativity, the Evangelists uniformly associate Jesus with Mary, even more invariably than at first sight appears necessary.

Thus, as a sign by which to know their new-born Saviour, the shepherds at Bethlehem were told that they should "find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." (Luke, ii., 12.) And St. Luke adds, that "they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in a manger."—(*Ib.* v., 16.) Again, when St. Matthew records the visit of the Magi, he mentions that, entering into the house they found the child, with Mary his mother, and falling down, they adored him. (Math., ii., 11.) In both of these instances, it might be deemed superfluous to mention the name of Mary at all; she must have been present; why then take notice of so obvious a fact, especially as it was not to visit her, but her Divine Child, that both the Magi and the shepherds went to Bethlehem. It is not superfluous, nor without a meaning. It enables us to keep steadily in view the united agency of Mary with Jesus in the progress, as well as in the beginning, of his designs of mercy. As he was incarnate by her word, so he was supported by her, as infants are at their mothers, from day to day; he was nourished from her substance, and watched and tended by her love, and closely associated with her at every step of his advancing years. Thus, also, the angel who appeared in sleep to St. Joseph commanded him to take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt. (Matt., ii., 13.) And again, when they were to return home, the angel once more directed him to take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel. (*Ib.* ii. 20.) "And he arose," says St. Matthew, "and took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel."—(*Ib.* v. 21.)

"After the days of Mary's purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished," says the Gospel,

“they carried the Divine Infant to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord.” Here is a new and important instance of the agency of Mary. It was no empty ceremony, that offering and redemption of the infant Redeemer. “He was offered,” says the prophet Isaias, “because it was his own will.”—(Is., i, iii. 7.) It was the first instalment of the sacrifice, which from Eternity he had designed to make; when, in the language of the Psalmist he said, “Behold I come; in the head of the book it is written of me, that I should do thy will; O my God, I have desired it; and thy law is in the midst of my heart.” (Ps., xxxix., 7, 9.) It was the symbolical and preparatory offering which was consummated on Calvary, and is perpetuated on our altars, for a lasting memorial of his Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. And that offering was made by the hands of Mary. He lay in the hands of his blessed mother passive, and seemingly helpless, with no visible sign of his greatness, as he lies to-day, in the hands of his priest. The Omnipotent had taken upon himself our infirmity; had adopted our weakness, he could not walk, or stand, or speak. Mary must therefore sustain him; and express for him the interior, longing desire of his Eternal love, to offer himself to his Father for man, which had as yet found in him no voice to make itself known, nor capacity to carry out its intentions. Beneath the form of an infant, there lay concealed a Divine energy; that child was the very Word that had created the world; but the conditions of our humanity, within which his infinite love had circumscribed him, had imposed silence upon him, had reduced his power to feebleness and inaction. Mary was chosen, among all the generations of mankind, to stand forth, in the plenitude of grace and power, to

supply the means of action to the Infant-God ; to become, for the time of this necessity, the voice of the Eternal Word. She advanced along the aisles of the solemn temple, attended by Simeon and Anna, and St. Joseph, to the place where the priest was waiting to receive her. She raised the Child in her arms, and with an overflowing heart surrendered him to the representative of his heavenly Father on earth. The first and long desired act of his Sacrifice was accomplished, he was not hers any longer, but God's—the victim of charity, ready to be immolated. The Eternal Priest, according to the order of Melchisedec, had ascended the mountain of sacrifice ; and in this oblation of himself, Mary was made the great agent and minister of his will. Thus, “they presented him to the Lord.”

But the time had not yet come for the last and bloody act of his sacrifice, when the Lord would lay upon him the iniquity of us all, when the life of the victim must be taken for its expiation. His oblation of himself, though essentially one and the same, must be prolonged and reiterated through a course of years : “He must first suffer many things, and be rejected by his nation.” (Luke, xvii., 25.) His mother must therefore receive him again, to foster and mature his natural powers ; to watch the growing signs of his intelligence ; his advance in wisdom and age ; and in grace with God and man. (Luke, ii., 52.) He was therefore ransomed, for the small sum of money prescribed by the ceremonial law ; and was restored to Mary to remain for thirty years of close and inseparable union. And in the act of receiving him back, she was made the subject of a remarkable prophecy, referring to her prolonged association with him in the

designs of God. "Behold, this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel," said holy Simeon, "and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed." (Luke, ii., 34, 35.) So intimately was her future life to be bound up with his, that the sorrows of his sacred heart should also pierce hers; and this with a definite object in the plans of Divine Providence. The contradictions which he was to endure were the sword which was to pierce her heart. And thus we have another proof of the continued coöperation with the Redeemer's mission, assigned to Mary, in her sufferings, no less than in her actions.

For twelve years, nothing is recorded of the Holy Family, except its annual visit to Jerusalem, at the festival of the Passover. But it is enough for us to know that Jesus and Mary lived and suffered together during all that time. Then recorded incidents, which must have happened, are more than sufficient to make even the hidden life of the Redeemer and his Mother a valuable confirmation of this fact. From what occurs daily in our own lives, we can form a very definite idea of the mutual services, the unwearied interchange of kindness that must have drawn closer and closer together those blessed hearts.

We know of the sleepless nights, the days of anxious watching, made unavoidable by the many incidents and unintelligible distresses of infancy and childhood; every one must be familiar with the endearing ways by which children entwine themselves about their mother's heart. Twelve years are soon passed over in thought; but with their measured lapse in real life, incidents without number are occurring, which would make no great figure, indeed,

in history, but which are bound up with the life of a united family. Daily necessities anticipated and provided for; innocent gratifications procured; hours of anxiety or of labor shared together; the calm and open converse in intervals of rest; courteous demeanor; the unselfish preference of each other's good; the growing esteem, and confidence, and trust in each other's worth: these are the simple means that endear the hearts of the same family to one another, and make the joys and sorrows of each the property of all. It needs no effort of imagination thus to animate those unrecorded years of the Redeemer's childhood; and to perceive the development of Mary's assimilation to his will, and of her agency in his maturing purposes.

At the age of twelve, he appears at Jerusalem, and Mary is with him. Their visit to the temple is finished; Mary and Joseph travel homeward for a whole day, but Jesus, unknown to them, remains behind. They discover their loss, and immediately return. After three days' anxious search, Jesus is found in the temple, with the doctors. Mary addresses Him: "Son, why hast thou done so to us; behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." (Luke, ii., 48.) He replies: "How is it that you sought me; did you not know that I must be about the things that are my Father's?" (*Ib.* v. 49,) A declaration of his Divine character, which may perhaps be thought fatal to our argument. But this is not the only instance in which the apparent meaning of our Saviour's words is singularly contrasted with the action which immediately follows. "And He went down with them," says the evangelist, "and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." (*Ib.* v. 54.) The subsequent act certainly appears

more wonderful on the very account of the language that preceded it. He must be about his Heavenly Father's business; and seemed, for that reason, to put aside human interference: yet he immediately resumes his place in the company of Mary and Joseph, and remained with them for eighteen years longer. And those were the years of his youth and early manhood, when many sons exempt themselves, or are exempted by circumstances, from filial dependence on their parents' will. Yet all the while, Jesus "was subject to them." It would have been comparatively less remarkable, if this fact had been affirmed of his childhood and infancy; it might have been thought to be more in harmony with that age, or rather the necessary consequence of it. But the inspired writer has reserved it for a time of life, when the contrast which it presents is much more conspicuous; and has connected it with the narrative of what passed in the temple, between our Lord and his Mother; thus increasing, if possible, the importance of this new feature in his life. For, as much as his words seemed to depreciate his holy mother, so much does his later subjection gain in importance. The greater the disparity between Jesus and Mary is made to appear, and the more unlikely it seems that she should command, and he obey, the more astonishing is the information that he "was subject to her." It is impossible to resist the conclusion, that, by this very objection, he was about his Father's business, that is, doing his Father's will: that Mary, therefore, by ruling, as well as he, by obeying, was furthering the mysterious operations of his mission on earth. For "whereas he learned obedience by the things which he suffered," (Heb., v., 8,) and as obedience requires some one to command, as well as a

subject to obey, it was necessary that Mary should consent to act as his Superior, to govern him, and control his will. Thus she who had become his mother, discharged in succession all the offices belonging to that relationship ; was associated with him in the performance of what his infantine weakness could not do without her assistance ; claimed, because he willed it, what his strength alone could have enabled her to receive, the obedience and subjection of God. The union, then, of Jesus and Mary, and her coöperation with him for thirty years of his life, cannot be called in question. But a time arrived when he must leave her, on his Father's business, for a little longer than before, but not forever. And as he had made up for her three days' loss of him by obeying her for eighteen years, so, on the eve of his longer absence, he gave her a precious token that her union and influence were only suspended, and that at the appointed time they should be resumed.

The circumstances of the marriage feast at Cana are familiar to everyone. The wine was exhausted, and Mary appealed to her Son : "They have no wine." His answer seemed to discourage her application : "What is it to me and to thee ; mine hour is not yet come." It was his farewell ; but he would not leave her without a parting benediction, without directing her hope to an hour of reunion. He had done her bidding for thirty years ; how could he refuse her what she had suggested rather than asked ? As once before, his action derives a peculiar value from its contrast to his words, he seems again to repel, while he is preparing to do more than the suppliant "asks or thinks." It is evident that she did not interpret his answer as a repulse, or a refusal of her

request. If he had expressly assured her that her desire should be immediately granted, she could not have acted more appropriately than she did, even after his apparently unpromising answer. She said to the servants, "Whatsoever he saith to you, do it." Could anything prove more convincingly the secret union of her heart with his, her exquisite perception of the signs of his will, her keen foresight of his intentions, taught her by thirty years of intimate sympathy and intense study of his mode of action. Even after the event has interpreted the language of our Lord, and fixed its true meaning, there are persons in the world, too many, alas! who still affirm that it was meant as a refusal, and nothing more. But Mary, while the issue was to all but herself doubtful, never doubted; she turned to the servant, expecting immediate compliance with her petition, and prepared them for receiving the necessary orders. The miracle followed immediately; wine in abundance, and superior in quality to the former, filled the vessels into which the servants had poured water. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory." (John, ii., 11.) It was the closing act of his subjection to his holy mother; the beginning of a new period in his mission. Henceforth he will act, for a time at least, alone; he will fulfil his ministry and show forth his glory as a master, not as a subject.

But, as the first period of his life on earth began and ended in intimate association with Mary, so the second, or public period, began in like manner with her; the earliest attestation of his divinity was given in her presence, and because she desired it. His words, indeed, implied that the exertion of her influence was premature: "Mine hour is not yet come." The disciples at Emmaus,

when he made as though he would go farther, "constrained him," and prevailed upon him to tarry with them; Jacob wrestled with the angel a whole night till sunrise, and wrung from him a blessing ere he let him go; of Mary, as of Jacob, it might be said that she "was strong against God;" (Gen., xxxii., 28.) She was stronger than opportunity, and gained, at the beginning of her Son's ministry, a part of the benediction reserved for her at the end of it. For his words also imply that there was a time to come when her influence should be no longer premature, as there was a time past when it was all powerful. His language was at once retrospective and prospective. It was as if he would say, "for thirty years I have done thy bidding, O my mother; I have gone out and come in at thy desire; and been in all things subject to thee, but it must not be so any longer. My great mission demands my separation even from thee. But as the peaceful years of my youth were passed with thee; as thou didst watch by my crib, and admire the faith of the shepherds and wise men, and witness their adoration; the hour shall again come when thou and I shall be once more together as we were in the past; the dark hour of my Passion shall bring thee again to my side; thou shalt see a heathen soldier and a malefactor, yea the powers of nature herself pay homage to my divinity. And then I will remember thee." Thus he bade her farewell; thus he closed the first period of her influence; thus he connected it with the beginning of the new period that was opening, and anticipated its revival at a future day.

Twice, during his public ministry, did his mother cross his path, and his words on both occasions are often interpreted unfavorably to our argument. Once, he was

told that his mother and his brethren desired to speak to him. He answered, "Who is my mother and who are my brethren?" and pointing to his disciples: "Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." It was a repetition in substance of his former words: "I must be about my Father's business;" and, "mine hour is not yet come." As he was separated from his holy mother in order to fulfil the will of his heavenly Father, and more entirely to give himself to his mission, he adopted for the time all who were similarly devoted to that supreme will, who were laboring for the same great end; he admitted them to share the love and the thoughts that belonged to his mother, but which she was then withheld from personally claiming. There was a place in his divine heart sacred to the love of friends; another to the love of sinners; there was also an interior place sacred to filial affection—to the love of his mother. It was hers by nature, and doubly hers by grace, earned long and well; it was inviolable as his own unchanging truth. But that this filial love might not be wasted, while the business of his Father withheld it from its proper object, he bade it overflow upon those who most resembled his holy mother in their coöperation with the divine will. She was not excluded from her proper share; far from it. She was expressly included, for his very words remind us of the manner in which she became his mother; of the unreserved surrender of herself to his will, which secured for her that unparalleled honor, when she said, "Be it done to me according to thy word." Indeed, was there ever a disciple who carried out the will of his heavenly Father so faithfully as she did during her whole life.

At another time, a woman who was present, exclaimed, "Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the breast that gave thee suck." (Luke, xi., 27.) She was unconsciously fulfilling the inspired language of Mary herself, who had predicted that all generations should call her blessed. "Yea, rather blessed," said Christ, "are they who hear the word of God, and keep it." Again he seemed to turn attention aside from his mother, but, in reality, to establish her right to all that was claimed for her, and to much more; he did not call in question her blessedness; how could he do so, when the Holy Spirit had declared, by her own inspired lips, that she should be called blessed by all generations. He certainly recognized the blessedness which belonged to her, as his mother, by making it a subject of comparison with another and a greater benediction. She was blessed because she had borne him and nursed him, but more blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it. Was she therefore, excluded from this blessing? Far otherwise. Compare the testimony of the same evangelist: "Mary kept all these sayings, all these things, and pondered them in her heart." It was, therefore, her own greater benediction that he pronounced; it was her higher claim to a better reward, in which all who in like manner hear the word of God, and keep it, may have a share.

