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**CONSCIENCE AND SIN**

**SABINE BARING-GOULD**

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# Ash Wednesday

## *ON CONSCIENCE.*

God has created man for a purpose, and that purpose is, that he should attain to everlasting blessedness.

God is good and loving unto all His works. He made the plants and the beasts, and set them ends to accomplish here on earth, but the ends for which man was made are not to be attained in this life.

Through the Fall man's mind is darkened, his connexion with God is broken, his sight of the aim to which he should tend is obscured. God has given to him His law as the rule of his actions, that man, hearkening to the revealed Will of God, may be guided aright, and so accomplish that end for which he was made, and attain finally to everlasting blessedness.

Every act of man that is in conformity with the revealed law of God is *good*.

Every act of man that is contrary to this revealed law of God is *bad*.

Every act that is in conformity with the law of God is not only *actually* good, but it is *relatively* good—that is to say, it tends to our individual advantage. It is not only good in the sight of God, but it is profitable to our own selves.

So also is the converse true, that every act done against the law of God is *actually* and *relatively* bad; it is bad in the sight of God, and it does injury to our own selves.

Now, in order that we may be able to judge whether our acts are in conformity with the law of God, He has set in us a faculty which has the office of applying the law of God to our own circumstances; and this faculty tells us whether our acts are in conformity with or contrary to the external law of God. Thus we have the exterior law, and the interior faculty, which we may almost term a law, and this inner law is called *Conscience*.

II. The revealed law of God, considered in itself and in relation to God, its Author, is holy, inviolable, and inalterable. “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting (*or* restoring) the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.... In them is Thy servant warned: and in keeping them there is great reward.” (Ps. xix. 7-11.)

But though the revealed law of God is fixed and immutable, yet when applied to the human Conscience it takes different forms, according to the state of the Conscience.

Hence it follows that the divine law *ill-applied*, so far from being a sure rule, may become perverted into a sanction whereby we evade the obligations laid on us, and authorize ourselves to commit that which is wrong.

We shall therefore have to consider:—

1. The nature of Conscience.
2. The obligation of obeying Conscience.
3. The different kinds of Conscience.

4. The rules of conduct relative to each sort of Conscience.

# First Thursday in Lent

## *THE NATURE OF CONSCIENCE.*

1. Conscience, which is the gift of God bestowed on all men, Christian and heathen, is that practical judgment which points out to us what to avoid or what to do in any particular emergency that may arise. Just as we may know that there are certain laws of nature, and our ready commonsense tells us, when varying circumstances arise, how we are to act so that the laws of nature may be to our advantage instead of to our overthrow, so is Conscience the commonsense application of the indwelling consciousness of the distinction between right and wrong to emergencies, as they rise up and demand of us a choice between one course or another.

2. Conscience has a threefold exercise of its judgment.

(a) *Before an action* takes place, Conscience throws light on the action contemplated or proposed, tells us its moral value, and if the Conscience judges that it is *good*, then it counsels and permits the act. If, however, the Conscience judges that it is bad, then it dissuades from, and forbids the act.

(b) *During an action* Conscience is active, and in spite of all the clouds of prejudice and of passion that may have risen up, it bears testimony to the true nature of our conduct, it either encourages us to carry it through, not to be supine about it, not to abandon it before it is completed, and so leave it imperfectly accomplished, but to carry it through to the end, thoroughly and completely. Or else, Conscience does not cease from turning us aside from the prosecution of the act which it disapproves; it acts as a drag, a check, and unless resisted will completely arrest us in the prosecution of that which it esteems to be bad.

(c) *After an action*, Conscience recompenses us by the satisfaction we feel, the approval it accords to us for having either accomplished what it advised, or for having abandoned that conduct which it disapproved. So S. Paul speaks of people being “a law unto themselves,” shewing “the work of the law written in their hearts, their Conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another.” (Rom. ii. 14, 15.) This is the “testimony of the Conscience,” “the answer of the good Conscience” to which both S. Paul and S. Peter appeal.

3. We have seen that Conscience instructs, judges, and rewards or punishes; but we must consider further, that Conscience does not control the will of man, it merely dictates to the will what is right, and warns it as to what is wrong. It uses no constraint. Man’s will is free; Conscience clears the eyes of the mind, and shews it what conduces to welfare, and what to destruction, but it neither impels man irresistibly into the former course, nor holds him back forcibly from taking the other. It shows man what is medicine and what is poison, but it does not compel him to take one and reject the other, for the will of man is absolutely *free*.



# First Friday in Lent

## *THE NATURE OF CONSCIENCE.*

(Continued.)

1. Conscience, in the order of religious life, is that which the Court of Justice is in the order of public life, a court that has been instituted by the legislature to keep discipline and well-being in the State, to protect the individual in his person, his property, and his repute.

Thus Conscience takes the general laws of God and explains them in their bearings on our own conduct, and applies them to our several cases. Also, Conscience sees to the execution of the law—that it shall be obeyed as well as acknowledged. Also, Conscience punishes every infraction of the law.

In other words, Conscience is the *interpreter* of the law of God, it is the *judge* sitting in judgment on us for our observance or non-observance of the law, and it is the *executioner* carrying out the sentence against us. As interpreter, Conscience enlightens us as to the requirements of God, explains to us what is obscure, and smooths the way so that our wills, enlightened and ready to act without impediment, may take a direction one way or other.

An act does not become *just* or *sinful* till the will has consented to the advice of the Conscience as interpreter, or has turned against it and deliberately gone contrary to what it has laid down. Every wilful sin is therefore a determinate revolt against God.

2. But Conscience is more than interpreter, judge and executioner; it is also our *accuser* and the *witness* against us.

As accuser, it pursues the guilty everywhere, into the innermost recesses of the thoughts.

It sees clearly, it knows all the circumstances, it declares with unhesitating voice both what is the nature of the sin, and what is the condition of the sinner. Thus to the office of accuser it unites that of *witness*, presenting itself ever before the accused, with unshaken testimony. It has seen all; it has seen all as it is; and it has forgotten none of the circumstances.

As *judge*, it is enlightened with Divine illumination that pierces through all the mists of prejudice and clouds of passion, and nothing escapes from its vigilance.

As judge it is also severe, not easy and indifferent, for it has not its own law or humour to obey, but the divine law, which it interprets and administers.

It is just, for it stands in that position that it is between God, the Lawgiver, on one side, and man, who breaks that law, on the other. If it be inclined to over-leniency, if it be unjust, then Conscience is itself corrupted. But we are not now speaking of Conscience degraded, cajoled, bribed, and dishonest, but of the true Conscience as divinely illumined and divinely directed to judge aright. And as just and enlightened Conscience passes its judgment, and then takes up the office of executioner. “If,” says S. Paul, “we would judge ourselves we should not be judged.” That is to say, if we suffer our Consciences to perform their proper function here in the time of life, to pass sentence upon us justly, and execute the sentences passed, then there would be no second judgment for us at the last. That judgment is needed only because so many people refuse to permit Conscience to perform its divinely-ordained work here in this life.

Then consider Conscience as the *executioner*. It punishes man here, to work out his amendment. But if Conscience be not suffered to perform its divinely allotted task here, then it will do it in eternity when the time for amendment is over. That is the worm that dies not, that the fire that is never extinguished. Conscience is given to us as our executioner here in order to *improve* us, not to torture us unprofitably. It punishes us to work in us *repentance*. These are the two operations of Conscience as executioner.

# First Saturday in Lent

## *THE OBLIGATIONS OF CONSCIENCE.*

1. As Conscience is a gift of God we are responsible to Him for the use we make of it. Conscience is the moral faculty; as the eyes are organs of the faculty of sight, the ears of the faculty of hearing, so has Conscience the faculty of seeing and knowing and distinguishing right from wrong. As God has given us sight and hearing we exercise these faculties, and, what is more, cultivate them. So, as God has given us the moral faculty, we exercise it, and cultivate it, if we desire to fulfil the ends for which God has created us. God gives us eyes to see our way, and not strike against walls, and fall into pits. So God has given us Conscience to see our moral way, and not run into temptations, and to avoid moral dangers.

2. As Conscience is that interior judgment which God has planted in us to dictate to us what to do, and what to avoid, on special occasions, then, to disobey the voice of Conscience is to disobey the Voice of God. Not only so, but, as Conscience points out to us that a certain course is one to which duty calls us, and we refuse to follow the indication of Conscience, this is a revolt of the will against God, and when the will, knowing what is right, deliberately chooses what is wrong, it commits mortal sin. It was so with Adam and Eve. They knew the Commandment of God, and wilfully went against His Commandment, consequently they had turned away from their proper end, and turned themselves into the camp of rebels against God.

3. When S. Paul says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," he is speaking of the eating of meats offered to idols; and he shows how that Conscience is the rule as to whether a thing is sinful or not. Idols are naught, so that the things offered to idols are not actually polluted by the oblation; nevertheless, if the Conscience refuses to admit this, and argues that, as a meat has been offered to an idol, the partaking of it is participation in idolatry, then to eat of the meat that has been offered brings guilt on the soul. "He that doubteth is damned if he eat." (Rom. xiv. 23.)

4. From this we may draw a practical conclusion that it is always well to follow Conscience, even when Conscience, ill-instructed, may be in error; that if Conscience disapprove of a course of conduct, and yet may not understand clearly on what grounds it utters its disapprobation, it is safest, indeed it is right, to obey Conscience, and not take advantage of its hesitation.

That a Conscience may be ill-taught, and therefore in error, that a Conscience may be perverted, we shall see presently; but what appears to be abundantly clear is that it is advisable always to obey Conscience in all things; but then we must be careful to have the Conscience well-instructed, clearly illuminated, so that it may not be hesitating, confused, and liable to direct us wrongly.

5. When Conscience hesitates, and is doubtful between two courses, it is right to seek advice from such as are experienced in the direction of Conscience.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit must be invoked to open the eyes of the understanding, and guide into truth. When hesitation and doubt still remain, then the safest course to adopt is that line of conduct which is likely to entail most trouble, likely to cost us most, least likely to attract notice from others; also, generally, if not always, the simplest and most natural line is the right one; but self-interest, or a disturbed moral sense, may incline one to take another line

that is not absolutely wrong in itself, but is less right because less natural, and simple, and direct, and common-place than the other.

# First Sunday in Lent

## *CAUSES OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF CONSCIENCE.*

1. Conscience as given by God to man is sound, vigorous, and direct. It sees clearly what the truth is, and distinguishes at once good from evil.

Whatever God gives is good, and God gives this faculty of distinguishing between good and evil to man for a purpose, essential to man, that he may follow his course, and attain to that end for which God made him. Therefore, God certainly gave to man, originally, a sound, sturdy, and clear-seeing Conscience, to be the pilot of his vessel, the driver of his chariot, the legislator of his state. That we may,—indeed, that we *must* acknowledge. God Himself set man in the world to accomplish a certain work, and He furnished him adequately for the fulfilment of the task allotted to him.

2. *But*, man's Conscience is not what it was when God first made man; it has been debilitated, it has been vitiated by original sin. The first sin of Adam, and the sin that has issued from that original fault, has formed a habit of sin in the human race, that infects, weakens, in some cases paralyzes, the Conscience. So that it no longer sees as clearly what is right and what is wrong, as at first; it has no longer the same unhesitating voice; nor has it the same power of influencing the will as at first, for the will itself has become distorted. The unsettlement of Conscience has allowed the will to become impatient of restraint, and to incline to follow other impulses than that of the moral faculty. The will is also inclined to evil through the poison of sin which has passed into the nature of all men since the fall, and though, by Baptism, the antecedent guilt of original sin is put away, yet its deteriorating effects are not all removed. God receives us by Baptism into a state of grace, in which state that which has been marred by the fall can be restored; but the fact of Baptism does not at once restore, it only sets us in a condition in which restoration is possible.

