

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



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THE SAVED AND LOST
A STUDY

THE COMPARATIVE NUMBER
OF THE SAVED AND LOST.
A STUDY. BY THE REVER-
END NICHOLAS WALSH, S.J.

"Say to them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."—EZECH. xxxiii. 11.

"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."—LUKE xix. 11.

"A faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners, of whom I am the first."—1 TIM. i. 15.

"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."—1 ST. JOHN ii. 15.

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EDUARDUS KELLY, S.J.,
CENSOR THEOL. DEPART.

Cum opus cui titulus est "The Comparative Number of the Saved and Lost," a P. Nicolao Walsh nostræ Societatis sacerdote compositum aliqui ejusdem Societatis revisores, quibus id commissum fuit, recognoverint et in lucem edi posse probaverint; facultatem concedimus ut typis mandetur.

PATRITIUS KEATING,
PROVINCIAE HIBERNIAE S.J. PRÆPOSITUS.
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DEDICATION



A. M. D. G.



*To God
The Creator, Father,
Saviour, and Sanctifier
of all Men,
To the
Most Sacred Heart of Jesus which
loves all Men,
And to
The Ever Blessed Mary, Mother
of God, Mother of all Men, and
The Refuge of Sinners.*

• , •

*I wish to link this little book with the Memory of the late
Hon. Judge John O'Hagan, who died November 12th 1890,—
R.I.P. Also with the Memory of his wife, Sister Mary Frances
of the Blessed Sacrament, who died to this world, by the
Religious Profession, October 4th 1898. In admiration of
their lives, and in affectionate gratitude for their friendship,
their kindness, and their generous charity to me.*

PREFACE

THIS study is the outcome of some thought on a subject which has long had an interest for the writer. No one will find in it deep learning or reasoning. Nor could such be expected of me.

It was written and is published in the belief that it advocates an unpopular opinion opposed to those held by the great majority of writers and preachers. Still, I do hope that any who may read it will not be too severe on me for my boldness, and will admit that something sound and solid may be said in its favour.

I call my opinion unpopular—though it is hard to make out why it should be so—because for the one who advances it in book or pulpit, there are the many who uphold the contrary; and some of them in so decided and strong a manner as to suggest that none other is tenable. I need not say that if there be a thought expressed, or the manner of expressing a thought, which is not perfectly in keeping with the teaching and spirit of Holy Church, I unreservedly retract it.

The theologians I have looked into are for the most part Cardinal Franzelin, S.J., and Father Hurter, S.J.; the Scripture Commentators—A. Lapide, Maldonatus, M'Evilly, Bellarmine on the Psalms, and Dr. Trench on the parables.

I desire to thank the Censors who examined the manuscript, my Superiors who have allowed me to publish it, and His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin, who most kindly gave me his Imprimatur.

N. W.

MILLTOWN PARK,
Feast of St. Francis Xavier, 1898.

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THE SAVED AND LOST¹

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY—STATE OF THE QUESTION : SOURCES OF ARGUMENT

WE read in the Gospel of Saint Luke that "A certain man said to our Lord: Lord, are there few that be saved?" This query is evidence that the comparative number of the saved and lost is a very old question, and that the tendency long ago, in the days of the old dispensation, was to think that the few are saved and the many lost. In any case, it is a question which has been from time to time, if not always, earnestly and warmly debated amongst believers. It has an attraction and

¹ By the word "Lost" I always mean those only to whom the Judge shall say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels."

interest for them, because it touches their final and eternal destiny.

It is, as all know, a question about which there is no authoritative decision of the Church, nor unanimous opinion of her Fathers or Theologians: an open question therefore, about which we may speculate, provided we do so in a reverent and religious spirit. It is one of those *dubia* in which we are free, according to the celebrated dictum of Saint Augustine, "*In dubiis libertas.*"

Father Faber, in his well-known book, *The Creator and the Creature*, writes on this subject in a full, fair, and learned way. There is nothing one-sided or partisan about him. He gives all the opinions held by others, speaks of them with respect, and states his own with great moderation and modesty. I wish to admit and acknowledge my indebtedness to him in stating the question, as well as in some other points.

Immediately after the chapter on "The Easiness of Salvation," follows one, entitled "The Great Mass of Believers," in the opening of which he says: "We will suppose the objection to be made that if salvation be

easy, then practically we ought to find that most Catholics are saved. It is not enough to say, that though salvation is easy, the corruption of man is so tremendous that little comes of it; for then it seems a question of words to call salvation easy. Salvation is the saving of *fallen* man, and therefore to be really easy it must far more than counterbalance his corruption. The question is one of too momentous a character, of too thrilling an interest for us to be content with mere rhetoric. We repeat, if salvation be easy most Catholics must be saved. Can we venture to say that such is our belief?"

This question is not, however, to be necessarily limited to the relative number of *Catholics* lost or saved; nor do Father Faber and others so limit it. It may be extended to all men—to Jew, Gentile, Greek, and Barbarian; in a word, to every fallen child of fallen Adam; and such is the purpose of this study.

This subject has been treated directly and formally by theologians, Scripture commentators, ascetical writers, catechists, and preachers of high name; indirectly and informally by

some of the Fathers of the Church. Their views may be classified as follows:—1. Many hold that the majority of mankind will be lost because pagans, unbelievers, heretics, and schismatics make up a majority; and some are of this mind, even taking children into their reckoning. According to this view, few adults will be saved. 2. Some, who confine themselves to Catholics only, maintain that, even taking children into account, the majority will be lost; which really means that few adult Catholics will be saved. These we may well call the rigorous or severe views. 3. On the other hand, many, notably Suarez, hold, as Father Faber does, that the great majority of adult Catholics will be saved. 4. Some, amongst whom we are glad to count the illustrious Dominican, Father Lacordaire, hold or incline to the opinion that the majority of mankind, including heathens, heretics, etc., will be saved.¹ We may call these the mild or merciful views.

¹ After this study was written some friends drew my attention to the fact that the Rev. Père Monsabrè, O.P., in one of his Notre-Dame Conferences, Lent 1889; Father Castelein, S.J., in a series of articles published in the *Revue Générale*, headed "Rigorism and the Number of the Saved"; and Father Joseph Rickaby, S.J., in one of his Oxford Conferences, headed "The

Father Faber, in classifying the upholders of these opinions, notes, "In point of theologians, the rigorous opinions regarding the whole mass of mankind have an overwhelming majority. The rigorous opinions concerning adult Catholics have more theologians on their side than the milder views.¹ But if we abstract moral, ascetical, and hortatory authors who write to rouse and to impress their readers, and retain only pure theologians in the stricter sense, I think the authorities on the two sides will be not far from evenly balanced, the excess, however, being in favour of the rigorous view. Some of the authorities on the milder side are of very great weight."

Father Lacordaire, in one of his celebrated Notre-Dame conferences "On the results of Extension of Salvation," advocate this mildest opinion. Though Father Faber—whom Père Monsabrè quotes—did not formally set himself to prove it, his sympathies were clearly with it.

¹ Father Joseph Rickaby says in his conference, "The Extension of Salvation: "But as to what proportion of men die in sanctifying grace, and what proportion in mortal sin nothing is revealed, nothing is of faith, and nothing is really known to theologians. If ever you find a theologian confidently consigning the mass of human souls to eternal flames, be sure he is venturing beyond the bounds of Christian faith and of theological science. You are quite free to disbelieve his word ; I do not believe it myself."

the divine government," inclines, as do some others, to the mildest opinion of all, namely, that the majority of mankind will be saved. To this, I purpose, with all respect for the views of others, to confine my advocacy. All the arguments used in its favour will, however, tell with greater force in favour of the other mild opinion, that the majority of adult Catholics will be saved.

But it may, at the very outstart, be fairly objected: Is it safe or prudent to reject the severer views, when it is admitted even by opponents that they have the weight of authority—one of them overwhelmingly—on their side? Does not this fact prove that there must be solid foundation and good reason for them? Does it not appear strange, almost incredible, that holy and learned men would uphold views naturally distasteful and repelling, unless they were compelled to do so by convincing arguments? This objection may be answered in one sentence: Holy and learned men like Suarez, Faber, Lacordaire, Bergier, and others, have held or inclined to the milder opinions, and, in a perfectly free and open question like this, there could be nothing wrong or imprudent in a person

taking his stand with them. Moreover, if anyone in studying this question, within Catholic lines, becomes convinced that the mildest opinion is the most probable, he could not be justly found fault with for upholding it, provided he does so in that reverent and obedient spirit which should mark all religious discussions on open or free subjects.

The advocates of the severer opinions seem to rely, as far as I can learn, on two arguments—1. On some texts, types, or figures of Holy Scripture which, according to their interpretation, touch directly and immediately this subject. 2. On the sinful external aspect of the Catholic world, and the hopelessly sinful and lost aspect, as it appears to them, of the pagan, heretical, non-Catholic world. We hope to be able to show that both fail; the first, because it is in itself very weak, counteracted also by as strong, if not stronger, texts in favour of the mild opinions. The second, because it is naturally calculated to mislead. Father Vasquez, a theologian of name, writes: "It is clear from Scripture that the number of the lost is greater than the number saved," and hesitates, or rather declines, to give a

favourable opinion with reference to Catholics. Yet Father Faber does not fear to say : " In the use of the Scripture argument the triumph is completely and most remarkably on the milder side. Indeed, the Scripture proof seems quite unmanageable in the hands of the rigorists." Suarez holds as more probable that the majority of Catholics are saved ; whilst A. Lapide gives as his reason for combating this opinion that the greater number of living theologians in Rome in his day thought the general laxity of morals in the world a strong proof that the severer view was the more probable.

The upholders of the milder and more merciful views seem to rely on arguments more solid and logical. On the character of God, and on His relations, providence, economy, and will towards *all* men ; as we have them clearly evidenced in His own inspired word, and formulated by theologians. These, fairly and fully studied, would almost necessitate us to think that the difficulty is or ought to be, not to be saved, but to be lost ; and that none are lost for ever except they who *wilfully* fight God to the end, and that these are the fewer rather than the greater in number.

I must admit that it is not difficult to account for the prevalence of the severe or rigorous views, because of certain *external* aspects of the world looked at and regarded in a human way according to man's natural wont. We are, as a rule, inclined to be severe rather than considerate and merciful in our study, opinions, and judgments of our fellow-man. "Man sees those things only which appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart." Is it therefore unlikely that we, judging from mere appearances, are often inclined to think of or fear as lost many whom God, the Great Father, who tenderly takes in and weighs everything for as well as against His children, treats in a far more just and compassionate manner?

God works out salvation in His own way by grace, and the action of grace in the soul makes no noise, attracts no attention, falls in no way under the senses. And what do we know of God's secret action in the souls of men, living or dying? We often know much of the wild doings of youth and early manhood, but little or nothing of the salutary changes which take place, imperceptibly, in a settled life, in later years, in sickness, in suffering, in old age, or when death is near. We are struck,

startled perhaps, by the evil doings of some men, whilst the daily good deeds of thousands are unnoticed, or cause us no surprise. The innocence of children, the patient endurance of the poor and afflicted in their hard lot, are ignored or overshadowed by the wickedness of the adult, and the voluptuousness of the rich who have peace in their possessions. The world is a bad place, no doubt; but its badness is brought far more before men, and forced on their attention, than the supernatural world, with its abundant ever-overflowing fountains of ordinary and extraordinary graces, and the sanctifying and saving effects which they produce, silently, in the souls of men. Unkindness, ingratitude, injustice, because they hurt, irritate, excite angry passion, are far oftener spoken of and made public than deeds of kindness, gratitude, or charity, which are generally kept more or less secret by the persons concerned.

Besides, is it not true that evil is, for the most part, visible, observable, self-asserting, bold, violent; whilst goodness is, on the contrary, quiet, modest, humble, unostentatious? The bad and wicked deeds of man are much more in evidence than the virtuous and holy.

Newspapers, the police and law court reports keep them so. One murder—"one more unfortunate come to her death"—one suicide, the horrors, cruelties, and sins of a passing war will be much in the minds and on the lips of many who never advert to the millions who at the same time are leading really Christian Catholic lives, or lives good according to their lights. To the millions of priests, religious men and women and lay persons who are living lives of close union with God, and of devotion to the spiritual and temporal welfare of others. Let us consider a case in point near home. One takes up the morning newspaper and looks over the police courts. He is shocked and horrified by brutal cases of wife-beating, cruelty to children—all traceable to intemperance—and of other crimes, a dozen or so for the morning sitting, and is tempted to think Dublin is a bad city and on the road to perdition. Yet it numbers, by the thousands, honest, upright, sober, Christian, religious inhabitants—families who live in love and peace, parents who care and educate their children in a most conscientious manner. A religious city—and if you take note of its charitable institutions, orphanages, hospitals, asylums,

etc., all built, established, and supported by the people, without government help—the most charitable city in the world.

Father Faber puts this truth before us in his own beautiful and striking way when he says: "Evil, like the world, is loud, rude, anxious, hurried, and ever acting on the defensive, while goodness partakes of the nature of Him who alone is truly good. It imitates His ways of secrecy and concealment, and is impregnated with His spirit of unostentatious tranquillity. The infuriated mob that burns down a church and tramples the Blessed Sacrament under foot, is a much more obvious and obtrusive phenomenon than the dozen Carmelite nuns who have been doing the world's hardest work for it before that tabernacle door for years. The whole priesthood of the Church, busy at its work of mercy, catches the eye much less than a single regiment in scarlet marching down on its fellow-Christians." With all respect for the many writers and preachers of name who use the external-aspect argument to prove that the majority of mankind, including Catholics, are lost, I must, in all humility, say that I can see no proof in it, and that as an argument it is most misleading.

Still, it is strange that so many holy and learned men¹ have taken pessimist views, and held the most extreme and severe opinions in this matter. But this may be accounted for. Some of these were mere theologians of retired studious lives, who probably heard more of the bad external side of the world than of the good which is in it. Preachers and ascetical writers, who believed, as many of them did and do, in fear as the great incentive to avoid sin, utilised those opinions in order to excite dread and to urge the faithful to work out their salvation in fear and trembling; utilised them often in a very one-sided way, taking,

¹ "It is true that older theologians take a very gloomy view on this subject, holding it, not as of faith, but as their conclusion from premises of faith. In an age when men freely gave over one another to torture and death, they did not look for any wide and far-reaching final mercy of God upon the sins of humanity. Still, they spoke in excess of their knowledge and in excess of their faith. We must not be dogmatic in supporting the contrary side. We have no more revelation than they had. Still, we may opine and conjecture and argue for greater leniency. The rigour of the older theologians culminated in Jansenism. To the Jansenist the elect were 'the few grapes left upon the vine after a careful vintage' (Isaias xxiv. 13). Since the extirpation of Jansenism, the pendulum of theological speculation has swung the other way, and theologians generally hope more of the mercy of God, or, at least, speak with less assurance of the range of His rigorous justice."

—FATHER RICKABY.

as we shall see, great rhetorical liberties with holy Scripture. Some of them would appear to have formed so transcendent an idea of God, of His majesty, His holiness, His justice, His power, that they thought few could pay Him that worship and give Him that service which would be at once worthy of Him and sufficient to save themselves. It may be that, when absorbed in thought of Him as King of kings and Lord of lords—all Holy, all Just, all Terrible,—they overlooked too much the fact that He is also the Great Creator, Father and Saviour of all men—all Loving and all Merciful. We read of holy men who were very much alarmed—sincerely, I believe, though some would perhaps say absurdly so—about their own salvation. Such persons would be naturally inclined to have this same feeling of alarm about others. A few have written or preached in so decided and strong a manner on this subject as to suggest the suspicion that they thought it would be more for the honour and glory of God that a greater number should be lost than saved.

Father Faber, writing of the severe opinion that the majority of Catholics are lost, says :

“According to this rigid opinion, if the deceased baptized infants of the faithful, with the deceased baptized infants of heretics, added to the adult Catholics who are saved, do not make a majority; and if also the statement be true that the deaths of the children of Catholics nearly equal in number—as Ruiz says—the deaths of adult Catholics, then must the number of adults, who are saved, be so small that the Church of the redeemed in heaven, the conquest of our Saviour’s precious blood, is chiefly composed of children, of those who on earth never merited, never loved, never used their reason at all. Is not this a conclusion so repugnant as to be inadmissible?” And yet, Father Faber, who evidently rejects this opinion, is obliged to admit that it has many holy and learned advocates, even a majority, on its side. This question of the lost and saved is truly a very free and open one.

It will not, I hope, be considered out of place to close these remarks on the arguments used by the advocates of the two rigorous opinions, by giving an example of the manner in which they assert and endeavour to prove

them. Massillon¹ is considered by learned critics, such as the late Lord Brougham, to be the first of French preachers. We have two celebrated sermons of his entitled, "On

¹ There are some differences on minor points between the Rev. Edward Peach's translation of Masillon's sermon "On the small number of the elect," which I have used, and the sermon as I find it in the original. Peach gives two distinct sermons preached, one on Septuagesima, and the other on Sexagesima Sunday. The text of the former is, "Many are called but few are chosen." Of the second, "The parable of the sower who went out to sow his seed." In the original I can find only one sermon—a very long one—preached on the Monday of the third week of Lent. Text, "There were many lepers in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, but Naaman the Syrian." On comparing, however, the translation and the original, I found that Peach divided and condensed the long sermon into two, and that his translation is fairly faithful. Could it be that Peach accommodated the sermon of Monday to two Sundays, taking as the texts a word from the gospels of each? If this supposition be true, it was scarcely fair to make Masillon say in the first sentence of the first sermon, "The words of *my* text declare that many are called but few are chosen." Suggesting that this inspired word settled the question. I fear that Peach is in a great measure answerable for this most despairing sermon being substantially preached in many English-speaking pulpits year after year. Monsabrè gives extracts, in his conference, from Masillon's sermon. He shows the weakness of his Scripture illustrations, and condemns in strong words the exaggerated tone and style of the sermon, which, he says, approaches too near to that savage theology—*cetté théologie sauvage*—which pretends that Christ did not die for all men, that He thought of the elect only in the work of redemption, and distributes His effective graces with a miserly hand.

the small number of the elect." Though we must be presumptuous enough to differ from and criticise him, we cannot but admire that noble, independent, apostolic spirit which alone could have inspired and supported him in addressing such sermons to such an audience—to Louis XIV. and his voluptuous and corrupt Court. Anyone who may carefully read those discourses of his will, I think, consider my remarks fair and just, at least from my point of view.