So far, therefore, from those instances presenting any real difficulty, they strengthen and confirm our argument most materially. They prove how intimately present to our Lord was the recollection of his mother, and of the peculiar claims which she had to his benediction. If she could not be with him personally, her place in his heart was not, therefore, vacant; her peculiar title to it was

made the condition of others' admission to a similar distinction; Jesus and Mary were still united; he remembered, and taught others to remember, that her claims to his rewards, great as they unquestionably were, because she was his mother, were not the greatest; and that if they were open to the reach of others, it must be by the way which she had already traced by her example. She, on her part, calmly awaited the coming of his promised hour, and was content.

It was no accident, nor fortuitous concurrence of circumstances, that made the summit of Mount Calvary the scene of the arrival of that promised hour. It was not on Mount Thabor, where he was transfigured, that it came, nor at the time when he rejoiced in spirit, because the mysteries of his kingdom had been revealed to little ones; nor in the short triumph which introduced him into Jerusalem a few days before he suffered; it was when the sacrifice of his life was almost consummated. If there ever was a time in his whole life, when it might be thought that the great object of his mission should necessarily exclude every other thought; when it might seem the least probable that his holy mother would resume her place by his side, and once more be distinguished by the expression of his filial love, it was surely in the hour of his death. But "there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother." "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved, standing by, he said to his mother: Woman, behold thy Son; and to the disciple: Behold thy mother." (John, xix., 25, 27.)

Every sensitive heart knows how natural it is in the hour of deep sorrow to shrink from the sight of all but those who are most intimately united to it by mutual

sympathy. The doors of the heart are closed to the most respected among ordinary friends; their condolence is offered and accepted from a distance. But Jesus, in the hour of his soul's bitter anguish, draws his mother again to his side after a period of reserve and separation; he not only admits her to suffer with him, but he pours into her heart the oil of his consolation. The prophecy of Simeon is about to be fulfilled; the Redeemer has been lifted up on the cross, for the fall and for the resurrection of many; a sword has pierced the soul of Mary that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed; and especially the thoughts that lay concealed in the heart of her Divine Son himself. Many thoughts and divine purposes, hitherto concealed, are disclosed in his last words to her. They make it impossible to conceive that her share in his mission was limited to his birth and infancy;—that after his parting from her at Cana she was thenceforth nothing to him, nor he to her, as is often falsely asserted. In making the hour of his death the hour also of her reunion with him, he contradicts such a supposition. A passing expression of his regard in the moment of his victory over the tomb, or of his triumphant Ascension, would have weighed far less, than his tender mention of her in the closing hour of his life.

His death left her where his birth had found her, close by his side; she stood to witness his closing eye, as she had first seen its opening light; to hear his last cry, as she had soothed his first; to be consoled by him, supported by his supernatural strength, as she had supported him in the time of his weakness and incapacity. And as he had to leave her alone in the world, he gave her another son, in his beloved disciple, to be to her what he himself had

been. To John he gave her as a mother; and in him to the whole church of God. It was a new mission, springing out of the first; the prolongation of her influence and coöperation in the work of the Redemption.

Lastly, after the Ascension of our Redeemer, the blessed Virgin's name occurs, as "Mary, the mother of Jesus," (Acts, i., 14,) among those who were present at the election of Mathias. No others are named but herself and the eleven Apostles; from which we infer the deference that was paid her, and the high rank that she filled in the infant church.

The whole course of the history of the Blessed Virgin then, as recorded in Scripture, uniformly exhibits her as coöperating, as an instrument, or as the Perpetual Help, in some way or other, in the mission of her Divine Son, the Redemption of mankind; and as recognised by him in this intimate relation.

The work which the Redeemer began in his Incarnation, and completed in his Passion, was not yet firmly established and secured. His kingdom was not to come all at once, nor his dominion to be immediately established on the ruins of the empire of evil; the number of his elect must be gathered in from all nations and generations of men; the merits of his Passion must be applied to the souls he has redeemed, through all succeeding ages. This great mission is carried on through his Church; she represents his divine energy; she reproduces the features of his life in her own; in her are stored up the permanent inexhaustible fruits of his Redemption. His existence began in the hour of his death; when his own mission of suffering was ended; when from his open side there flowed blood and water, to refresh and purify the inheritance of

the Lord. At Pentecost his Church came forth in the power of the Holy Spirit, fully endowed with all that was necessary to accomplish the work that was assigned to her. Since then she has never been idle, never weary in the execution of that work; in varying fortunes, in the many changes of outward circumstances, she has prolonged and multiplied the labors of Christ's life and death through eighteen centuries, and throughout the whole world.

If Our Lord continues, then, to act through his Church, in the accomplishment of his designs, does Mary still co-operate with him? Is her influence felt, together with his, as it was of old? Is she associated with him still, in the continuation and completion, as in the beginning of his work of redemption of this fallen world?

Whoever considers, with calm and impartial attention, the whole course of the life of the Blessed Virgin, and observes its invariable bearing on the great events of her Son's ministry and its uniform connexion with it, cannot doubt that her influence and co-operation are designed to last till the end of time. They were extended too far during her life on earth, to make any other conclusion probable. If Christ had merely been born and reared by her fostering care, and had then left her to accomplish his mission, if the veil had closed upon her history at Nazareth, and no further mention of her had been made in the inspired narrative of his life; there would even then have been cause enough to deem it probable that more had occurred than had been recorded, and that the term of his childhood was not the end of her union and co-operation with him. But with the additional information regarding his maturer years, afforded by the Evangelist; with the knowledge that he chose to be subject to her till he was

thirty years of age; that he allowed himself, as it were, to be constrained by her intercession to work his first miracle, that he drew her again to his side, and disposed events so as to console her, in the time of his agony; and finally, with the recollection that the last time she is named in Scripture, it is in the august society of the eleven apostles; it is impossible to think that her share in the work that brought her Divine Son from heaven is at an end, or that such an extension of her influence, beyond what the necessity of the case, according to human foresight, seemed to require, could have any other consistent or legitimate termination than the conclusion of the vast undertaking, whose beginning depended on her consent.

The first evangelical prophecy, also, spoken by God to the deceiver of our race, points to the union of the woman and her seed in their hostility to the devil and his seed. The devil and his seed are inseparable enemies of the woman and her seed, who must therefore, by parity of condition, be inseparable also. Even the variety of expression, "She shall bruise," or "It shall bruise thy head," against which exception is often taken, illustrates the identity of operation that unites the woman of prophecy and her seed; and hence it is in reality indifferent whether one reading or the other is adopted, for the woman triumphs in her seed, and neither her seed nor his triumph could be without her coöperation. Till the final destruction of the deceiver and his seed, it is evident that the woman and her seed must coexist as the divinity appointed agents of that destruction. The first words of the prediction, at least, admit of no equivocal interpretation. "I will put enmities between thee and

the woman, between thy seed and her seed." While hostility is possible between sin and holiness, between God and the evil one, so long must Mary and her Son coöperate in sustaining it, in pushing it to extremity, and finally, in destroying its objects. The only term of her influence and united action is the term of which St. Paul speaks when he says: "Afterwards the end, when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father, when he shall have brought to nought all principality and all authority and power, and the enemy, death shall be destroyed." (I. Cor., xv., 24, 26.)

Accordingly, the Church of Christ has ever regarded Mary's influence as powerfully affecting its own destiny. It does not assign her a merely historical position in the system of Christianity; or as if she had merited great honor only as the author of Christ's being in time. Mary is regarded by the Church as the centre of a living energy; as exercising a protecting and fostering care over the representative of her Son on earth. Her position of superintendence over the destinies of the Church is the divine appointment of Christ himself, who chose to be subject to her, during thirty years of his life; it is the reward of her singular conformity to the will of his Heavenly Father. The Church of Christ, therefore, cannot believe that Mary's patronage is more inconsistent with the supreme majesty of God, than was the subjection of that very God to her, while he lived on earth. God willed it to be so then, as he wills it now, that Mary should coöperate with him in the care of his Church. It could not be, unless he willed it. Now if it is his will, who can call it in question, or who can suggest an arrangement more in harmony with his revealed word; or one that redounds more to his sovereign honor?

But what need is there of Mary's interposition at the present day? Does it not seem to disparage the power or the mercy of God? The need of her interposition is neither less nor greater than it was in the beginning of the Church. God so willed it then, that the Incarnation should, in a measure, depend on her; if he still wills it, that the full accomplishment of all its results should, in part at least, depend on her, then her interposition is still needful. The disparagement to his mercy and power is not greater now than it was then. Mary was created by his power, as the chief instrument of his mercy. All that her influence now accomplishes, and all that it shall obtain till the end of time, is therefore due to his infinite and omnipotent goodness as to its first cause.

We read in Holy Scripture that as soon as "Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost."—(Luke, i., 41.) Mary had then conceived the Holy One; her chaste womb then embraced him who is the source of all grace; she was, therefore, at that moment, the treasury of grace. And through her, grace flowed in a plentiful stream upon all who approached her. Hence, has arisen the universal opinion that she has become from that moment, the great channel of grace to the Church, sending along its blessed stream, from the fountain-head, which is God, to refresh and fructify the garden of the Lord. As sin came into the world through Eve, grace came through Mary, with Jesus Christ, who was born of her, and ever remains her Son.

Sin would not have entered this world, had Eve not listened to the serpent, and furthered his wicked designs by her wilful coöperation; in like manner, had Mary not

listened favorably to the angel, and thus coöperated with God in the work of the Incarnation, Christ would not have been born of her—the fountain of grace would have remained sealed. He that gave his Son to the world through the agency of Mary, has with him given all things to the world through her.

If therefore you believe that Jesus Christ came to us through Mary, believe also that the graces which he merited for us, must come to us through his mother. If you believe that Mary was a help in our Redemption, believe also that she is a help in our sanctification; if you believe that, without her, you were not redeemed, believe also, that without her, you will not be saved; if without Mary, you could not have a Redeemer to open heaven to you, neither shall you have heaven without Mary's assistance; if the Redeemer came to you through Mary, it is also through Mary that you must come to behold the Redeemer in heaven in his glory for all eternity. If you believe in the beautiful order of nature, you must believe also in the order of grace; for the order of nature was established for the order of grace; or to speak more plainly, God wished that his own mother should be your mother also, not by name only, but in very deed. He wished, that she should be looked upon and honored as the Perpetual Help, or Intercessor for the welfare of the whole world, the help of sinners to obtain their conversion, and the help of the just, to obtain for them grace to advance and persevere in justice and holiness of life.

It is an article of faith that to invoke the saints, in order that they may, by their intercession, obtain for us God's blessings, is not only lawful, but also a useful and holy practice. But as to the intercession of Mary, St Alphon-

sus says, "that it is even necessary for our salvation; necessary, not indeed absolutely, but morally. We affirm that this necessity arises from the will of God itself, who has ordained that all his graces should pass through the hands of Mary, according to the opinion of St. Bernard, which may well be considered at the present day as the common opinion of doctors and theologians. And this doctrine is entirely in conformity with the sentiments of the Church who, in the public prayers, approved by her, teaches us to pray constantly to this divine mother, and invoke her as the *Health* of the weak, the *Refuge* of sinners, the *Help* of Christians, our *Life*, and our *Hope*, and our *Salvation*—expressions which signify the need we have of the intercession of Mary.

"But here a modern author remarks: 'If all graces pass through Mary, when we implore the intercession of the saints, they, too, must have recourse to the mediation of Mary to obtain for us these graces. This, however,' says he, 'no one believes, or has even thought of.'

"I reply, that there can be no error or difficulty in believing this. What difficulty is there in saying that God, in order to honor his mother, having crowned her as queen of the saints, and having ordained that all graces should be dispensed by her hands, would have the saints also to invoke her, in order to obtain favors for their clients? As to saying that 'no one has even thought of it,' I find that St. Bernard, St. Anslem, St. Bonaventure, Father Suarez, and others expressly assert it. 'In vain,' says St. Bernard, 'would one pray to the other saints for a favor, if Mary did not intercede to obtain it for them,' (See Glories of Mary, Chapt. v.)

This being the state of the case, the question of Mary's

Perpetual Help in relation to our sanctification is evidently not one of mere theory, nor an abstract matter, with which we have no practical concern, which may be accepted or not, indifferently; whose reception will do no good, or whose rejection will not injure. If the whole tenor of our Lord's life, if the universal and immemorial habit of the Church, if the pious custom of millions of holy souls all coincide in attributing to the Mother of Jesus, an uninterrupted fellowship with her Son in the great work of the Redemption, and in everything that tends to its final accomplishment, the establishment of such a fact must impress every mind with the relative importance of availing ourselves of this divine institution of the powerful intercession of Mary.

28. Why are the prayers of the saints so powerful?

Because the saints are the friends of God, and, therefore, their prayers are more agreeable to him than those of sinners.

St. Thomas says that all the saints in heaven are powerful to assist us when inspired by God to do so. Now, when we pray to the saints, and especially to the Mother of God, it is not from want or weakness of faith, as non-Catholics falsely assert. The faith of the centurion in the Gospel is highly praised by our Lord himself; and yet the centurion sent to the Redeemer "the ancients of the law" to intercede with him to heal his servant. (Matt., viii., 5) Nor is it from want of confidence in the mercy of God and in the merits of Jesus Christ that we invoke the saints, and especially the Blessed Virgin Mary; but we pray to them, because we distrust our own unworthiness, firmly believing that, if the saints, and especially the holy Mother of God, join their prayers to

ours, and interpose their influence with God in our behalf, we shall sooner receive from God the favors which we wish to obtain.

St. Paul had great confidence in the prayers of the saints on earth, for he says: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the charity of the Holy Ghost, to help me in your prayers for me to God." God honors the saints by hearing their prayers. He grants to them as to his friends, many blessings which he refuses to his enemies. But God honors especially his mother by hearing her prayers, which are more powerful with him than the prayers of all the angels and saints united.