3. There are several causes operating on our Conscience which tend to vitiate it:—

(a) *Ignorance* of the Divine Will, and of the law of God for us. Adam had a fully-enlightened Conscience, he knew uninstructed what was God's purpose and what was God's Will, but it is not so with us, or is so only in a very rudimentary and inadequate manner. We have to be *taught* the Will of God, and to learn His Commandments.

Consequently, it is incumbent on us to strive in every way to remove this ignorance, by reading Scripture, by receiving instruction, and by seeking after light by prayer.

(b) *Prejudice*, the result of ignorance and pride, or simply of ignorance and a warped judgment, owing to false instruction. There can be little chance through ignorance of going wrong in the main, broad principles of duty to our neighbours, but imperfect teaching or erroneous teaching relative to our duties to God, may well be the cause of our failing to perform, or performing inadequately, or performing wrongly our duties due to Him. Hence we require a sure moral guide to expound to us the law of God, and this God has given us in His Church.

(c) *Passion*, or concupiscence, which induces the Conscience to permit whatever flatters or gratifies the body or the mind. S. Paul says that in his natural state, "That which I do I allow not; for what I would that do I not; but what I hate, that do I ... to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not, but the evil that I would not, that I do." He is here picturing himself in his old, carnal, unregenerate state,

but under grace, it is other, there Divine help is given to enable the will to submit to the law of God and cast out the domination of the carnal appetites.

(d) *Lax public opinion*, which sets up a low moral standard, and brings Consciences to sleep, so long as they conform to public opinion, and make that the rule *instead of the law of God*. This is a great means of blunting and deadening Conscience, for it sets up man as a supreme authority in morals in the place of God, it makes the judgments of the world override the revealed Will of God.

# First Monday in Lent

## *CAUSES OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF CONSCIENCE.*

(Continued.)

Conscience may *command, forbid, advise, permit.*

(a) Conscience, when certain as to the moral right of a course of action, utters its peremptory command that it shall be done. We often are satisfied with a negative obedience, and consider ourselves discharged from all obligation to render positive obedience. For the commandments are negative. "Thou shalt not" do this or that. So, if we abstain from murder, theft, adultery, &c., we are satisfied that we are fulfilling the law. But in the Gospel the negative law, or law of prohibition, is not only greatly expanded, but it is turned into a positive law. "Thou shalt love God with all thy heart," &c., and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." It is a bit of self-delusion for anyone to suppose that he is fulfilling the law of his being if he merely abstains from those things prohibited. We have positive obligations laid on us, and these positive obligations the enlightened and healthy Conscience points out to us. Not only must we abstain from anger, but we must cultivate love. Not only must we avoid revenge, but we must do good to them that spitefully use us and persecute us. Not only must we avoid gluttony and drunkenness, but we must cultivate self-denial.

(b) Conscience forbids the commission of those things which are condemned by God's law. As already said, God's law has been expanded since the first imposition of it. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery, but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.... Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths; but I say unto you, Swear not at all.... Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil.... Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies.... Be ye perfect even as your Father, which is in Heaven, is perfect."

(c) Conscience advises when there is a choice between two ways, each good, but one more good than the other. In that case it points to the higher and nobler course of action, that which, perhaps, costs more to us, is more arduous, and most painful. It does not require us, under pain of condemnation, to take the higher course, it merely recommends it as the superior, and shows that there is no sin incurred by choosing that which is inferior. Thus our Lord gave certain counsels of Perfection, but every man was to do as he thought best, in following them or not. So also S. Paul concerning marriage, he says that the condition is holy and unblameable, nevertheless he would advise to remain even as himself.

(d) Conscience permits the choice of an inferior course when it has advised a higher, when it has weighed all the circumstances; when it judges that the will is not strong enough to carry out the performance of the higher course, or that the taking of the higher course would subject man to temptations, or involve him in difficulties beyond his capacity of resistance or escape.

# First Tuesday in Lent

## *ON THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF CONSCIENCE.*

### I.—The Direct Conscience.

1. The various causes enumerated have been the occasion of Consciences becoming very various in quality. Of these varieties there are the following:

- (a) The Direct, or Sound Conscience.
- (b) The False Conscience.
- (c) The Scrupulous Conscience.
- (d) The Relaxed Conscience.
- (e) The Doubtful Conscience.

2. In the first place let us consider that vigorous and healthy Conscience which we call a Direct Conscience.

Now God intended all Consciences to be direct, and the object of all moral instruction is to bring crooked Consciences right, and to bring ignorant Consciences to a knowledge of what is right.

The direct, sound Conscience is that which we should aim all our lives to obtain. And as it is the interior manifestation of the Will of God, and an obligation is laid on us to obey it, we must observe what it commands, abstain from what it forbids, and respect what it counsels.

We must (a) use our utmost endeavour to learn our duties aright, both towards God, our neighbours, and ourselves. We owe to God the obligations of love, reverence, worship, and obedience. Our duties to our neighbours are tolerably plain—the State enforces most of them. We must respect the persons, the property, and the good name of our neighbours. Our duties to ourselves are to educate and develop all those faculties, physical, mental, and spiritual, God has put in us, to keep our bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity; to cultivate our reason and our intelligence—the reason so as to be able to form just judgments, and the intelligence so as to be able and eager to acquire knowledge; to nourish and discipline our souls so that our spiritual faculties may be alive to divine things, able to pray, to meditate on God, and be conscious of His Everpresence.

(b) We must endeavour to bring under our self-love, which is disposed to confuse and lead astray the Conscience by advising such things as are convenient and flattering to self, and making them appear right, or, at all events, admissible.

(c) We must seek to be serious in determining our conduct, to avoid all waywardness and caprice, remembering that for whatever we do we shall have to give account.

3. We must now consider what are the *means* whereby we may obtain a Direct or sound Conscience. These are many, but a few of those that are principal and fundamental must suffice.

(a) *The study of God's Word*, especially of the words of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of His Apostles. Nothing is more calculated to give a healthy and straightforward Conscience than this.

(b) *Experience*. We must bring our intelligence to bear on our acts; Conscience was never meant to be blind instinct, but a bright, fresh, enlightened faculty, assisted at every step by the



intelligence, and the intelligence will work on the facts of experience, and shew us where we have been doing what is right, and where we have been going wrong.

(c) *Hold to first principles.* Self-love is very much disposed to lead us into a maze of lines of conduct, and to encourage us to adopt that most easy, most flattering, most profitable to take. It brings up side duties, and exaggerates them to obscure broad principles. As a man when travelling, on coming to cross lanes, ascends a height to get a clear idea as to the main line, the direction in which he is going, so must we ever go up to the broad first principles to obtain a general survey, and follow the direction thus indicated.

## Second Wednesday in Lent

### *THE FALSE CONSCIENCE.*

1. That Conscience may be perverted so that it allows those things that are wrong, and forbids those things that are right, is, alas, very true. S. Paul speaks of this. “Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and Conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.” (Titus i. 15, 16.) And again, he speaks of those whose Consciences are seared with a hot iron (1 Tim. iv. 2); and again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he speaks of evil Consciences. Now an evil Conscience can only be such an one as—originally good and sound—has been turned about so as to be bad and diseased, allowing such things as it should condemn, and condemning such things as it should allow.

2. Now a False Conscience may be either *invincibly* wrong, or *vincibly* wrong, that is to say, incurably bad, or curable.

It does not by any means follow that he who follows his Conscience, invincibly false, commits sin. Not only does he not commit sin, but he is probably doing what is the best for his spiritual condition under the circumstances.

For instance, take a man who has been born and brought up in Dissent, into whose mind has been inground the maxim that he must fight against the Church. So long as he does resist the Church by fair means he is not sinning, the Devil cannot count on him as fighting in his army against the Kingdom of God, as an enrolled soldier of evil. That he is not. He is doing right, according to his lights. *But*, supposing he has recourse to illegitimate means of defaming and undermining the Church, such as spreading scandalous stories against its members or ministers, *knowing them to be false*, then his resistance to Christ’s kingdom becomes sinful. Prejudice, the result of a false education, has become so enrooted that his error is invincible, except by some supernatural illumination. It was so with Saul. He fought against the Church, but he did it from a right motive. As soon as God miraculously converted him to a knowledge of the truth, then he became an Apostle under that Gospel which he had formerly resisted.

3. Now let us consider the case of a Conscience in a condition of *vincible* error. As a vincible condition of error is one from which nearly any man may free himself if he takes the pains, he sins if he follows a false Conscience, without making any effort to set it right. The error being voluntary does not excuse the act. Through indolence, or indifference, or prejudice, he does not attempt to give himself a direct and sound Conscience, and he sins in following his Conscience when he commits something wrong, or omits something right, *not* because he is following his Conscience, but because he has made no endeavour to educate his Conscience to discriminate rightly.

As this is the case, we see how important it is for us to avoid *narrowness*, and to cultivate broad and liberal views. Narrowness is ignorance, and it petrifies the Conscience into a perverted direction. Everyone is morally bound to endeavour to the utmost of his power and opportunities to lay aside error, and to rectify his Conscience. This he can do by examining every question presented to him in all its aspects, for till he has so done, he cannot be sure that his view is the right one.

Again, he must pray for guidance. The Holy Spirit is given to the Church to guide all the members of Christ into truth. Lastly, he must submit his opinion to that of the holy, undivided Church, which is the pillar and ground of the truth.

4. It sometimes happens that in spite of efforts made to attain to a right Conscience, it remains in the same distorted and false condition as before. Either the mental faculties are insufficient to rectify it, the judgment is cramped, and habit or prejudice has obtained too strong a hold to be overcome. In such a case the Conscience is invincibly wrong, but nevertheless, its promptings must be obeyed. God, Who sees all things, and is full of mercy, will make allowances, only *not* for disobeying the mandate of Conscience.

## Second Thursday in Lent

### *THE SCRUPULOUS CONSCIENCE.*

1. The Scrupulous Conscience is a niggling Conscience that vexes itself about inconsiderable matters, and magnifies trifles into things of importance.

The Scrupulous Conscience is that which has no sense of proportion. In a large number of cases it is vastly particular over matters of indifference, and supremely indifferent about matters of importance. It is a Conscience that never goes back to first principles.

This was the sort of Conscience possessed by the Scribes and Pharisees, who tithed mint, and anise, and cummin, and passed over the weightier matters of the law. (Matt. xxiii. 23.) By Scrupulous Conscience is not meant a tender Conscience, but an itchy one. It is one that is ever suffering from vain apprehension, and regards things harmless and licit as though they were forbidden.

A sound and direct Conscience is necessarily a tender one. It sees what is right and what is wrong, all in due proportion; and shrinks from what is evil as from a serpent, and also is never at rest if it does not fulfil those obligations which it sees are enjoined. A Scrupulous Conscience is one that sees everything topsy-turvy, it magnifies trifles, and passes by without seeing them the more plain and obvious duties. It is influenced, not by its *knowledge*, but by its *fears*, and this allows it to strain at gnats and swallow camels.