The great preacher takes for his text the words of our Lord, "Many are called, but few are chosen"; sincerely believing, as many others do—erroneously as we shall see—that these words prove his opinion. He passes over the Scripture arguments in a very off-hand and self-satisfied manner. He gives one paragraph to them: "Were it my intention," he says, "to strike terror into your hearts, I would in this discourse enumerate the alarming examples with which the Scriptures are filled on this subject. I would tell you that the Prophet Isaias compares the small number of the elect to the few bunches of grapes which escape the eye of the vintager, to the few ears of corn which chance only

preserves from the sickle of the reaper. I would tell you, in the words of God Himself, that there are two paths,—one narrow, rugged, strewn with thorns and trodden by very few; the other broad, spacious, adorned with flowers, and trodden by the far greater part of mankind. I would tell you that the gospel *unreservedly* declares that perdition is the fate of the multitude, and that the number of the elect bears no comparison with the number of the reprobate.” With all apostolic liberty, I must say that the few bunches of grapes and the few ears of corn may be rhetoric, but have not a shadow of proof. The two paths suggest a difficulty which shall be considered hereafter, while it is regrettable that so great and good a man should have asserted “that the gospel¹ unreservedly declares that perdition is the fate of the multitude, and that the number of the elect bears no comparison to the number of the reprobate.” The gospel; which gives us the history of Him who came to save the perishing and the lost, who spoke the parables

¹ I had used this portion of Peach’s translation before I compared it with the original. In the latter the words are “The Holy Books everywhere declare.” The Holy Books, old and new, everywhere, as we shall see, give testimony to God the Father, and to Christ, the Saviour of all men.

of the lost sheep and the prodigal, who so gently and sweetly forgave the poor woman taken in adultery, and who died to redeem and merit saving grace for all men.

Having disposed of Scripture argument, he then proceeds to "examine the causes why the number of the elect is so small." "The elect consist of two classes only—of those who preserved baptismal innocence, and of those who regained innocence by a true repentance." He then asserts that "the first is a privilege enjoyed by very few, and the second requires a grace which, in the present general relaxation of morals and discipline, is either seldom received or seldom corresponded with." "There are more," said a holy father, "who never lost their baptismal innocence than have recovered it again by true repentance." "Seldom is there one who lives innocent; seldom is there one who dies penitent." Then, in order to show the fewness of the innocent, and the immense number who could be saved only by true repentance, but who never make it, he pictures the bad external aspect of the Christian and *Catholic* world in the strongest language. I can give only one or two extracts out of many: "But these times"—the earliest days of the

Church—"are elapsed, and great is the change that has taken place. The number of believers is increased, but the number of the just is diminished. The world is the same now as it was from the beginning—corrupt and profligate; its conversion to the faith has produced no change in its manners and customs. When it entered the Church it introduced likewise its immorality and profaneness. Yes, true it is, that the land, even the land of Christianity, is infected by the corruption of its inhabitants; all work iniquity, and seldom is there one who does good. All states and conditions have corrupted their ways; even the lamps of Jacob are extinguished, the salt has lost its savour; the priest has become like the people." Did he think that all the world was as bad or worse than Versailles and its surrounding? What of the sanctity of the Church—one of her notes? In ages worse than the one in which he lived—in those ages when kings and barons and Churchmen were too often anything but edifying—the lives of high sanctity and exalted holiness, led by millions, stamped them as "ages of faith." He then describes the sort of penance and penitential life which alone could save. Such only as we read of in the

lives of remarkably holy men. Lives, I admit, which necessarily lead on to great exceptional sanctity, but certainly not necessary for escaping the eternal fires, and saving the soul through the pains of purgatory. It must be admitted that there is a strong family likeness between Massillon and many other preachers and writers who uphold the severe opinions.

CHAPTER II

FIRST ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF THE MILDEST OPINION.—GOD THE CREATOR OF ALL MEN

THE reasons which have induced me to think the mildest opinion, namely, that the majority—and, I scarcely fear to add, the great majority—of mankind will be saved, are: 1st. Because the study of God's character urges, if not forces, me to do so; 2nd. Because this opinion appears to make most for His greater honour and glory, and for the merits of Christ; 3rd. Because the belief in it is better calculated to make us love God, and to serve Him the more from love.

We come now to the heart of the work, to the arguments in favour of this mildest opinion. These arguments are what logicians call *à priori*, or certainly akin to them,—arguments which lead up to a conclusion and prove it; unless there be others called *à posteriori*, which weaken or destroy them,—arguments from cause to effect. That these arguments may have

their full and legitimate weight we must carefully study and understand God and His relations to man, as He Himself gives them in His own inspired Book.

God is the Creator, the absolute Owner, and the Lord of all things. He upholds, directs, and governs all things according to that wise, powerful, and loving Providence which reaches from end to end mightily and sweetly. He created all things 'for Himself, for His own glory, and secures that they all fulfil this end after a manner in keeping with their nature, and according to His own wondrous ways. Hence, the ministering spirits in heaven adore Him, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power, because Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were and have been created." And again, "Every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, I heard all saying, 'To Him who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction, and honour, and glory, and power for ever and ever.'"

It is His will that all things, even His inanimate creatures, should do His behest and serve Him; should reflect, manifest, hymn

His praise and glory according to fixed laws framed by Himself.

It is deserving of note, too, that God so loves His inanimate creatures that He speaks of many of them with affection, as if they were intelligent beings, doing His word, and obeying Him with mind and heart. "He telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names. He sendeth forth light, and it goeth. He hath called it, and it obeyeth Him with trembling. The stars have given light in their watches, and rejoiced; they were called, and they said here we are, and with cheerfulness they have shined forth to Him who made them." In Psalm xviii. we read, "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands. Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night showeth knowledge. There are no speeches nor language where their voices are not heard. Their sound hath gone forth in all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. He hath set His tabernacle in the sun, and He, as a bridegroom, coming out of His bridechamber, hath rejoiced as a giant to run his way. His going out is from the end of heaven, and there is no one who

can hide himself from his heat." Cardinal Bellarmine, in his commentary on this psalm, writes: "The heavens pre-eminently, and the sun amongst the heavenly bodies, beyond all the other works of God, by their grandeur and beauty, make His glory known to us. They do so incessantly; day to day uttereth speech, and night to night showeth knowledge. They do so to all and everywhere. 'There are no speeches nor languages where their voices are not heard, and their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.' Whilst the sun, beautiful as the adorned bridegroom, and strong as a giant, rejoices to run the circuit of the earth and impart His gifts to every one." In the "Benedicite" and "Laudate," read every day in Lauds, all things animate and inanimate, from the lowest to the highest, are called on to bless God, because, "He spoke, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created." And here, in passing, may we not remark, as perhaps foreshadowing a similar truth in a higher order of things—harmony, sequence, and development being marks of God's work—that the material inanimate world substantially

and persistently fulfils the end of its creation. Sun, moon, and stars, earth and air and sea, dew and rain and sunshine, the regularly revolving seasons are and obey God's law and will even in this fallen world. "By Thy ordinance," says the Royal Psalmist, "the day goeth on, for all things serve Thee." And if there be, at times, what are commonly called revulsions, or rebellions of nature, they are the exceptions, and are, comparatively speaking, few and rare.

We recognise a similar wise, powerful, loving, and consistent providence on the part of the Great Creator with reference to the animate, irrational world. Sheep and oxen, the beasts of the field, the wild and savage ones of the forest and jungle, the gentle, patient, useful camel, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea are His. He creates, preserves, and utilises them all for some end or purpose. He has given to them wondrous instinct for self-preservation and protection. "The sparrow has found for herself a house, and the dove a nest, where she may lay her young ones." The inspired writer of the Book of Proverbs tells us that, "There are very little things of the earth which are wiser than the

wise." He instances the ant: "Go to the ant, O sluggard, and consider her ways, and learn wisdom, which, although she hath no guide, nor master, nor captain, provideth her meat for herself in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." We read things of birds, the where and the how of building their nests; of the doings of bees, the beaver, and other animals which would be incredible if not proved by facts. What grander; more sublime; what better suited to give us an idea of the magnificent greatness, the ineffable providence of God, than what we read in the closing chapters of the Book of Job: "Then the Lord answered Job out of a whirlwind, and said, 'Gird up thy loins like a man; I will ask, and answer thou Me.'"

Then follows a series of questions in which God seems to revel in the power, wisdom, and love which He manifested in the creation of the material and animal world, and in man's incapability of understanding them.

God has kind thought, and takes great care of His animal world, for "the sparrow valued at a half-farthing shall not fall on the ground without the Father, and not one of them is forgotten before God." "He maketh grass to grow on

the mountains, He giveth to the beasts their food, and provideth for the raven when her young ones cry to Him, wandering about because they have no meat." "He watereth the hills, and all the beasts shall drink, and the wild asses shall expect in their thirst." Is there not tender thought and consideration of them in that legislation to His chosen people which forbade them to plow with an ox and an ass, to muzzle the ox which treadeth out the corn, to boil the kid in the milk of the dam, or to be cruel in bird-nesting? And here we may again note what may be the foreshadowing of a higher truth. This world of animate, irrational creatures fulfils constantly and perfectly the end for which it was created. It, in its own way, praises, glorifies, and serves God. The vast majority of animals, if not all, are of necessity, or use, or service, or recreation to man, for whom they were called into existence. Unnatural monsters are very rare. The dangerous, wild, and savage animals are comparatively few; they live away from man, and if harm come from them, it is to the few who, from motives of trade or sport, become the aggressors and expose themselves to it.

But these two worlds, magnificent creations

of God, were called into existence and kept true to their purpose for the sake of a being of a far higher order and of a far nobler nature than any or all of them,—for Man. In the words of St. Ignatius, “All the other things on the face of the earth were created for man’s sake, in order to aid him in the prosecution of the end for which he was created,” which end is “To praise, reverence, and serve God, and by this means to save his soul.” Created for man’s sake! For man! made by God to His own image and likeness, made little less than the angels, made, in a true sense, the Lord of creation, because God has subjected all things under His feet that He may use them in working out the grandest and highest destiny possible to a creature: the service, first, for the moment of this life, and then the eternal, face-to-face possession of God.

We should therefore be prepared, without further proof, for a wiser, more powerful, and more loving providence of a higher order, in keeping with this higher being, than that which so successfully directs and governs the inanimate and irrational worlds. Cardinal Belarmine, in one of his expositions of the Psalms, writes: “David records God’s providence in

regard of the beasts and the birds in order to let man see that he will never be forsaken by God in His providence. God, who so bounteously feeds beasts and ravens, will never desert those who are made to His own image and likeness."

But we have higher testimony to this truth, nay, the very highest, because divine. Is not such our Lord's reasoning and conclusions as we have them in His Sermon on the Mount—"Behold the birds of the air: for they neither sow nor do they reap, nor gather into barns, and your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they?" "Are not five sparrows sold for four farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? Fear not, therefore: you are of more value than many sparrows." "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they labour not, neither do they spin; but I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field, which is to-day and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe, how much more you, O ye of little faith?"

God is the Creator of all men, of Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, of the wild,

ignorant savage, as well as of the civilised and cultured Christian. A creator He Himself tells us, "who lovest all things that are, and hatest none of the things He has created, who did not appoint or make anything hating it." "It is sweet to think," writes Father Faber, "of the web of love which God is hourly weaving round every soul He has created on earth. It enlarges the heart to think how round every soul of man He is weaving this web of love. The busy European, the silent Oriental, the venturesome American, the gross Hottentot, the bewildered Australian, the dark-souled Malay. He comes to all. He has His own way with each, but with all it is a way of tenderness, forbearance, and lavish generosity. The variety of their circumstances—and these are well nigh numberless—are not so many as the varieties of his sedulous affection. The biography of each of those souls is a miraculous history of God's goodness. If we could read them, as probably the Blessed can, we should see Him winding invisible threads of light and love even round the ferocious idolater; we should see him dealing with cases of the most brutal wickedness, the most fanatical delusion, the most stolid insensibility, and even for these arranging

all things with the exquisite delicacy of creative love."

God the Creator is a being of infinite intelligence, is an infinitely intellectual being, and must therefore have had some good end and purpose in creating man, whom He has made to partake of His own intelligence. He tells us this end and purpose in express terms, and we have it constantly kept before us in the mutual relations between God the Creator and man the creature, as we read of them in holy Scripture. God could not give up certain rights which are His as Creator, nor can man rid himself of certain obligations strictly due by him as creature to the Creator. "To His own praise and glory God created and formed and made man." Man is "to adore the Lord his God, and to serve Him only." Man is "to love and serve the Lord his God with his whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." Man is bound to worship God, as revealed to him, by certain religious acts, and to serve Him by respecting, obeying, and doing His will as manifested in His laws and commandments promulgated to him. This is the "whole man" for his day of probation here on earth. The possession and glory of God in Heaven is his

eternal reward. Cardinal Newman, in one of his sermons, "God's Will the end of Life," states this truth in simple but striking words: "Realise it, my brethren. Everyone who breathes, high and low, educated and ignorant, young and old, man and woman, has a mission, has a work. We are not sent into this world for nothing. We are not born at random. We are not here that we may go to bed at night and get up in the morning, toil for our bread, eat and drink, laugh and joke, sin when we have a mind, and reform when we are tired of sinning, rear a family,—and die. God sees everyone of us, He creates every soul, He lodges it in the body one by one for a purpose. He needs, He deigns to need, everyone of us. He has an end for each of us. We are all equal in His sight, and we are all placed in our different ranks and stations not to get what we can out of them for ourselves, but to labour in them for Him. As Christ has His work, we too have ours; as He rejoiced to do His work, we must rejoice in ours also."

God who created all men, civilised and savage, for such an end, and commanded them to attain it, could not leave them without the means which, if rightly used, would enable them to do so. These means would be, as a matter

of course, suited to the state and condition in which men would find themselves placed by the providence of God. A written law for some, for others a law written on the heart, and, for all, grace by which they could observe the law.

Although the question of God's will to save all men, without exception, will be considered more fully further on, still, in view of a conclusion to which attention is about to be called, it is well to premise that the most learned theologians lay down and prove the following proposition:—That God really and sincerely wishes the salvation of all men, *because He is the Creator of all Men*. Cardinal Franzelin proves this proposition first from holy Scripture; His principal argument is taken from the opening verses of the second chapter of St. Paul's first epistle to Timothy, in which occur the words, "Who will have all men to be saved—because there is one God." He strengthens his arguments by citing those texts found in the Epistle to the Romans, in which the apostle speaks of no distinction between Jew and Gentile, Jew and Greek: "Is He, the God of the Jews only? yes, of the Gentiles also, for the same is Lord over all." He concludes this proof as follows:—"According to St. Paul's

doctrine, the first, and in itself sufficient reason why God wishes all men to be saved, is because He is the God of all men. No man, therefore, is excepted, unless there be men of whom the one only true God is not God, which would lead on to the error of the Gnostics that there were two Gods, one of the spiritual, the other of the animal and earthly man."

He then shows that the Fathers of the Church held "that God wishes all men to be saved, because He is the Creator of all men." In the words of St. Ambrose, "God wishes all whom He made and created to be saved: would to God, O men, that you would not fly and hide yourself from Him; but even if you do He seeks you, and does not wish you to perish." And another Father says, "The one God Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is God of all men, and therefore desires to save all men whom He created." Whilst a host of them declare that God, on His part, wishes to enlighten, justify, and save all men whom He has created.

I think we may fairly take as proved or granted the following truths:—I. That God, because He is the Creator of each man, takes a personal interest in him, keeps him ever in

mind, and has dealings with him. Holy and learned men have not feared to say, and to justify their saying, as well they can, by Scripture, that He thinks of and is concerned about each of us, as if there were none others in the world to claim His attention ; 2. That He, because Creator of each man, sincerely wishes to save each man ; 3. That for this very purpose of saving each He has a providence which His infinite wisdom designed and directs, which His infinite power enables, and His infinite love urges Him to carry out. To carry out in varied ways His own ways, often strange, secret, mysterious, upholding His own rights ; and man's right also, if I may call it such, that his free will be not ignored nor violently oppressed. To anyone keeping those truths well in mind it must, I think, appear more probable that this providence will be, in the main, a success rather than a failure ; that a providence infinitely wise, powerful, and loving will be more effective for carrying out God's wish for the salvation of man, than the finite powers of evil in man and devil, for his damnation. More probable that though many can and will fight God to the end and be lost, they will be fewer far than those whom He will

tenderly, and in His own way, bring home to Himself. Yet, if the majority, the great majority of mankind, Catholics included, be lost, must we not admit, what appears incredible, that God's magnificent providence and economy, with reference to His noble creature, man, is a failure ; nay more, that God Himself as Creator of man is, humanly speaking, substantially a failure, though a success in His two creations of a lower order, the inanimate and irrational.