Mary is made *Mater Dei*, the "Mother of God." Behold two words, the full meaning of which can never be comprehended either by man or angels. To be Mother of God is, as it were, an infinite dignity; for the dignity of a son redounds to the honor of his mother. Now as there can be no son of greater excellence than the Son of God, so there can be no greater mother than the Mother of God. St. Thomas asks, whether God could make creatures still more perfect than those already created, and he answers—yes, he can, except three, *i. e.*: (1) the Incarnation of the Son of God, (2) the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and (3) the everlasting beatitude of the saints in heaven;—in other words, God can create numberless worlds, all different from one another in beauty, but he cannot make anything greater than the Incarnation of Christ, the maternity of the Blessed Virgin, and the happiness of the blessed in heaven. But why can he not? Because God himself is concerned in, and most intimately united to, each of these works, and is their object. "*Hæc*

tria Deum involvunt et pro objecto habent," says St. Thomas Aquinas. Now, as there is nothing greater than God, there cannot be a work greater than any of those with which his Divinity is so intimately united. As there can be no man more perfect than Christ, because he is the Man-God, and as there can be no greater happiness than the beatific vision, and enjoyment and possession of God in heaven, where the soul is, as it were, transformed into God, and most inseparably united to his nature, so, also, no mother can be made more perfect than the Mother of God. These three works are, in a certain sense, of infinite dignity on account of being so intimately united to God, the Infinite Good. There cannot then be anything better, greater or more perfect than those three works, because there cannot be anything better than God himself. The Blessed Virgin gave birth to Christ, who is the natural Son of God the Father, both as God and as man. Christ, then, as man, is the Son both of the Blessed Virgin and of God the Father. Behold, in what intimate relation she stands with the Blessed Trinity, she having brought forth the same Son, whom God the Father has generated from all eternity.

Moreover, the Blessed Virgin is the Mother of God without a father; she was both mother and father to Jesus Christ. Hence she is the mother of her Divine Son far more truly than other mothers are the mothers of their children, for Christ received of the Blessed Virgin alone his human nature, and he is indebted to his mother for all that he is as man. Hence, Christ, by being conceived and born of the Blessed Virgin, became, in a certain sense, her debtor, and is under more obligations to her for being his mother, than other children are to

their parents. Truly, this dignity of the mother of God is great!

If Mary then, is the Mother of God, what must be her love for God! Our love for a thing is in proportion to our knowledge of its value. Now, who had ever a greater knowledge of God than Mary? If the knowledge of God possessed by all the angels and saints were united in one soul, it would be but as a drop of water when compared with the ocean of love contained in the soul of Mary. And why? Because, Mary being the Mother of God, her Divine Son, in order to show his love and reverence for her, was obliged to make her as happy as possible. Now true happiness consists in the love of God, the Supreme Good.—The greater this love, the greater also is the happiness of the soul. It is then quite natural for us to think that God must have given his mother a love as intense, and as ardent as it was possible for her to receive, and consequently, a knowledge of himself in proportion to the love she was to have for him.

Moreover, Jesus Christ is the only Son of God the Father; by him alone he is generated as the Divine Word; he is also the only Son of Mary, his mother, because it was from her alone that he received his whole human nature by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost. Hence, as he is the Son of God without a mother in heaven, so also is he the Son of man without a father on earth. And this is the reason of the quite singular and reciprocal love, both of the Blessed Virgin towards Jesus Christ, and of Jesus Christ towards his virgin mother. The love of a child for his parents is generally divided between father and mother; hence, it suffers diminution. But in Jesus Christ it was a filial love which was un-

divided; it was whole and entire, for his mother alone; it was then immense, and of the most ardent nature. In like manner, the Blessed Virgin's love for Jesus Christ was undivided. She being to him both mother and father, she loved him with a father's and mother's love. She knew, moreover, that he was not only her Son, but also her God; and therefore she loved him with unbounded love.

But what is most encouraging and most consoling for us who live in this valley of tears, is, that the love of the Blessed Virgin for us poor sinners is in proportion to her love for God. God wished her to be his mother; consequently, he wished also that she should be our mother; it was for our sake that the Son of God became man; it was then also, for our sake, that the Blessed Virgin became the Mother of God and our mother.

She is the Mother of Christ; hence, as Christ has loved us with unspeakable love, so as to give his life for us, so Mary, too, loves us as the children of Christ. Jesus Christ is her Son; but of everyone who is a perfect Christian, it may be said, that not he himself lives, but that Jesus Christ lives in him; hence, it may be said to Mary, speaking of every good Christian: Behold thy son!

If Jesus Christ required great love of Peter in order to be worthy of being the head of the Church, what love must he not require in the Blessed Virgin, who was the mother of the Church? What is most peculiar to a mother? Is it not love, affection, a constant solicitude for the welfare of her children? Is not a mother's love proverbial? What must then be the Blessed Virgin's love for us? Did she not carry mercy itself in her blessed womb during nine months? She must then be

all penetrated and glowing with divine love. Again, did she not offer and sacrifice her Son on the Cross for us, so as to be able to say: I have loved you so much as to deliver up my Son to so cruel a death.

What is Holy Communion? Do we not receive in it her Divine Son, Jesus Christ? Indeed, O Virgin, who can measure the height, the depth, the length and the breadth of thy charity and goodness for men? O what consolation for us who have in heaven a *Father* who is *God*, and a *Mother* who is the Mother of God!

If Mary is the Mother of God, what wonder then that God has glorified and will glorify, through all ages, her power of intercession with him and her mercy for all men? The eternal Father has chosen Mary to be the mother of his only Son; the Holy Spirit chose her as his spouse; the Son, who has promised a crown in heaven to the apostles who preached his word, is bound in justice to do more for the mother who bore him, the eternal Word. If you believe in honoring your mother, remember that he believes in honoring and glorifying his.

The apostles did not enter upon their office of intercession till the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost; after that, whatever they should ask the Father in Christ's name, they were certainly to receive. Mary began her office of intercession at Cana; its commencement was inaugurated by Christ's first miracle. It is true, his answer seems at first unfavorable. But observe how every circumstance of that event strengthens the Catholic view of our Lord's conduct. Mary's faith in her Son's power, and in his willingness to grant her request, never wavered, even when he seemed to make a difficulty. Whether his words had a meaning wholly

different from that ordinarily attached to them now, or whether she, whose heart was as his own, read his consent in the tone of his voice, or in the glance of his eye, her only answer was the words addressed to the servants: "Whatever he shall say to you, do it," evidently proving that she never for an instant doubted the favorable issue of her request. Now, if what appeared to be an unreasonable exercise of Mary's influence resulted in a miracle, and the first of his public miracles; and if he predicted the coming of an hour when the exercise of her influence should no longer be unseasonable, as his words clearly imply, what prodigies must not her intercession effect at the present time! She is now exalted to the throne of her Divine Son in heaven. Now, if she could thus prevail with God in her lowliness, what can she not obtain now in her exalted state?

We rarely hear of Mary, but in connexion with a miraculous demonstration of the power of God. She was conceived as no other human being ever was conceived: From the very moment of her conception she was holy. By divine privilege she was conceived without original sin, and by special grace she was always free from actual sin.

She, again, conceived her Son and God in a miraculous manner, by the power and operation of the Holy Ghost. She preserved her virginity in her conception. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son." (Isai., vii., 14.)

Our Saviour, says St. Augustine, was to be born of a virgin, according to the flesh, in order to teach us by this great miracle that his followers were to be born again, according to the spirit, of another virgin, which is the holy Catholic Church.

Mary also preserved her virginity at the the birth of our Saviour. "A virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son," which evidently proves that her conception and delivery caused no change in the supernatural state of her virginity. Not only is our word conceived in our intellectual faculty, but it even comes forth by an intelligible expression without any diminution in our intellectual powers. In like manner, the Word Incarnate came forth from the womb of Mary without affecting her virginity in the slightest degree. The Son of God came to destroy sin, and efface every moral stain thereof from the soul of man. How could it then be supposed that he commenced the glorious work of human redemption, by causing any stain or blemish to the honor and glory of his mother? He came to inculcate the divine maxims of the Gospel on the minds and hearts of children, in order that they might respect and revere their parents. Now, would his doctrine have produced any salutary effect, if, at his birth, he had lessened the glory and dignity of his mother's virginity? To prove to the world that he had assumed our human nature, he seemed to be born of a woman; but to manifest his divinity, he was born of a virgin. As he was conceived in a supernatural manner, he was not subject to the ordinary course of nature; but at the moment of his birth, he miraculously came forth into the hands of his virgin mother like a splendid flower on its stem, and holy Mary prostrated herself in profound adoration before him. "The lily of virginity shall bud forth and blossom, and rejoice with great joy and praise; and all nations shall see the glory of the Lord and the beauty of our God." (Isai., xxxv., 2.)

Miracles attended the visit paid by the Blessed Virgin

to her cousin Elizabeth. The birth of her Divine Child was accompanied by many striking prodigies. When she carried him in her arms to present him in the temple, behold, new miracles followed her steps ! The first miracle of her Divine Son was performed at her request ; she took part in the awful mystery of the Passion ; she shared in the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit, at Pentecost. In a word, miracles seem to have been the order in her life, the absence of miracles, the exception ; so that we are as little surprised to find her surrounded by them, as we should be astonished to hear of them in connection with ourselves. Mary was a living miracle. Her first and strongest title to our love and homage is the indelible character of glory communicated to her by the miracle of the Incarnation, by which God became man of her substance ; the Eternal became subject to the laws of time and space ; the Infinite was comprehended in the form of an infant ; the invisible Creator of the universe became visible to the eyes of his creatures. Her coöperation was necessary before that miracle could take place ; a portion of its splendor, therefore, rests forever on her royal head. She has earned for herself, through her correspondence with God's grace, new titles of honor and renown ; but the mystery of the Incarnation lies at the foundation of her greatness. With that mystery, continued in a certain sense in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, she, too, is intimately connected, inasmuch as the sacred Humanity which we worship there, in union with the Divinity of Jesus Christ, was assumed from her virginal flesh and blood.

Hence, it does not surprise us that she should continue to be a centre of miraculous action ; we are prepared for

it by her whole previous history. It seems to be the law of her being; she represents to us the most stupendous miracle that the world ever witnessed. It seems therefore almost natural, that she should be able to suspend here and there, the course of natural events by the power of her intercession. All that we know of her miraculous power now, is but little when compared with the prodigies which were effected through her agency during her earthly career. She saluted her cousin Elizabeth; and when that holy woman "heard her salutation, she was filled with the Holy Ghost." She addressed her Divine Son at the marriage feast and said, "They have no more wine;" and immediately the filial charity, which had bound him to her for thirty years, constrained him to comply with her request. He, whose meat and drink it was to do the will of his Heavenly Father, seemed to make the will of Mary the law of his action rather than his own. Again, there was a moment when the mystery of the Incarnation hung upon the word of her lips; the destiny of the world depended upon an act of her will. When God wished to create the world, "He spoke, and it was done;" when he wished to redeem the world, he left it to the consent of his creature, and that creature was Mary. She said, "Be it done to me according to thy word," and the miracle of all miracles, the mystery of all mysteries, was consummated, "God was made flesh and dwelt amongst us."

After all we have said, what difficulty is there in believing it possible that the Blessed Virgin has wrought this miracle or that; has cured this person or that. These miraculous interpositions are as nothing, when compared with those miracles which we must believe, unless we would forfeit the very name of Christian.

And as there is nothing too great for the power of the Blessed Virgin, so there is nothing too insignificant for her notice. While she fights the battles of the universal Church, she cares for the salvation of the least of Christ's little ones; she is always ready to console and refresh their fainting spirits, to procure for them even the smallest actual grace. From the holy virgin martyr, who in the first ages of the Church invoked the aid of Mary against the demon of impurity, to the youth who kneels to-day before her altar, imploring the preservation of his innocence or the restoration of lost virtue, it has never been heard that anyone who fled to her protection, implored her assistance, or asked her prayers, was left unheeded.

Number, if you can, those who through the intercession of Mary have been restored to life, how many sick have been cured, how many captives have been set at liberty, how many have been delivered by Mary who were in danger of perishing by fire, in danger of shipwreck, in danger of war and pestilence. Number all the kingdoms which she has founded, all the empires which she has preserved; to how many armies that put themselves under her protection has she not given victory over their enemies? Call to mind Narses, the general of the emperor Justinian; was it not through Mary that he gained the victory over the Goths; and was not the victory of Heraclius over the Persians due to Mary? Plagius I. sought her aid, and slew 80,000 Saracens; Basil, the emperor, defeated the Saracens by her assistance; Godfrey of Bouillon, defeated, through her assistance, the Saracens, and regained Jerusalem. Through her Alfonsus VIII., King of Castile, slew 200,000 Moors with the loss of scarcely 20 or 30 Christians; Pius V. obtained through her

intercession the celebrated victory over the Turks. How many heresies has she not crushed! It was she who animated St. Athanasius and St. Gregory Thaumaturgus to defend the Church against the Arians. It was she who animated St. Cyrillus to defend the doctrine of the Church against the Nestorians; it was she who inspired St. Augustine to raise his voice against the Pelagians; it was she who encouraged St. John Damascene to attack the fierce heresy of the Iconoclasts; it was she who animated St. Dominic to defend the doctrine of the Church against the Albigenses; it was she who filled St. Ignatius Loyola with undaunted courage to battle against the baneful heresy of Luther; it was she who inspired St. Alphonsus de Liguori to take up arms against the poisonous serpents of Jansenism and Gallicanism; it is she who has inspired so many persons to consecrate themselves to God in the religious and apostolic life.

These public manifestations of her powers recorded in the history of the Church are indeed wonderful; but her secret influence—the influence which she exerts over the hearts of men, over human passions and motives of action, over the invisible enemies of our salvation, is even more wonderful, more comprehensive. This influence is felt through the whole church; it is of hourly occurrence; those who have felt its gentle operation can bear witness to the truth of its existence. One, for instance, sets his heart upon obtaining from the Blessed Virgin the recovery or conversion of a dear friend; another prays for the clear manifestation of the divine will in his regard at some critical period of his life; another prays for some special favors; they begin a *Novena* to Mary, and ere it is ended, their prayer is heard. In their daily strife with sin and

temptation, the name of Mary acts as a spell upon the spirits of evil. If they at times give way to pride and contempt of others, they invoke the aid of Mary, and their hearts become kind and humble. Does the thought of impurity cross their mind, they call upon her name; they raise their eyes towards her throne, and the demon flies from them. Number, if you can, all the sinners who have been converted through Mary; number the just who have become perfect through her; how many there are who have received the grace of purity through her; how many there are who have obtained through her the grace to overcome their passions; how many who have already obtained through her the crown of life everlasting. Behold a St. Augustine, a St. John Damascene, a St. Germanus, a St. Anslem, a St. Bonaventure, a St. Bernard, a St. Dominic, a St. Vincent Ferrer, a St. Xavier, a St. Alphonsus; behold that countless multitude of saints, who on account of their sanctity have shone like suns in the heavens. Was it not through Mary that they became holy? Have they passed through any other gate, than through the gate of Mary? These are the hourly triumphs of Mary's power; the secret, but conclusive, evidence of the queenly authority with which she is invested for the welfare of the faithful.