The Scrupulous Conscience often causes quite as much scandal as the erroneous Conscience, for people see it making much of small matters, and are led to despise or disregard Conscience as an unreliable guide.

2. That a Scrupulous Conscience may be brought to a right perception of the relative proportions of duties, it must, or at all events, it is most advisable that it should be put under directions by a wise Confessor, who will labour to give it robustness, will strive to drag it out of its confusion, and set it well aloft, where it may be able to survey the whole map of the county of duty, and orientate itself accordingly.

A right Conscience is also a tender one, but the converse is by no means true, that a tender Conscience is always a right one.

3. A Scrupulous Conscience is often a companion to extraordinary self-conceit. To bring it into healthy condition, and remove its distortion of view, humility must be very resolutely practised. Even where there is not self-conceit, there is generally self-centredness, the mind is for ever turned in on self, and occupies itself with probing all its tender places, and fretting it into sores. The best, if not the only remedy for this is the forcible disengagement of the mind from the consideration of self, and rough, resolute, and protracted labour for others.

Consciences are sometimes scrupulous about the misdeeds, real or imaginary, of others, and inert in judging of their own condition. Cruel acts of injustice are done under the plea of obedience to Conscience—this is due to the undue scrupulosity of the Conscience which considers *only itself*; on the other hand, great lack of charity, courtesy, and consideration for the feelings of others is shewn by a Scrupulous Conscience, which concerning itself with *others only*, disregards the broad principles of right action as relates to itself.

4. In directing a Scrupulous Conscience aright, care must be taken, not only to give that Conscience a clear and healthy view of the comparative proportions of duties, and the comparative sinfulness of things forbidden, and to bid it distinguish between those things that

are duties, and those which are optional; those things that are sins, and those which are harmless; but also, it must be bidden to take into consideration its responsibilities to other persons as well as to itself, so that under the plea of following Conscience some gross piece of injustice or rudeness may not be committed.

## Second Friday in Lent

### *THE RELAXED CONSCIENCE.*

1. The Relaxed Conscience is that sluggish and careless Conscience which allows itself to be ruled or influenced in its determinations by the voice of public opinion, or by the supposed interests of the person present or future.

In the matter of religion idolatry is mortally sinful, for it is the making by man of a religion for himself instead of accepting one from God. A man is as truly an idolater when he fashions for himself a sect, as when he makes a graven image. No man has any right to invent doctrines, and establish a ministry of himself. Such religion is *from below*, whereas the divine religion is a revelation *from above*.

Precisely so is it with regard to morality. No man must seek for the moral sanction in the voice of public opinion, or in anything *below*. He must seek it *above*, in the revealed Will of God.

Thus a Relaxed Conscience, that is governed by the public voice, by the press, by private personal interest, dethrones God from His place as Lawgiver, and sets up public opinion or personal interest in His room. It does not seek its sanction in Heaven, but on earth.

As men make to themselves gods to worship, and sects and doctrines, so do men make to themselves laws of ethics. He who worships and believes in such gods and such doctrines as suit him is an idolater, or a heretic, and he who obeys only such moral laws as suit him is every whit as much in sin.

2. Now very few persons making any profession of religion deliberately relax their Consciences, and submit them to the earth-born law of right and wrong. They far more commonly allow it unconsciously to modify their views of right and wrong to suit their own convenience. They take God's Commandments, and pare and shape till they have fitted them to their low ideas, and accommodated them to their practice.

This is not done all at once, and openly, but is a gradual process which, unless guarded against, will deaden the Conscience till its voice is no longer heard proclaiming any other law than the commonplace maxims of mundane morality. This relaxed Conscience, being in error, more or less voluntarily permitted, can no longer serve as a guide to conduct. On the slightest motives it is ready to permit what is not really allowed by God's law, and to regard mortal sins as venial offences.

3. The Scrupulous Conscience exaggerated trifles; made mountains out of molehills. The Relaxed Conscience minimises great things, and reduces mountains to molehills.

4. There is but a sole *remedy* for a Relaxed Conscience, and that is to replace God on His throne as Supreme Lawgiver, and to bow down to and worship Him alone. Instead of our taking His law, and trimming it to fit public opinion and self-interest, we must make His Will paramount, and test everything by that. Every act must be brought to, and tried by the measure of the Sanctuary, and what falls short must be rejected. In such a matter there can be no compromise between God and mammon; God must reign, not supreme only, but *alone*, as the Lawgiver, to Whom Conscience looks up, and Conscience must answer His voice, and not the voice of the world, and turn to that for direction. No man can serve two masters; either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Observe this injunction of Christ. He speaks of *masters* giving orders to their servants,

and of obedience to command in the servants. The Conscience is servant; it *must* obey God or the world; it cannot serve both. In the effort to serve both it becomes relaxed and useless.

## Second Saturday in Lent

### *THE DOUBTFUL CONSCIENCE.*

1. The Doubtful or perplexed Conscience is that Conscience which cannot form a resolve. It suspends judgment on the right or wrong of an action, either because it thinks that as much is to be said on one side as on the other, or else it suspends judgment through lack of illumination, it does not see what it ought to do. Or again, it suspends judgment because it is not sure of the existence, or the obligation of a law commanding or forbidding some action.

This is the condition spoken of by S. James. "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

The right Conscience is certain. It sees clearly and judges decidedly. So does the false Conscience see and judge, though falsely. But this Conscience is paralyzed in judgment, it sees so many reasons on one side and so many on the other, that it falls into despair, and does nothing because of timorousness, lest it should judge awrong.

2. The Conscience can hardly be doubtful about the main laws of God. It is in their application to man's action that uncertainty lies. And it is inevitable that some uncertainty should exist, for man is put in several relations, and has duties in each that sometimes conflict. He is a member of the State, the Church, the family, and the social body to which he belongs. He has duties to those above him and to those below him, and it cannot be that these duties should always lie in parallel lines. He must sometimes exercise his judgment, and decide which among several duties he will observe and which pretermit.

3. Conscience should never be suffered to remain in suspense, and in suspense be left unacted upon, for Conscience is given us to spur us to action, not to excuse us from acting, and so sanction inertness. Unless Conscience be acted upon, it becomes debilitated.

We must act. We will now see how in doubtful cases one ought to act.

4. An opinion presents itself before our minds to be adjudged on. The intelligence, in face of two contradictory courses of conduct, has to determine which is right and is to be followed, and which is wrong and has to be avoided.

(a) An opinion may be *slightly probable*, when it is founded on motives that are insufficient to determine the assent of a prudent man.

(b) An opinion may be *probable*, when the motives impelling towards it are strong, but there is a slight probability in favour of the contrary opinion.

(c) An opinion may be *certain*, when all reasonable doubt is excluded, through the contrary opinion being altogether improbable.

When the opinion is certain, then it must be accepted and followed. When, however, it is only probable, or slightly probable, then the judgment must be called in to pronounce on the *probable consequences*. Hitherto we have considered the eye as turned to God as the sole author of law; but in such cases as there is no certainty, only probability, the Conscience is assisted by *prudence*, which is the action of the reason judging of the probable consequences of an act.

When the moral sanction is certain, prudence is not called in to alter the conduct essentially, only that it may order it so as to be carried out advisably; but when an opinion is probable,



and not certain, then the eye of the reason may be, and ought to be, directed to the future consequences, and the judgment formed, not only on the antecedent probabilities, but also on the probable consequences, good or evil. As prudence can only judge future probabilities, it may not countermand what has certain sanction. Very often the consideration of probable consequences assist us in determining the right or wrong of an act, which antecedently is not certain.

## Second Sunday in Lent

### *ON PRUDENCE.*

1. God wills not only that we should consider His law as the rule of our conduct, but also that we should exercise Prudence in the obedience we render to His law.

Prudence is a faculty given to man by God, a scintillation of His foreknowledge whereby man is able, in a measure, to look into the future, and it is a useful handmaid to judgment.

Prudence is called in (*a*) for the determining of a line of conduct, and (*b*) for determining the manner in which a determined line of conduct shall be carried out. When our Lord exhorts, “Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves,” He exhorts to Prudence. “Whatsoever thou takest in hand, remember the end.” (Eccles. vii. 36.)

In the first place, Prudence is called in for determining a line of conduct. When the moral sanction is indubitable then it can alter nothing; all it can do is to advise and direct as to the carrying out of what is determined on so as not to jar against the rights of others.

But when there is only probability on our side, then Prudence is invoked to say what the consequences that will result from such an action are likely to be, good or bad; and so may exercise a very valuable function in advising or dissuading.

Prudence looks to the near future, and to the remote future. It considers what are likely to be the consequences in this world, and whether the course of conduct will receive the sanction of the all-seeing, all-just Judge at the Last Day. “The wisdom of the prudent,” said Solomon, “is to understand his way.” That is, as Conscience looks back to God for its justification, so does Prudence look forward to the course taken in obedience to the dictates of Conscience, and smoothes it.

Prudence is generally a moderator in the execution of duty. That execution might be harsh, and hurtful, but Prudence wisely softens and simplifies, abates prejudice, and commends the course of Conscience to the approval of others.

2. We will now consider some practical rules for conduct in such cases as the Conscience does not give a certain decision, but sees that different opinions may be probable, more or less, and is in hesitation which to follow.

(*a*) One good rule is to follow that course which is most natural; what is strained and has the semblance of being excentric is probably one flattering to self-esteem, and had better be avoided.

(*b*) Another good rule is to follow that course which is safest, in which there is least likelihood of disturbing others, injuring or annoying them. Also, which is least riskful to ourselves, in health, substance, or reputation.

3. It must not be forgotten that it is quite possible so to carry out a *right* purpose as to do *wrong* in the execution. Having decided on what is right, foresight and judgment are required to determine *in what manner* and *at what time* it is to be carried out. Prudence often shews us that the same result may be attained by the exercise of patience as by an impulsive and precipitous execution, and that the act performed cautiously and judiciously will do good, whereas if done at once in a headlong manner it may effect mischief. Also it shews that there are more ways in which the same thing may be done, and that there is a right way and a wrong way, a way that is advisable, and a way that is mischievous and to be dissuaded from.

We are warned not to do evil that good may come, but people forget that a considerable amount of evil is done by those who do good in a wrong manner.

4. Prudence is but another name for *wisdom*, and wisdom is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. By understanding we see God's law, by wisdom we know how to carry it out.

## Second Monday in Lent

### ON FORTITUDE.

1. We have seen that Conscience, enlightened by Divine Revelation and assisted by Understanding, obtains a clear knowledge of God's Will, and its application to the several conditions in which man is placed in his course through life.

We have seen how that it is not sufficient for man to *know what* is to be done, he must also *know how* it is to be done, and this is where Prudence is needed.

But Prudence is not enough. Prudence may be so timorous as to dissuade from action altogether, and may neutralise the effect of the promptings of Conscience. Prudence sees dangers, and it may magnify dangers. "The slothful man," says Solomon, "saith, There is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets," and so does not go abroad. Now Prudence counsels a man not to go out of doors when there actually *is* a lion there, but Timidity keeps him at home *on the chance* of a lion being there. It is the function of Prudence to foresee dangers, take account of obstructions and difficulties, and if Prudence stood alone it might induce to inertness, and spiritual sluggishness.

2. Therefore God gives us a supplementary counter-balancing grace, which is that *Fortitude*, or courage, to carry us with resolute, bold hearts through the fulfilment of duty. When we know well our duty, then we prudently consider which is the best way of executing it, and then fortitude steps in to nerve us to the full and exact completion of our duty.