We know something about God's general ways of dealing with the children of the Church, and a little perhaps of His special dealings with a few souls outside our own. But what do we know in general or in particular of His dealings with Jew, Gentile, Greek, Barbarian, the silent Oriental, the gross Hottentot, the dark-souled Malay ? And yet these are the works of His hands, and the subjects of His providence, as well as Christians and Catholics. God is no acceptor or respecter of persons. He will not save a man simply because he is Christian, or a noble, or a scholar ; nor cast off a man because he is a pagan, a slave, or an ignorant naked savage. He Himself tells us that He " will not accept any man's person, neither will

He stand in awe of any man's greatness, for He made the little and the great, and hath equally care of all." Saint Peter in one of his sermons, and Saint Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, are decided on this point, and used it to quiet and check the proud bragging of the Jews. Each man will stand or fall on his own personal merits or demerits as judged by God.

If the upholders of the two severe rigorous opinions ask me, in what way God "weaves His web of love" about every soul He has created, even about souls which look to the human eye outcast, I answer at once, It is His secret, I do not know. But if they ask me why I believe He does, I answer without fear; Because His character, as Creator of all men, clearly revealed in Scripture, and formulated by eminent theologians, oblige me to think so. I would then be tempted to ask them what reasons they have for thinking and saying plainly, "All infidels are damned on account of their infidelity." "The great majority of mankind is lost, because infidels, heretics, etc., always made the majority." That in a word the Creator, as well as Judge, will say, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" to the

whole mass of unbelievers, etc., as well as—according to some—to the majority of Catholics. I can only find two reasons—some texts, types, or parables of Scripture, which do not in any way prove their most dismal views, and the external bad aspect of the world, which is at best misleading, and which certainly cannot limit or interfere with the universal *secret* action of God by grace in the souls which He has created. “We may depend upon it,” writes Father Faber, “that in a thousand spots which look desert, waste, fire-blackened, God’s mercÿ is finding pasture for His glory.”

CHAPTER III

SECOND ARGUMENT.—GOD THE FATHER OF ALL MEN

God is not only the Creator but the Father of all men, without any exception. “The Father who,” to use His own words, “made and created and possess them.” He has commanded us to address Him by this title, “Our Father who art in heaven.” All Christians do so; and a preacher, in his opening instructions, would teach and exhort the untutored savage to believe in and speak to Him as such.

As I naturally desire that anyone who may read this plea for the mildest opinion, should take in and understand the arguments in its favour, I may be pardoned the following remarks :—God in Scripture and the soundest writers use parables, homely illustrations, figures of speech, etc., in describing and developing God’s nature and character. Now



it is to be feared that we read these, even the beautiful Scripture parables, as we would a fairy story, a novel, or look at a good picture. We say, perhaps, it is beautiful, interesting, instructive, but we practically forget that it is meant to tell us and impress on us, by its attractive or striking form, a great truth, a great reality. It is true that parables were sometimes used—so Bacon tells us—as a mask and veil as well as for elucidation and illustration, that is used to conceal or hide the truth from some who were not worthy nor fitted to receive it, as well as to illustrate or to prove a truth to others. Saint Basil speaks of the parable as “a profitable discourse with that moderate degree of concealment which shall provoke, not such as shall repel or defeat inquiry.” “Our Lord,” says Saint Chrysostom, “spoke in parables in order to arouse and excite, diving down into the deep sea of spiritual knowledge, from thence to fetch up pearls and precious stones.” Saint Jerome, a high, if not the highest, authority in Scripture matters, puts it more simply when he says, “Parables were used in order that what the hearers cannot retain, if it be presented to them as a mere precept, may be retained by simili-

tude or example." They not only instruct, but in doing so excite the imagination and feelings in so striking or attractive a way, that what was so taught becomes more fixed in the memory. "Parables," writes Dr. Trench, "are not merely illustrations, but also proof; they witness to the truth and are arguments." For whatever is really good in an earthly king, master, or father, is eminently, but as truly so in God, the King of kings, Lord of lords, "The Father of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named."

God is the Father of all men—not one excepted—and being God He must be a perfect Father. But more, He tells us that He is such. He thinks of each of us. We are always before Him, written on His hands, and dear to Him as the apple of His eye. In the inspired book of Ecclesiasticus He speaks of "the father who waketh for the daughter when no man knoweth, and the care of her taketh away his sleep, when she is young, lest she pass away in the flower of her age." He speaks of the mother's love "which cannot allow her to forget the son of her womb." He takes here the love of earthly father for daughter, and of mother for son—a love which is, of all

earthly loves, the strongest, the most unselfish, the most self-sacrificing, the most untiring, and the purest ; and then tells us that His love for His children is greater. "Can a woman forget her infant so as not to have pity on the son of her womb ? and if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee."

Our Lord, in His Sermon on the Mount, reasons from the love of the Heavenly Father for the birds and the lilies to His much greater love and care of us, His children ; and adds, "If you men being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them who ask Him ;" and, again, when urging the command of loving our enemies, He gives as a reason for doing so "that we may be the children of our Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise on the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust."

God is the Father of all men, and eminently a perfect Father. Now a perfect father could not *of himself* place himself in a wrong position with one of his children. He could not, of himself, give one of them a stone in place of bread, nor a scorpion in place of an egg. Nay more, he could not even permit anything to

happen to them with the intention or *necessary* result that it should really harm them—even their trials sent by Him should be for their good if they only rightly receive and bear them. We could not imagine such a father casting out, expelling from his home for ever a child, until he had tried the proper means to keep him with himself—until the child deserts him, or, by wilful, obstinate, persistent disobedience to his father's will, necessitates his own expulsion. Such a father will do all he well can for the welfare of his children—do everything short of violence to enable his children to succeed in all that is for his own and their good. The dominant desire—wish—will—of such a father must be to make his children happy; his dominant dread and horror, that one of them should be unhappy. Now God being such a Father, and willing the eternal happiness of His children, must, according to His providence, give them the means of securing it.

The thoroughly fatherly character of God manifests itself best in His own declared manner of dealing with His bad, rebellious, sinful children. Sin is the only evil, and mortal sin is the greatest evil. We meditating on

mortal sin as spiritual writers, particularly Saint Ignatius, put it before us, can get some idea of what an awful and horrible thing it is. But God alone is capable of fully understanding its moral filth, malice, and turpitude. He speaks of it as outrage, contempt, insult, ingratitude of the basest kind offered to Himself. "You contemned Me, you despised Me, you turned your back on Me and went after other lovers;" "When I filled your hands with good things, you said, Go away from me;" "You made Me serve you in your sins, and you wearied Me with your iniquities." God speaks of sin and the sinner, as one keenly sensitive to and acutely feeling the malice of it and of him who commits it. He cannot now, it is true, personally feel the indignity put upon Him, nor can it be the cause or occasion of unhappiness to Him, because dying once He dieth no more, and because of the essential blessedness of His divine nature. Still, we should bear well in mind that He once paid its full penalty in the greatest sufferings a human being could endure. Besides, the malice of mortal sin is not in its outraging, hurting, or making miserable the being whose law it violates, but in the will of the sinner. Suppose a child deliberately

makes a blow from behind at his father, or a subject at his king. He misses; it is hushed up. The father or king is not made the least unhappy, because they never hear of it. Yet the son or subject is as guilty before God and man just as he would be had he killed one or the other. God also requires reparation, and inflicts punishment for sin as if it were a personal injury or pain to Himself. What greater evidence of the malice of mortal sin could God have given than the just creation of hell to punish it, and the mysteriously awful atonement which He required and made for it?

Yet, such being mortal sin, it is most remarkable the hankering and longing of the Great Father after the worst sinners, and the very easy terms on which He forgives and takes them back again and again to His heart. They can forget that they are His children, but He cannot forget that He is their Father. "As I live," He says, "I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." And fearing, as it were, that His sinful children would lose hope saying, The just He will hear, but who are we to call on Him, surely He will not hear us?—He again and again not merely commands, but, humanly

speaking, He humbles Himself to beg, crave, implore them to turn to Him, to call upon Him, and that if they do so with repentant hearts, He will forgive them; "That if their sins were as scarlet they shall be made white as snow, and if they be red as crimson they shall be made white as wool." He cries to them like one who could not be happy without them. The whole-hearted readiness and joy with which again and again He pardoned the Jewish people, is more notable than the chastisements which He inflicted when they sinned.

He not only tells His sinful children that He is gracious, and sweet, and patient, and merciful and long-suffering, but He warns them against a danger which would be in the end fatal to them, namely, that because of His patient, long-suffering ways, they should be tempted to presumè and sin on to the end. "Say not, I have sinned, and what harm has happened to me." "Delay not to be converted, put not off your conversion from day to day, saying, The Lord is merciful and He will have mercy on the multitude of my sins." Like a good father, He hopes long and "has mercy upon all, and overlooketh the sins of men for the sake of repentance, and spareth all because they are His who

loveth souls." We see by these texts and others that God knew that His patient, merciful, hopeful bearing with sinners would be a temptation to them—a temptation to run their sinful, against His merciful, course, and by doing so to lose their souls. Hence He not only warns them against it, but tries to touch the hearts of such reckless children by telling them that He acts so through love—to give them the longest day for repentance, "dealing," as He says, "patiently with them for their own sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance."

We see still more plainly God's fatherly longing after His sinful children, in the easy terms on which He forgives them. Let me suppose one who has committed countless mortal sins of the blackest dye. What must he do to get pardon for them all? First, he must ask grace—pray; and here let us remember that the grace of prayer is refused to no one, or rather is given to all. Also that prayer—speaking to God—is the easiest thing in the way of speaking—easier than speaking with man, because God, being always present with us, is the easiest person to speak to in this world. He asks of God in a few sincere words

the grace to repent—a grace which cannot be refused, as it is, beyond all doubt, one of those good things which, if rightly asked, must be given by the Father. He uses this grace in making a true supernatural act of contrition—a minute's work,—and all his sins are forgiven as to their guilt. If he die after such an act, he cannot be lost for ever, though he most probably, and most justly, may have a very long and painful purgatory. More wonderful still, all guilt and punishment are remitted to the unbaptized pagan who makes an act of attrition and receives the sacrament of baptism, or an act of contrition when the reception of this rite may be impossible. Our Lord tells us how easy and swift true repentance can be in the case of the publican—the notorious and typical sinner—who by making an act of sorrow for his sins, in seven words, went home to his house justified.

Let the worst sinner that ever lived—a Catholic, I suppose—ask grace and make a good confession—not an hour's work, perhaps—or an act of contrition with the intention of going to Confession, and all his sins are forgiven as to their guilt. May we not suppose that the divine Teacher suggested God's patient,

long-suffering, merciful, hopeful disposition towards the worst of His children when, in answer to Peter's question, "How often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him, till seven times?" He said, "I say not to thee seven times? but seventy times seven times," particularly as He elsewhere exhorts men to forgive their enemies, that they may be the children of their Father who showers His gifts on the bad as well as on the good.

The great Father forgives His sinful children again and again on terms which seem to be the easiest that would be consistent with what is due to His own honour and to their good. His way of acting contrasts in a very marked way with that of man. A man sins against his fellow-man or against the law of the land in some grave matter. He is arrested, brought (and justly so) into public court, disgraced, and punished; and this for his first crime! A man sins against the great God, violates His law a thousand times, and God forgives him on the easy terms mentioned above: and, in doing so, most tenderly and considerately protects his character by the most solemn seal of confession, and inflicts on him no public nor humiliating penance. God is far more ready and generous

in forgiving the worst than men, even good men, are in forgiving each other, and bad would it be for the best of us if He were not.

We can solve this mystery of His wonderful mercy on perhaps only one principle, namely, that He so sincerely and really desires the salvation of all His children, and so dreads the loss of even one, and this the worst, that He makes reconciliation with Himself as easy as He well could.

Now, keeping in mind that God is the Father, the perfect Father, of all men—of the poor out-cast ignorant savage, as He is of the most refined and best instructed Catholic, a Father who created them for Himself, who gives them grace to fulfil this end by avoiding sin and observing His law as promulgated to them, and who takes them back, no matter how much they may have sinned, so freely and so kindly—what should be our first, most logical conclusion? Is it that the majority, the vast majority, of His children are lost to such a Father, lost for ever against His wish and will, and lost in that hell, where the fire is never extinguished and the worm dieth not? Is it that God, infinitely wise, powerful, and loving, is as a Father, humanly speaking, a great failure, as He is not when

birds of the air and lilies of the field are concerned? I think not, but rather that most of them, if not all, are saved according to means and ways in keeping with His fatherly providence, and *suited to the states and circumstances* in which He had placed them.

I do not wish to ignore an objection which may occur to some. God is called in Scripture King, and Lord, and Master. True, but He is oftener styled Father. Being God, He must be a perfect king, lord, master. He is therefore not only just and righteous, but thoughtful, kind, considerate, and helpful towards His subjects and servants. Besides, His fatherly characteristics can never be idle nor absent, as these are His children as well. He is also spoken of as the Mighty, the Terrible, the Avenger, the infinitely Just, who will judge justice. True, but let it not be forgotten that "God is Love" by the very essence of His nature, and that He loved from eternity, long before he had to exercise justice or inflict punishment. Hell, someone has said, is not the natural outcome of God, because God is Love. It was forced upon Him by the deliberate action of His subjects. God could not of Himself, of His own pure will, place Himself in the position

of the terrible, avenging, and punishing judge; but man can and does at times oblige Him to take such a position. We ourselves, of our own free will, can do wrong, and then blame God for the consequences of it.

Love is, by its very nature, generous and diffusive, and its fruits are kindness, tenderness, considerateness, and mercy; while the reasons which oblige God to exercise His justice are to be found not in Him, but in man, who willfully provokes it! In any case, His mercy is more extolled in Scripture than His justice, and this is spoken of as largely tempered with mercy. "His mercies," He tells us, "are from the beginning of the world, and all His ways are mercy; His ~~mercy~~ is magnified even to the heavens, and is great above the heavens. He is sweet, and mild, and plenteous in mercy, and His mercy is upon all flesh. His tender mercies and loving-kindnesses have been for ever." He also tells His children how considerate He is, how He pities and compassionates, taking everything for as well as against, making large allowances for them on account of the weakness and corruption of their nature, when He says, "As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath He upon us,

because He knows what we are made of, because He remembereth that we are dust."

Could children be safer than in the hands of such a Father; His eye never off them, His arms always around them? Is it not most probable that such a Father will, in His own ways, bring home and have with Him in His heavenly house the majority of His children, and that those who wilfully fight and reject His loving overtures all through to the end will be comparatively few.

By way of showing the effect which can be produced by the very thought of God our Father, and belief in Him as such, I may give a fact told to me by the person concerned, now dead for some years. He fell into a state akin to despair about his salvation. A Confessor, to whom he opened his mind, told him to go, take his Bible, and write out all the texts in which God calls Himself his Father. He did so, and was blessed with calm and peace before he had written twenty.

CHAPTER IV

THIRD ARGUMENT.—GOD THE SAVIOUR OF ALL MEN

WE have, however, more convincing arguments for the mildest opinion than those already adduced. Could the great Creator and Father of all men prove, in a clearer, stronger, and more attractive manner, His real sincere desire to save all men, and to give them all the means of salvation, than He does in the wise, powerful, and loving work and economy of the Incarnation? “God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting.” “For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him.” “The Son of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save.” “By this truth the charity of God appeared towards us, because God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world to be a propitiation for our sins, and not

for ours only, but for those also of the whole world." And Saint John concludes that we ought all to love each other from the fact that God so loved us.

In passing, I may allude to an objection suggested by the words of our Lord as given above: "That whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting,"—an objection which is used as an argument by the advocates of the severest opinion. One gives as a reason for holding this opinion: "Because infidels, heretics, etc., were always in the majority;" another says, "All infidels are damned on account of their infidelity;" another, "Out of that immense multitude of people who know not God, none are saved." In a word, they seem to state boldly that all non-Christians, and all who have not the catholic faith in Christ, are, as a matter of course, lost. Could any well-instructed Catholic admit such a conclusion? Is such a conclusion according to the teaching or spirit of the Church? The objection may perhaps be answered as follows:—Just as a certain belief in our Lord will not necessarily secure salvation,—for does He not Himself say, "Not every one who sayeth Lord! Lord! will enter into the kingdom of heaven;"

and again, "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord! Lord! have we not prophesied in Thy name, cast out devils in Thy name, worked miracles in Thy name? to whom He will answer, I never knew you, depart from Me,"—so a certain want of belief in Him may not necessitate damnation. There is such a thing as implicit faith in our Lord which they, who have never heard of Him, can have. Is there anyone rash or cruel enough to assert that all who, without personal fault of their own, never heard of Christ, that all to whom His gospel was never preached, are, as a matter of course, simply *on this account* lost? It is to be feared that some Catholic writers and preachers, on this subject, were so dazzled by the great light within the Church, so absorbed in the exceptional privileges which God gives her children, that they could see nothing but darkness, and the absence of God outside her.

To return to our argument, What is the attitude of our Lord with reference to the all-saving work, for the doing of which His heavenly Father sent Him, and to which He gave Himself with all His heart?