Is it then strange that we rejoice in the name, in the dignity, in the glory of Mary? Would it not, on the contrary, be strange indeed, were we to be slow in proclaiming her praise? If God has endowed the Blessed Mother of his only begotten Son with such power and dominion, have we no obligations to fulfil towards her who is the Mother of our God and our most gracious queen? She is the Mother of God; therefore you must honor her as

such. She is full of grace; therefore she deserves your praise. She is full of mercy; therefore she deserves your confidence. She is the queen of the saints, and your queen; and therefore she is entitled to your homage. She is an object of complacency to the Heavenly Father, who loves his daughter; she is an object of complacency to the Son of God, who loves his mother; she is an object of complacency to the Holy Ghost, who loves her as his spouse. Honor and love Mary, and the Heavenly Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost will take delight in you.

Mary is the mother of God; it is she who has been chosen out of thousands; hence God has ordained that all nations should call her blessed, and should honor her with filial and heartfelt devotion; for he who is the Almighty has done great things unto her; thus has he willed it; thus has he decreed it, and as he has willed, so has it been done.

Not to love and honor Mary with a sincere heart, must proceed either from culpable neglect, or from want of faith in the divine revelation, and in the wise plans of Providence. "He that despiseth you, despiseth me," said our Blessed Lord to his apostles; his words apply with greater force to his holy mother; and "he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." Far from us be the unworthy fear that, by having recourse to Mary, we should disparage the honor of Christ. The more we look up to her, the higher must her Divine Son rise in our regard; for his glory exceeds hers as the inherent splendor of the sun surpasses the borrowed light of the moon, as the Divine Creator excels his most gifted creature. We cannot love, and honor, and pray to Mary, without loving and honoring him who has made her so worthy of love.

And we cannot love him as he ought to be loved, without being especially drawn towards his Blessed Mother. If we love him we must imitate him to the best of our power ; we must imitate him especially in his filial love and reverence for his Blessed Mother.

The saints have always made his love for his Blessed Mother the model of their love for that most holy Virgin. To name the saints who were deeply devoted to Mary would be to name them all. The more they strove to love God, the more they felt drawn to love Mary, or to speak more correctly, the more they increased in love of Mary, the more they increased also in love for God.

The church has never grown weary of praising and honoring Mary. Consider the many days in the year that are consecrated to her honor ; consider how frequently and how solemnly are her feasts celebrated. Call to mind the many hymns which have been composed in her honor. She is extolled by the clergy, both regular and secular, extolled by all nations, esteemed and honored by all that are of good will and truly sincere heart. But whosoever would conceive a true idea of the power of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, whosoever would fairly estimate the heartfelt loyalty of Christians for their heavenly queen and mother, must pass into Catholic lands and observe the fervent multitudes that crowd the sanctuaries of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Countless, indeed, and unspeakably great are the favors which God hourly grants to men at the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. How many conversions are not made from heresy, or from infidelity every day through Mary's direct interposition ! Many have been brought into the true fold by the prayers of their friends addressed to her ;

others by wearing her medal; others by invoking her in time of need; others by observing the devotion of Catholic friends to her, and the beautiful charities, the gentleness and unselfishness which are apt to spring from that devotion. Although it is in reality a far greater miracle to bring about the conversion of a soul than to raise the dead to life, yet men are generally more filled with admiration at miracles of this latter kind. In order, therefore, to give us the most striking proofs that Mary is Our Perpetual Help in all our necessities, God has selected places—certain sanctuaries of the Blessed Virgin, in which He performs more miracles and hears our prayers more readily than he does in other places.

“It is true,” says St. Augustine, “that God is everywhere, and that he who created all things is not confined to any particular place; it is true, that he must be worshipped in secret—in spirit and in truth; that so hearing in secret, he may also justify and reward in secret. Nevertheless it is undeniably certain, that God does make a difference between one place and another, though we cannot always tell the reason of such preference.” Did not God himself, by the mouth of Moses, promise that he would choose a place for his people, that his name might be there? And did not Solomon pray at the dedication of the temple at Jerusalem, that God would hearken to the supplications of his people in *this place*? And did not God promise that his eyes and his heart would be there always, and that he would hear the prayers of those who would worship him in that holy place? There were many pools in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, but yet it was only to the pool of Bethsaida that the angel came; it was only its waters that were moved; it was only its waters that possessed the miraculous healing power.

The holy Church, therefore, cherishes a special devotion towards certain sanctuaries, believing, as she does, that God wishes to honor his saints, especially his Blessed Mother, by making more frequent and more wonderful manifestations of his presence in these places than in others. No wonder, then, that the Church condemned as rash, mischievous, and contrary to the pious custom of the faithful (Bull, *Auctorem fidei*, prop. 70) that declaration of the Synod of Pistora, which rejected all special *cultus* of one image of a saint in preference to another; no wonder that theologians lay it down as a principle acknowledged by all doctors, and placed beyond dispute, that God sometimes prefers one place of devotion to another.

Experience, however, teaches that such holy places are found in those countries only where the people entertain great love and devotion towards the Blessed Mother of God. In the Catholic countries of Europe, for instance, there is scarcely a hamlet, a town, or a city, which is not consecrated to the dear Mother of God. When a Catholic nation was about to engage in battle against their enemies, they went to pray before the shrine of Mary; they came back victorious, and in gratitude they raised the sanctuary of *Our Lady of Victories*. When perishing by the scourge of pestilence, they made a *Novena* to the Blessed Mother of God; their prayers were heard, and they built the sanctuary of *Our Lady of Help*.

The shipwrecked mariner, saved by the intercession of Mary from the fury of the storm—from a watery grave, raises a modest chapel at the friendly port that receives him, and calls it by the sweet name of Mary—*Mary, Star of the Sea*.

A poor, benighted traveller attacked by highway robbers succeeds happily in converting one of the number,

by his prayers and charitable words, and the place of this miraculous conversion receives the name of *Our Lady of the Robbers*.

In this way all Europe became filled with sanctuaries raised to commemorate some particular favor received through Mary's intercession. And calling to mind the many extraordinary favors received from Mary in some particular sanctuary of hers, the people call upon Our Lady of Loretto; Our Lady of Einsiedlen; Our Lady of Fourvière; Our Lady of Puy; Our Lady of La Salette; Our Lady of Lourdes; Maria Zell, Our Lady of Guadalupe, etc. Thus all Europe is filled with sanctuaries of our Blessed Lady. There sacred processions sweep through the streets; long trains of pilgrims wind along the banks of the rivers, or through the green-wood, to a favored chapel of our Lady; the sweet face of the Virgin Mother smiles upon you as you pass the way-side shrine; there the hum of business is stilled, and there the traveller bares his head for a moment's communion with God, as the angelus bell rings from the neighboring steeple; there the very mile-stones of the road-side become niches which speak to us of love and devotion to Mary.

It is impossible for those, who have never visited the towns and villages of a catholic country, to conceive the feeling of delight with which the pious traveller is affected at the sight of so many images of the Blessed Virgin placed at the angle of streets, in squares and public places, on bridges, fountains, and obelisks, or between the stalls of a village market or fair. Each statue or holy image has its lantern, and is decorated with flowers which the people of the neighborhood renew every morning at day-break. There the sweet name of Mary is the most fami-

liar of household words ; there the poet chants her praises ; there the painter and sculptor—the masters of art—love to reproduce her pure, maternal face ; and there even the very Protestant has not yet learned to speak of her with disrespect, nor utterly banish all love for her from his heart. It is on account of this great love for the Blessed Mother of God, that there is not a province but has its own favorite image, its own favorite sanctuary of Our Lady, and linked with that image some legend, which marks that spot as a chosen abode, selected for the outpourings of her maternal favors.

From the firm belief that such spots are more highly favored than others, and that prayers offered there are more readily heard, the pious practice has arisen of making public or private pilgrimages to these holy places, in order to obtain some particular favor, or to render thanks to God through his Blessed Mother, for favors obtained. For, if God sends us so many favors through Mary as their channel—the channel naturally the most agreeable to him—we are impelled to return our thanks through the same blessed channel. When our hearts are filled with emotions of gratitude or veneration, we naturally seek to give vent to our feelings by some outward act of devotion ; and hence the faithful have, in all ages, formed solemn processions, have made long pilgrimages, to some favorite shrine of the Madonna, in order to express their love and devotion to their beloved Queen.

In these sanctuaries of Our Blessed Lady may be seen votive offerings, ornaments of gold and silver, and precious stones, in commemoration of miraculous cures, or other extraordinary favors, obtained through the intercession of Mary, by those who invoked her at her holy

shrine. In these sanctuaries of the Blessed Virgin the blind are restored to sight, the lame walk, the dead are raised to life, demons are expelled from the bodies of men. These are authentic facts, attested not only by persons of note, who have heard them from others, but by thousands of eye-witnesses, whose sincerity we cannot doubt; they are facts so numerous that, if they were all written, the world itself, I think, could not contain the books; they are facts which plainly tell us, that, since God is pleased to assist us in all our necessities, spiritual and temporal, through Mary, it is also in Mary that we are to seek and to find our Perpetual Help, or Intercessor, in the work of our sanctification. God has given us in our own times, a striking proof in confirmation of this truth in the miraculous picture of our Lady of Perpetual Help, which is in St. Alphonsus' Church of the Redemptorist Fathers in Rome, Italy. God has been pleased to perform numberless miracles before this shrine; nay, he has even been pleased to perform miracles and grant extraordinary favors to many persons who had recourse to the intercession of his Blessed Mother, under the title of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. These miracles, then, and these extraordinary favors, tell us most plainly that God has made his ever Blessed Mother our Perpetual Help and refuge in this valley of tears, and that, if we confidently have recourse to her intercession, we shall find in her a channel of ever flowing grace. And we, especially, who live in a country which is as yet more infidel than Catholic—where we are constantly surrounded by dangers of every kind, should bear in mind that we stand more particularly in need of the intercession of the ever Blessed Virgin Mary.

If we consider how the anti-Catholic pulpit and lecture-

room, the press and the bar-room reëcho, against the Catholic Church, the false charges of idolatry, of taking from God the honor due to him alone, and giving it to a creature; if we consider how even the most charitable of our enemies shake their heads and bewail what they call the unfortunate propensity of the Roman Catholics to give too much honor to Mary; if we consider how many temptations surround the Catholics here; how hard it is to bear contempt, misrepresentation, and wilful falsehood; how much easier it is to hide a delicate and beloved sentiment than to expose it to the risk of a sneer; how swift the pace of the money-hunter is here, how little the beautiful in life and faith is cultivated, and how devoted men are to what they are pleased to call the practical, and which means simply more careful, diligence for the body than for the soul—for time than for eternity—if we consider all this, the wonder is, not that there is so much or so little devotion to Our Lady, but that there is any devotion at all. Yet in spite of all this, we believe that there is no Catholic country in Europe; that there never has been a country in which reverent love and earnest, heart-felt devotion for the Blessed Mother of God is more deeply rooted, more ardently cherished, or more fervently practised than in this country. This devotion to Mary guides and influences the hearts of men, and it is found pure and glowing, in the souls even of those who seem to be most engrossed in worldly affairs. This devotion begins in earliest childhood, when the scapular and the medal are placed around the neck of the babe, to remain there even to the hour of death. As the child grows up, he associates himself with some Sodality of the Blessed Virgin. As soon as he has grown up to manhood he joins some

benevolent society, which is placed under the special patronage of the Queen of angels. The daughters of Our Lady of the Visitation, of Loretto, etc., train up our young girls; the Brothers of Mary devote themselves to the education of our youth. The Bishop labors patiently till his seminary of St. Mary is completed; the priest toils arduously until his parish of the Annunciation or of the Assumption is established; all join their prayers, their counsel, their wealth, their labor, their self-denial, until the cross towers through the green wood from the convent of Mary's Help, and the church of the Immaculate crowns the summit of the hill.

In the Council held in Baltimore, 1846, the assembled Fathers—twenty-two Bishops with their theologians—solemnly chose the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate, as Patroness of the United States of America. These Fathers of the Council had been trained to honor the Blessed Mother of God, they had labored in her service; they desired to add this crowning glory to all that they had done in her honor during a long life of labor and prayer; they wished at the same time to show their zeal for the true interests of this country by placing the entire United States under her protection in this solemn and public manner. On the following year this election was confirmed by the Sovereign Pontiff, and from that time in all public sessions that close these august assemblies, after the *Te Deum* has been chanted, the cantors, richly vested, stand before the altar, and intone their first acclamation to the Most High. As soon as that solemn hymn of praise is ended, they burst forth in the words, "*Beatissimæ Virgini Mariæ sine labe originali conceptæ, harum Provinciarum Patronæ, honor æternus.*" And in chorus, the venerable

Bishops, the theologians and attendant priests, and the whole multitude of people, repeat the glad acclamation, and then, swelling to vaulted roof, and filling the aisles of the grand cathedral, rolls in deep, majestic chorus, Amen! Amen!

Ever since that solemn act, Mary has gained vast possessions in this country; and we may confidently hope that she will conquer it all, and annex it all to the kingdom of her Divine Son. Love and devotion towards Mary is on the increase. This love for the Mother of God is a good omen—she will not fail to show openly that she is the Patroness of this country and the Perpetual Help of all who invoke her holy name.

The spirit of infidelity and religious indifference is spreading rapidly in every direction. All the ills which an immoral and infidel press entail upon society, all the crimes arising from a godless education, menace the destruction of every vestige of Christian modesty, piety and innocence. Nothing better can be opposed to this infernal serpent, than love and devotion towards her whose office it is to crush the serpent's head whenever it makes itself visible.