Many an one, having seen the right way, invokes all his fortitude to assist him in the carrying out of what is right, regardless of the advice of Prudence, and many an one, when Prudence indicates difficulties, and advises delay, falls into neglect. Each is necessary, and each is equally necessary.

3. Fortitude is a gift of God; it is an attribute of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit, not only of Counsel, but also of Strength.

We need Divine strength to *undertake*, strength to *carry through*, strength to *bear the consequences* of doing what is right.

(a) *In the first place*, having obtained a clear sight of what is God's Will, and also having prudently considered what is the best way of fulfilling it, we require strength to brace our resolution to undertake the task set us, that is to say, to make up our minds strenuously to do that which God commands, and to do it in the way most advisable.

(b) *In the second place*, we require strength to persevere and not to become discouraged, and leave off imperfectly done that which we see it is our duty to do. It is often better not to begin, than to leave off what has been undertaken unaccomplished.

(c) *In the third place*, we require strength to endure the consequences of our act. If we have done that which is right, we cannot be sure that it will not entail on us loss, ridicule, disappointment. But we must then invoke the aid of the Divine gift of Fortitude to strengthen us to endure cheerfully such consequences as come of what we have done, putting all our trust in God, and leaving all further care to God.

4. It must not be supposed that the Divine gift of Fortitude is one and the same thing as human *obstinacy*. Many men are obstinate in carrying out their resolutions, and in carrying them out in their own way. They have strong wills. But the Divine grace is different; it is

allied to humility, and human obstinacy is tied up with self-conceit. It is therefore not difficult to distinguish the one from the other. A lowly spirit may be strong in the Lord to fulfil resolutely the Will of God, but an obstinate spirit is a self-opinionated one that follows not God's Will, but its own. We must be careful in examining our own selves, and seeing if there is strong resolution in us, if it is strong in the right way, and with the right sort of strength.

## Second Tuesday in Lent

*ON SIN.*

The Nature of Sin.

1. We come now to the consideration of Sin. Sin is either:—

- (a) The revolt of the created will against the Divine Will; or
- (b) A voluntary violation of a commandment of God.

2. God is the Supreme Lord of all creation, and Author of our being. His Will should be the absolute law of all created beings. But as He made men and angels in the plenitude of freedom, He gave them wills, wills wholly free, and He set before them His law as the way of happiness, revealing to angels and men that so long as they conformed their wills to His Will they would be happy. Men and angels, though created free, were for all that dependent on God; but certain angels, with Satan at their head, revolted—they set their wills in opposition to the Will of God, from dependence they aimed at independence.

The fall of Adam and Eve was different; instead of a complete revolt of the will against the Will of God, it was an inclination away from God's Will in one particular, a transgression of a commandment, not an act of rebellion.

The revolt of the will against God is a deliberate resistance to the just and holy laws which He has laid down, and it attacks the immutable order He has appointed as the relation between Himself and His creatures. It is also a wilful attempt to change the destiny of the creature.

Thus Satan rebelled through pride, dissatisfied with what God had ordained as to his place in the hierarchy of created intelligences. He desired to be higher or different from what he was. His rebellion was against the supremacy of God.

3. Now it is but exceptional to find man wilfully, knowing what he is about, rise up in open and deliberate rebellion against God; nevertheless, such revolt is found to be among men, though it may be hoped not always, or not often *conscious* revolt. Those rebel against God who—

(a) Profess *Atheism*. They deny His existence, His law, His providence. God has put in every conscience a witness to His being, to His law, to His providence, and to profess Atheism is not only to reject revelation, but to resist the inner testimony of the Conscience. It is incipient, encouraged, and becomes habitual, till the whole attitude of the inner nature is one of antagonism to God.

(b) Who resist *God's moral law*. Men may be ready to admit that there is a God in Heaven, but as His law limits and controls their liberty, they strive against the restraints He imposes on them, and submit only to such laws as they are forced by the law of the land, or by social society to observe. They cast God out of their consciences.

(c) Who resist *God's truth*. Men may accept the fact that God exists in Heaven, and that He has imposed on men a moral law, but they reject His revelation regarding the facts of the Faith, the articles of the Creed, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, the Commission to the Church, the Sacraments. All wilful resistance to the faith as taught by the Church, the depository of Revelation, is thus a rebellion against God.

(d) Who resist *God's Church*. The Church is the kingdom of God on earth, and all schism is a revolt against His authority as committed to His Church, and in as far as it is *conscious* and deliberate, is rebellion against God, different only in degree to that of Satan and his apostate angels in Heaven. Where this is in ignorance, it is of course otherwise. God will always consider the imperfection of man's knowledge, and if a man resists His truth, His moral law, His Church, through invincible ignorance, He will excuse such rebellion.

## Third Wednesday in Lent

### *THE NATURE OF SIN.*

(Continued.)

1. We have considered the first and most terrible Sin, that of the Revolt of the creature against the Creator. We might indeed consider all transgression as a rebellion of the will against the Divine Will, but it is not always so. It is not a rebellion of the will altogether, and consciously against God as Ruler, but it is a transgression of a single command, either through stress of temptation or through carelessness. It may, however, be deliberate and wilful, a transgression of one law, but without the intention of stepping into absolute and acknowledged hostility to God.

2. We sin against God's commandment, either—

(a) By *thought*, when we voluntarily and with deliberation consider, and take pleasure in considering, those things which we know to be forbidden by God. The thought of evil is not necessarily sinful, nor is the emotion of pleasure that follows on the thought, *unless harboured*. We cannot avoid the knowledge of evil, nor can we help the sense of pleasure which is due to the corruption of our nature through original sin, but when the *will consents* to the thought of evil, takes it up and gives it a lodgment in the heart, then it becomes Sin.

(b) By *desire*, when, knowing that a certain course of conduct, or a certain act is contrary to the Will of God, we feel a desire, and encourage that desire to take the course, to do the act which we know is wrong. We sin by wilfully harbouring an evil thought, and by wilfully harbouring an evil wish. For instance, we may desire that someone who has injured us may meet with some accident, or not recover from some sickness. The thought of such a thing must at once be put aside, lest it should breed the wish that so it might be.

(c) By *speech*, when knowingly words are uttered either (1) contrary to truth; (2) contrary to charity; (3) contrary to religion.

1. God is truth, and loveth truth, and all falsehood is abominable in His sight. As children of God we must seek ever to be open and truthful, avoiding evasions of the truth, and perversions of the truth, and denials of the truth. That is to say, avoiding the obligation of speaking the truth exactly when it is required; twisting the truth about so as to alter its appearance and give it a look other than it should have—a dressing up of the truth, denial of the truth, knowing what we are doing. Satan is a liar, and the father of lies.

2. Contrary to charity. We sin when we speak words that are unkind, even if they be true. We have no right to reveal what we know, and to publish abroad the infirmities, the errors, the faults of our neighbours, unless we are called upon to do so for some justifiable cause. All backbiting, slandering, evil-speaking, is inspired by the Evil One, who stirs up strife, whereas God is the God of unity.

3. Contrary to religion. We sin when we speak against God's revealed truth and His Church. But we can also sin by holding our tongues when we ought to speak. When we hear error proclaimed we are bound to stand up for the truth; not to do so is to neglect a plain duty, for God has made us all missionaries of His Gospel, soldiers in His army, to advance His kingdom by example and by precept, and we are bound by our allegiance to Him to use our best endeavours to dissipate error and remove prejudice.



## Third Thursday in Lent

### *THE NATURE OF SIN.*

(Continued.)

1. We have seen how that we can sin against God's Commandments, by thought, and by word. We can also sin against Him by act, and by omission. We daily say, "We have offended against Thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done."

We will therefore now consider sins of *commission* and sins of *omission*.

2. We commit sins of the first sort, that is, we are guilty of *sins of commission*, when we do anything, when we adopt any course of conduct, knowing it to be forbidden by God. It seems hardly necessary to say much about such sins, as they are obvious to all. It is perhaps only necessary to say that we are guilty of sins of commission, when we transgress any of the Commandments of God *in the spirit*, as well as in the letter. Our Lord shews us that the Commandments are expanded under the Gospel to include much more than appears on the surface. Consequently any little act of unkindness, any trifling with sensuality, any over-indulgence in eating or drinking, any disrespectful treatment of those who are in authority, are sins of commission, though they are not against the written words of the law. It is therefore right for us to consider what is implied by the written law, and to measure our conduct and weigh our acts by the spirit of charity, by first principles of justice, and then it will be found that we have allowed ourselves many things which are contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." (Rom. xiv. 22.)

3. We use much less circumspection about *sins of omission*. It is therefore advisable to consider them more carefully.

We sin by omission when we omit to do those things which

(a) We are commanded by the Law of God.

(b) Our Consciences advise.

(c) We are commanded to do by those set in authority over us.

(d) We are required to do by the State, or social law.

(a) Now it must never be forgotten that our duties as Christians are not merely *negative*, to abstain from this and not to do that, but are *positive*, to advance the Kingdom of God, and work out our own salvation. Our Lord, in the parable of the unprofitable servant who hid his treasure, shews us this. We must try to discover what active work in His Kingdom He has ordained for us to accomplish, and then do it with all our might. No man has any right to live in idleness. He must do something either for God, or for his fellow men.

(b) We must obey the promptings of our Conscience. If Conscience urges, and we neglect to obey it, we are neglecting the voice of God.

(c) We are bound to obey and execute the commands of those set over us, parents, guardians, masters. If in authority, and they require us to do something, then we cannot omit doing what is ordered without incurring sin; for all authority devolves from God, and we are responsible

to God for the way in which we fulfil our duties under those set over us. We must obey *readily, cheerfully, and exactly*.

(d) We are members of the State, and to the laws of the State we are morally bound to give obedience; all organizations, the family, society, the State, are divine in origin, and we cannot revolt against any one of these without lesion of the Spirit of Unity which makes all society possible, and that is the Divine Spirit. It is only when a social or a State law is clearly contrary to revealed Divine law, that disobedience is permissible.

## Third Friday in Lent

### *SOURCES OF SIN.*

1. We have now considered the Nature of Sin, and shewn that it is essentially a revolt against God, either complete and conscious against God Himself, or particular, against some commandment of God.

We will now see whence Sin arises.

There are *interior* and *exterior* sources of Sin.

2. We will take, first, the interior sources of Sin. These are three—(a) Culpable ignorance; (b) Human fragility; (c) Malice.

3. *Culpable ignorance.* A man is guilty when he commits an act which is sinful, or omits to fulfil a duty, not knowing that the act is sinful, or that the duty is obligatory, through ignorance, but through ignorance which is voluntary, because he has neglected to learn what is his duty and what are the commandments of God, or else, because having learnt, he has allowed his knowledge to lapse, and he no longer keeps in mind what he once learnt; or else, because by trifling with his conscience he has so confused it that it no longer speaks distinctly and emphatically, telling him what to do and what to avoid. Consequently, we are bound to use our best endeavours to learn exactly what is the Will of God, and having learnt to keep in mind what has been acquired, and so promptly, and without prevarication, to obey our consciences that they may not become to us uncertain in their utterances.

We may be, and we shall be, excused if we have sinned through involuntary ignorance, but not if we have neglected the opportunities placed in our way of learning our duty.

4. *Human frailty.* The weakness of our mortal nature is prone to let us be drawn away into evil, either through—

(a) The violence of temptation; or

(b) The weakness of our resolution; or

(c) The force of bad habit; or

(d) The warmth and concupiscence of imagination.