CHAPTER V

CHARACTER OF CHRIST, THE SAVIOUR OF ALL MEN

To understand this fully we must thoughtfully and reverently study the character of our Lord, Christ the Saviour. It is well to do so—first, because it will bring home, or help to do so, the power of an argument which appears to me, at least, the most convincing in favour of the mildest opinion ; secondly, because it is a study which too many Catholics and Christians neglect or make in a very superficial way. It is again the fairy story, the novel, the pleasing picture. We read of Him, look on Him, and say—we cannot help saying—His is a very beautiful and lovable character; and there it ends. He is not with many who believe in Him a great—the greatest reality : a reality which makes Him a great supernatural power, always actively at work in their lives ; a power under the influence of which they, as it were,

instinctively shrink from offending Him, resolve to do His holy will, and to model their lives according to His, even at the cost of self-denial and mortification.

Saint Ignatius bids us ask as graces preparatory and suited to meditations on the life of our Lord—first, an *intimate* knowledge of Jesus Christ. Not a mere superficial looking on Him. An *intimate* knowledge, that I may know Him from the very centre of His heart out; His little as well as His great ways. An intimate knowledge that I may have grand magnificent thoughts, and be able to discourse eloquently about Him. Yes, if you will, but I am not to rest here,—bad for me if I did. “An intimate knowledge,” says the Saint, “that I may love Him the more.” If we know Him we must love Him, because He is essentially lovable, and the more intimately we know Him the more we shall love Him. But again, am I to rest in this love, having warm and affectionate feelings towards Him, and expressing them in an earnest and loving way? No, I must go farther. “That I may love Him the more, and *imitate* Him the more.”

It is easy to have thoughts and feelings about our Lord, and to put them into words.

compared to the work of imitating Him. Easy to think and easy to speak of Him, but not only not easy, but hard to flesh and blood to be, as He always was, meek and humble of heart, patient, resigned to the crosses of life, forgiving and merciful towards enemies, obedient unto death, and all this when we have strong temptations to the contrary. If we do good things for God, which cost us nothing, or are a pleasure, saluting those who salute us, loving those who love us, we are not without our reward, but they are, in themselves, no sure proof of love. We have this only when we do or bear things naturally hard for love of Him, or because He wills and wishes them; to be true to our Lord, by imitating Him in *trying* circumstances, is the only unfailing test of true love.

Our Lord tells us this when He says, "If anyone wish to be My disciple, he must *take up his cross* and follow"—imitate Me, and "if he do not do this he cannot be My disciple,"—when He says, "If any man love Me, he will keep My commandments." To know the commandments by rote—to talk about and even explain them, is easy; the hard and difficult thing, and therefore the proof of love, is to

keep them. We Catholics, who know Him, are bound to imitate Him, each in his own state ; to imitate Him in our manner of bearing the crosses of life. If we do not do so we are Christians only in name—shams and deceits,—hence that saying of Saint Malachy, “In vain am I a Christian if I imitate not Christ.” And when our Lord wished to give to all men and to all time a proof that He really loved His Father, He gives it in His readiness to accept and endure the sufferings which His Father willed. “That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given Me commandment, so do I ; arise, let us go hence,”—whither ? to take the first step on that road which led to and ended on Calvary.

As an attraction and help to the study of Christ, the Saviour and Model of all men—a study as delightful as it is instructive—we have His life vividly pictured to us in the Old and New Testaments with the most perfect harmony between them—His life, written, I may say, by Himself. In the Old He, rises before us to the sound of the prophet’s lyre, and His character and mission are generally described in the poetic imagery and sublime

language special to their office. In the New, He walks this earth, a man Himself, the seen of man, fulfilling to the letter, in the hard facts of His life, all that was predicted and foretold of Him. We have, first of all, texts of the Old which throw much light upon His character and mission, which are of special interest, and have the double stamp of revelation, because they are declared by Himself, or by the inspired writers of the New, to have been spoken of Him—of Him to whom the law and the prophets give testimony.

An intimate friend, now dead, of the late Cardinal Newman told me that His Eminence attached great importance to this as a proof of the divinity of our Lord and His divine mission. The books of the old law certainly existed hundreds of years before the Coming of Christ, and they were most religiously kept and most sacredly guarded against corruption or interpolation. No one but God could have inspired the Messianic prophecies, and have sent, when the fulness of time came, a person to fulfil them. Our Lord did fulfil them, not only to prove that He was the heaven-sent Messiah, but also the Son of God, God Himself, because equal to and one with the Father.

Let us consider those prophecies and their fulfilment.

How boldly does Christ proclaim His all-saving character and mission in His interview with the disciples of the Baptist, as narrated in the Gospel of Saint Matthew: "Now when John had heard in prison the works of Christ, sending two of his disciples, he said to Him, "Art thou He who art to come, or look we for another?" "And Jesus making answer, said to them, Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen; the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead live again, the poor have the gospel preached to them; and blessed is he that shall not be scandalised in Me." Here He cites two well-known Messianic prophecies of Isaias, chapters xxxv. and li., and then asserts, or rather proves, He is the man,—He says He is, because He had fulfilled them. He also explains the nature and end of His saving mission. It was to be given—note well—if not exclusively, most specially compassionately and helpfully to those who most needed it—to the poor, the afflicted, the suffering, the leprous, the dead of body and of soul.

In the Psalm xxxix., the title of which is,

"Christ's coming and redeeming mankind," the inspired Psalmist places upon the lips of the eternal Son of God the following words, which Saint Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, chapter x., cites as said by our Lord "when He cometh into the world":—"Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not, but a body Thou hast fitted to Me." Holocausts for sin did not please; then said I, 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." These words express the most generous, the most unselfish, the most awful oblation ever made, if we consider who He is that makes it, and to what He commits Himself by doing so. An oblation by which the eternal Son of God, through love of His Father's will, offered Himself, with all His heart because He wished it, to the work which He knew would please Him. And this will and work,—what were they? That He, the very God Himself, should take our lowly nature, humble and empty Himself, taking the form of a servant, and become obedient to death, even the death of the Cross. And why this? That He might in the most powerful, striking, and effective way,

because by the most terrible sufferings, agony, and death ever endured, satisfy the longing of His father and His own for the salvation of all men, without even one exception.

Again, *Isaias*, chapter xlii., entitled "The office of Christ, the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles," describes our Lord as He should be when He would come to save the world; and *Saint Matthew*, chapter xii., cites the prophecy as fulfilled by Him: "Behold My servant, whom I have chosen; My beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased: I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall show forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not contend, nor cry out; neither shall anyone hear His voice in the street. The bruised reed He shall not break, the smoking flax He shall not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory." We have here the characteristics which ought to mark one who comes to redeem, sanctify, and save fellow-man; a man Himself, but of power, because beloved of God and filled with His Spirit, and yet, withal, gentle, humble, and meek; considerate, tender, and merciful towards all, even towards the benighted and ignorant Gentiles.

Perhaps one of the most interesting and

striking, if not dramatic, scenes in the life of our Lord is that told us by Saints Matthew and Luke. He entered, one Sabbath day, the synagogue of Nazareth, "where He was brought up," and faced a congregation of His fellow-townsmen and women, who, though they could not but admire His wisdom and miracles, still made little of Him, saying: "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not His mother called Mary? and His brethren, James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Jude? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Whence, therefore, hath He all those things? And they were scandalised in His regard." Truly a prophet without honour—as He told them—in His own country. Yet boldly "He rose up to read, and unfolding the book of Isaias, found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, therefore He hath annointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of reward.' And when He had folded the book, He restored it to the minister and sat down. And the eyes of all were fixed on Him, and He

began to say to them, This day is fulfilled this Scripture in your ears." Fulfilled in Himself. Mark well, the mission for which He had been consecrated and sent was, in a very special sense, if not exclusively to the poor, the afflicted, the oppressed, to the enslaved of soul and body.

But the prophecy which throws the fullest light on the character and mission of Christ, the Saviour of all men, is that which places Him before us as the one Shepherd set up by God to rule His flock. There is much in the word *Shepherd*, as it is used in all writings—sacred and profane. It supposes the perfection of a ruler, vigilant, watchful, protective, yet, at the same time, tender, compassionate, and merciful. The prophet Ezekiel, chapter xxxiv., gives us, first, God's lament over His flock, "scattered, wandering on every mountain and hill, the prey of all the beasts of the field"; for, as another inspired writer says, "We all like sheep had gone astray." And then He adds, "Thus saith the Lord God, I Myself will seek My sheep, and will visit them. As the shepherd visiteth his sheep, so will I visit My sheep, and will deliver them out of all the places where they were scattered in the cloud and dark day. I will seek that which was lost,

and that which was driven away I will bring again, and I will bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was weak, and that which is strong I will preserve. I will feed them on the mountains, by the rivers, in the most fruitful pastures. I will cause them to lie down and rest on the grass." And Isaiah, chapter xl., sings: "Behold, the Lord God shall come with strength, and His work is before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather together the lambs with His arm, and shall take them up in His bosom, and carry them that are with young." Could there be anything more touching or more beautiful than this picture of our Lord as the Good Shepherd of all His flock; thoughtful of and most tender towards the perishing and the lost, the afflicted, and the weak? Fulfilled to the letter, when dying for ail on Calvary, He took us all to His arms, and placed us in His bosom and heart. We may, I presume, take it for granted that our Lord had those prophecies in His mind, and declared them fulfilled in Himself when He said, "I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd gives His life for His sheep." Those prophetic outlines of the character

and mission of the Saviour of the world most aptly introduce us to the study of Him as He lived and walked and worked amongst men. The Spirit of God and of the Good Shepherd was upon Him, nay, filled Him from beginning to end. Hence, when He began His active missionary life, He declared at once what His work should be. "He was come not to destroy, but to save." Save whom? "The perishing and the lost." How could the lost be saved? Only by a Saviour, wise, powerful, and loving as He. When the scribes and Pharisees endeavoured to excite popular feeling against Him, saying, "He is the friend of publicans and sinners, He eats with them." Far from denying or explaining away the charge, He admits, justifies, glories in it, because His mission was to such. "They that are in health need not the physician, but they that are ill; for I am come to call not the just, but sinners." Such is His answer.

Powerfully and beautifully does our Lord impress on us His anxious longing after the worst sinners, His real sincere desire to save them, the labour and trouble He gives Himself to do so, and the sweet, easy terms on which He takes them back, in the parables of the lost sheep and the prodigal.

Let us rest for a moment on these, bearing well in mind that they are not mere illustrations, but proofs; that our Lord spoke them in order to give us—in an attractive way not likely to be forgotten, His natural attitude—His real mind and heart towards the worst sinners.

One might perchance think for the moment, or at least suspect, when reading these parables, that the sheep which went away and the son who left his father's house did so because they were in some way neglected or not looked to as carefully as the ninety-nine or the elder brother. This thought could not be entertained for a second. The character and after-conduct of shepherd and father would oblige us to believe that both did all they could, short of violence or imprisonment, to keep the one in the fold and the other in his home, and this through love of them. But foolishly, ungratefully, wilfully, and obstinately, they turn their backs on shepherd and father, and go their own way, after other lovers. Could we condemn shepherd or father if, in the painful and irritating circumstances, they had taken their stand as follows—many would have done so, and justified their action :—They have abandoned us ! Well, the

best thing is to let them see their folly out. When they have learned by experience that they have done wrongly, they will be only too glad to come back. No, the dread of their being lost, and the anxious longing for them, would not allow indifference or inaction. The shepherd sets out with anxious heart to seek the strayed one, forgetful for the time of the ninety-nine who were always true to him, sacrificing also the love and consolation which he found in being with them. And when at last he finds her, there is no upbraiding ; quite the contrary, he is so considerate of her, tired in walking hard ways, that he lifts her up and places her on his shoulders, and so glad, that he carries her back rejoicing. " Even so," our Lord adds, " it is not the will of your father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

And the father ! how does he act when, after many a day of patient prayer and almost hopeless look-out, he espies the wretched prodigal returning ? Does he sit more or less in state within his house, oblige the son to remain for some time at the door, and, when he had admitted him, rake up the past, remind him of the love lavished and the warnings given to him, speak gravely, if not bitterly, of the shame,

disgrace, and dishonour brought on his family by his misconduct, and then give him a sort of conditional pardon on hard terms? Men act this way, or worse;—God never. No. “His father saw him when he was a great way off, and was moved with compassion; and, running to him, fell upon his neck and kissed him.” And this before the prodigal had opened his lips. But when, with humility and sorrow, he makes his confession in few words, nothing is too good for him. He must have the rich robe, the precious ring; the fatted calf is killed, and the house rings with merriment and feasting. If one saw all this, not knowing the circumstances, he would be tempted to think that the father was in the wrong, had treated his child harshly or unjustly in the past, and was now making reparation. And when he was blamed for his way of acting by the elder son—who, I suspect, would have been an advocate of the severest opinion—his only answer, a most natural one, is gladness and joy because of a child lost and found, dead and brought to life again. A father of the Church says, “God is so rejoiced to get home a sinner that He cannot bring Himself to scold him.”

Some persons, it is to be feared, think and

speak of God as if He were a proud, imperial autocrat, hard, severe, and exacting ; or as a hard task-master, with the low ways of a detective. By His nature, as King of kings and Lord of lords, He may be the former, but in action He is neither the former nor the latter. Why this wrong view of God ? Because some, instead of submitting to His will, as is their duty, act independently of Him, place themselves in opposition and antagonism to Him, and then are enraged because He will not yield to them ; or, ignoring Him, they set their hearts on something naturally loved, and think they ought to get it, whilst He wisely believes it better not to give ; or they act foolishly, imprudently, wrongly, sinfully, and bring trouble and punishment on themselves ; or crosses and trials come which they do not view rightly as well-deserved chastisements or as blessings in disguise, and then get out of sorts with God. They forget that He cannot do wrong, cannot put Himself in a false position with them ; but that they themselves can do both, and then most unjustly blame Him, as if He were the cause of their misfortune or their misery. No one can fight with God and have peace. There is only one way of conquering Him, and this is

by laying down our arms and striking to His will.

St. Leo the Great has said : " If Christ were not God He could not have redeemed us, and if He were not man He could not be our exemplar or model." God, or an angel, or a man of impassable nature could not be a model to us. Hence the Eternal Son took our nature, as human as in us, without sin—first, that, bearing the sins of all men, He might atone for them in His flesh on the Cross, His Godhead giving to His great sacrifice its infinite, redeeming, and sanctifying power ; and secondly, that He might show forth the perfection of our nature and be a pattern to His brethren ; that, by experiencing in Himself, as He really did, our sorrows and our sufferings, " He could the better compassionate us." It is with this second end or purpose of the incarnation that we shall have to do for a moment. We leave out of sight too much the human side of our Lord's character. We would love Him the more and imitate Him the better if we understood how thoroughly human He was and is.

Keeping in mind the reasoning of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, and the saying of Saint Leo, may we not assert that one of

the secondary reasons why God became man was to prove that God is far more thoughtful, considerate, tender, and helpful towards us than the best of us are to each other? We have many instances of this, and some very painful contrasts between the ways of God the Saviour of man towards men, and of man towards his fellow-man. Instances which bring out, in very clear relief, the exquisite human beauty of our Lord's character. How much better should we be if we took them more to our hearts!

Saint Matthew tells us that our Lord, followed by a great multitude, was once passing where two blind men sat by the wayside, begging. These poor afflicted ones, hearing that Jesus was nigh, "cried out, saying, O Lord, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." What was the action of the crowd; did they, or even one of them, go at once to our Lord and say, Here are two brothers of ours in sad need of your help; ah! do what you can for them? No such thing; quite the contrary, they are for hurrying on and leaving them to their fate, nay, more, "they rebuked them, that they should hold their peace." But our Lord; He called them,

had compassion on them, touched their eyes, and they saw.

Another time, we read how some good mothers brought their infants and little children that our Lord might impose hands on them and pray. How did the disciples act? Did they, in a spirit of kindness, charity, and becoming respect for women and children, favour their pious desires? No; they acted just as the crowd did; they rebuked them that brought their children. But our Lord: He was much displeased with the action of His disciples, read them a lesson on humility, taking a child as His text, and then embraced and blessed the children.

More remarkable still: we read how an alien woman of Canaan once came to our Lord, and crying out, said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil." And here again the disciples not only have no sympathy with nor pity for this poor distracted woman, they actually plead against her, "beseeching their Master to send her away, because she crieth after us." But He, having first, by very trying questions, evoked her wondrous faith,—greater than any He found in Israel,—sends her away.

comforted, for "her daughter was cured from that hour."

The Evangelist gives us His daily life through all the days of His mission. He was ever followed and surrounded by the poor, the ignorant, the afflicted of body and soul, and virtue was for ever going out from Him for the healing of all. A celebrated French painter so pictures Him, seated in the midst of a group, each member of which represents some phase of human sorrow or suffering: He, the Divine Physician, curing and comforting all. He aptly entitled his work, "Christ the Consoler."

So human was His heart that the very sight of sorrow moved it to its depths. The widowed mother of Naim made no appeal to Him, but He saw her tears fall as she followed the remains of her only son to the grave, and restored him at once to life, and to her arms.

The two parables noted above have prepared us, no doubt, for His manner of dealing with sinners, even the worst; and, after all, facts are stronger proofs than parables. That universal practical sympathy which made no exception when bodily disease and suffering were in question, is symbolical and typical of a higher

sympathy when the miseries of the soul were the object of it. We read of no sinner, who came to Him, being cast out; all were received with open arms and welcome. I might insist on Magdalene and the thief on the Cross, but I will not, because one came and the other cried out to Him; but I do on that wretched woman, who was dragged before Him, as evidence of His dread of losing even one, and this apparently the most hopeless. She had committed a grievous, scandalous crime against the law of God and Moses, the penalty of which was death by stoning. She did not of herself come to Him. She was dragged before Him, and her accusers put a pressure upon our Lord, of which no ordinary man could have freed himself, without condemning her. And yet in the moment He touched her soul with grace, saw repentance in her sad and silent attitude, took her part against her accusers who, sinners themselves, had no mercy for her, and forgave her so mercifully and in such tender words, that one is tempted to think that He made too little of her sin. And this is the unchanging God, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever! The God of whom some think and speak harshly. God help the very best of

us if He were to us what even the best of us are often towards each other.