Ah! how truly does not St. Alphonsus de Liguori assert that "the salvation of all depends upon preaching Mary, and confidence in her intercession." We know that St. Bernard of Sienna sanctified Italy; St. Dominic converted many provinces; St. Louis Bertrand, in all his sermons, never failed to exhort his hearers to practise devotion towards Mary; and many others have done the same.

Father Paul Segneri, the younger, a celebrated missionary, in every mission in which he was engaged, preached a sermon on devotion to Mary, and this he called his

favorite sermon. The Redemptorist Fathers also have an invariable rule not to omit in their missions the sermon on Our Lady; and it is found that no discourse is so profitable to the people, or excites more compunction among them, than that on the power and mercy of Mary. To try to make the people good without inspiring them with love for the Blessed Virgin is to labor in vain. The better the people are made to understand what God has given us in Mary, the sooner they will lay aside their evil habits and practise virtue; for no sooner do they commence to love Mary, and pray to her than they open their hearts to the largest channel of grace.

In the year 1835, the communions in a certain parish in the city of Paris, containing a population of twenty-seven thousand, did not exceed seven hundred. The good parish priest set to work to remedy this deplorable state of things; he formally placed the charge committed to him under the protection of Mary, and instituted her confraternity among his people. In the year 1837, the communions amounted to nine thousand five hundred; and each succeeding year they have become more numerous.

Of all the sinners who, by favor of Our Lady, attained to an extraordinary degree of perfection, there was probably none more privileged than St. Mary of Egypt. It was through her devotion to Our Lady that she began, continued, and brought to a happy end, the career of her perfection, and emerged from the abyss of degradation in which she lay to the sublimest heights of sanctity. Before her conversion, she was a snare which entrapped every heart to enslave it to sin and to the devil; a net of which the devil made use to capture souls and to people hell. When the abbot St. Zosimus found her in the wilderness

of Egypt, he requested her to give him an account of her life. This she gave in the following words :

“ I ought to die with confusion and shame in telling you what I am ; so horrible is the very mention of it that you will fly from me as from a serpent ; your ears will not be able to bear the recital of the crimes of which I have been guilty. I will, however, relate to you my ignominy, begging of you to pray for me, that God may show me mercy in the day of his terrible judgment. My country is Egypt. When my father and mother were still living, I went, without their consent, to Alexandria. I was then twelve years old. I cannot think, without trembling, on the first steps by which I fell into sin, nor on my disorders which followed.” She then described how she lived a public prostitute seventeen years, not for interest, but to gratify an unbridled lust ; she added : “ I continued my wicked course till the twenty-ninth year of my age, when, perceiving several persons making towards the sea, I enquired whither they were going, and I was told they were about to embark for the Holy Land, to celebrate, at Jerusalem, the feast of the Exaltation of the glorious Cross of our Saviour. I embarked with them, looking only for fresh opportunities to continue my debauches, which I repeated both during the voyage and after my arrival at Jerusalem. On the day appointed for the festival, all going to church, I mixed with the crowd to get into the church where the holy cross was shown and exposed to the veneration of the faithful, but found myself withheld from entering the place by some secret but invisible force. This happening to me three or four times, I retired into a corner of the court, and began to consider with myself what this might proceed from, and, seriously reflecting

that my criminal life might be the cause, I melted into tears. Beating, therefore, my sinful breast, with sighs and groans, I perceived above me a picture of the Mother of God. Fixing my eyes upon it, I addressed myself to that Holy Virgin, begging of her, by her incomparable purity, to succor me, defiled with such a load of abominations, and to render my repentance the more acceptable to God. I besought her that I might be suffered to enter the church doors to behold the sacred wood of my redemption; promising from that moment to consecrate myself to God by a life of penance, taking her for my surety in this change of my heart. After this ardent prayer, I perceived in my soul a secret consolation under my grief; and attempting again to enter the church, I went up with ease into the middle of it, and had the comfort to venerate the precious wood of the glorious cross which brings life to man. Considering, therefore, the incomprehensible mercy of God, and his readiness to receive sinners to repentance, I cast myself on the ground, and, after having kissed the pavement, with tears, I arose and went to the picture of the Mother of God, whom I had made the witness and surety of my engagements and resolutions. Falling there on my knees before the image, I addressed my prayers to her, begging her intercession, and that she would be my guide. After my prayer I seemed to hear this voice: 'If thou goest beyond the Jordan, thou shalt there find rest and comfort.' Then, weeping and looking on the image, I begged of the holy Queen of the world that she would never abandon me. After these words I went out in haste, bought three loaves, and, asking the baker which was the gate of the city which led to the Jordan, I immediately took that road, and walked all the rest of the

day, and at night arrived at the church of St. John Baptist, on the banks of the river. There I paid my devotions to God, and received the precious Body of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Having eaten the one-half of one of my loaves, I slept all night on the ground. Next morning, recommending myself to the Holy Virgin, I passed the Jordan, and from that time I have carefully shunned the meeting of any human creature."

Zosimus asked how long she had lived in that desert. "It is," said she, "as near as I can judge, forty-seven years." "And what have you lived upon all that time?" asked Zosimus. "The loaves I took with me," answered she, "lasted me some time; since that I have had no other food than what this wild and uncultivated solitude afforded me. My clothes being worn out, I suffered severely from the heat and cold." "And have you passed so many years," said the holy man, "without suffering much in your soul?" She answered: "Your question makes me tremble by the very remembrance of my past dangers and conflicts, through the perverseness of my heart. Seventeen years I passed in most violent temptations and almost perpetual conflicts with my inordinate desires. I was tempted to regret the flesh and fish of Egypt, and the wines which I drank in the world to excess; whereas here I often could not have a drop of water to quench my thirst. Other desires made assaults on my mind; but, weeping and striking my breast on these occasions, I called to mind the vows I had made under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, and begged her to obtain my deliverance from the affliction and danger of such thoughts. After long weeping, and bruising my body with blows, I found myself suddenly enlightened and my mind restored to a

perfect calm. Often the tyranny of my old passions seemed ready to drag me out of my desert ; at those times I threw myself on the ground and watered it with my tears, raising my heart continually to the Blessed Virgin till she procured me comfort ; and she has never failed to show herself my faithful protectress." Zosimus taking notice that in her discourse with him she from time to time made use of Scripture phrases, asked her if she had ever applied herself to the study of the sacred books. Her answer was that she could not even read ; neither had she conversed nor seen any human creature since she came into the desert till that day, that could teach her to read the Holy Scripture or read it to her ; but "it is God," said she, "that teaches man knowledge. Thus have I given you a full account of myself ; keep what I have told you as an inviolable secret during my life, and allow me, the most miserable of sinners, a share in your prayers."

We can say that in the penitential life led by this saint in this solitude she had no other teacher, no other guide, than the all-holy, all-merciful Virgin, to whom she ever had recourse ; it was under Mary's guidance, that she overcame the most fearful temptations and withstood the most violent assaults that hell could make against her ; faith in Mary triumphed over all feeling of weariness, trampled under foot the repugnance of poor, weak nature, and enabled her to persevere constantly for forty-seven years, leaving to the world an ideal of perfect penance, a pattern of the most eminent sanctity, and a most convincing proof that there is no means more powerful than devotion to Mary to raise up any soul, however fallen and weighed down by sin, to the height of perfection.

A great power is evidently within our reach, placed by

the care of God at our disposal, to assist us in our struggles against sin, to raise us when we fall, to carry us on to eminent perfection. It is easy of access; it lies at our door; it is within the instantaneous reach of all, even of children. That power is the influence of Mary, and its employment in the work of our salvation. We may not reject its powerful assistance; nothing can be safely neglected that God has designed to make so perilous a work more sure. We may not throw away the aid thus offered, nor think to fight our way through the ranks of our spiritual foes without obligations to her, nor to speed on in our heavenward course without her helping hand. The heat of the battle will overcome us, the length of the way will exhaust us, unless she buoy up our steps and refresh us when we are weary. God's grace is free and strong; but if she is the channel through which it must flow, it will not reach us but through her. We are not greater than Jesus, yet he made himself her debtor; we are not stronger than he, and yet she was appointed to minister to his infantine weakness. Even if we could struggle through without her support, we should be outstripped in our course by many who started later and with many more disadvantages; our passage would be joyless; hope would shine dimly on the future.

What knowledge have we of the assaults of our spiritual enemies that may lie before us, perhaps in the hour of death? What security have we that if Mary does not assist us then, we shall not be lost? It is for this reason that devotion to Mary is declared by eminent theologians to be a great sign of predestination, on account of the manifold assistance which is thus secured in its attainment.

In the *Chronicles of the Friars' Minor*, (Lib. iv., cap. xxii.) we read that Brother Leo, a familiar companion of St. Francis, had the following vision: The servant of God beheld himself placed on a sudden in the middle of a vast plain. There he beheld the judgment of Almighty God. Angels were flying to and fro, sounding their trumpets and gathering together countless multitudes of people. On this vast field he saw two high ladders, the one white, the other red, which reached from earth to the skies. At the top of the red ladder stood Jesus Christ, with a countenance full of just indignation. On one of the steps, somewhat lower, stood the holy patriarch St. Francis, who cried aloud to his brethren on the plain below: "Come hither, brethren; come without fear; hasten to Christ, who is calling you." Encouraged by these words of their holy father, the religious crowded around the foot of the ladder, and began to mount. Some reached the third step, and others the tenth; some advanced to the middle; but all sooner or later lost their footing and fell wretchedly to the ground. St. Francis, beholding so deplorable a fall, turned to our Lord and earnestly besought him to grant salvation to his children. But the Redeemer yielded not to the prayers of the saint. Then the holy patriarch went down to the bottom of the ladder, and said with great fervor, "Do not despair, brethren of mine; run to the white ladder, and mount it with great courage. Fear not; by it you will enter into Paradise." Whilst he was thus speaking, the Blessed Virgin appeared at the top of the white ladder, crowned with glory and beaming with gentleness. And the friars, mounting the ladder by favor of Mary, made their way, and all happily entered into the glories of Paradise.

We may learn from this how true is the sentiment of St. Ignatius the Martyr, "That the mercy of the Blessed Virgin Mary saves those whom God's justice does not save." Ah! let us hearken to the words of this saint; let us hearken to our Lord while he says to us from his throne in heaven: "I am the eternal Wisdom. I have come upon earth only through Mary; through her I have effected the redemption of mankind. If thou desirest wisdom and sanctity, call on Mary; for through her I will give it to thee." It was through her that Rupert the abbot, Albert the Great, Hermanus Contractus, and many others, destitute of learning and talents, became doctors in philosophy, theology, Holy Scripture, and other branches of science.

"Thou art my child; I, therefore, am thy Father, but Mary is thy Mother. Thou art weak; I am the Lord, that giveth strength and help in all thy necessities. Thou art a sinful man, but I am thy God, full of love and mercy; Mary is the refuge of sinners, through whose mediation thou wilt obtain mercy. Thou aspirest after heaven; behold, I am the King of Heaven. Mary is the Queen of Heaven. In order to obtain for thee access to this heavenly kingdom, thou art bound to become holy. I am the living fountain of all grace and holiness; but it is Mary who has the office of dispensing my graces. If thou, then, my child, desirest to obtain graces and glory in heaven, what hast thou to do? Call on Mary. Love and honor Mary. Through her I will listen to thy prayers and give ear to thy sighs. I will show her that I am her Son; and she will show thee that she is thy Mother. My Mother is the gate of heaven; through her all gifts and graces descend on earth; through her all the saints ascend to me into heaven.

“Accomplish, then, my will, by endeavoring with all thy power to promote the honor of my Mother. Extol her at all times and in all places, in season and out of season; wherever thou art, praise and extol her, and cause others to do the same. Impossible for thee to give my Mother more honor, interior and exterior, than is her due. What is thy feeble love and honor compared to that which she receives from me? As thy love for thy fellow-men is but a shadow of my love for men, so thy special love for Mary is but a shadow, a faint, attenuated shadow, of my love for her; for my sake, if thou wouldst please me, reverence her as much as thou canst. If thou hast hitherto served Mary, try to serve her still more fervently; if thou hast loved her, endeavor to love her still more ardently. Happy that Christian who serves Mary and at the same time tries to make others serve her! Happy that Christian family in which Mary is truly honored; I will give it salvation and benediction. I will give it grace in the present life and glory in the life to come.”

WHAT THE ANGELS AND SAINTS KNOW AND SEE.

After all we have said about the veneration and invocation of the saints, the question may be asked: what do the angels and saints know and see?

The angels and saints, says St. Thomas Aquinas, know and see God, but they do not know and see all that is in God, they have not a complete knowledge of God. They are finite creatures, and a finite creature can never be endowed with infinite knowledge, and it requires infinite knowledge to know the infinite. Hence, it is God alone who knows and comprehends himself such as he is.

God is an infinite ocean of light. The saints may enter

it, but they can never see its depth and its extent; God is a mirror in which all things are reflected; but the saints cannot see all the images contained in that incomprehensible mirror. However, what the saints know and see of God is sufficient for their eternal happiness and glory, for it satiates all their desires. Seeing God as he is, they know his nature, his divine attributes, and the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

They see clearly all the truths of religion, which were mysteries to them on earth. They now appear to them in the splendor of the beatific vision; "As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God." (Ps., xlvii., 9.)

They see multitudes of saints, know their thoughts, their love, their joy, their glory. They also have knowledge of the state and torments of the damned in hell. "And Abraham said to him," (Dives) "son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy life-time, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." (Luke, xvi., 25.)

They see the state and order of the world, all things in the universe, and the good and bad actions of mankind.

It is also part of their happiness to know for certain that they cannot sin any more and lose the happiness of heaven. It is something peculiar to man not to desire anything, or to make efforts to obtain something, unless he sees some real or supposed good or happiness in the acquisition of that thing. If it happens that he turns his mind and heart from real happiness, it is because he is seduced by some false good or happiness.

The case of the angels and saints is quite different. They see the Divine Essence in all its splendor and glory.

They incessantly contemplate the Sovereign Good, and the universal source of happiness for all created beings. Where could they find something more attractive than God, or how could they choose sin in preference to that divine glory? It is as impossible for them to separate themselves from God as it is for us to deny the first principles of right and wrong.