5. *Temptation is strong.* Temptations are from without and from within. It is necessary to recognize the fact that we are being tempted in order that we may be prepared to resist. Half the sins fallen into are committed before we have realized that we are in temptation.

Therefore we pray that we may not be led into temptation.

*Our resolutions are weak.* Some wills are much weaker than others. Nothing can be a greater blessing than to have a strong will rightly directed. A strong will perverted to evil is a great evil; but so also, and only a little less so, is to have a feeble will devoid of resolution. This is what most have, poor, crippled, infirm wills, and we must strive after God's strengthening grace to brace and nerve these limp wills, so that we may have the will to do after God's good pleasure. Half the sins, indeed, more than half the sins, committed are committed, not from deliberate wickedness of the will, but from infirmity of the will, which has not the strength to stand against temptation.

*The force of bad habits* is very great. We say that habit becomes a second nature. If we have allowed a bad habit to grow, it requires great resolution and Divine grace to enable us to cast it off.

*The warmth of imagination* which unfolds pictures before the mind encouraging to evil. Imagination is a faculty that may be of great service to us, but it is also one that may lead us into danger. Many a sin is committed out of curiosity. It was curiosity that led to the first transgression.

6. *Malice*. The sin committed out of malice is the most condemnable of all, for it issues from a *will* that is corrupted and resolved on disobedience. In temptation, through our frailty that leads to fall, the will is overcome; it may wish the good, but be powerless to take the right course; but where the will is set determinately on evil, there the sin is of the worst kind conceivable. This is the condition of Satan, one of continuous and complete revolt against God out of hatred of what is good.

## Third Saturday in Lent

### *TEMPTATIONS TO SIN.*

1. There are three exterior sources whence temptation arises. As we have seen, there are springs of temptation in our own selves, but we are also subjected to temptation from without. There are, (a) The Devil who seeks our destruction; (b) Created beings that seek to draw us from God to make of them our ends; (c) The world that endeavours to bring us down to obedience to its low tone of morality instead of following the high course as indicated by revelation.

(a) The devil walketh about as a roaring lion, says S. Peter, seeking whom he may devour. We do not know for certain the reasons why Satan so diligently seeks man's destruction, but they are probably *jealousy*, because man is created and called to occupy those places in Heaven which he and his apostate host have lost through their rebellion. They are filled with envy and spite against us, that we should attain to eternal blessedness, whereas they have lost it, and are doomed to eternal misery. Another cause is certainly *malice*, hatred against God; Satan and his host know what God has designed for man, and know what God has done for man, and because they have set their wills in antagonism against God, they ever seek out of malignant hatred to mar God's work and undo His ends. A thoroughly bad man takes a malicious delight in making others as bad as himself, and the devils feel this same inclination in a heightened degree. Another cause is the *pride* of the evil spirits. They are in warfare against God, and they feel a sense of triumph when they are able through man's free will to obtain the fall and degradation of one of God's noblest creatures. It flatters their pride to be able to gain something like a victory over God.

(b) Created beings endeavour to draw us from God, to fix our ambitions, our affections, on them. Or rather it may be said that we are tempted to forget our true end and aim, allured by the beauty and attractiveness of the creatures of God, to set our hearts and minds on them instead of on the Creator. We are surrounded by God's good things of creation, but we must look up through nature to God Himself, not let nature arrest our attention. So with human beings, we should love them indeed, but not let love of them take off our hearts from the supreme love of all, that should be given to God. We are guilty of loving the creature above the Creator whenever we allow our love for men, or for things of this world, to make us give up religious duties, cease to care for things spiritual, and to engross our thoughts.

(c) The world endeavours to draw away our allegiance from God to it. The world has formed its own moral code, an easy one, indulgent to our corrupt nature, it glosses over faults, and permits laxity. It does not enforce self-denial, but, on the other hand, encourages indulgence and extravagance. A very great number of people take public opinion as their rule of life, and so long as they conform their lives to what society expects and demands, regard themselves as in the way of salvation. Now the social code is well enough as far as it goes, but it is not intended to be the supreme code. The law of God is that which we must obey first, and that always points out to us a higher life, a purer life, and an unselfish one, whereas the world insists on a life which is selfish, and without any noble aims.

## Third Sunday in Lent

### *THE GENESIS OF SIN.*

1. We will now consider the way in which Sin is engendered, and takes upon it form and guilt. As already said, the knowledge of Sin is not in itself sinful. Nor is the sensation of pleasure that arises on the occurrence of a sinful suggestion necessarily so. Sin does not spring into deadly reality till the will has given its consent.

2. The *intelligence* proposes the evil thought to the will; it counsels the will to agree to some sensible good, which it sees, to the disobedience of a divine law, the existence of which it recognizes.

That is to say, we see that a course of action lies open to us, which, as we admit is forbidden by God's law, yet this course of action will, we feel assured, bring to us some great advantage. For instance, a manufacturer sees how that, by the adulteration of his goods in a certain manner, not liable to detection, he may be able to save himself several thousand pounds, which sum he will net as a profit. Having seen his opportunity, he either accepts it or he rejects it; he turns the suggestion of his mind into a sin, or an occasion of victory over temptation.

3. The *imagination* represents in lively colours to the will the charms, the delights of some action which the Conscience recognizes as forbidden. Not only so, but the imagination exaggerates these charms, these delights, so as to form a most alluring picture which the will has a difficulty in rejecting.

4. *Ignorance* conceals from the will the inherent evil of a course of action proposed. A Conscience that is not keenly alert to duty, and has not been disciplined in right, sees a course of conduct before it, and sees that it will conduce to great advantage, but is too blunt or gross to be able to distinguish any right or wrong in it. It acts in obedience to the impulse to gain a promising temporal end, without perception of the true nature of the act. This often happens. We do not have our eyes opened to what we have done till after the thing is done, and then, and then only, discover how wrongly we have acted.

5. *Bad habit* encourages the will to consent to evil by recalling the pleasure or advantages obtained by past yielding to temptation, and invites it to a continuance. Moreover bad habit blunts Conscience, and removes all sharpness of perception as to the right or wrong of an act. Bad habits are easily acquired, and when once they get hold of a man are eradicated with difficulty. Everyone therefore should be watchful against the beginnings of a habit that may be bad, that is not assuredly good, for what may be bad will in the long-run become actually bad. Bad habit grows through carelessness, and a constant watch against its rooting itself and ramifying must be maintained.

6. We have seen now how that the will is urged to consent to evil, either through the intelligence advising it, or the imagination alluring to it, or through ignorance, blinding to its nature, or through bad habit, which has weakened the power of resistance in the will. Now Sin only begins when the will has given consent. S. James says, "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (S. James i. 14, 15.) First the *suggestion* of Sin comes from the Intelligence, or from the imagination. Then the *will consents* to the suggestion. Sin is then in conception. Then it is carried forth into *execution*. Sin is accomplished. It has become a fatal fact. Lastly comes the judgment on sin, the result

that follows sin as a shadow follows a body—Death. “The wages of sin are death.” “By sin came death.”

We must therefore keep a watchful guard over the thoughts and imaginations, and let the will be under the absolute control of the Conscience, so that it may not give consent to the evil suggestion. If it has given consent, sin has begun to live; it may, however, again be checked before it proceeds to act.

## Third Monday in Lent

### *ON ORIGINAL SIN.*

1. The subject for meditation to-day shall be the nature and effects of Original Sin, which is that Sin committed by our first parents, and of which we inherit, *not the guilt of the act of Sin*, but the *consequences of the act*.

God is just, and God would not condemn to everlasting death men because their first parents had broken His commandment. But the consequences of Adam's sin passed on all his descendants. By his disobedience he had disturbed the Divine Order, lost his original innocence, introduced a dislocation into his nature. We will now consider what the results of that transgression were.

(a) It disturbed the direct relation of the soul to God. It obscured its vision of God, and all certainty as to God's Nature and Will. This we see from the history of mankind. We find that the vision of God by the soul was so clouded that men fell into ignorance of God, and into false conceptions relative to the Nature of God and the Will of God. All the wanderings of the human mind in idolatries and mythologies are the result of the loss of clear perception of God's Nature. Not only so, but the mistakes men made relative to the law of God, so that they did many things that were evil, believing them to be good, was the result of the obscuration of the spiritual vision so that it could not see what was the Will of God.

Again, all the errors and uncertainties into which men fell relative to the future state was due to the clouding of the spiritual eye, so that it could no longer see what was the Purpose of God relative to man.

(b) The intelligence was darkened. Adam and Eve saw what was before them, Death the consequence of Transgression, but allowed themselves to be confused by the pleadings of the serpent, disputing the consequences. Ever since, a confusion of the intelligence as to consequences resulting from acts has existed in men; a lack of sharp and decisive vision as to the relation of effect to cause, as to the relation of result to act.

The confusion and obfuscation of the intelligence is removed to a large extent by education, but only by such education as broadens the mind. A narrow, illiberal education may do much harm by throwing partial lights which tend the rather to confuse.

(c) The weakening of the human will. The will is not only inherently weakened by having given way to evil, but it is continuously weakened by the uncertainty it is in how to decide, by the darkening of the understanding, so that duties are not always clear, nor consequences certain. The will to do what is right is by no means strong, since Adam and Eve turned their will away from God; the human will has acquired a bent that inclines it not always to follow the right.

(d) And the undue elevation of sensuality tends to deceive the will and induce it to follow the appetites of the body instead of the promptings of the understanding. Adam and Eve went against Reason when they partook of the fruit of the tree to satisfy a carnal curiosity and gratify an animal appetite. Ever since then carnal curiosity and animal appetite have obtained a dominating power in man, composed of body, soul, and mind, quite out of proportion to what was purposed. This undue elevation of Sensuality leads man to seek the gratification of those appetites he shares with the beasts, at the expense of his intellectual and spiritual powers.



(e) One other result of the Fall affects man's body. God made man to be healthy, strong and happy. By his turning away from God, the source of life, strength and blessedness, he became liable to decay, sickness, pain, sorrow, and death.

2. We see, then, that the fall of man has led to the disturbance of man's nature, and it has left man in such a condition that of himself he is unable to attain to the knowledge of God and His Will, and unable to fulfil God's Will even when He knows it. Consequently he fell more or less completely under the dominion of the Evil One, who prompted to error, and to that of Sensuality, which promised happiness to man in the pursuit of his inferior appetites.

## Third Tuesday in Lent

### *THE EVIDENCE FOR ORIGINAL SIN.*

1. The existence of Original Sin in man is proved to us in the first place by our very constitution. We have only to look into our own selves to discern its presence. S. Paul, speaking of himself in his condition under the law, says, "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sin ... did work in our members." (Rom. vii. 5.) "That which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.... To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.... I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin that is in my members." Who does not know this truth by experience? Who has not felt the conflict; realized that there are different and opposing elements in his nature? There is a mixture of dignity and meanness, of nobility and baseness, of the knowledge of what is right and a love of what is evil, in all men. They have but to look steadily into themselves to see that it is so.

2. Scripture affirms the existence of Original Sin. "Man born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble ... who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." (Job xiv. 1, 4.) "Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Ps. li. 5.) "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12.)

3. The Church has always taught the existence of Original Sin, and the Sacrament of Baptism, ever ministered, is a witness to this, for Baptism is the means whereby men pass out of a condition of natural incapacity to fulfil God's law into a state of grace in which they are able to do those things God has commanded. The Sacrament of Baptism was instituted as a corrective to Original Sin, to remedy the defects produced in man by his filiation from Adam.