But have I forgotten this mildest opinion which I am advocating, and the arguments in its favour? Well, apparently for the moment, but not really so. Our Lord, in His daily life, walking and working amongst His fellow-men, and doing good to all, is so beautiful and lovable a figure, that one may be pardoned for lingering or even going off his road, in order to look upon Him, study Him, and then love Him the more. Besides, His character, as manifested on earth, seems to me at least, to go far in proving as most probable that the majority of mankind will be saved. Surely He, having the same mind and heart in heaven which He had on earth—enthroned, glorified, and interceding for us all at the right hand of His Father—ought to be more willing and powerful to compassionate, help, and save than when, as man, He lived in our midst.

But to the argument. If we were to speculate for ever, could we imagine any stronger or more convincing proof that the Son made man was one in mind and heart with His Father in the real sincere will to save all men without exception, than the proof He did give by suffer-

ing and dying for all men? We also get some insight into the earnestness of this will, and into the intense longing He had for the salvation of all men, by considering for a moment the way in which He humbled Himself and suffered in order to merit and secure their salvation. He did not, writes Saint Paul, "take hold of the angels, but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold." Saint Thomas tells us in his hymn, "Adoro te devote," that He could have atoned for all the sins of the world, and saved it by one drop of blood. And yet what did He will? "He offered Himself because He willed it." He willed "to be made in all things like to His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest before God, that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people. For that wherein He Himself hath suffered and being tempted, He is able to succour them also that are tempted. A High Priest who being 'tried' in all things without sin, even as we are, and learning obedience in suffering," could the better have compassion on our infirmities. So Saint Paul describes Him.

We may rightly suppose from the words of Saint Paul and Saint Thomas, cited above, that the eternal Son, had He so wished it, could

have done His great work of the world's redemption without subjecting Himself to humiliation, pain, or suffering. But instead of this, He takes a nature—ours—which was to Him humiliation and degradation. "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." In this lowly nature He passes through every phase of sorrow and of suffering, intensely sensitive to them all. He endured every torture of soul and body beyond what any other being ever did or could bear, feeling them all as if He were only man, and all the more because He was God; and as long as it was possible for Him to sustain them, on to His last agony and death on the Cross. And all this, that He might carry out the will and satisfy the longing of His Father and His own, first, by atoning for the sins of every child of Adam; and, secondly, by meriting infinite grace for the salvation of them all.

Holy Scripture overflows with proofs of this most consoling truth. Christ is the second Adam, because He undid the evil work of the first. He died for all men, because He died for all whose nature He took. He died for all against whom stood the handwriting of the decree. He gave Himself a redemption for all.

He is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Each and every man may say with as much truth as Saint Paul, "He loved me, and delivered Himself to death for me." In His supreme oblation and awful sacrifice, He excluded no one. In His mind and heart were the Greek, the Gentile, the Barbarian, as well as the Jew. We have this truth declared in the Nicene Creed, and proclaimed in the title, "Salvator Mundi," Saviour of the World, given by excellence to our Lord.

He Himself once said, "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And Saint Paul, "Scarce for a just man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man some one would dare to die." He alone gave proof of that exceeding great love which urged Him to suffer and die for us when we were His enemies. "God commendeth His charity towards us, because when we were as yet sinners Christ died for us." He so valued us, bad as we were, that He would not buy us at a low price: Not with gold or silver or corruptible things. He, the Lamb, unspotted and undefiled, gave the highest price He could—His precious blood to its last drop, and His life (St. Peter, 1st Epistle, chap. 1, verse 18).

CHAPTER VI

FOURTH ARGUMENT.—FROM THE MIND AND ACTION OF THE CHURCH

WE learn much of the mind of the Church on this subject from the works of her greatest and most approved theologians. These lay down, and prove from Scripture and the unbroken teaching of her Fathers and Doctors, the following propositions:—1. That God really and sincerely, of His own loving nature, wills and desires the salvation of all men,—not one excepted. 2. That Christ was one with His Father in this will and proved it by dying for all men. 3. That Christ's satisfaction and atonement for the sins of all men was infinite, and that His merits for the sanctification and salvation of all men are infinite also.

But, moreover, Christ's great saving work and mission did not close with the awful sacrifice of Calvary. He provided that they should go on for ever. He therefore founded

His Church, His visible, yet divine spiritual kingdom, in which the Holy Ghost must for ever abide, to keep her in truth and holiness, and to pour out lavishly her gifts. He organised her, in Saint Peter and the Apostles, as a moral body to last for ever. He provided for her greater expansion and development, filled her treasury with His own merits, furnished her in the most generous manner with means and helps for the salvation of mankind. Lastly, He commanded her to teach, with His authority, all nations; and all nations to accept her teaching.

The means and helps which the Church possesses with a view to the salvation of her children, are easy to know and easy to use. It is easy to learn of her the dogmas to be believed, the commandments to be observed, and the sacraments to be received. All these are within the capacity of the child and of the uneducated. By the right use of prayer, by the reverent hearing of Mass, by the worthy reception of the sacraments, particularly those of Penance and the Eucharist, and by the pious use of some approved devotions—the conditions laid down for doing these works fruitfully being simple, easily understood, and easily ful-

filled—Catholics can always command grace, by the good use of which they can overcome temptations, observe the commandments, discharge the duties of their state, repent if they sin, and save their souls.

Now, narrowing the question for the moment to Catholics—and bearing well in mind that God's greatest, only work, I may say, outside Himself, the Incarnation, culminating in Calvary and the institution of the Church, was designed, carried out, and perfected by the infinite wisdom, power, and love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for the set purpose of saving men, whom they sincerely wish to save—what conclusion is forced upon us? Is it not that the majority, the vast majority, of adult Catholics are saved? For if not, must we not admit what appears incredible, that this transcendently great work, settled by God in His providence as the best for effecting that upon which His heart was set, the salvation of His children, is, humanly speaking, a great failure. And here I may appeal to experience. If any person, living in a Catholic country as ours is, or in any country where the Catholic Church is in evidence and carrying on her mission, review their Catholic friends or Catholics in any way

known to them—good, bad, and indifferent—will not the number of those leading good lives exceed the number of one or both of the other classes? Again, many of these change as time goes on, become practical Catholics long before death-sickness shows itself, and how few of them, after all, die without the last sacraments. And, even at the last hour, a confession made by a person who is really repentant by attrition, takes away the guilt of countless sins, and saves the soul from being eternally lost. Some holy and learned men have expressed great hope for all Catholics who receive the last sacraments. Let me not, however, be even suspected of making little of Catholics putting off their conversion till death faces and frightens them. I have, perhaps, too strong views about a certain class who do this. Father Lacordaire, in his advocacy of the mildest opinion, attaches importance to the poor.

God is no acceptor or respecter of persons. He Himself tells us so. In the exercise of His infinitely perfect and delicate justice, there must be a good deal of what I may call balancing. It is therefore in keeping with God's character as Creator, Father, and Saviour of His poor children, of the least of His little ones, as He

lovingly calls them, that He would balance the poverty, misery, and hardships of this temporal life by the riches, comforts, and helps of the spiritual one; that He saves them on easier terms than He does others. I wonder had He this in mind and heart when He said, "Blessed are the poor," and gave Himself almost exclusively to them?

But let me suppose the case of a rich man who has peace in his possessions. God has blessed him spiritually by giving him His greatest grace, membership of His Church, temporarily, also, by giving him the comforts, the riches, the pleasures, the luxuries of life—temporal gifts which he values and enjoys and loves so much that death would be preferable to his losing them, or to his being subjected to the hard suffering lives which God has given to better men. And yet he made for years those human things his idols; he allowed them not only to absorb him, to alienate him from God, but he made them the means of insulting and outraging the Great Giver by abusing them. A very Dives, indulgent of self, and heedless of the poor; a man to whom God may say with perfect truth, "When I filled your hands with good things, you said, Go away

from me." What reason is there for balancing here? Do not the very awful things, said by the Fathers of the Church, and authorised by words of God, as to death-bed repentance, apply with force to the case supposed? And yet Catholics of this class are, I believe, in a great minority.

But I must be back to the mildest opinion, that the majority, not merely of Catholics, but of mankind, are saved. There is a great truth, the consequence of the Incarnation, and of the Church's mission, that makes for this opinion, to which I must ask a studied attention. Grace, merited at such cost by Christ and given to man, to every man with a view to His salvation by the Holy Spirit, is God's great and only sanctifying and saving power. With it we can do all things,—without it nothing. Now, countless means, settled by God, and therefore of their nature effective, are always at work to cause a never-ceasing abundant flow of grace on the whole world, and of bringing it home to the souls of all men;—graces which, according to the Prophet's word, were to be as rivers and fountains breaking out in desert and wilderness, and making what before was barren and desolate, bloom like the lily and the watered

garden. The first of these means, and the greatest, is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in which the same victim is offered, and the same Priest the offerer as on Calvary. In the words of the Council of Trent, "No other work so holy could be offered as this tremendous sacrifice." Theologians, even those inclined to limit its effects, write of the atoning and impetratory power of the Mass in itself, independently of the dispositions of the priest, as immense. We know, from the very wording of the Mass, as well as from the spirit of the Church and of her Divine Founder, the prominent ends, purposes, and intentions for which Mass is offered—1. For the welfare, prosperity, and triumph of the Church, and for the spiritual good of men, living and dead. Is it too much to say that these are identical with the salvation of mankind, which is the sole mission of the Church? 2. For the conversion of sinners. These are kept well in mind for all Catholics by the prayers which the present Sovereign Pontiff has ordered to be said in the vernacular at the end of each Mass. The wish, will, desire, and longing of the Divine Victim, offered upon thousands of altars, every morning, are the very same as He had when agonising on

the Cross. And the unbloody sacrifice is His most powerful means of giving effect to that will of saving all men, for which He shed His precious blood to the last drop on Calvary. It is stated that a quarter of million of masses are celebrated each day throughout the whole world, fulfilling to the letter the well-known prophecy of Malachy. What, we may ask, becomes of those graces which no one but God could count? Graces merited by Jesus Christ, who, when lifted up, will draw all men to Himself; graces merited by Him, and given to all men, to the very worst sinners about whom His sacred Heart is most anxious, because in greatest danger of being lost to Him for ever. Can we believe that such graces—so merited and so given by God, who desires the salvation of all men, and for this purpose poured out by the Holy Spirit—run for the greater part waste, and are useless? Yet such must be the case, if the mildest opinion be not the truest.

Again, no man could number the myriad meritorious works performed by millions in every age of the Church. The prayers said, daily masses heard, holy communions made, visits to the Most Blessed Sacrament, acts of charity, of self-denial, of mortification often

heroic. The sacred ministrations of devoted priests and religious, as well as the holy lives of seculars, secret and hidden, with God. Souls on fire with the love of Jesus crucified, and inflamed with His love for all men, even the worst. But we must not suppose that all or the most of those meritorious works were or are offered up for those only who do them. The Church's spirit directs them towards the worst sinners, even the worst pagans whom she is under command to teach and convert. But, moreover, there have always been countless children of hers, whose dominant devotion and work have been the conversion of sinners, and above all, of the worst and most hopeless. This is, as we learn from their holy founders, the purpose, I may say the only purpose, besides their own personal sanctification, of all the contemplative orders of women,—the devout female sex. Lacordaire, by the way, in advocating the mildest opinion, attaches importance to women.

We are so caught by things which are public and under our eyes, that hidden lives and works are little thought of and, by some, little prized. We are impressed by and in admiration—rightly so—of the noble works of charity done by religious of active orders in the poor school,

the hospital, magdalen asylums, orphanages, the cabins of the sick, poor, etc. But scarcely, perhaps, give we a thought to the contemplative religious—so numerous in the ages of faith—whose devoted, mortified lives, lives of the closest union with Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, were given to the multiplying of graces throughout the whole world for the conversion of sinners.

I must rest for a moment on the contemplative orders of women, because I believe that these at all times, and more particularly in the trying ages of the Church, did marvellous things for the worst sinners, and therefore suggest at least an argument in favour of the mildest opinion. We may learn the spirit which animated those contemplative orders, by studying the mind of their founders, and of some of their most remarkable members; many of them canonised saints, who all were filled with zeal for the conversion of sinners, and did their best, by word and example, to impart this zeal to their orders or communities. Of St. Teresa, we read that she had an intense zeal for the conversion of sinners. She continually recommended their souls to the Divine mercy, with many tears. She constantly wept

over the darkness and ignorance in which infidels and heretics lived, and inflicted on herself tortures in order to appease the Divine wrath, and to secure the grace of their conversion. Her grief for the sinful was inexpressible, and she was ready to suffer with joy a thousand deaths for one soul. She charged her religious never to cease from this office of charity, and from praying for those ministers who labour for the salvation of souls. The incredible zeal and solicitude of St. Catherine, of Bologna, for the conversion of sinners, made her pour forth prayers and tears almost without intermission for their salvation. Of St. Catherine, of Sienna, we read that her ardent charity made her indefatigable in labouring for the conversion of sinners, offering for this end continual tears, prayers, fasts, and other austerities, and thinking nothing difficult or above her strength. Her prayers often succeeded when her words, usually powerful, failed. Many hardened sinners, two assassins condemned to death, long with rage in their hearts and blasphemies on their lips, were at last moved to repentance by her prayers. We read of some contemplatives who, in desperate cases, threw themselves

prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament, and lovingly told our Lord that they would not leave till the soul was given to them, or rather to Him. We can understand all this if we bear in mind that those simple, devout souls were ever looking on the crucifix and the tabernacle ; and these, the two great outcomes and proofs of the love of the Sacred Heart for all men, even the worst, not only set on fire their own hearts with love of our Lord, but with love also of what He loved—sinners. Our Lord is said, in some of His revelations to such souls, to have begged of them to pray for the conversion of sinners, that He might satisfy His longing to save them.

A person once expressed surprise to a distinguished Redemptorist Father, that St. Alphonsus, a man of so active and missionary a disposition, should have founded an order of contemplative nuns. His answer gave the *raison d'être* of such orders. "St. Alphonsus' intention," he said, "was that whilst his priests were engaged in their active ministrations, his nuns would be procuring graces which would make these ministrations fruitful in the souls of the faithful." Preaching in itself cannot convert or save unless the seed of the word fall

upon prepared soil. The sacraments, though they of themselves produce grace, cannot of themselves purify and sanctify. Souls must be disposed in order to receive them rightly and profitably. But what is it which alone can dispose soil and soul? Grace. We may therefore justly suppose that all contemplative religious, active religious, and priests who, as a rule, have great devotion to the conversion of sinners, pious seculars, many of whom are not wanting in this spirit, like a poor, simple old woman who once said to myself, "Father, I am always praying that not one soul for which Jesus died should be lost to Him"; in a word, all who, by their prayers and other meritorious works, bring home grace to the souls of sinners, have as much, if not more, to do with their conversion than the priest who ministers to them. Rodriguez, in a chapter headed, "Of prayer, which is the second means to produce fruit in souls," proves at length from Scripture and the Fathers that prayer is the best means of averting God's wrath and of converting sinners. "The affair of converting souls is purely supernatural. We do it better by fervent prayers, by tears and sighs of heart, than by eloquence and force of words." We are told of a dis-

tinguished preacher whose sermons produced great good, and who, on this account, had some temptations to vanity, whom God humbled by giving him to understand that the fruit gathered by his sermons was due to the graces merited by a pious lay brother, who sat, as is the custom in Italy, at the foot of the pulpit, and kept reciting the rosary for his success to the greater glory of God. Fact or fable, it illustrates a great truth. But there is something still more powerful for flooding the world with grace, and bringing it home to the souls of all men, than the quarter millions of masses and the millions of meritorious acts for ever ascending from earth to the throne of God for the salvation of sinners.

What of the poor suffering souls who know from the experience of their own lives, better than the holiest soul on earth could, the desire of God to save, and His loving ways of doing so, who are full of gratitude to Him for His great mercy? Their prayers and their sufferings are for ever ascending to God, begging for others that grace He delights to give, and of which they have received. What of the Saints and Angels whom no man could number? What of her, Mary, the ever-blessed mother of

God—Mother of Christ—and therefore Mother of mercy and Refuge of sinners, gifted with a privileged omnipotence? What of Christ Himself sitting at the right hand of the Father, for ever interceding for us? Saints and angels and the Virgin Mother are for ever looking on the face of Christ, and understanding, as the highest contemplative could not, what He did for the salvation of sinners. Now wise, with the wisdom of God, they remember how He was treated and mocked (as a fool. Now glorious, they remember how He was as a servant, an outcast, a leper, and no man. Now powerful, they remember how He was struck upon the face, spat upon, scourged as a slave, crucified as a malefactor. How, for a time, He gave up everything on earth but His love of sinners and His power to save them. In His five wounds, now glorified, they read every page and see every scene in the most cruel passion. How sinners were first and more in His heart than even His own mother; and how He went to the very extreme limits of truth to plead for and excuse them in the awful hour of His agony.