It is true, they have free will—perfect liberty. But in what does it consist? It consists in being able to choose between doing and not doing a thing; it does not consist in being able to commit sin. It is only by an abuse of liberty that we commit sin. The perfection of liberty or free will consists in acting without fear of sinning, as the perfection of the intellect consists in not erring in the conclusions we draw from the first principles. If then the angels and saints in the state of heavenly glory cannot sin, whilst man unfortunately has the power of sinning, what conclusion can we draw therefrom? It is that liberty or free will is more perfect in the inhabitants of heaven than in us poor mortals of this world, a liberty so great and perfect that they can never abuse it, and consequently are perfectly certain that they can never forfeit their heavenly happiness.

The angels and saints, however, do not know the thoughts of the human heart. The thought of the mind and the disposition of the heart can be known in their effects, or even by the sensations of the soul. The change of countenance, the alteration of the voice, or some other external sign, are sufficient indications of our interior feelings. By such external signs, the angel, and even the devil, can know our thoughts and natural propensities. But they cannot know the thoughts of our intellect nor

the affections of our will. God alone knows them. They know however the prayers addressed to them by the faithful on earth. It is not of great importance to Catholics to know how the saints in heaven know the prayers and necessities of those who, in prayer, address themselves to them. For their part, they do not doubt in the least, that God never wants means of letting the saints know the desires of those who beg their intercession here on earth. God acquainted the prophets with the knowledge of things that were yet to come many hundred years after; he informed the prophet Eliseus of the king of Syria's counsels, though privately resolved on in his bed-chamber, and at a distance. (IV. Kings, vi., 12.) St. Peter knew the sacrilegious lie of Ananias and Saphira.

It is generally granted that even the very devils hear those desperate wretches who call on them? Why should not the saints have this privilege. It is, indeed, an undeniable truth that God has granted thousands of extraordinary favors, at the intercession of his saints when they were invoked by the faithful. These favors are so many evident proofs that the saints know the prayers which are addressed to them.

It is also part of the happiness of the saints to remember all those who were dear to them in this life.

The land in which the saints dwell, is not a land of oblivion. Heaven does not harden hearts, but makes them more tender and more compassionate, it does not distract minds or alienate them; it does not diminish, but increase their affection, charity, and piety for us. How could those forget us who were once among us, and suffered what they see us suffer. No; the just in heaven are most desirous to see us happy with them for all eternity.

They are not so immersed in heavenly glory as to forget our miseries. They are the great friends of God, and they know perfectly well what power they have with God to aid us, by their prayers, in all our necessities. And, Ah! how quick are not the angels and saints in coming to our assistance. Their will alone is sufficient to bring them down from heaven to earth as quick as thought; for there is a double impulse in this movement, that of the divine will, and their own desire to assist us.

When I had charge of our students and novices at Annapolis, Md., I one day went out with them in our boat on the Severn river. We were sailing behind a sand-boat, and whenever she made a tack we also made one. Now, it happened that, after she had made a tack she turned unexpectedly around. We were in her way and in imminent danger of being run over and swamped by her. We were so close to her that some of the students, to escape the danger, leaped from our boat on board the sand-boat. When I saw that the danger of being swamped was inevitable I called on the Blessed Virgin Mary, exclaiming in a loud voice: "Mary, help us!" No sooner had I uttered this cry for supernatural aid than we were instantly out of all danger. On beholding this, the captain of the sand-boat exclaimed: "That's a miraculous escape!"

ON THE HONOR GIVEN TO THE CROSS AND HOLY IMAGES.

29. Of what use are the cross, and holy images?

They remind us of Christ and the saints, increase our devotion, and serve as books of devotion to those who cannot read.

By holy images we mean representations of Christ and

his saints, or of the historical parts of Holy Scripture, showing in a striking manner what Jesus Christ or his faithful servants have done or suffered.

Our divine Saviour is generally represented attached to the cross, or sitting with his disciples at the Last Supper.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is usually represented bearing the holy Infant Jesus in her arms, or crushing the serpent's head under her feet.

The saints are generally represented with circles of light about the head and a diadem surrounding the brow. We often see something peculiar added to the saint—something that serves to recall to our mind the virtues practised by the saint, or the kind of death which he underwent. Thus, St. Lawrence is represented with a gridiron, to remind us of the nature of his martyrdom; and St. Sebastian with arrows fixed in his breast, because he was put to death by arrows which were shot at him.

Before the coming of Christ, the cross was looked upon as a sign of ignominy and disgrace. The deepest shade of infamy was cast upon the character of him who suffered death upon the cross. All looked upon the cross with the greatest horror. But when our dear Saviour came into this world, he chose the cross as the instrument of our redemption. By his death thereon he atoned for our sins, and purchased for us grace and everlasting glory. He made the cross the glorious instrument of his victory and triumph over the devil and sin; he made it his holy standard under which all his followers should fight his battles; and this standard will be borne before our Lord in a triumphant manner, when he shall come in glory to judge the world. (Matt., xxiv., 30.)

Hence it is, that this glorious instrument of our redemption was always very dear and most precious to the holy Apostles of Jesus Christ. "God forbid," exclaims St. Paul, "that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal., vi., 14.) "Now, no one glories in a thing," says St. Thomas, "unless he loves and esteems it, and places in it all his greatness and happiness." As the sacred Passion of our Lord is the source of all greatness and happiness, the holy Apostles had no other desire than that of improving themselves daily in the knowledge and science of Jesus crucified; they had no other solicitude than that of teaching all men the great mystery of the cross, and of impressing them with the sentiments of Jesus Christ crucified. "I judged not myself," says St. Paul, "to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (I. Cor., ii., 2.) Ah! "Look on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who, having joy proposed unto him, underwent the cross, despising the shame. . . . Think diligently upon him who endureth such opposition from sinners against himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds." (Heb., xiii., 2, 3.)

It is thus that the Apostles encouraged the Christians to love and esteem the cross. Hence it was, from the very birth of Christianity, a pious custom with the faithful, not only to make the sign of the cross upon their foreheads, but also to impress the same holy emblem upon the walls of their places of religious worship, in the cemeteries, upon their altars, and upon the tombs of their martyred brethren.

It was, also, customary with them to wear about their persons crosses made of gold, or silver, or wood. This we learn from the incident which led to the martyrdom

of St. Orestes, a soldier in the Roman legions, during the reign of Diocletian. Orestes was distinguished in his cohort for his agility in every martial exercise; and, in particular, for the precision with which he cast the disk. Once, as he was displaying his activity in presence of his commander Lysias, a cross, which the Christian soldier wore around his neck, accidentally escaped from between the folds of his garment, where it lay concealed, and proclaimed the religion of Orestes, whose resolute refusal to sacrifice in honor of the gods was crowned with martyrdom.

It was, however, only some years after the promulgation of the Gospel, that they ventured to exhibit the crucifix, that is, the figure of Christ suspended on the cross. They knew that Christ crucified was a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles. Hence the Christians of the first centuries refrained from painting the figure of our Blessed Redeemer on the cross.

But the time came when Christ was pleased to make Constantine the great triumph by the sacred sign of the cross, to put a stop to the long persecution of the Christians, and to establish the Catholic religion throughout his dominions. This emperor marched from the border of the Rhine, through Gaul and part of Italy, by Verona to Rome, against his enemy, the tyrant Maxentius. Constantine, though not as yet a Christian, earnestly invoked the one true God, both on his march and especially on the day before he gave battle. Christ was pleased to show him, in two visions, from what power he received the empire of the world. The fact is minutely related by Eusebius who heard it from Constantine himself. Having passed the Alps and reached the plains of Italy, behold,

as he was marching on, a little after midday, at the head of his troops, a luminous cross appeared in the open sky, above the sun, and upon the cross a legend expressing victory was distinctly seen by all, written in Greek characters: "In this be thou conqueror." The night following, Christ appeared to Constantine in his sleep, with the same sign of the cross, commanding him to make a representation of it and use it as his standard in battle. Next morning the emperor arose very early, imparted this second vision to his friends, and gave orders for an exact representation of the cross, as it appeared in the sky, to be made and blazoned in the imperial banner. It was known by the name of *Labarum*. The emperor chose fifty men of the stoutest and most religious among his guards to carry this banner by turns before him whenever he went to battle. Constantine ordered also banners of the same fashion, but of a smaller size, to be made for every legion, and had the monogram of the name of Christ framed, in the form of a cross, on his helmet and in the shields of his soldiers.

Maxentius' army, which consisted of the united forces of three armies of veteran soldiers, esteemed as the best in the empire, engaged Constantine in the Quintian fields, near the bridge Milvius, now called Ponte-Mole. Maxentius was defeated, and drowned in the Tiber, A. D. 312. Constantine entered Rome in triumph on the same day (Oct. 27). He attributed his victory to the cross. Out of religious respect for the sacred instrument of the death of Christ, he forbade the use of the cross as an instrument of punishment of malefactors in any part of his dominions.

In the year 326 St. Helena, the emperor's mother, out

of a desire to visit the holy places in Jerusalem, undertook a journey to Palestine. On her arrival at Jerusalem she felt inspired with a great desire to find the identical cross on which Christ had suffered for our sins. But there was no mark or tradition, even amongst the Christians, where it lay. The heathens, out of their great hatred of Christianity, had done everything in their power to conceal the place where our Saviour was buried. They had heaped upon it a great quantity of stones and rubbish, and they also built over it a temple to Venus, that those who came thither to adore him might seem to pay their worship to a marble idol representing this false deity. They had, moreover, erected a statue of Jupiter in the place where our Saviour rose from the dead. Helena being willing to spare no pains to compass her pious design, consulted all the people at and near Jerusalem, whom she thought likely to give any assistance in finding out the cross. She was informed, that if she could find out the sepulchre, she would likewise find the instruments of torture; it being always the custom among the Jews to make a great hole near the place where the body of the criminal was buried, and to throw into it whatever belonged to his execution. The pious empress therefore ordered the profane buildings to be pulled down, the statues to be broken in pieces, and the rubbish to be removed. The excavation having been made to a considerable depth, the holy sepulchre was discovered, and near it were extended three crosses, and there also lay the nails which had pierced our Saviour's body, and the title which had been fixed to the cross. That one of these crosses was the one they were in quest of there appeared no reason to doubt; but which of the three it was could

not be ascertained, as the title was found separate from the cross. In this perplexity the holy Bishop Macarius, knowing that one of the principal ladies of the city lay extremely ill, suggested to the empress to cause the three crosses to be carried to the sick person, not doubting but God would discover which was the cross they sought for. This being done, St. Macarius prayed that God would have regard to their faith, and after his prayer, applied the crosses singly to the patient, who was immediately and perfectly recovered by the touch of one of the three crosses, the other two having been tried without effect. St. Helena, full of joy for having found the treasure for which she had so earnestly sought, built a church on the spot, and placed it in that church with great veneration, having provided an extraordinary rich case for it. She afterwards carried part of it to the Emperor Constantine, then at Constantinople; another part she carried to Rome, to be placed in the church which she built there, called the Holy Cross of Jerusalem. The main part of the cross St. Helena enclosed in a silver shrine, and committed it to the care of St. Macarius. St. Paulinus relates, that although chips were almost daily cut off from it and given to the devout, yet the sacred wood was not thereby diminished. It is affirmed by St. Cyril of Jerusalem, twenty-five years after the discovery, that pieces of the cross were spread all over the earth. He compared this wonder to the miraculous feeding of five thousand men, as recorded in the Gospel.—*Alban Butler.*

From the time that Constantine the Great had gained his great victory over Maxentius by the miraculous power of the cross, this sacred sign was held in great public veneration all over his dominions. But the cross

of our Lord is "*a sign which shall be contradicted*" to the end of the world.

It was not many years after when the emperor Julian, the apostate, persecuted the Christians in a most cruel manner. He hated Christ, and did all in his power to bring infamy upon our Redeemer and his holy religion. Being a great enemy of the cross of Christ, he ordered this sacred sign to be taken out of the shields of the soldiers.

To strengthen and confirm the Christians in their love and veneration of the cross, our dear Saviour was pleased about that time to honor the instrument of his Passion by a great miracle. On the seventh day of May, about nine o'clock in the morning, there appeared a large body of light, in the form of a cross, in the heavens, just over the holy Mount Golgatha, reaching as far as the holy Mount Olivet (that is, almost two English miles in length.) This luminous body was seen clearly not only by one or two persons, but by the whole City of Jerusalem. This most wonderful apparition was not a momentary transient phenomenon; for it lasted for several hours together, visible to all; it was brighter than the sun, for the light of the sun could not eclipse it. The whole city was struck with reverential awe and fear, tempered with joy. All ran immediately to the Church, young and old, Christians and heathens, citizens and strangers; they all united in giving praise to our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, the worker of miracles, and acknowledged the truth of the Christian religion to which the heavens bore witness. The Greek church commemorates this miracle on the 7th of May. (*A. Butler's Lives of the Saints, March 18.*)

As Christ himself has rendered his cross most glorious; as he has triumphed, by this sign, over all his enemies;

as he has chosen the cross to be his standard, under which all his followers are to fight his battles and gain the victory over their enemies, the Church of Christ has always professed a very high regard and veneration for this salutary sign.

One day Monsignor de Cheverus preached on the adoration of the cross. Many Protestants were present. First he laid it down as the true doctrine of the Church, that we adore only Jesus Christ, the Man-God; and that the honor we pay the cross is to be referred to Jesus Christ, who is represented on the cross as dying for us. He then went on in these words: "Suppose that some man, with a generous and magnanimous soul, seeing one of you about to fall under the sword of an enemy, casts himself at once between you and the assassin, and by his own death saves your life; and that an artist struck with surprise at such an heroic act, draws the portrait of that noble and generous spirit, and presents you with the picture representing him bathed in his blood and covered with wounds—what should your first impulse be on receiving it? Why, you would at once fall on your knees with love and gratitude, passionately kiss it, and moisten it with your tears. But, my brethren, this just explains the doctrine of the Church in reference to the adoration of the cross. When we now look on the cross, and the figure on that cross, the mind discusses not, but the heart is full of love and gratitude, and cannot restrain its warm bursts of affection and tenderness." At these words the entire audience became affected, the preacher took up the crucifix, and the Protestants, forgetting their dry controversy, approached the cross, and with tearful eyes kissed it lovingly.