By nature—that nature degraded and corrupted through the fall—we can do no good thing; but by Baptism we pass into the Kingdom of Grace, and therein are enabled to stand, are strengthened, enlightened, and cleansed.

4. Reason, moreover, assures us of the existence of Original Sin. In the first place, we know that God is good, and we cannot understand that a good God should have created man, the noblest of the works of creation, to suffering and misery. We feel assured, if we recognize God as good and loving to all His works, that He did not make man to be what he is, full of infirmities, ignorances, narrownesses, liable to suffering intensely acute, to continuous trouble, to decay, to diseases most painful, distressful in every way, loathsome, and finally to complete dissolution. Again, we have but to look at history, to read the daily records of crime in the papers, to see that there is a frightful amount of evil among men, and always has existed, and this cannot proceed from a good God.

We must either deny the goodness of God, and say that man has been created by a capricious Deity—a mixture of benevolence and malevolence, of goodness and of evil—*or else*, we must allow that God created men good, but that His purpose has been hindered, and partially made ineffectual through the introduction into man's nature of something that was alien to it at first. The introduction of this alien element can only be attributable to man himself, who, having a *free-will*, could turn away from the course ordained for Him by His Creator, could deflect from the direct line, could bend from the way of happiness to that of misery.

5. A state of Original Sin is not a condition of guilt for act done, but a condition of impotency or partial impotency towards good; and Baptism affords supernatural assistance towards the undoing of those bad effects produced by the Fall, and transmitted through all generations. It places man in such a condition that little by little he can recover himself, and be restored to the original condition of innocence, vigour, and vitality of the first man as he left the hands of God.

## Fourth Wednesday in Lent

### *ACTUAL SIN.*

1. Having seen what Original Sin is, we come now to Actual Sin. Original Sin, we have seen, was a partial paralysis of man's better nature, a confusion of his faculties, and a rendering him incapable of, by himself, attaining a recovery. It is a passive state of inability towards good, and of subjection to evil. Actual Sin is quite other—it consists in sinning voluntarily.

Original Sin is a hereditary condition; Actual Sin is personal. Original Sin is involuntary; Actual Sin is voluntary. Original Sin is a state; Actual Sin is an act which throws us into a state of sin.

A guilty act carries with it guilt to the soul of him who commits the act, but it may also entail a consequent state on others. For instance, a father by his vices may so corrupt his blood that his children have sickly constitutions. They inherit the *consequences*, but not the *guilt*. This is analogous to Original Sin, the state we are in through the fault of Adam. Or, again, a father may squander an ancestral estate. His children are born in penury, and are incapable of ever recovering what their father has lost. His is the guilt, theirs the condition into which his act has thrown them.

2. Actual Sin is of various degrees of guilt; according to the state of knowledge of him who commits it, or according to the heinousness of the sin committed, or according to the amount of deliberation and wilfulness with which it is committed. Where there is complete ignorance of the nature of the act, so long as that ignorance is not voluntary, there the guilt of the act is not mortal, though the act itself may be a grave offence. So also the manner in which the will gives its consent materially aggravates or lessens the guilt of a sin. If the act be known beforehand to be forbidden, and yet the will consents to it, it violates Conscience, and the guilt is grave; but when a transgression is the result of unpremeditation, a surprise, and the will has not had time given it to act, there the guilt is slight.

And once more, there is a difference in heinousness in sins. It is wrong to strike another violently; it is worse to strike with purpose so as to permanently injure.

3. Sin is a violation of the Commandments of God, and as such is incited to either by the Devil, who is the enemy of God, or by the carnal nature which desires its own ends regardless of what conduces to the exaltation of the superior nature, or by the world, which desires to lower the general moral tone of men to a vulgar and easy level. It is therefore a dereliction from God's Law, a turning away from God's Order, a choosing of what is either against His Will, or not wholly in accordance with His Will. It is therefore always evil, and always deserves punishment, and always leads to suffering.

God has set before man, as the end of his existence, the attainment of perfect happiness, by complete though gradual recovery from the effects of the Fall. Every sin is a slipping back into the condition from which we ought to strive ever to escape, if it be not, what it is in some cases, a going down into an even worse condition, by making our original sinful condition an excuse for becoming actually sinful.

4. For the avoidance of sin we need supernatural aid, and this is Divine Grace. By Baptism we are placed in the Spiritual Realm, in which we are furnished with sufficient help to enable us to resist all temptations, overcome all bad habits, discipline all inclinations till they take the direction of good in place of evil, and obtain a clear illumination of our intellect, so that

we can see, and see distinctly, what is God's Will for us. Moreover, we obtain the faculty of judging proportions, and of estimating what is near and transitory at its proper value, as also what is far off and enduring. Naturally we over-estimate what is close before us and is temporal, and hardly see at all and value what is far off and eternal, but by the gift of Divine Grace our spiritual vision is enabled to judge distances and judge values correctly.

## Fourth Thursday in Lent

### *THE CONDITIONS OF SIN.*

1. Every sin is an act done by man endowed with free will, in the exercise of his freedom, and with consciousness what he is about. That is to say, certain conditions are requisite in order that an act may be really sinful, and these conditions are, a knowledge of what is proposed to be done, liberty to do it or to forbear, and the will engaged to accomplish what is proposed.

2. *Knowledge.* An act is only culpable when he who commits it knows what he is about, knows the character of his act, or has at all events a strong suspicion that the act is contrary to the law of God. This is what S. Paul repeatedly urges. "The law entered, that the offence might abound." "The motions of sin, which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death." "I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." "Without the law sin was dead." The measure of sinfulness is largely the knowledge possessed by the doer of the deed. To such an extent is this the case, that S. Paul supposes the case of one who commits an act that is in itself harmless, but it becomes sin to him because he thinks it is forbidden.

A corollary to this is that the degree to which an act is sinful depends largely on the degree of our knowledge. For instance, to one who knows that it is his duty to God to attend public worship every Sunday it is sinful if he, without excuse, stays away; but the sin is by no means as great to him who has never been taught his duty to God, and thinks that going to Divine worship is optional, and is merely for the sake of hearing a sermon, which very probably, and perhaps reasonably, he thinks he can do without.

3. *Liberty.* An act is only culpable when the person who does the act is free to do it, or to refrain from doing it. It is only when the will is free that it can act so as to make what is done guilty or innocent.

Take the converse. A man may speak the truth, or give a large sum in charity, because he is forced to do this, not because he wishes to do it. He acts against his intention and desire. The act is good, but there is no merit in what he has done, for it is done under constraint. So it is possible that an act in itself wrong may be done under such overwhelming compulsion that all exercise of freedom and determination is impossible. If any freedom remains, if there be any chance of escape from doing what we know to be wrong, then it is, to us, more or less sinful, if we yield to force.

4. *Will.* This is the main faculty that determines the sinfulness of an act. If we will to do an act which is a violation of a commandment of God, or which may give occasion to the violation, then the consequence is mortal sin. An act done by a child before it has attained the use of its reason is not sinful, nor is an act done by anyone without the exercise of the power of determination sinful. Thus homicide is not murder. We may take what belongs to another person in ignorance that it belongs to another, or also, without the wish of defrauding another, and in either case the act is not sin.

The reason why eternal darkness and separation from God is possible to devils and man is that the will may become so turned away from God, and so diametrically opposed to Him, that the faintest stirring of a wish to return to obedience is absent. If any lost spirit could at any time repent, its salvation would be possible. Eternal death is due to the fact that men may become so alienated from the life that is in them, so full of hatred of good, that they cannot

turn to God, and hereafter, when they view the consequences, may still never *will* the return, but persevere in their rebellion and hatred of what is good.

It is consequently of the utmost importance that we should watch over our wills, and strive to bring them to perfect conformity with the Will of God, for in that alone lies our security, in that alone true blessedness.

## Fourth Friday in Lent

### *CONDITIONS THAT DIMINISH GUILT.*

1. We have seen that in order that sin may be deadly, it must have been committed with knowledge of what was proposed, in the exercise of liberty to act or not to act, and with deliberate determination of the will.

Now it is obvious that the same act may be very much less guilty in one man than in another according as these faculties exist in more or less activity.

We will now consider some of the more simple extenuating causes that may make a sin really to be—to the soul of him who has committed it—a fault only.

(a) *Excusable ignorance.* As has been pointed out, a man is only guilty of mortal sin, when he is ignorant that the act is forbidden. S. Paul says, “As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.” And our Lord Himself, “That servant which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.” (Luke xiii. 47, 48.) But the ignorance must be excusable, that is to say, he who is in ignorance must not be in *wilful* ignorance.

(b) *Fear.* In certain circumstances the mind may be in such a state of alarm and disturbance that its power of judgment is paralyzed, and the will is overborne by the fear which has become dominant. It is said of those who are out of their minds that they are not accountable for their actions, and there are cases in which terror is so acute, and so overmastering, that a man or woman ceases to be morally responsible for what he or she does.

(c) *Compulsion.* As already shewn, liberty is essential to qualify an act as either culpable or not culpable to the person who is the agent. An act may be in itself wrong, but the guilt entailed on the soul of him who does it depends on whether he be a free agent or not. For instance, it often happened that a martyr was forced to offer incense to idols. The grains were thrust into his hand, and the hand was extended by violence over the fire of the altar. But as the soul of the martyr never yielded consent, no guilt of apostasy attached to it.

(d) *Inadvertence*, or excusable want of attention. It does often happen that a wrong act is done before we really know what we are about. It is done without premeditation. We are of course bound to be ever on our guard against temptation; but that sin into which we have fallen *unintentionally* does not carry with it the same guilt to the soul as if it had been done with deliberation. “Be not high-minded, but fear,” says the Apostle. The Evil One is ever on the watch to entrap us when unprepared into sin. And though a sin committed inadvertently may not be mortally sinful, yet it may, and probably will, carry with it the temporal consequences just the same as if it had been committed deliberately. “Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation.” S. Peter denied his Master partly through fear, partly through inadvertence, he was caught off his guard. We stand often without any sight of or suspicion of the temptation on the brink of which we are, and with a touch we are over. As we are repeatedly warned to caution and watchfulness, such inadvertence does not wholly excuse us. We are *bound* to be ever prepared, nevertheless the nature of man is weak and frail.



2. Let no man seek to excuse himself for his sins. The remarks made are calculated to comfort the distressed and agonized soul that finds itself fallen into sin, which it hates, and is not intended to encourage a comfortable assurance of peace when there is no peace, and to engage to lack of watchfulness, and want of contrition.

## Fourth Saturday in Lent

### *CONDITIONS THAT AGGRAVATE GUILT.*

As there are certain conditions that remove the gravity of guilt attaching to mortal sin, so, on the other hand, are there certain conditions that aggravate the culpability of an act against God's will, conditions that may cause a sin, not in itself heinous, to become deadly in its consequences to the soul. These conditions shall now be taken into consideration. They are four, just as there were four conditions that lessened guilt.

The conditions are these:—

(a) *An error of Conscience*, which leads the person committing an act, to believe that an act is forbidden by God, which really is harmless or allowable, and he nevertheless commits the act wilfully. Believing a course to be sinful, he takes it deliberately. The course may not be in itself wrong, but in that he thinks it wrong, and wilfully elects to take it, believing that he is going against the Will of God, he sins mortally. This we can see at once, for it is a deliberate revolt of the will against what is believed to be God's Will, and it is the setting of the will in opposition to God which is the condition that makes sin to be mortal.