All the glorious inhabitants of heaven, seeing Jesus Christ and God face to face, know, as the

holiest on earth could not, the will and desire of God—Creator, Father, Saviour, and Sanctifier—for the salvation of all men. How much the salvation of men contribute to Their glory. How much the working out of this salvation cost, the joy in heaven, and the happiness of a soul saved; and the disappointment and misery of a soul lost. We must believe that with all this knowledge, and with souls not merely aflame with love, but one in love with God, their prayers are for ever and ever ascending to Him for that which they know He has most at heart—the conversion and salvation of sinners. Millions on earth, and millions in heaven, are every moment meriting by prayer, and by more powerful means than prayer, graces not merely for those whom they fear or know to be sinners, but for sinners—the worst sinners—scattered everywhere, of whom they know nothing. Many a soul who never preached, never administered a sacrament, never did any external apostolic work, will, I suspect, be amazed when they joyously learn on judgment day the number of sinners they saved by the devotion of their lives to this purpose; by their pleading constantly for them before crucifix and tabernacle. We may fairly

speculate as to what becomes of those myriad graces, asked with such heart by such souls of God, who, wishing to save all men, wishes to give them grace to do so. Is it more probable that the greater number are waste, and fail in the end and purpose for which they were asked and given, or the contrary? If, as a rule, grace, this great power of God, is in the end more effective than ineffective, it would go far to prove the mildest opinion. What becomes of those myriad graces? If we could know of God's secret dealings with His children and the redeemed of His precious blood during life, and still more when they are about to die, we would most probably learn that the ignorant, benighted, wild savage, and all those who, through His providence, are outside the ordinary road and way of salvation, receive largely of those graces, and are looked to and helped in His own extraordinary way. This view is taken clearly by Father Faber, and by other upholders of the mild opinions, and it is hard to imagine how anyone could take any other view, if he believes that God is the Father and Saviour of all men in truth, and not merely in name.

DR. MURRAY'S ARGUMENTS.

Dr. Murray, the late well-known Maynooth Professor of Theology, whom many, still living, remember with esteem and affection, gave one or two lectures on this question. I heard them, and though it is more than fifty years ago, and I have no notes, I remember well the trend of his reasoning in favour of the mildest opinion. I should do so, because his lectures first excited my interest and founded my conviction. He argued somewhat after the following manner :—

If we study the life and mission of our Lord as we have them vividly pictured to us in Holy Scripture, old and new, in prophecy and fulfilment, we must believe that He was and ever must be the divinely constituted King of a mighty spiritual kingdom, the greatest and grandest which ever existed. A kingdom which was to include the whole world, and be for all time, or rather for eternity. He was to rule from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. To Him shall be gathered all nations, and in Him shall all nations be blessed. Peoples and kings and queens from the islands of the sea and from afar are to come to Him bearing gifts in their hands. He is to

be the light and glory of the Gentile world, and salvation even to the farthest ends of the earth. He shall lift up His hand and set up His standard to the people, and they shall come to Him, bringing their sons in their arms, and carrying their daughters on their shoulders. All nations shall serve Him, and all the kings of the earth shall adore Him. Kings shall be His nursing fathers, and queens His nurses, and they shall worship Him with their face to the earth. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." A human word would disfigure this magnificent inspired description of King and kingdom. And yet, being King of this mighty Empire, He shall be the Prince of Peace—the Lamb, the Ruler of the world, because ruling it in gentleness; the Divine Physician, at whose word the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame leap as the deer, and the dead live again; the Good Shepherd, who is to have a special love, tenderness, and pity for the weak, the bruised, the strayed, and the lost. Now is it probable, is it credible, that the majority of the

subjects of such a King, who loves them all, desires their happiness, and gives to all, in His own way, the means of securing it, will be obstinate rebels to the end? probable, that man and devil shall carry away from such a King the greater number of captives, that hell in its numbers will out-distance heaven? If such be the case, what of the greatness, grandeur, and magnificence which God tells us will be special characteristics of the mighty King and kingdom? Is our Lord to be also a failure as a King?

But we must press this last argument further, or rather supplement it by another. It is also clear from Scripture that our Lord is to have a final triumph, not merely because such ought to be the result of such a King's powerful and beneficent rule, but also in reward for the awful sufferings which He patiently endured unto death for love of His subjects. In proof of this, let us take two or three texts of Holy Scripture. In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiàs, entitled a "Prophecy of the Passion of Christ," we are told that Christ offered Himself because it was His own will, that He was wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins; that, bearing our infirmities, our sorrows, and our

sins, He laid down His life for His people. What is to be His reward for all this? "He shall see a long-lived seed; the will of the Lord shall be prosperous in His hands. He shall see and be filled, shall justify many, and shall divide the spoils of the strong." And St. Paul writes: "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names. That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father." St. John, in his inspired book the Apocalypse, describes the powers of evil, and gives them very terrible names, but then adds: "These will fight the Lamb, but the Lamb will conquer them because He is the Lord of lords and King of kings." He also tells us that thousands of thousands saints and angels in heaven sing, "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction, because He has redeemed us to God *out of every tribe, and tongue, and nation, and people.*" But what of

this final triumph and victory? Where can they be if on judgment—the great election—day our Lord's rival candidate, enemy, and opponent, will, under His very eyes, and in presence of the whole world, carry away jubilantly into hell the majority, the vast majority of His subjects,—subjects whom He loved as a Father, whom He bought out of slavery at the highest price He could give, and for whose salvation He laboured and suffered? Such a result should give us, as Father Faber says, “hard and, to our weakness, dishonourable thoughts of God.” The Church calls the fall of Adam a happy fall, because it merited the more abundant grace of redemption. Could anyone who, in a spirit of lively faith, takes in the whole work of the Incarnation, reconcile himself to the thought that it is in great part a sad failure? It is awful enough to think that even one soul should be lost, after all God has done for it.

“Quærens me sedisti lassus,
Redemisti crucem passus ;
Tantus labor non sit cassus.”

“Seeking me Thy footstep hasted,
Me to save the Cross was tasted ;
- Be not toil so mighty wasted.”

This beautiful verse of the “*Dies Iræ*” gives us in three sentences not merely what our Lord suffered for each child of Adam, but also what should be the natural effect of such suffering.

To conclude these arguments, and at the cost of repeating myself, I must say : If we study God the Creator, Father, Saviour, and Sanctifier of all men, His real, sincere will to save all men, and His giving to all men the means of working out their salvation ; if we look on these not as mere words, meaning little or nothing, but as words which embody great divine truths revealed by God Himself, we must be almost necessitated to believe it most probable that He will in His own varied, wondrous, and mysterious ways—ways suited to the state in which His own providence placed men—bring home in the end to Himself the majority of His children, and that the fruits of His redemption will be abundantly copious.

Of course it may be, and is, objected that God is glorified in the lost as well as in the saved. True, if you will, but in a very different way. God is love, and therefore He loves to save. The Church in one of her prayers tells us that it is “special to God to have mercy and to spare.” Will anyone say He loves to

damn? Damnation is forced upon Him in the exercise of His justice by the obstinate rebellion of His creature. At the same time, anyone should naturally shrink from thinking or saying that He is, or could be, glorified by the eternal loss and damnation of the majority of His subjects and children.

CHAPTER VII

HOLY SCRIPTURE.

THE writers, but perhaps still more the preachers, who uphold the severe opinions, appeal to or at least use Holy Scripture as if it were all on their own side. They see types or figures of the lost and saved in the few grapes, or olives, or ears of corn which remain after a well-made vintage and harvest (Isaias, chaps. 17 and 24) ; in only eight being saved in the deluge, in Abraham alone separated from the rest of the world, in only three saved out of the wicked cities, in Job being the only just man in his land, and the three children the only innocent ones in Babylon, in only one widow being relieved during the famine in Israel, and only one leper, out of many, being cured in the days of Eliseus, the prophet. A very satisfactory answer could be given, and is given, to each of the above-mentioned types. I confine myself to a general one. These comparisons,

first of all, if pressed home, would lead to a conclusion so dismal, so despairing, "so hard and dishonourable to God," as to be almost incredible: conclusions which no person should accept unless really proved. They are used principally, but not exclusively, by preachers who wish to terrify, and who for this purpose often accommodate Holy Scripture to their views in a very free and loose way. These types, figures, comparisons, as one may call them, have no power or force as an argument unless it can be shown that *they were intended by the Holy Spirit, who inspired Scripture, to shadow forth the comparative number of the lost and saved.* Now, I cannot find amongst the advocates of the severest opinion who use them, even one who in any way hazards such an assertion. Rhetoric they may be, but argument they are not.

The words, "Many are called, but few are chosen," with which our Lord closes two of His parables, "The labourers in the vineyard" and "The marriage feast," are cited with great confidence by the upholders of the severest opinion as final and conclusive. Such is not the case. The real meaning of those parables

and words is so controverted as to exclude proof. A. Lapide, who is the strongest advocate I know of the severest opinion, admits and explains two interpretations of the parable of the labourers, and one of the marriage feast, which do not, and could not, touch the question of the lost and saved. He even calls the first of the two mentioned above very probable, and gives St. Jerome, St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, Maldonatus, Bellarmin, and Suarez as favouring it. Both parables, as interpreted by such men and by others of name, seem to favour the mildest opinion. In the one all the labourers are rewarded, and in the other only one guest is cast out.

Some seem to think, and one writer says plainly, that our Lord decided this question in favour of the severe opinions when He spoke of the narrow and wide gate, as we read He did in the seventh chapter of St. Matthew, and in the thirteenth of St. Luke: "Enter ye at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are that go in thereat; how narrow is the gate and straight the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it." Or, as St. Luke gives it: "And a certain man said to

Him, Lord are they few that are saved? but He said to him, Strive to enter by the narrow gate, for many, I say, shall seek to enter and shall not be able." We may remark, first, that our Lord kept His secret to Himself, and gave no direct answer to this certain man's question. He does not say that most men, or the majority of men, are lost. When he says many there are who go in by the wide gate, He asserts at most what the advocates of the mildest opinion do not deny, that many, absolutely many, will be lost. But does He even say this? We may, with all respect and reverence, suggest an interpretation which is justified by the text itself and borne out by the experience of those who have had long and intimate relations with souls. We must very carefully distinguish between a life bad at one time, and the same life not continuing bad to the end. We are not to suppose, bad once bad for ever. Again, when our Lord speaks of two gates, He means not the gates of heaven and hell, but the gates of two roads which, persevered on to the end, would lead to one or the other. He, moreover, speaks of those only who enter on or begin a loose kind of life, but not a word as to how they end. Is there not such a thing as true repentance made

by the living and dying, often secret with God, and far more unnoticed by man than the sinful life which needed it? A repentance which gets a man out of the danger of ending on the broad way which leadeth to destruction.

It is true that many, carried away by the powerfully strong attractions of the world outside, and the stronger natural passions within, enter at the wide gate and run for a time the broad way, who, in maturer years, get out of it into the narrow way. We see this in the lives of many canonised saints, men who in early years were thoroughly worldly, like St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier, or thoroughly sinful like St. Augustine. How many men are to be met in ordinary life—edifying and religious—who were not always so; the memory of whose past sins is, like David's, a fountain of tears and an incentive to great holiness. On the other hand, there are few who, from obvious and natural reasons, are strong and courageous and mortified enough to find and enter the narrow gate in the spring-time of life. Still, millions in every age have given themselves early to the sanctuary, to religion, to good lives, according to their light and grace, though

some of these, the few, have managed to get into the broad way in time, and to hold on it.

The advocates of the two mild opinions have also some Scripture types which they cite as a set-off to those of their adversaries. It is said commonly that only one-third of the angels, or at best a minority of them, fell. The wise and foolish virgins were equal in number; in a fairly cultivated field the good grain exceeds the cockle; and in the fisherman's haul the good fish as a rule exceed the bad. In the parable of the talents, two are rewarded—only one condemned. From the marriage feast, to which “the good and the bad were gathered,” only one was expelled. All the labourers of the vineyard received the same recompense, which, according to a very probable interpretation, means eternal life, but in different grades of merit and glory. These, if they can be called arguments—I do not credit them as such—are certainly as powerful as those adduced in the other side. I do not think anyone could compare, and place on the same level as arguments, those types urged in favour of severe and mild views with the Scripture proofs from the nature and character of God relied on by the upholders of the latter. As to the other argument

put forward by the rigorists, the external-aspect argument, as I call it, I shall add one remark to those made earlier. No one, except God, or someone inspired by Him, could make even the most vague guess from this external aspect as to the final and eternal results of evil, and the powers of evil, compared with the final eternal results of good, and of the power of good, of God, "who alone is good." If one were to guess, it would certainly look nearer to the truth, more likely, and more honourable to God, to give Him the victory.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LOST

THERE is, however, a very dark side to this question—a very sad one as well. Though the study, as made, would of itself induce the belief that no one could be finally lost, still, we must believe that many are. This terrible truth is implicitly taught in the defined dogma of eternal punishment, and explicitly in our Lord's description of judgment day, as well as by other words of His. There goes, however, side by side with this belief, a delicate, considerate charity which warns us against passing a fatal sentence on any individual, no matter how bad his life apparently may have been. This, because we are not, nor could we be, the judges of our brother. God alone has the right and the knowledge to be such. Besides, what do we know of God's secret dealings with individual souls? We also turn away, perhaps, from the thought that even one being, created in love

for the noblest purpose by the Father, redeemed at such cost by the Son, and looked to and helped by the Holy Ghost, should be lost to Them and to itself for ever.

“Hell,” writes Father Faber, “teaches the same comfortable doctrine as heaven, but in a rougher strain. I do not think if we kept in view the perfections of God, we should venture to believe, unless the Church taught us, that there was in creation such a place as hell. When it has been revealed to us, we can perceive not only its reasonableness, but also how admirably it is in keeping with the various attributes of God, and not least of all with the exquisiteness of His mercy.” When God decreed to create this world in which we live, and selected, according to the saying of St. Augustine, to permit evil because of the good He would take out of it, rather than that there should be no evil at all, hell fits into its place as a matter of course. Dr. Trench, in the chapter of his book entitled “On Teaching by Parables,” has some remarks which could not be called in question by believers, which seem to ground an argument in favour of the necessity and reasonableness of hell. Proving that parables are “arguments, and may be

alleged as witnesses," he writes: "The world of nature is throughout a witness for the world of spirit, proceeding from the same hand, growing out of the same root, and being constituted for that very end. All lovers of truth readily acknowledge these mysterious harmonies and the force of argument derived from them. To them the things of earth are copies of things in heaven, and the question suggested by the angel in Milton is often forced upon their meditations —

‘What if earth

Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein

Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?’

The Lord is King, not borrowing this title from the kings of earth, but having lent His own title to them, and not the name only, but having so ordered that all true rule and government on earth, with its righteous laws, its stable ordinances, its *punishment*, and its majesty, and its *terror*, should tell of Him and of His kingdom, which ruleth over all." Let me now suppose that a man is guilty of murder, is taken up, tried most fairly, and found guilty, but let go free. He again and again repeats his first crime, and is again and again let off. How long, think you, would any people stand such

action on the part of the king or government ? It would be sufficient to upset both. There would be monster meetings, and justly so, to protest against and denounce it, and to demand the extreme penalty of the law for the murderer. And the criminal's act was but a violation of a righteous *human* law, a making little of its majesty, its punishment, its terror. But what if a man so treats the law, the majesty, the punishment, the terror of the Great King who ruleth over all, and of whose higher rule and government those of earth are but shadows ? Is there to be no punishment for him ? A man wilfully breaks the law of God again and again, and will not before the end comes make that reparation, that repentance, so wondrously easy, which God asks of him. He knowingly outrages the majesty, power, and justice of God by violating His law, and he outrages His patient, long-suffering mercy by not accepting the easy conditions upon which God will forgive him. He dies in this state, necessarily the enemy of God by his own free action, and therefore necessarily separated from Him for ever ; and this is hell, because the eternal loss of God is its greatest torture and punishment. For a man who could so treat God,

the mystery should be, not that there is a hell, but were there no hell to punish him.

Many are lost. How many? Are some or any lost because of only one mortal sin committed, or after many repentances ending, however, in a final unrepented fall? These are God's secrets, about which we know nothing. God, here and there in Holy Scripture, notably in the first chapter of Proverbs, describes perhaps the class of sinners who oblige Him to cast them off for ever, whose eternal destruction is truly the work of their own right hand. He speaks in very awful words of the attitude towards them in which *they* place Him: "I will laugh in your destruction, and shall mock when that shall come to you which you feared, when sudden calamity shall fall on you and destruction as a tempest." But to whom are these words, denoting final reprobation, addressed? To those to whom He can with truth say: "I called, and you refused. I stretched out My hand, and you regarded not. You despised all My counsel and neglected My reprehensions, and despised all My reproof." The loss of God for ever is, in a certain true sense, an infinite evil because

the loss of the infinite good. May we not therefore hope—for we are only speculating on a free question—that this mysteriously awful punishment is only inflicted for the most awful crime. Dr. Pusey, in a very learned treatise of his on *Eternal Punishment*, in which dogma he firmly believed, hazards, if my memory do not fail me, the statement that final eternal reprobation is most probably the consequence and punishment of a wilful, obstinate, final, and formal rejection of God. God Himself seems to suggest such a thought by the earnest manner in which He warns sinners against presuming on His patience, His long-suffering, His mercy; telling them also that if they so fight Him to the end, they must pay the penalty of doing so.