If we, then, kneel down and pray before the cross, the crucifix, the images or relics of Christ, it is not that we pray to the cross, or crucifix, or the images, or relics of Christ and his saints, for we know but too well that these objects are lifeless, senseless, and powerless, and can neither hear nor help any one.

One day a Protestant lady entered a Catholic Church, and saw her Catholic lady-friend kneel down and pray before each station of the way of the cross. She went and said to her: "How foolish you are to pray to a lifeless and senseless, and powerless picture! Is this not the sin of idolatry?" The Catholic lady answered; "Did you hear what I said when kneeling down to pray before the image of our Lord? I did not say, 'I adore thee, O image of Christ and bless thee;' but I said, 'I adore thee, O Christ and bless thee, because, by thy holy cross thou hast redeemed the world.'" The Protestant lady was silent and ashamed of her ignorance.

The reason, then, why we kneel down and pray before the images and relics of Christ or his saints, is, because these pious objects enliven our devotion by exciting pious affections and desires in our hearts, and because, by reminding us of Christ and his saints, they encourage us to imitate their virtues and good works.

Chr. Fr. D. Schubart, a Protestant, relates the following touching anecdote: "I saw a Franciscan kneeling before a fresco painting of Christ on the walls of the cloister, which was admirable for its truth and beauty of expression. On hearing me approach, he rose up. 'Father that is really beautiful.' 'Yes; but the original is still more so,' said the monk, smiling. 'Then why make use of a material image in prayer?' 'I see,' said he, 'that

you are a Protestant; but do you not see that the artist modulates and ennobles the fantasies of my own imagination; have you not always experienced that this faculty calls up a thousand different forms? Permit me to prefer, when there is question of images, the work of a great master to the creation of my own fancy.' I was silent," concludes the writer.

No doubt, those who truly love our Lord Jesus Christ, love everything that refers to him and reminds them of him. Hence they love his cross, they love his images, and appreciate them higher than others. "It is," says St. Teresa, "a great consolation to see the pictures of our amiable Saviour. I wish our eyes could always be fixed upon them." Indeed, can there be anything more attractive and interesting for a Christian than to gaze on the image of him who has loved us with an infinite love?

Hence, the holy Council of Trent says, on this subject: "And the bishop shall carefully teach this, that by means of the histories of the mysteries of our redemption, portrayed by paintings or other representations, the people are instructed and confirmed in (the habit of) remembering, and continually revolving in mind the articles of faith, as also that great profit is derived from all sacred images, not only because the people are thereby admonished of the benefits and gifts bestowed upon them by Christ, but also because the miracles which God has performed by means of the saints, and their salutary examples, are set before the eyes of the faithful, that so they may give God thanks for those things, may order their own lives and manners in imitation of the saints, and may be excited to adore and love God, and to cultivate piety." (*Sess.* 25.)

The crucifix and the images of the saints are, then, in

the first place, like so many books which are suited to those who cannot read; for from them can be learned the history of religion and the principal mysteries. "Sacred pictures are books for the unlearned," says St. Gregory the Great; "we place them in the churches, that those who cannot read may behold on the walls that which they cannot learn from books." (*Apud. Guillon, t. xxiv.*) "Sacred pictures and images," says the learned and pious Bishop of Belley, "serve the purposes of books to the more instructed, as well as to the least, because they are calculated to excite in the minds of all sentiments of true piety and of holy emulation."

In the second place, they excite in us pious affections and desires toward Jesus Christ, his blessed Mother, and the saints. People of the world procure the pictures of the persons whom they love, that the love and affection which they bear them may be nourished. And pious souls wish that there should be placed before their eyes the crucifix and the pictures of the saints, that the love which they bear God and the saints may always be kept alive; for nothing is better calculated to excite that love than the crucifix and the images and relics of the saints. Let us suppose a succession of holy pictures suspended from the walls of a Church or room, representing Jesus Christ born in a stable—adored by the Magi—presented to his Father in the temple of Jerusalem—conducted into Egypt by St. Joseph—fasting in the desert—preaching to the multitude—healing the sick—raising the dead—transfigured on the mountain—at the Last Supper with his Apostles—washing their feet, and instituting the blessed Eucharist—agonizing in the garden of Gethsemane—betrayed by Judas—brought before the different tribunals—

tied to a pillar and scourged naked—condemned to death by Pilate—carrying His cross up Calvary's hill—crucified between two thieves—buried in the tomb—arising gloriously from the dead—appearing to his disciples after his resurrection, and ascending into heaven—what a great many truths will be learned from so many pious pictures ! Must not such representations *excite* in the hearts of all who look at and contemplate them, “pious affections and desires” towards God our Redeemer, who has done and suffered so much for our salvation.

If we suppose another line of pious images representing the acts of virtues practised by the saints—St. Peter bitterly weeping for having denied Christ—St. Stephen falling on his knees when he was about to be stoned, to ask pardon for his executioners—St. Lawrence suffering on a gridiron for his faith, and so of many others ; what effect must the view of them have on the minds of Christians ! Will they not at once admire the wonderful effects of grace, and will they not feel themselves *excited* to practise virtue, and to do everything in their power to imitate these great models of sanctity ?

In the third place, the crucifix, holy pictures, and relics encourage us to imitate the virtues and good works of Christ and the saints ; for, when we look on them, we immediately recall to our minds the life and actions of Jesus Christ and the saints. We begin to reflect on the great love and kindness of Jesus Christ towards us, on his goodness and patience, his charity and his humility ; we also ponder on the virtues of the saints, their purity, their zeal, their disinterestedness, their submission under all trials and sufferings to the will of God ; and thus, meditating on the acts of those illustrious friends of Jesus

Christ, we are induced to imitate their virtues and good works.

St. Teresa tells us, in the nineteenth book of her life, that her resolution to lead a holy life was owing to the sight of an image of Jesus suffering on the cross. "One day on entering my oratory," she writes, "I saw an image representing Jesus covered with wounds. It was so touching, it reminded me, in so lively a manner, of all that Jesus had suffered for us, that I was entirely overwhelmed by the sight thereof. On beholding those wounds which my sins had greatly enlarged, I was seized with a death-like suffering. My heart seemed to break. I knelt down at the feet of my Jesus, and with many tears, entreated him to give me the grace never to offend him again.

"From that moment I have always felt a great love for pious pictures. Alas! how unhappy are not those heretics who regard them as objects of horror, and who, through their own fault, are deprived of a great means of instruction and edification. Undoubtedly, they do not love Jesus Christ. If they loved him, they could not help taking pleasure in contemplating his features. Do not those who love one another, in this world, take pleasure in gazing on the portrait of the beloved one?"

Sylvester relates that St. Mary Magdalene revealed to a great servant of God of the Dominican Order, that, after the Ascension of our Lord, she felt inspired to retire into the wilderness, there to lead a life of prayer and penance. From the very beginning of her retired life, she besought God most earnestly to make that exercise of piety known to her, by which she would become most pleasing to him. God heard her prayer. He sent an

angel to plant a cross at the entrance of the cave in which she lived for thirty-two years, and thus gave her to understand that, by remembering all the sufferings which Jesus Christ had undergone out of love for her, and by meditating upon them every day of her life, she would become most pleasing to him, for the very reason that no one can reflect long upon the life and sufferings of Jesus Christ, upon his death on the cross, and upon the love with which he died for all men, without feeling inflamed with love for him who endured so much for love of us.

Blosius relates that God one day revealed to St. Gertrude, that one draws upon himself the eyes of the divine mercy as often as he looks devoutly at an image of Jesus Christ crucified. Indeed, the constant meditation on the sufferings of Christ on the cross, is the great school of Christian perfection. All the saints found in it their comfort and their joy; they learned in it to die to themselves, and to enter into the sentiments of Christ crucified.

Where did St. Bernard acquire his eminent spirit of devotion? Where did the great St. Augustine obtain his spiritual science? Where did St. Francis of Assisium conceive his seraphic love? Where did St. Thomas Aquinas learn his sacred science? It was in the meditation on Jesus Christ crucified, in the book of the crucifix. "When St. Bonaventure writes the spiritual breathings of his heart, all inflamed with love," says St. Francis de Sales, "he seems to have no other paper than the cross, no other pen than the lance, no other ink than the precious blood of Christ. What a deep sentiment of love when he exclaims: It is good for us always to abide in spirit before the cross! Let us make to ourselves three tabernacles in the wounds of our crucified Redeemer; one in

his feet, another in his hands, and a third in his sacred side. Here will I rest; here will I watch; here will I read; here will I converse; here will I study."

The holy Catholic Church, therefore, was right when she solemnly declared in the General Council of Trent, "that the images of Christ, of the Virgin mother of God, and of the other saints, are to be had and retained, especially in Churches, and that due honor and veneration are to be given them; not in such a manner, however, as if any divinity or virtue was in them, or as if anything was to be asked of them, or as if any trust was to be placed in them, as was of old done by the heathens, who placed their hope in idols; no, the honor shown to images refers to those who are represented by them—that is, Jesus Christ, or his saints. So that, if we kiss an image, or uncover the head, or prostrate ourselves before it, we adore Christ by this outward act of respect, or venerate the saint whom it represents." (*Sess. xxv.*)

This doctrine of the veneration of holy images has always been taught by the holy Catholic Church. In the eighth century, certain heretics arose, called Iconoclasts (breakers of images), who rejected the reverence due to the cross and holy images. They broke them into pieces and trampled them under foot. They found a defender of their impious doctrine in Leo, the *Isaurian*, a rude and ignorant soldier, who rose from the humblest walks of life, and finally succeeded, by the aid of his army, in being placed upon the imperial throne. It is told of him that, amid the mountains of Isauria, he once heard some Jews blaspheme and curse an image of the Redeemer. One of them turned to him and jokingly remarked: "Were you emperor, would you not destroy all those images?" "I

of his works of the finding of the relics of St. Stephen, and of the miracles which were performed on that occasion, and remarks: "A little dust has gathered together a numerous congregation of people; the ashes are hidden, but the benefits appear. Consider what God reserves in the kingdom of the living, when he gives such blessings from the dust of those that are dead." (*Serm.* 217, *or Dit.* 92.)

In the city of Naples, in Italy, are preserved the relics of the holy Bishop and martyr St. Januarius. Among many miraculous deliverances which this city ascribes to the intercession of this great saint, none is looked upon as more remarkable than its preservation from the fiery eruptions of Mount Vesuvius, now called La Somma, which is only eight miles distant, and which has often threatened the entire destruction of the city, both by the prodigious quantities of burning sand, ashes, and stones which it throws up on those occasions to a much greater distance than Naples, and, by a torrent of burning sulphur, nitre, calcined stones, and other materials, which, like a liquid fire, has sometimes gushed from that volcano, and, digging itself a channel, which was sometimes two or three miles broad, rolled its flaming waves through the valley into the sea, destroying towns and villages in its way and often passing near Naples. Some of these eruptions, which in the fifth and seventh centuries threatened this city with destruction, by the clouds of ashes which they raised, are said to have darkened the sky as far as Constantinople, and struck terror unto the inhabitants of that capital.

On those occasions, the people had recourse to the intercession of St. Januarius, and thereupon the divine mercy so wonderfully interposed in causing these dreadful evils

suddenly to cease, especially in 685, Benedict II. being Pope, and Justinian the younger, emperor, that the Greeks instituted a feast in honor of St. Januarius, with two yearly processions, to return thanks to God.

The protection of Naples from this dreadful volcano by the intercession of the same saint, was most remarkable in 1631 and 1707. In this the last, whilst Cardinal Francis Pignatelli, with the clergy and people, devoutly followed the shrine of St. Januarius in procession to a chapel at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, the fiery eruption ceased, the mist, which before was so thick that no one could see another at the distance of three yards, was scattered, and at night the stars appeared in the sky.

St. Jerome wrote a book against Vigilantius, who was the first to deny honor to holy relics. One passage of the work has these words: "The devils, with which he (Vigilantius) is possessed, roar at the relics, and confess they cannot bear the presence of the martyrs." And in his fifty-third epistle, he writes thus: "You tell me that he (Vigilantius) vomits once more his poison against the relics of martyrs, calling us dust-worshippers and idolaters, for reverencing dead men's bones. Oh! unhappy man, who can never be sufficiently lamented!"

We honor the relics of the martyrs that we may adore him whose martyrs they are; that the honor of the servant may redound to the Master who says: "He that receiveth you, receiveth me." (*Lib. contra. Vigil.*)

"Those, therefore," says the Council of Trent, "who affirm that veneration and honor are not due to the relics of the saints; or that these and other sacred monuments are uselessly honored by the faithful; and that the places dedicated to the memories of the saints are in vain visited

of the martyr. "See," said Philomatus, one of his tormentors, "the scoundrel wishes to die a martyr," and he at once struck him on the head with a heavy club, and killed him. The murderer immediately fell to the ground, the devil entered into him and killed him in a most frightful manner. (*Hist. of Heres. by St. Alph., p. 195.*)

30. But does not God say, "Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing?"

God does not forbid the making, but the adoring, of images.

It is not forbidden by the first Commandment to make images, provided they are not made for the purpose of adoration. This is evident from several reasons. If the words taken from the book of Exodus: "Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath . . . thou shalt not adore them nor serve them," (Exod., xx., 4), were intended to forbid the making of images of any kind, as they include every kind without exception, it would be unlawful to make any picture at all, because all are included, whether holy or profane; so that it would be a sin to make the picture of a friend, or to imprint the king's image upon coin, or to paint a horse, or a house, or any creature whatsoever. But no sane man ever imagined that the command extended to all this, for it would be the greatest folly to suppose that God prohibited the making of images in general. Neither are we prohibited by the first Commandment to make holy images; and for this clear reason, because God Himself absolutely commanded holy images to be made, as He said to Moses: "Thou shalt also make two cherubim of

beaten gold on the two sides of the oracle ; let one cherub be at one side, and the other on the other ; let them cover both sides of the propitiatory, spreading their wings and covering the oracle." (Exod., xxv., 18.) In this passage we see, that holy images, or the likenesses of heavenly things, were made by the express command of God.