(b) *The evil of the end proposed*. That is to say, if anyone allows himself to do an act in itself harmless, or permissible, in order to attain to an evil end, then the act, though in itself harmless and permissible, becomes exceeding sinful. The end proposed poisons the whole course of conduct pursued. In the former case a harmless act is made deadly in its consequences through antecedent ignorance, in this case through subsequent evil. In both cases there is revolt of the will against God. He who desires an evil of any kind, knowing that it is evil, *i.e.*, that it is against the law of God, and deliberately compasses that end, makes every step he takes in the course whereby he reaches that end, however indifferent they may be in themselves, taken by themselves, to be mortally sinful to him. This is clear, because throughout he is acting with a will in opposition, and in known opposition, to the Will of God.

(c) *Contempt of the law or Lawgiver*. An act done by man in disregard of God's law, with indifference to what God wills, is in itself mortally sinful. No man has any right to disregard God's law, which is the rule the Creator has impressed on His intelligent creatures, and no man may be indifferent to God, Who has given His law as the rule of well-being for the creatures He has made. To put God out of the thoughts, and to act as if there were no God Who has expressed His Will is practical Atheism. With the lips he who so acts may indeed confess Him but in acts deny Him. Neglect and disregard of God may, indeed, be due to circumstances over which man has no control—defective teaching in childhood, for instance—but of this we are not speaking, but of such cases where a man has been taught about God and His Will, and deliberately puts such considerations aside, and does not allow them to influence his conduct.

(d) *The circumstances of the case*. An act, harmless or permissible in itself, may yet be sinful, and gravely sinful, if the circumstances be such as to make it the occasion of evil; for instance, if it lead on to the formation of a bad habit; or if it be the occasion of grave scandal. Such was the case of eating meat offered to idols. In itself it was innocent, but he who ate meat so offered before weak brethren, knowing that he was causing injury to their consciences, thereby defiled his own conscience. In the former case we have an act made

sinful through disregard of the Lawgiver, in this through disregard of the consequences to ourselves or to others.

## Fourth Sunday in Lent

### *ON FREE WILL.*

1. We have seen throughout how that the exercise of the Will is that which gives character to an act, stamping on it its mark of sin or righteousness, in as far as it affects the individual Conscience.

We will now look at the Human Will, and consider how it operates.

An object is presented to it, and it can determine with relation to it in three different ways.

(a) It can *consent* to it. If the object be evil, and it consent to it, then it becomes guilty, it sins. This is what has been insisted on throughout, that the Will of man is the determining quality making a thing to be sinful or not to the individual Conscience.

The imagination or the intelligence presents to the Will a certain picture, proposes a certain act, and the Conscience then pronounces on the right or wrong of what is presented and proposed. Then the Will forms its decision. If it consents to what is suggested, and the Conscience has informed it that this is *wrong*, then it makes a deliberate act of separation from and revolt against God.

(b) It can *resist*, it can absolutely refuse to take the course indicated, when the Conscience has pointed out that the course is contrary to what God has ordered. When the Will thus deliberately resists the evil suggestion, it not only does not sin, but it performs a good and meritorious act. It has taken the side of God, and such an act of positive adhesion to God is rewarded by God, and strengthens the Will in a right course.

When we say that an act of adhesion to God is meritorious, we do not mean that any act of man unassisted by grace can deserve a reward, but that God will reward man if he, by an exercise of free will, ranges himself on His side, just as surely as He will punish man if he, by an exercise of his free will, ranges himself against Him.

The devils, by an exercise of free will, rebelled, and lost happiness. The good angels, by an exercise of free will, remained faithful, and deserved and retained Beatitude. So man has to decide. God's grace does not constrain, it encourages and helps, but it forces no man to take the course that leads to life. The determination lies with man, and that determination must be made by an exercise of the Will.

(c) It may remain *passive*, neither consenting nor resisting. Now, the Will of man is given to him as a determining power, and no man has any right to bury this talent. Free Will is the best gift God gave to man, and though it has been weakened by his fall, yet it can be brought again to full vigour and energy by the exercise of it in one direction or the other. The rudder is given to the ship that by means thereof it may be steered. So the Will is given to man that thereby he may be directed. No good steersman will desert the wheel and let the vessel drive before the wind and become a prey to the waves, and no man may leave the determination of his course to accident, without moral deterioration. We must strive to brace the Will so as to decide according to judgment and Conscience, and every such decision gives tone and force to the Will.

2. There are certain cases in which it is advisable to *avoid* instead of *resisting* temptation. When we know that circumstances are strong against us, and we know that our Wills have not acquired that nerve and independence which will enable us manfully and persistently to resist, then the judgment advises avoidance of the danger.

This is especially the case in all such temptations as affect modesty. We must never run into temptation, and where we are doubtful, and the way of avoidance is possible, there we do well to take it.

## Fourth Monday in Lent

### *THE DETERMINATION OF THE WILL.*

We have seen now what the Free Will in man can do. It can choose, or refuse, or remain inert.

Now we will go a little further, and see how it decides. It can aim directly or indirectly at a certain end.

(a) The Will can be *direct* when it decides for that which is evil, *because it is evil*.

Or when it decides for that which is evil, *because of the pleasure or profit* accruing therefrom.

Naturally, the first of these decisions is the worst; it implies a radical hostility of the will to God. It is the condition into which the will of the devils has fallen through persevering opposition to God. They love evil for its own sake. The transgression of God's Law affords them no gratification, the prospect of transgression holds out to them nothing but a deepening of their woe; nevertheless, their wills have become so set in opposition that they hate what is good, and love what is evil, simply because good is good and evil is evil. The more any man suffers his will to deflect from the Will of God, and he allows himself consciously to choose evil, the nearer he approaches to this condition of rooted and hopeless antagonism to God, and separation from the source of life, light, and happiness.

The second condition is the usual one, in which man chooses evil because of the gratification to his senses, or his pride, that the commission of a forbidden act, or the adoption of a forbidden course, or the dereliction of a commanded duty, will entail on him, or that he fancies it will entail. He does not love evil because it is evil, but he loves pleasure or what flatters his pride, and he accepts the evil because of what it promises.

(b) The Will can be indirect in its pursuit of evil when (1) It does evil that good may come, *or* (2) When it does good that evil may come.

In *the first case*, the Will proposes to itself to attain to a good end, but it allows a certain course which it admits to be against God's Law, in the hopes that the lesser evil will result in the greater good. Thus, a lie is told to gain the conversion of a heretic. It is good to draw a man from heresy into the way of true religion, but to use a forbidden means to do this is to sin. Or an act of injustice may be done for the sake of doing some great and manifest good. This is not permissible. Not only must the end aimed at be good, but the means by which it is attained must be good also. Better leave the end unreached than use illegitimate methods for obtaining it.

In *the second case*, the Will proposes to itself to attain a bad end, and to reach that uses good and legitimate means. For instance, the truth is spoken when we know that by speaking the truth we shall rouse violent passions and produce discord. We do not mean that the truth should be perverted into untruth, but that it may be withheld. We are not bound *always* to say everything we know, but to maintain a prudent reserve. If A. has said something harsh of B., we are not bound to tell B. what A. has said of him. It may be perfectly true what we retail, but if we do retail it we know it will be productive of discord. So it is quite possible for a person with an ill intention to use quite legitimate means—that is, means in themselves unobjectionable—to attain an evil end. Self-deception may, and does sometimes, blind people

to the badness of the object they seek, by representing to them that they have done nothing wrong in the way by which they have worked to reach it.

## Fourth Tuesday in Lent

### *PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS.*

From what has been said about the Will of man and the Nature of Sin, some plain and Practical Conclusions may be drawn.

1. Those evil thoughts that pass in us, to which we give no consent direct or indirect, are not sinful to us, entail on us no guilt. That is to say, we are not responsible for evil thoughts, images unseemly, profane, uncharitable, for distractions in prayer, dreams of the night, unless we arrest them and give them our consent. Living in this evil world, surrounded by evil, we cannot avoid the knowledge of evil; that knowledge may, however, pass over the mind darkening momentarily, but not staining, like the shadow of a cloud on a hill side. So also with regard to wandering thoughts and unsuitable ideas presenting themselves to us in prayer, we cannot help them, but if we allow our thoughts to wander without effort to recollect them and harbour the unsuitable ideas, then they become sinful.

2. Sin consists in the assent given by the will to the suggestion of evil. That has been sufficiently insisted upon, and need not have anything further said thereon in this place.

3. If certain evil effects are foreseen, more or less distinctly, as likely to ensue, if we follow a certain line of conduct, and there be no reasonable motive to force us to adopt that line of conduct, and those evil effects ensue, then we are guilty of them. It lay in the power of our will to avoid that line of conduct which brought us into peril of doing those things which are evil, and, foreseeing the risk, we took the perilous course. This is the case of rushing into temptation. For instance, we foresee that association with certain individuals will lead to a lowering of our religious fervour, a laxity of view with regard to our moral obligations, and, nevertheless, we cultivate their society, then we are guilty of the coldness that ensues in our religion and the laxity that occurs in our moral look-out.

Or, again, if we see that by going to a certain place we are running great risk of committing a certain sin, and, without any real necessity, we go to that place, and fall under temptation, then we are guilty, as if we had deliberately committed the sin. Or, again, if we see that by spending much time, and thought, and money on dress, we are becoming liable to vanity, and we go on lavishing attentions on our personal appearance, so that we do become conceited and vain, then we are guilty of the sin of vanity. We have wilfully chosen that course which leads to vanity.



## Fifth Wednesday in Lent

### *THE GRAVITY OF SIN.*

We come now to consider why Sin is in itself so grave. There are several reasons.

1. It is a revolt against God. 2. It is a setting at naught of the Work of Christ. 3. It neutralises the Work of the Holy Ghost. 4. It is an attack on Society.

1. *It is a revolt against God.* In the first place because God is the supreme authority, the Lord over all Creation, and that creature which sets up its own will against His, is thereby a rebel. Man regards, may be, the laws as unjust, or as tyrannical, that God has imposed on him; unjust because they limit his freedom, or are beyond his power to obey; tyrannical because they oppose the desires of his heart and animal appetites.

In the next place it shows a disregard or disbelief in God's promises and warnings, it is therefore grave because it shows indifference to God's goodness and to His severity. In the first case it robs God of the obedience due to Him, in the second case it robs Him of the respect due to Him.

Then, again, Sin is a revolt against God, as it makes man seek another end than that which God has ordained. God would have man seek Him, make Him the object of all His aspirations, all His efforts. By Sin a creature is substituted in the place of God, and man labours for, thinks of, cares for this created object, a person, or a thing, and makes of it an idol. It turns a man away from God as the object of life and its energies to a perishable and unworthy end.

Once more, Sin is a revolt against God, inasmuch as it robs God of the love, fear, reverence, worship, the thoughts of the mind, and the affections of the heart, that properly belong to Him.

Sin therefore is a state of rebellion against God, in that it refuses to acknowledge Him as king, and in that it sets up another sovereign in His place. It takes away that obedience, homage, love that should have been given to God, and gives it to something or someone else.