Many are lost. The reason or cause of this is simple enough, and easily understood. God tells us this in many places, but very plainly and clearly when He says, "Good and evil, life and death, are before man, and that which he shall choose shall be given him." In other words, man is always in contact with things, which, if used rightly, will be for his good and for his eternal happiness; but if abused, will be the source of evil and eternal death. God will

not force the good upon man and make him do it; He will not violently drag him away from the evil and prevent him doing it. Whichever he himself selects will be his. "God sincerely wills the salvation of all men; Christ died for the salvation of all men; and grace is given to all men with a view to their salvation. How then does it happen that men are lost?" I cite Franzelin: "The Fathers of the Church ask frequently why all are not saved." And then he gives the answers which they always gave, Because "men defraud themselves of the general gift and grace"; "some men do not wish to yield to God"; "some men are enemies to themselves," because "they are unwilling to be saved." So Ambrose, Paulinus, Chrysostom, Œcumenius: "When the cause is asked why all men are not saved, we have the habit of answering, Because they do not wish it." St. Augustine: "It is good that he who prepares, and consents, be saved by the gift of divine grace, but it is not good that the unwilling and resisting be saved, because it would be unjust." St. Thomas: The Council of Arles expresses this truth as follows:—"That some are saved is the gift of the Saviour, that some are lost is their own fault." Another Council says: "As

there is, was, and will be no man whose nature Christ did not take, so there is not, was not, and never will be a man for whom He did not die, though all may not be saved by the mystery of the Incarnation." God gives grace, but He never overrules free will, never necessitates the use of grace; nay more, He requires free co-operation on the part of the receiver. Hence a man can neglect, refuse to use, abuse grace, and by doing so suffer the loss of his soul.

It will occur to any thoughtful Catholic that purgatory throws light on this subject, and favours the mildest opinion. "Purgatory," says Father Faber, "goes as near unriddling the riddle of the world as any one ordinance which can be named. The extreme severity of the punishments of purgatory is another consideration which leads the mind to contemplate the immense multitude of the saved, and of those saved with very imperfect dispositions, as the only solution of these chastisements." Stress was laid early in this study on the mysteriously easy terms on which God forgives the worst sinners as to the guilt of their sins. God is all powerful in punishing and in purifying, as He is in everything else.

It is not, therefore, too much to say and to hope that He not only exercises His mercy, but fully satisfies His justice by years of most severe sufferings, to which He rightly subjects the souls of great sinners who repent late, or did little penance after their conversion. Purgatory is perhaps God's greatest device for the saving of the majority of sinners,

CHAPTER IX

PAGANS, HERETICS, SCHISMATICS.

THE advocates of the severe opinions seem to have been very much influenced by the very decided view they take of the final fate of pagans, heretics, schismatics, and all outside the external pale of the Church. Some of them prove the severest opinion to be most probable, because these, with bad Catholics, have always been in a majority. And one learned and Holy Scripture commentator says roundly, "*Omnes infideles damnuntur propter infidelitatem*"—All infidels, pagans, are damned because of their unbelief. With all respect for our adversaries, we may be allowed to study these classes of men in order to see if we are bound or justified in taking so hopeless a view of their state. Let us first take the pagan world,—those who are named by theologians, "*Infideles negativi*," (negative infidels)—I shall call them pagans—that is,

persons to whom Christ and His gospel were never announced, who were therefore, without fault of their own, ignorant of all Christian and Catholic truth.

I think it well to say a word here, in order to protect myself against a suspicion, or a charge which might be suggested by remarks and a certain line of argument about to be made, namely, If all this be true, it would be as well, if not better, to have been born, to have lived and died, a pagan, rather than a child of the Church. I do so beforehand, asking my readers to remember that charity thinketh no evil, and that to take scandal is often worse than to give it.

With all true Catholics I believe that God's greatest grace is to be born in, or called to the true faith, to be a member of the Holy Roman Apostolic Church, God's great *ordinary* organ of salvation, whose divinely appointed means, when used, make salvation morally certain. And I hope there is no one who believes more firmly in this truth, or is more grateful for this greatest grace and privilege than the writer of these pages. At the same time, this should not prevent me from making in a free question the best plea I can, within Catholic lines, for the

dark continents and our brethren who inhabit them.

Besides, it is well for us privileged ones to remember that our special grace brings with it a grave responsibility ; that Catholics, who sin against greater light, and abuse greater graces than the poor benighted pagan, if lost will be the more severely punished, and therefore are more guilty and criminal than they. God tells us this when He says, "From them to whom much has been given, much will be required." "The servant who knoweth the will of the Master and does not do it, will get double stripes." The tree or the field carefully manured and cultivated, if fruitless, or having for crop only briars and thorns, are declared to be specially accursed and for the fire. Our Lord announces this same truth when, as we read in the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew, He pronounces, Woe to Corazain, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, and tells them that it will be more tolerable for Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom in the day of judgment, because if the latter had seen the miracles wrought in them, they had long ago done penance in sackcloth and ashes. And again, when He tells the highly-privileged Jews that "the publicans and the harlots shall go

into the kingdom of God before them, because the former 'believed' in the Baptist's preaching, and they, seeing this, did not even afterwards repent that they might believe."

The reasoning of St. Paul in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Romans proves this truth also. "He in the first place,"—I copy the commentary of Dr. MacEvilly—"admits the great advantages the Jews possessed, and of which they were justly proud; but it is to retort on them with greater effect, and show that the possession and enjoyment of these privileges only heightened their culpability in violating God's law." "Thou that makest the boast of the law by transgression of the law, dishonourest God, for the name of God through you is blasphemed amongst the Gentiles." And in point of punishment St. Paul places the Jew before the Gentile when he says: "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek." This reasoning of the apostle may, unfortunately, be too often justly applied to some Catholics when contrasted with those outside the Church, even with the poor, ignorant pagan.

Millions of such pagans, as defined above, have always existed in this world, though the

Church has made salutary inroads on them, everywhere. Let us take first the lowest class, the lowest type physically and morally, in which scarcely a vestige of any belief or law can be found. We hear and read of such. We may be tempted, perhaps, to thoughtlessly look on them as completely God-forsaken, because of the heartless, cruel, savage way in which He has permitted them to be treated. Witness the slave trade, in which countless human beings, weak and helpless, not personally accountable for the state in which they were born, nor the ignorance in which they grew up, carried away with unjust violence, shipped, and treated worse than beasts, and sold into slavery. I heard a Bishop, who spent his life ministering to the negro slaves, say that in mental capabilities they were not equal to a civilised child of five. Their very colour creates a prejudice. The first time I saw a coal-black priest I had a difficulty in realising that he was a priest, and few whites would, I suspect, seek his ministrations. Some might, perchance, once, not from choice, but to be able to say that they did so. It may seem strange to found an argument in favour of these poor creatures, as I am about to do, on the very wretchedness of their state.

God is the Creator, Father, and Saviour of these as He is of the best instructed and most cultured Christian. He is no acceptor or respecter of persons. He must take in everything for, as well as against, must judge all according to the *light, the conscience, the capabilities which they had, and cannot condemn to the eternal fire except for a sin against His law, sufficiently promulgated to them, committed and never repented of.* The time of this life is but a time of probation, and is not as a second compared to eternity. The very existence of evil in its varied forms here is one of the most cogent arguments and reasons for a hereafter of rewards and punishments. God is the Father of all those poor pagans, a Father not in name, but in reality, a perfect Father, with the love also of a mother for them. Take now a homely parable, an argument, not a mere illustration. Human earthly parents of a good, conscientious type consider themselves bound, not only from love but from duty, to have a special eye to, and care of, the child who is weakest, most helpless, most suffering,—an imbecile perhaps. Take our Lord the Saviour, who died for those benighted pagans, who not only again and again preached and practised

the tenderest kindness and charity to the least of His little ones, but denounced, in what I may call fierce language, anyone who would harm one of them. By whom was He always surrounded and followed? To whom, almost exclusively, did He give His healing word and touch? To the possessed of the devil, the idiot, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the leper ; in a word, to the afflicted and dead of body and soul ; to persons who were in many ways like to those poor, ignorant, benighted pagans. Now this great God, Father, and Saviour, who knows not the shadow of change, is always the same, and true to Himself. Are we not, therefore, almost forced to believe that He has an anxious, compassionate, helpful feeling towards those pagan children of His, intensified in proportion to their miseries? He is also infinitely and delicately just. He can balance, compensate, equalise things which are to us inscrutable, and can do much in eternity to counterbalance what He permits in time. It is therefore, I may fairly contend, most probable that such a Father and Saviour has His own considerate, fatherly, and loving ways of dealing with those children who, without fault of their own, and in His permissive providence, were so born and

placed that the gospel tidings never reached them, and that they grew up, lived, and died in ignorance; that He gives them grace suited to the state in which He placed them, gives them means of which we know nothing, which, if used, will bring them home to Himself in the end. Who could believe that He will, as a matter of course, cast *en masse* those who were wretched, suffering outcasts in this life, into eternal exile and torment in the next? Yet I have read sayings of the upholders of the two severe opinions, which could scarcely be interpreted as meaning anything else. Besides, it may safely be presumed that many of those poor creatures die in the state of unbaptized infants, and are therefore not lost in hell.

Let us now view these pagans under another aspect. It is the most commonly accepted opinion that they have some code of dogma and morality—some belief—in a supreme being, the Creator, Rewarder, and Punisher, in some great spirit whom they are bound to worship, propitiate, and obey. This belief is generally hideously disfigured by idols of their own imagination, sentiment, or passion, and fetish worship, often with most revolting rites, even those of human sacrifice. St. Paul, in his

Epistle to the Romans, tells us much about them—1. That the visible created things of this world clearly manifest to them the eternal power and divinity of God. 2. That they have a law written on their hearts. 3. A conscience also “bearing witness to them, and their thoughts between themselves, accusing or also defending.”

It is asserted by eminent theologians that grace, proximately or remotely sufficient for salvation, is given to all men, even to the worst and most obstinate sinners, and to pagans. The Church herself seems to lay down this proposition by condemning the following :—“Pagans, Jews, heretics, and others of this kind receive no inflow—‘influxum’—of any sort from Jesus Christ.” The Fathers again and again inculcate that men perish, not because grace is wanting to them, but because they are wanting to it. St. Augustine says : “There is no soul, no matter how perverse, to whose conscience God does not speak.” St. Thomas writes : “It is part of God’s providence to provide what is necessary to each for his salvation, if He, God, be not impeded.” And again, “God wishes all men to be saved ; therefore grace is wanting to no man, and God, as far as in Him

lies, communicates Himself to all." And again, "God is prepared to give grace to all, and to draw all to Himself. Let it not, therefore, be imputed to Him if anyone do not accept it, but to him who does not accept it." The Council of Sens declares: "That grace is always at hand, and that no moment passes in which God does not stand at the door and knock, to whom, if anyone will open, He will enter and sup with them." I would ask my readers to remember the numerous means already alluded to by which the Church militant, suffering and triumphant, do their best to bring home grace to the worst sinners, to those who are in the greatest danger of being lost.

When and how often God gives grace to those pagan souls we cannot determine, as He has His own wisely planned ways and times of distributing it. Theologians, however, assert with great confidence—I cite Father Hurter, S.J.—that He gives it (1) when the observance of a difficult precept, or a grave temptation presses; (2) when a sinner is urged to repent by remorse of conscience; (3) when such a soul comes to the use of reason; (4) when means, divinely instituted, for salvation are proposed to him (5) when dying. There is also the celebrated

dictum of St. Thomas : " If anyone born and reared amongst savages does what in him lies to follow the dictates of natural reason in the seeking of good and the avoiding of evil, God will reveal to him that which is necessary for salvation by *interior inspiration*, or by sending a teacher." I italicise "*interior inspiration*," for I have heard or read this saying, those words omitted. I presume, as self-evident, that God could not view or judge these benighted pagans on exactly the same lines He will Catholics and large bodies of Christians who have a written law and an organised religion. We Catholics are no doubt singularly privileged, the petted children of God, but we must not do an injustice to Him by imagining that we have so absorbed His privileges and love that He has not much left for our poor pagan brothers and sisters.

With most of those, we may fairly suppose that the dogmatic and moral code written on their hearts, as well as the remnants of truth—disfigured and corrupted, which have come down to them by tradition—comprise very few points, and are of a very vague and shadowy kind. A great spirit, or greater being than themselves, whom they are bound in some way

to worship, honour, fear ; whose beneficent and protecting, as well as his harmful and punishing power, ought to be propitiated. They are, as we are told by those who travelled or lived amongst them, sincere in their awful beliefs and rites. It is a relieving thought that some of their cruel and most revolting practices, such as human sacrifices, have for their reason some distorted, disfigured religious belief, feeling, or sentiment, and that nothing weaker could sustain and keep them alive. Their moral law comprises perhaps one or two precepts not to slay a friend or to kill an enemy in unfair fight. But no matter what the law written on the heart, or in some other way manifested to him, he has conscience and grace to observe it. Nor can he be lost for ever unless he violates it wilfully, and dies impenitent. Now let us place those pagans side by side with Catholics, and study them for a moment. Many Catholics make very light, at times, of their written law, clearly and distinctly known to them as such, and again and again sin against it. Is it wonderful that many of those pagans act in a similar manner with their law? The Catholic under remorse or pressure of conscience wishes to repent, has the grace to do so, and does so

by the means settled for him. The pagan has a conscience as well, and under its remorse or pressure he wishes to repent. He has grace to do so, and uses it in making that act of sorrow suited to his state, according to his capability, and acceptable to God. Surely there is nothing very difficult or impossible to him in his repentance, as there is nothing in the Catholic's. All we know of God—Creator, Father, and Saviour of all men—should lead us to believe that He has not left millions of His children without a means of repentance accommodated to them, and not more difficult than those given to Catholics. The Great Saviour wept over favoured, but ungrateful, Jerusalem, “which had slain the prophets and stoned them that were sent to her,” and expressed by a tender and touching figure His longing to gather her children to His heart. Are we to suppose that He has neither tears nor heart for millions sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, who, in their great or almost perfect ignorance of Him, could not be ungrateful? He is no acceptor of persons, and the God of all men.

We are perfectly ignorant of God's providence and dealings with pagans to whom the gospel has never been announced,—how he treats with

them living and dying. But the presumption is that He is towards them as a perfect Father and Saviour should be—tender, considerate, and merciful.

“Our ignorance,” writes Father Faber, “of the last inward processes of deathbeds leaves one of the most spacious portions of life inaccessible to our notice. The hour of death is very spacious. It gives God room. It is God’s last chance with His creature, and Divine wisdom must know well how to use its chances. In the life of Condren there is a very remarkable passage urging on us the duty of thanksgiving to God for the graces He bestows on the dying, inasmuch as ‘His compassion for them is inexplicable, and He seems to distribute His favours to them all the more willingly, because they are hardly now in danger of profaning them.’” “The Divine mercy,” says St. Catherine of Sienna, “pursues the sinner even to the last death agony. Then, for the last time, the Creator and Redeemer of souls presents Himself to him, and says, Do you wish to be Mine? Are there any who will say, No? How many who will say, Yes?” The death struggle is the last fight between the powers of evil and of good, between God and devil for

a most precious inheritance, and whoever conquers is conqueror for ever. Now, as we know that right and might are both on one side, we ought easily to guess where victory will be.

Taking up again the argument from the parable of God being the Great Perfect Father, with a mother's love as well for His children :— Good earthly parents will do all they can, spare no expense, nurse with greatest vigilance and care their child when the child is seriously, dangerously ill. Their grief becomes the greatest, and often breaks all bounds, when they realise that death is about to take their child from them for ever. When David's infant died, he shut himself up, threw himself on the ground, and would not eat. And when Absolom, the worst son father ever had, was slain, he raved wildly through his palace. It is fair to hope that there is something of this, but of a higher order, in the great Father, and in the Son of David, towards His children, and, most of all, towards the worst and most forlorn, who are in imminent danger of being lost, and so lost to Him for ever.

I may tell a fact which I have from one of the persons concerned, that gives in a nutshell

the arguments which have been insisted on in favour of the mildest opinion.¹ A lady of means and position was for ever making and keeping herself miserable, brooding over the fate of the poor pagans. She seemed to believe, like some of the advocates of the severe opinions, that they should, as a matter of course, be lost. On making her lament to a priest of great learning and holiness, he at once said to her: "Madam, you seem to have great pity and compassion for those creatures; I presume you would give much to save them?" "Oh, father," she answered, "I would give all I have. I would give my life to save them." "Well," he rejoined, "do you not think that the great God who

¹ We see what undeveloped good there may be amongst Gentiles or pagans in the fact that when God's Word came to the sinful pagan city, Ninive, king and people did penance at once, of the severest and most humiliating kind. We learn also how considerate God is in excusing and defending pagans against the hard thoughts of their fellow-man. Jonas was "angry even unto death" because the tree, which had protected him from the burning rays of the sun, withered; and also, most probably, because his word of doom did not come to pass. "And the Lord said to him, You are grieved for the ivy for which thou hast not laboured nor made it to grow, which in one night came up, and in one night withered. And shall not I spare Ninive, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons that know not how to distinguish between their right hand and their left?"

created and died for them has as much pity, compassion, and love for them as you have?"¹

¹The concluding portion of a sermon preached by Dr. Hedley, Bishop of Newport, which I saw too late to utilise in the text, so pleased me that I give it in a note, glad to have so learned, so holy, and so distinguished a prelate to lean on:—"Were these heathen peoples within the reach of salvation? Nay—for barbarism and paganism still cover the larger part of the earth's surface—what are we to say, at this moment, of the multitudes who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death? First, we must say this: that it is of Catholic faith that Almighty God gives to all men sufficient grace to be saved; next, that no man is condemned, or can be condemned, merely for inculpable ignorance; thirdly, we must remember that responsibility is proportioned to capacity. This is so with children, with persons of feeble intellect, and with savages. The difference between the intelligence of these classes, and the highest trained minds of advanced civilisation, is very difficult to realise. The ideas of the savage about God and on morality may be vague, limited, and even inconsistent. But it is certain that the ideas are there, at least in rudiment. This being so, is it not quite certain that in all savage and heathen peoples there are multitudes of humble, obedient hearts, not by any means without occasional lifting up to a father and a judge, who seldom transgress essential morality? I believe these are the people of the 'two talents,' and I, for one, should not like to think that they did not enter into the joy of their Lord. For if there is one thing more certain than another, it is that it is not the simple that are cast out, but the wilfully perverse. And if we can be sure, as it seems to me we can, both from Holy Scripture and from the science of anthropology, that the idea of God as a maker and a rewarder is found in the traditions of every people in the universe, it follows as a necessary consequence—it is hardly an assumption to conclude—that the poor, the suffering, the simple, the patient multitudes in every age, must have turned

We may, perhaps, apply what has been said of pagans to another class ; to those masses, steeped in the grossest ignorance, whom the truths of the gospel, even as taught by outside sects, have never reached, could not reach. We hear and read of such living in large cities, particularly in those of heretical countries. We cannot call this state into which they are born and live a personal sin, for which they could be held accountable, though it may be traced back to others who, by their personal sins, helped to create it. I would not wish to be misunderstood, as if I were making little of the sins of those persons. I am merely intent on trying to show that there are good reasons, founded in the nature of God, for thinking that He has His own way of dealing with, and saving, those poor creatures, not only exercising His mercy, but vindicating His justice, rather than His own way of permitting them, or the vast majority of them, to be cast into the eternal fire.