In the book of Numbers we find, too, that Moses was commanded by God to make a "brazen serpent, and set it up for a sign ; that whosoever being struck (with the fiery serpents) shall look on it, shall live." (Num., xxi., 8.) This "brazen serpent" was a holy image, representing Christ upon the cross, as he himself assures us in the third chapter of the Gospel of St. John. Now, this is a manifest proof that the words of the first Commandment do not forbid the making of holy images, for if they were forbidden, God would never have commanded them on so many occasions to be made. Neither are we forbidden to use images for religious purposes ; for God not only commanded the images of the two cherubim to be placed upon the mercy-seat, upon the ark of the covenant, which was paying them honor, but he also made use of them for religious purposes ; for he said to Moses : "Thence will I give orders, and will speak to thee over the propitiatory, and from the midst of the two cherubim." (Exod., xxv., 22.)

What is forbidden by the first Commandment is not, therefore, the *making of images*, nor the *honoring of images*, but the making of them for the purpose of adoring and serving them as the idolaters do. That this alone is what is prohibited, is clear from the words of the command. For, after forbidding to make the likeness of anything, &c., it is immediately added : "Thou shalt not adore

them nor serve them," which words go to prove that the command only forbids the making of these things as idols, in order to be adored and served as if they were gods, or as if they had the power to see, hear or help us.

To make images and adore and serve them as gods is the crime of idolatry—a crime that prevailed much when God gave his commands to the Israelites, and to which the Israelites themselves were very prone, as appears from their own history. Idolatry was always severely and signally punished by God, as we learn from the book of Exodus, where there is mention made of twenty-three thousand Israelites being put to the sword by the command of Moses, for their idolatry in worshipping the golden calf.

31. Why do we honor the relics of the saints ?

Because God himself often honors them by miracles, and on the last day will honor them with eternal glory.

A holy relic is anything that belonged to any saint of God, and now remains with us after the saint to whom it belonged has either departed out of this life, or is at a distance from us. Now, the relics of the saints may be divided into three classes. In the first class may be placed the body or any part of the body of a saint which remains with us after his soul has quitted this earth. Thus the head, the arms, the limbs, the feet, the hands, the ears, the mouth, the teeth, the flesh, the hair, are so many relics. In the second class may be placed those things that belonged to the saint in his life-time, such as his books, clothes, or the like, but formed not a part of the saint's body, but only something that belonged to him. These also are esteemed holy, because they had relation

to the saint; such was the rod of Moses, and the mantle of Elias the Prophet. In the third class are included things that did not belong to the saints, but only had touched their bodies, either in their life-time or after their death; such are the aprons and handkerchiefs that touched the body of St. Paul, and afterwards cured all diseases, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles.

Now the authenticity of such relics must be sufficiently warranted, for to honor relics without a prudent and moral assurance of their authenticity, or without the due authority of pastors, as the canons require, is to fall into superstition.

One day St. Martin, Bishop of Tours, came to a place where he found a chapel and an altar erected by the concession of his predecessors, over the tomb of a pretended martyr. The place was much revered by the people; but St. Martin who was not over-credulous, would not go thither to pray, because he had no reliable account of the relics. He asked the eldest of the clergy what they knew of them, and receiving no satisfactory answer, he went with some of his brethren to the tomb of the pretended martyr, and besought God to show him who was buried there. Then turning to the left, he saw near him a pale ghost, of a fierce aspect, whom he commanded to speak. The ghost told his name; and it appeared that he had been a robber, who was executed for his crimes, whom the people honored as a martyr. None but St. Martin saw him; the others only heard his voice. Thereupon St. Martin caused the altar to be removed, and freed the people from this superstition. (*Sulp. Sev. in Vit. S. Mart. C. 11, p. 310.*) Where, however, the rules of prudence, concerning the authenticity of relics, are

observed, even though a mistake should happen, it is of the same nature as if a person, by inculpable inadvertence, kissed some other book instead of the Bible; and the primary object of such religious actions, which is to glorify God in his saints, is always certain, whatever mistakes may happen in facts, or such like human means which excite our devotion.

The relics included in the first class—the bodies or parts of the bodies of the saints, are properly relics in the strictest sense of the word. We honor them, because they were victims offered up to God either by martyrdom, or by patience.

The council of Trent says: “There is a reverence due to the bodies of holy martyrs and others, who reign with Christ; for these bodies were the living members of Christ, and the temples of the Holy Ghost; and they will one day be raised again to life, and glorified by the Lord, and it is through these bodies that God has bestowed many blessings upon men.” (*Sess. 25.*)

In the glorious days of the infant Church, the faithful applied to the sick the handkerchiefs and linens which had touched the body of St. Paul, and the sick were at once cured. But if God could give to mere linens which had touched the body of a saint the virtue of healing diseases, could he not give the same efficacy to the bodies themselves of martyrs and other saints? And not only could he, but he has actually done so. At all times, extraordinary favors have been obtained, and illustrious miracles have been performed by the relics of the saints. The history of the Church and the holy Fathers relate a great number of such miracles, the authenticity of which cannot for a moment be questioned. St. Augustine speaks in one

swear," replied the boy, "that I should not spare a single one." The imperial crown recalled his oath. In A. D. 726, he published a decree, announcing that in gratitude for the favors heaped upon him by God since his accession, he wished to destroy the *idolatry* which had crept into the Church; that the pictures of Christ, of the Blessed Virgin, and the saints, were idols, to which honor was given that was only due to a zealous God. He accordingly ordered their removal from the churches, oratories and private dwellings, and at length doomed their existence as well as their use.

When the edict was presented for signature to Germanus, patriarch of Constantinople, he refused his name. "The Christians do not worship images," said he to the emperor, "but only honor them as memorials of the saints and of their virtues. Painting is but an epitome of history for Christians, not an idolatry. You must distinguish between direct and relative veneration." But Leo was unwilling to understand so clear and simple an explanation. He again ordered St. Germanus to receive his decree, with the alternative of banishment, or even death, in case of refusal. "Remember," said the patriarch, "your coronation oath to change nothing in the tradition of the Church." The emperor struck the venerable confessor and caused his deposition by the senate. Germanus, taking off his pallium, said to the tyrant; "Although I am in the prince's power, yet my faith bows only to the decision of the Church." The intrepid champion of Christ numbered already four-score years. The emperor banished him and gave his See to a priest, named Anastasius, who did not blush to barter his faith for the vain honor of an usurped title. From that hour an un-

paralleled fanaticism wreaked its fury upon every sacred symbol. The troops of the Isurian broke into the churches and private dwellings, destroyed every pious work of art, and murdered all who dared to oppose them. Their profession named the heretics Iconoclasts (breakers of images). The emperor found it profitable to confiscate a number of gold and silver statues, costly vessels used in the service of the altar, jewels which enriched the images of Mary, and destroyed a large brass crucifix with which the piety of Constantine the Great had adorned one of the porticos of the imperial palace. It had always been held in special reverence by the inhabitants of Constantinople. Some women of the lower class rushed upon the officer who had executed the impious order, and murdered him. They had but given the signal for a savage slaughter, and were put to death, with many other Catholics. The martyrs were covered with a coat of pitch, and burned upon a pile of sacred images; their calcined bodies were then thrown to dogs.

A voice, however, from Syria was raised to brand the excesses of this savage cruelty. St. John Damascene proved the lawfulness of venerating images, by Sacred Scripture, Catholic tradition, and sound, logical arguments. "A picture," said he, "is to the ignorant what a book is to the learned. A picture is to the sight, what a word is to the hearing. Holy images are memorials of the divine works. Besides, the decision in such matters falls not within the province of princes, but of the Church. It was not to kings that Jesus Christ gave power to bind and to loose; it was to the apostles and their lawful successors, the bishops and doctors of the Church. Let these rash innovators recall the words of the Apostle St. Paul:

‘Should an angel come down from heaven and preach to you another Gospel than that which you have received We will not finish the text, but leave them time for repentance. But if—what God forbid, they obstinately cling to their error, we may then add the rest: Let him be anathema’” (accursed). This work created a deep sensation in the Catholic world. Leo sought to revenge himself on its author by means of a most infamous calumny. He had him accused as a traitor to the Saracen Caliph Hiokam, and the false charge proved by a forged letter. The Caliph called his council together, and the saint was condemned, and sentenced to have his hand cut off as a traitor. His innocence was, however, miraculously proved. Animated with a lively faith, he went before an image of the Blessed Virgin, whose honor he constantly defended, placed his amputated hand in connexion with the stump of his arm, prayed to the Holy Mother of God that his hand might be again united to his body, in order that he might be enabled to write again in defence of her honor. His prayer was heard. (*Darras’ Hist. of the Church, vol. ii. pp. 310-314; Hist. of Heresies by St. Alph. p. 193.*)

By this miracle God confirmed the truth of the Catholic doctrine of the veneration of holy images, and showed how he detested all those who reject this doctrine. These heretics were condemned and excommunicated by the Church in the second Council of Nice.

Among those who, at that time, were famous for defending this holy doctrine of the Catholic Church, and suffering even martyrdom in defence of it, was St. Stephen, abbot of Auxentium. In presence of the emperor Constantine Copronymous, who was an Iconoclast, he drew forth a

coin, on which was stamped the image of the Emperor and his son. "Now," said he, "if I spit on this image and trample it under foot, shall I be punished?" "Certainly," answered the officers of the court; "such an act would be a flagrant insult to the majesty of the emperor; such a crime would be punished with death." "What!" cried the saint, with a burst of indignation, "You put to death him who insults the image of your emperor, and you yourselves insult and trample on the image of Jesus Christ, the 'King of Kings!' Do you suppose, that God will not punish those who insult him in his images?"

This saint, who so strenuously defended the honor of images, was exiled for two years; then brought to Constantinople and put in prison, with chains on his hands, and his feet in the stocks. There he had the happiness to meet three hundred and forty-two monks from different countries—some had their noses cut off; others their eyes plucked out, or their hands or ears cut off; others were covered all over with scars from the floggings they had received, and many were afterwards put to death, and all this because they would not subscribe to the decree against the images. After being detained forty days in prison, a number of the imperial satellites came there one day, furiously calling on the guards to bring out Stephen of Auxentium. The saint came boldly forward and said: "I am he whom you seek." They immediately threw him on the ground, tied a rope to the irons on his legs, and dragged him through the streets, kicking and trampling on his head and body and striking him with clubs and stones all the way. When they had dragged him as far as the Oratory of St. Theodore the martyr, he raised up his head and recommended himself to the intercession

with the view of obtaining their aid, are wholly to be condemned, as the Church has already long since condemned and now also condemns them." (*Sess. 25.*)

32. Is it allowed to wear relics of the saints, or blessed articles of devotion?

Yes; provided we place confidence, not in them, but in God, or in the intercession of the saints, or in the blessings of the Church.

When speaking of superstition, we said that it is superstition to believe that those who carry about them the rosary, or scapular, or Agnus Dei, or relics of the saints, or St. John's Gospel, or any such work of piety, shall never be condemned to hell; or that at the hour of death, they shall certainly repent, and have the benefits of the sacraments, although they have neglected to receive them all their lives. Such a presumption of security does not come from God. Hence, the Council of Cambray, held in 1565, admonishes the faithful that "the vanity and superstition of those are abominable, who promise themselves for certain that they shall not depart this life without penance and the reception of the sacraments, because they have a devotion to this or that saint, or because they carry about them certain articles of devotion."

It is, however, without doubt, very lawful to carry relics about us, or a cross, or an Agnus Dei, an image of Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, or of the saints, or other marks of piety approved by the Church, as the rosary and the scapular, provided it be done with a pious intention, placing our confidence, not in relics, images, or any other article of devotion, but in God, or in the intercession of the saints, or in the blessings and prayers of the Church.

CONCLUSION.

OUR dear Saviour came into this world to save us from everlasting destruction. By his holy doctrine he showed us the true road to heaven. By his death upon the cross, he obtained for us all the graces necessary to enable us to walk on that road. By the worthy reception of the sacraments and by prayer we obtain those graces.

But as it is in the nature of man to act *freely* and tend to happiness, whether real or imaginary, without *compulsion* or *constraint*, our dear Saviour wrought miracles himself, and has, since the establishment of his Church, wrought miracles through his saints, to induce men to seek *freely*, through him, mercy and salvation in the Roman Catholic Church, in which alone miracles are performed. Hence, only those are induced by miracles to embrace the Catholic faith, who *freely* and *earnestly* seek for truth, grace and glory. "Wisdom," says Holy Scripture, "will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a soul subject to sin." (Wisd., i., 4.) I will here relate a miracle which is called, by Baronius, "The *Standing Miracle* in the Catholic Church,"—a miracle by which God most clearly confirms the truth of the Catholic doctrine of the veneration and invocation of the saints, and of the honor paid to holy images and relics.

It is hoped that the reading of this miracle may produce a salutary effect upon those candid non-Catholics who are animated with a sincere heart and upright will.

Now this standing miracle in the Church is that of the blood of St. Januarius, liquifying and boiling up at the approach of the martyr's head.

In a rich chapel, called the Treasury, in the great Church at Naples, are preserved the blood, in two very old glass vials, and the head of St. Januarius. The blood is congealed, and of a dark color, but, when brought in sight of the head, though at a considerable distance, it melts, bubbles up, and, upon the least motion, flows on any side. The fact is attested by Baronius, Ribadeneira, and innumerable other eye-witnesses of all nations and religions.

This miracle takes place equally in all seasons of the year and in variety of circumstances. The usual times when it is performed are the feast of St. Januarius, the 19th of September; that of the translation of his relics, the Sunday which falls next to the calends of May; and the 20th day of December, on which, in 1631, a terrible eruption of Mount Vesuvius was extinguished, upon invoking the patronage of this martyr. The same is done on extraordinary occasions at the discretion of the archbishop. This miracle has regularly happened on the annual feast of St. Januarius, and on that of the translation of his relics, from the time of that translation, about the year 400. Many Protestants, on witnessing this great miracle, have been converted to the Catholic faith. No wonder, for not to believe a doctrine which is confirmed by miracles is to resist obstinately the voice of God who speaks through miracles.

THE END.