Many upholders of the severe opinions take as hopeless, or nearly as hopeless, a view of heretics, schismatics, etc., as they do of pagans,

to Him, dimly and intermittently, perhaps, but with sufficient apprehension to bring them within the reach of His infinite mercy and compassion."

and by means of these swell the number of the lost. Let us now give a word to these classes, to be counted by millions,—Lutherans, Nestorians, Coptic, Armenian, and Greek, or better perhaps, Russian schismatics. Thousands of these, validly baptized or not baptized, die before they come to the use of reason. Thousands of these are simple, sincere, well-intentioned lay people—I have these only in mind now—who have to live in the heterodox atmosphere in which they were born. A misfortune, certainly, but not a personal, wilful fault or sin. They are simple people, who never doubt, nor think of doubting, because simple trust in the traditional religion of one's family and ancestors is a strong power, and because they take everything in unquestioning faith, as their ministers give it to them. They believe in God, in our Lord, in prayer, in certain external rites by which God should be worshipped and honoured, in sin, and in the necessity of repentance. Millions of them, like the Greek and Eastern schismatics, have a valid sacrifice, externally more solemn than ours, valid sacraments, and very marked devotion to the Ever Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, and to the saints. Simple, uneducated people, living many of them far away from town

and city, they know nothing of the true Church, or only what has been told to them by her enemies. They have grace by which they can lead good lives, grace and the sacrament by which they can repent if they sin, grace and the sacraments to prepare for death. Now, keeping in mind God's real character, as He Himself has given it to us (I know I say this too often : I do so because all my arguments rest on it), it is far more probable that the vast majority of those simple people are saved, than that they are cast off wholesale because of a state, and the consequences of a state, in which they were placed by God's providence, and for which they are not personally accountable.

It may sound harsh and seem strange to say, that there is a class of persons who appear to be in greater danger of being lost than the pagan or negative infidel, the grossly ignorant or the simple followers of sects and schisms : namely, heretics and schismatics of the educated class. These, as a rule, by profession and education, know much of Holy Scripture, and reverence it as the Word of God, believe in most, if not all, the fundamental truths of Christianity, are not ignorant of history, and live in countries where the Catholic Church is

carrying on her mission. The danger would also seem to increase in proportion to their education, knowledge, and nearness to the Church. They know too much, and have gone too far, not to have the thought forced on them that they should learn a little more and go a little further. It is scarcely possible that such persons have not, from time to time, some misgivings as to their religious position, and that light is not almost forced on them as to the paramount claims of the Catholic Church.

I was once much impressed by the reasons of his conversion given to me by one who was born and lived for years a High Church Anglican layman; reasons which one should think could not be explained away by others holding what he once held. "I always believed," he said, "in Holy Scripture as the Word of God. This made it clear that Christ founded only one Church, a *visible, public*, moral body,—a kingdom which was to teach all nations—could not fail nor err, because the divinely constituted organ of truth, and should last, in all ages, to the last. I knew something of history, and this told me that, for centuries, from the fourth to the sixteenth, there was no visible, public Church but one, which held the same dogmas,

rites, practices, etc., which the Catholic Church holds to-day. The Sacrifice of the Mass, the real abiding presence in the Blessed Sacrament, seven sacraments, purgatory, prayer, and masses for the dead, devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and Bishops appointed by the Roman Pontiff as successor of St. Peter, and in communion with him. So I was forced to the conclusion that the Catholic Church is the true Church of Christ, or that the promises of our Lord utterly failed. I could not accept the latter, and was obliged to accept the former." A condensed proof of the Church. There is reason, however, for fearing that many of his class, from human, worldly, cowardly motives, slight, ignore, stifle, or strangle divine warnings, suggestions, graces given to them, and compound in some way or other with their conscience.

Still, of this very numerous class, as well as of their great opponents, who style themselves Reformation Protestants and Nonconformists, we are not bound to take that dismal view which the advocates of the severe opinions take. The children of many of those classes are baptized, some not baptized, validly at least. Now all these, if they die, as hundreds of them

do, before coming to his use of reason, are not lost. Again, charity thinketh no evil. We are not to judge of the interior affairs, motives, secrets of men's actions or lives from their exterior conduct. We see in them what we think is wrong, and is perhaps really so, but seldom think of the reasons and excuses by which they justify themselves, or of the difficulties in the way of their living otherwise than they do. There is an old saying, "The best hurlers are on the ditch," that is, the most self-sufficient and severe criticisers of a struggle or fight, are they that are not in it. To judge fairly and justly of the real full guilt of a man, we must honestly imagine ourselves in similar position and circumstances. If we do this, are we sure that we would be better than he?

We must admit that a large number of those we are now considering have strong religious feelings and principles—wrong and mistaken, if you will, in our view, but not in theirs. They often prove that they are sincere and in good faith, not only by the earnest, but even by the unpopular or disedifying way in which they express and fight for them. Witness the stand-up battle going on in England for some time between the Reformation Protestants and the

High Church Ritualistic party. Numbers of these classes believe in prayer, and practise it; in sin and in repentance; cling to their sacraments and sacrifice, though they are not really valid; have love for our Lord, and who, in their alms and generous charity to the poor of Christ, often contrast not unfavourably with ourselves. Is it possible that anyone who was through life kind of heart and generous of hand to the poor, *for love of Christ*, was lost? Many texts of Scripture, our Lord's description of judgment day, and very pronounced sayings of the Fathers, particularly of St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine, founded on these texts and descriptions, would perhaps justify me in saying No.

Then there is such a thing as invincible ignorance. "The depths of invincible ignorance," writes Father Faber, "may underlie no inconsiderable region of a man's moral nature, and each individual character has an invincible ignorance belonging to itself."¹

¹ Some time ago there was a controversy carried on in *The Tablet* concerning Nonconformists,—what they do and do not believe. The following letter was published over the name of F. W. Lewis, who wrote as one well informed in the matter:—"We must remember that, as a rule, Nonconformists look on Catholicism as a tissue of absurdities. From infancy they have been taught by every conceivable method that, intellectually, it is

Pope Pius IX., of holy memory, gave an allocution of the 9th of December 1854. In it he condemns as "impious and fatal" the opinion of those who hold "that we may well hope for the salvation of all who were never members of the Church of Christ, and that the way of salvation may be found in any religion." But he adds: "God forbid that we should dare to place limits to the Divine mercy, which is infinite. God forbid that we should wish to scrutinise the secret counsels and judgments of God, which are a 'great deep' and cannot be penetrated by human reason. The dogmas of Catholic faith touching the justice and mercy of God are not opposed one to the other. It is to be held, as of faith, that no one can be saved outside the Apostolic Roman Church. This is the one ark of salvation, and he who enters not into it shall perish in the flood. At the same time, it is to be held as certain that they who are ignorant of the true religion, if their ignorance be invincible, are not guilty of fault in this

beneath contempt, and that an acquaintance with Holy Scripture is all that is needed to dispose of its pretensions. No doubt it is hard for born Catholics to regard such persons as in good faith, but the simple truth is, they are in entire ignorance of the wealth of proof which can be adduced from Holy Scripture for Catholic doctrine."

head. Moreover, charity demands that we pour forth assiduous prayers that all nations may be converted to Christ, that we labour with all our strength for the conversion of all men, for the hand of God is not shortened, and the gifts of heavenly grace are never wanting to those who wish and ask, with sincere mind, to be refreshed with His light."

That a person can be invincibly ignorant of the claims of the true Church is admitted by all, and is quite intelligible. There have been, and there are thousands who, owing to the state into which they were born, their position and surroundings at home, at school, at college, at university, were and are confirmed in the religion of their birth and family, and protected against any doubt concerning it. Every individual with whom they come in contact, every book placed in their hand or within their reach, every fact and view touching religion keep them in unquestioning faith with reference to their own position, and too often in dislike, if not dread and horror, of the Church of Christ. This will apply with more force to women carefully reared in good Christian homes.

Speaking of such persons, an eminent Cardinal has said: "Of those who have

sickened and died in good faith on the way, how many have been saved by prayer!" Another eminent Cardinal has written: "I have no doubt that, through imperfect ministries and irregular systems, God shows His mercy on every soul which has the right dispositions. Therefore no doubt could be cast on the reality of the work of grace in human souls in the Church of England, or in any other Church, by being convinced that its position is schismatical and its acts irregular. When convinced of this, however, it is a vital duty to submit to the law of unity and authority in the Church of God. I believe all sincere souls receive grace according to the measure in which they act up to their own light and convictions." I read also in one of the approved tracts of the Catholic Truth Society the following sentence:—"The Catholic belief is that no penitent soul can perish, that one who really loves God cannot be lost, and there are holy, penitent, and loving souls in the most erroneous systems." I heard, on undoubted authority, that the late Cardinal Manning, speaking of a person dead who was never received into the Church, said, "I wish I were as sure of my own salvation as I am of his."

The adversaries may ask what authority I have for presuming, as I have again and again done, that God has His own ways of dealing with such souls—pagans, heretics, schismatics, etc. I answer, because He is their Creator, Father, and Saviour. If they go further, and ask what are those means, I answer at once I do not know, for, in the words of Pius IX., I do not wish “to scrutinise the secret counsels and judgments of God.” I may retort, however, by asking what authority have they for holding that the Great Creator, Father, and Saviour, who sincerely desires the salvation of all men, who died for all men, who gives grace to all, who is no mere acceptor of persons, has nevertheless left millions in every age, so neglected or so badly helped, that all, or the vast majority of them, are lost? I can find—and I have studied some of the strongest upholders of the severest opinion—only two reasons or arguments,—one from Scripture, and the other from the external aspect of the world. Both, with all respect, so weak and misleading as to be no arguments at all. There is a saying attributed to Saint Augustine which may throw some light on this subject, and which seems to favour our opinion: “On the last day many

will be found who have belonged to the soul of the Church, though they have never belonged to the visible body." That is, persons—pagans, heretics, schismatics, etc.—whom God in His own way brought home, by the grace of repentance and love to Himself directly, and to His Church indirectly or implicitly. The last argument in favour of the mildest opinion, from one's own experience of God's dealings with himself, may appear somewhat strange and weak to many, though perhaps the strongest of all to a humble, thoughtful soul. If such a soul, coming towards the close of life, review its past history—God's generosity, patience, compassion, mercy, readiness to forgive; how the great fisher of souls played for years with him, often disappointed and distressed by his waywardness, his ingratitude, his breaking the golden cord and getting away, far away, from Him; still, He met him again and again with another and another bait, till in joy He landed him safely: such a soul will certainly see in himself not an exception, but the rule and example of The Good God's dealing with the souls of His children. To sum up, in a last word, I must say that the mildest opinion—the salvation of the majority of mankind—

is what we should naturally expect from the study of God's nature and character, as we have them in Scripture, in prophecy and fulfilment, in parable and in fact, in the teaching of the Church and of her theologians. This opinion appears to be so becoming and necessary a result of the Incarnation as to make it most probable that God in His own wise and powerful way, will give it effect. It would also crown with victory and triumph our Lord, in reward for the sufferings, agony, and death which He lovingly bore for the salvation of all men. Moreover, the belief in this opinion is calculated to give us higher, grander, more magnificent views and thoughts of God, and to urge us to work out our salvation, not so much in fear and trembling, as in the nobler and stronger motive, power of love.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX



THE argument from God, the Saviour, of all men, is most beautifully suggested, if not really given to us, in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Suggested : because almost all the Fathers and commentators apply this parable allegorically to our Lord. Really given : because St. Augustine asserts that our Lord intended this Himself, and proves it as follows : —“When two terms of reproach were cast at our Lord—‘Thou art a Samaritan and hath a devil’—He answers, ‘I have not a devil.’ The term He answered, He refuted ; the term, as to which He was silent, He confirmed.” “None can refuse to acknowledge,” writes Dr. Trench, “the facility with which all the circumstances of the parable yield themselves to this interpretation. Such a meaning as this, lurking behind, though one day to pierce through the literal, and to add to the parable a yet more endearing charm, would be, of course, latent at the first utterance.”

The circumstances of the parable are familiar to us, as we find them in the tenth chapter of St. Luke. A certain man, when journeying from Jerusalem to Jericho, is set upon by robbers, who strip, wound, and then leave him half dead. A priest and a Levite pass him by and give him no help. Not so a Samaritan—his bitter, sworn, traditional enemy—for he stops, binds his wounds, cleansing and soothing them with wine and oil, then lifts him up, “sets him upon his own beast,” brings him to an inn, and arranges that he be looked to on to perfect recovery.

The traveller, lying stripped, wounded, and bleeding to death, stands in the parable as the representative of Adam and all his children. “This man,” writes Hugh of St. Victor, “typifies the human race, which, in the persons of our first parents, forsook the celestial state, and by their sin fell into the misery of this world of exile, being, by the cunning of the old enemy, despoiled of the robe of innocence and immortality, and sorely wounded by the taints of original sin.”

But we must consider his state as more desperate, because of the gashes inflicted on himself by his own personal sins. “For we,” to cite St. Clement of Alexandria, “at the

hands of the powers of darkness, have been nigh done to death with the number of our wounds, with lusts, passions, sorrows, guiles, and pleasures." Or, as others picture it, Adam and all his children left Jerusalem—the heavenly city, the city of the vision of peace, paradise, and the state of innocence, where they were at peace with God—and descended towards the profane and cursed city, Jericho. But no sooner had they done so than they fell into the hands of him who is a robber and a murderer, who stripped them of the robe of innocence, and wounded them so terribly, that life is fast ebbing away.

St. Ignatius, in his meditation on the Incarnation, pictures very vividly our state as personified by this victim of robbers and murderers. He bids us behold in imagination "all the surface and circuit of this terrestrial globe covered with men so varied in dress and carriage,—some white, others black,"—all, from the elegant voluptuous Greek and Roman, on to the wild naked savage. "Some in peace, others in war ; some weeping, others laughing ; some in health, others in sickness ; some being born, others dying ; now they swear, blaspheme, wound, and kill, etc., all descending into hell."

Naturally, we should look round to see whence help may come, and cry with all our hearts for it. The priest and the Levite—that is the old law—saw us and passed us by because they could not succour us. The old law could not give life (St. Paul, Galatians). We could not help ourselves, because we were all in the same damnation—wounded, bleeding to death. No supernatural nor life-giving power within us. We lay of ourselves, helpless and hopeless, in a deep pit—a very Slough of Despond—alienated from God and His enemies. But help and healing did come. By whom and how? By One who alone was able and willing to lift us up and save. By Him, The Eternal Son of God, who offered Himself to His Father for this work. By Him who said, “Oblations and holocausts and sacrifices for sin did not please Thee ; but a body Thou has fitted to Me. Behold, I come to do Thy will, and I desire it in the midst of My heart.” By Him, the good Samaritan who forgot what we were—His enemies—in His pity and compassion for us.

And how? This is a word to study, and to meditate on, in order to love our Lord the more. How? Does He sit enthroned in heaven and give His saving word to us in a distant, kingly, Imperial

manner? Does He take the angelic nature, or a glorified impassible human nature, and come to strike us with the sword of justice, or to bid us to remain in that miserable state, to suffer on that bed of our own making, or to pass us by with indifference or contempt; or, without raising a hand Himself, give us labour the more; without shedding a tear Himself, make us weep the more; and without knowing Himself grief, to give us sorrow the more? No! In His great love, "it behoved Him in all things to be made like to His brethren, that He might become a merciful High Priest, that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people. Hence He took our lowly nature—that very nature in which we had been struck down and wounded unto death. And by doing so He bridged that mighty gulf which separated earth from heaven, man from God, children from their Father; crossed it, and, stooping to our lowest level, came to us, bound up our wounds, cleansing and soothing and cheering with the wine and oil of His grace, and then taking us up into His arms, placed us "upon His own beast," which last typifies His sacred humanity. How truly so! for how did He bind up our wounds, and stay

the flow of blood and heal our bruises? By being Himself, in His human nature, "wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins—carrying our griefs and bearing our sorrows, and atoning for our crimes in His flesh on the Cross." And lastly, He "brought us to the inn,"—to His Church, or, in His own way, to His sacred heart, "and took care of us." A merciful, compassionate, loving care of all, in which He is never wanting.

THE END

WALSH, Nicholas.

The comparative number of the
saved and lost.

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