2. *It sets at naught the Work of Christ.* Christ came down on earth, taking human nature upon Him to break the power of Sin, and enable man to overcome it. Therefore He made atonement for Sin, and provided means of grace whereby man might be enabled to conquer it. But Sin is the making in vain the Atonement. "If they fall away ... they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." (Heb. vi. 6.) It prevents the sacrifice of Christ having any efficacy on the soul, to cleanse it from the past and to strengthen it for the future.

3. *It neutralises the Work of the Holy Ghost.* Our Lord poured down the Holy Spirit on His Church to be the sanctification of all the members thereof. This Divine Spirit prompts to good, and helps to perform what is good. It "prevents and follows us," *i.e.*, it goes before, stirring up the will to do, and follows assisting in the performance. The Divine Spirit endeavours to purify us, illumine us, and strengthen us. But Sin stains, darkens, weakens us, consequently every sin wilfully indulged in, undoes the work of Sanctification which should be daily going on in us, forming in us the likeness to the perfect pattern of Jesus Christ.

## Fifth Thursday in Lent

### *THE GRAVITY OF SIN.*

(Continued.)

1. We have spoken of Sin as a revolt against God, as undoing the work of Jesus Christ, and neutralising the Holy Ghost's work of Sanctification. We will now consider it as *an attack on Society*.

God is the Author of peace and concord, "He maketh men to be of one mind in an house." It is due to Him that Society is possible. He made man not only to be an individual with freedom, but to be a member of a community. The most elementary type of community is the Family, then comes the State, and lastly, the Church. Such unions can only be formed and maintained by a certain amount of sacrifice of individual freedom, and by mutual forbearance and compromise. Now as we see that barbarism, pure and simple, is the state of man who lives merely as an individual, and as we may be quite sure that God never intended man to be a savage, we may conclude, from reason, that God wills that man should unite with his fellow-men into societies, and therefore that He sanctions and blesses the surrenders and compromises that make such unions possible. It is so in a family; no single member can do exactly what he likes, he must give up something for the others, and it is exactly the same in the State and in the Church. In human nature there is an union of different elements, and in man as created all these were in complete accord; since the Fall disorder has entered into their relations, so that there is divergence of object aimed at by mind, body, and soul. God desires to see man's nature restored to perfect unity, so that all conflicting tendencies may cease.

2. Now Sin attacks Society—*i.e.*, the Divinely-ordered unity—in several ways.

(a) By *Pride* it impels the individual to assume a place to which he has no right, or to refuse to the rest those concessions which are necessary to make social harmony possible. Man rebels against being only one among many, and endeavours to thrust himself into prominence by arrogating to himself what does not lawfully belong to him.

(b) By *Jealousy* men are excited the one against the other. They envy each other the place, the wealth, the respect, that they have obtained. All men cannot have the same position, the same wealth, and the same respect; there must be difference among the members of the community, as there are differences among the members of the body. Sin is an attack on Society when, through envy, it stirs up class jealousies, and stimulates hostility between different members of the social body.

(c) By *Cupidity*. Men, in their selfish greed to arrogate to themselves all things desirable, use the strength, opportunities, position they have, to draw to themselves the good things of this world, to the despoiling of their fellows. Our Lord warns against love of Mammon. No man, He said, could serve God and Mammon, that is, riches; and one reason is, that this greed after wealth is not for the distributing of means of subsistence among the many, and the relief of the necessitous, but in order that it all may be retained for the glorification and indulgence of self.

3. These three motives for the breaking-up of Society are all of Diabolic inspiration. As God is the author of unity, so is Satan the source of all schism. God brings men together, and inspires to the sacrifice of their individual caprices to the general good; the Evil One, on the other hand, urges to the undue exaltation of the individual self, so as to procure separation.

He is the cause of discord in families, of the sapping of the principles of unity in the State, and to heresies and schisms that rend the Church. In a family, in the State, in the Church, all members, all classes, all orders, are bound together for the common good, and the Divine Spirit is in every social body as a good ferment—working out of it what is evil. But the Spirit of Evil is the spirit of decomposition, which breaks up all unity. It is in the family, in the State, in the Church, what death is to that unity, the living man—a break-up into warring units.

## Fifth Friday in Lent

### *THE EFFECTS OF SIN.*

We will now consider what are the effects produced by Sin. These effects are *general* and *particular*.

The general effects of Sin are as follows:—

1. Sin causes a *stain* or scar on the soul. But this stain or scar is not to be regarded as having a positive existence, but to be a privation. A stain is a deficiency in whiteness, as a scar is a defect in healthy smoothness. We are restored as far as guilt goes, by our Baptism, to a state of innocence before God, the infirmity and liability to Sin remains in us, but no condemnation before God. Our souls are white and sound, white as bleached linen, sound as an untorn garment. But every sin committed after Baptism is a loss of purity and of soundness. The soul that has sinned always after bears traces of the sin committed. The blot may be covered, the rent mended, but the traces of its having been made are never removed, though, indeed, the guilt may be put away by true repentance and absolution. This is due to the fact that a sin is a something committed, and an act can never be undone, though its consequences may be rectified. A word spoken can never be recalled, nor can an act that has been done. There is salvation for the sinner that repenteth, but the salvation attained by the penitent is and must be different in kind from that achieved by the soul that has never fallen into wilful sin.

2. Sin entails *condemnation*, subjecting to punishment, either temporal or eternal.

All sin is a violation of God's Commandments, and God is a righteous Judge Who will call every man to account for what he has done; but not only *will* He do so, He *does* so now; and in this present life, to some extent, does punishment come on the man who sins. We see this in actual life, how that certain acts do bring with them their condemnation and their chastisement on the doer of them.

We see the same in nations that transgress God's laws. God visits it upon these nations, and brings them down, till by suffering they have come to recognize their guilt.

3. Sin *alienates* from God. God hates sin, and he who is in sin is at enmity with God, is separated from God, and God's favour is withdrawn in a large degree from him. Jesus Christ, by His merits, brought us into reconciliation with the Father, blotting out the handwriting of offences that was against us. The merits of Christ's atonement were *applied* to us at our Baptism. Then we who were aliens were made nigh by the blood of Christ. Every sin after Baptism separates us from God, darkens the light that shines on us, checks the flow of Divine grace that nourishes our spiritual life.

4. We can, indeed, *return to the favour of God*, through the merits of the death of Christ; but every return from mortal sin is a revival from the dead, a special call back out of the state of transgression into which we have thrown ourselves, into the way of salvation. To obtain this we must *realize* that we have sinned, *repent*, be sincerely sorry for what we have done, and *resolve* never to do the same again. Then, and not till then, does God for Christ's sake forgive us. No repentance is sufficient that has not the character of recognition of the gravity of the offence, sorrow for having offended God, and sincere desire for amendment.

When there is true repentance, then God *pardons the guilt*, but He does not remove the consequences of the act. The punishment must still be undergone. Thus, a man may have

ruined his constitution by his excesses, or squandered his patrimony. He may bitterly deplore his sin, and sincerely resolve to avoid all occasions of sin for the future, but, though God on his true repentance blots out his iniquity, He does not restore robustness to his constitution, nor does He return to him his wasted patrimony.

## Fifth Saturday in Lent

### *THE EFFECTS OF SIN.*

(Continued.)

We will now further consider the effects of Sin, and these the particular effects.

We live three lives; as we are made up of Body, Mind, and Soul, each has its special life. The Body lives an animal life, the Mind an intelligent life, and the Soul a spiritual life.

Sin produces a disturbing and poisoning effect on all these lives.

1. *The life of the Body.* God made man healthy, vigorous, and immortal. The introduction of Sin into the world has produced disease, infirmity, and death.

Sin is the cause of hard and exhausting toil, of the many hardships, privations, troubles to which we are exposed in this life, and it is the cause of the separation of soul and body in death, and of the corruption that ensues in the grave.

Sin has a certain deteriorating effect on the body when indulged in, at all events those sins which are sins of the flesh, such as drunkenness, gluttony, sensuality. They bring their condemnation with them on the body that sins.

2. *The life of the Mind.* The true illumination of the mind is God. An intellectual life is willed by God. No man may lawfully neglect to cultivate his understanding by neglecting to acquire knowledge, or his reason, by neglecting to use his rational power. If man does, he sins, he is wasting a precious gift of God, and the light that is in him is darkened, he becomes a prey to superstition, ignorance, stupidity. The life of his mind becomes stunted and extinguished. Sin acts on the mind as well as on the body, it distorts its perception of the truth, narrows its view, and leads it to mistake falsehood for truth.

3. *The life of the Soul.* This is the most important life of all, and it is the life usually least regarded. This is the life that is divine in us, the breath of God. It has a double aspect (*a*) as to God, and (*b*) as to man. That is to say, it lives in two relations, one to God, the other to man.

This spiritual life is the life of the spiritual faculty in man which enables him to see God, to delight in His presence, to love and to fear Him, to find pleasure in prayer and in meditation on the things that are invisible. It enables him to look beyond time into eternity, and to desire those things that God has promised.

Sin, when it has touched the soul, weakens its faculties. Its power of vision is affected. "Blessed are the pure in heart," said our Lord, "for they shall see God," but impurity is like a film over the eye, clouding its vision. As the soul ceases to see God, it ceases also to love Him, it takes less delight in prayer; the body, or the mind, gains advantages over it, the compound life is no longer maintained in due balance, but one factor or other overlaps, and chokes the spiritual life.

Again, the spiritual life is the life of the spiritual faculty in man which enables him to observe God's law, and Sin lames and weakens man's moral powers. As long as the spiritual life is healthy, man's moral life is also healthy, for indeed the moral life is only another aspect of the same divine life in man. But if man delivers himself up to Sin, then this moral power in him is weakened, it ceases to speak distinctly, it becomes confused, and finally ceases to speak altogether.

It is possible by continuance in sin to extinguish the spiritual life altogether. If the mind be not employed, then it sinks into inertness and death of the rational and intellectual faculties, and unless the soul be allowed to grow and expand, it also will languish. And if by continuance in Sin the soul be subjected to wound after wound, and its voice be never listened to, then finally it will die.

## Fifth Sunday in Lent

### *THE DEADLY VICIES.*

1. Certain Vices go by the name of Capital or Deadly Vices, because they lie at the head or source of all sin; and because they mortally affect the soul.

But they are not in themselves acts, but principles or springs out of which sins issue.

They are reckoned as seven in number, but neither does Scripture indicate this number, nor has the Church come to any decision on this point. It is rather common sense, and common observation, that have led to this classification, and it is a classification simple and intelligible, and of practical use.

These seven Capital Vices are seven mothers who, when taken into the heart, settle there, and produce large families of sins. They are *Vices*, that is to say, they are dispositions towards evil, disordered inclinations left in us by original sin, whence spring up in us, *by the consent of the will*, large crops of bad actions, *i.e.*, of sins. Vice is a habitual disposition towards evil. Sin is the action produced by this disposition when it has seduced the heart into giving consent to it. Vice may exist without sin, and sin can exist without vice. That is to say, there may be a vicious inclination which cannot manifest itself in act, because the opportunity is wanting. A sin may be committed without vicious inclination, out of carelessness, or against the inclination which is towards good, through the weakness of the nature and debility of the will.

Everyone has, more or less, the roots of vices in him, though in some they are far stronger than in others, and in some individuals certain vicious propensities are stronger than other vicious propensities. One man may have a natural proclivity towards pride, and this very inclination towards pride may neutralize in him the inclination towards indolence.

2. The seven Capital Vices are:—

1. Pride. 2. Avarice. 3. Luxury. 4. Envy. 5. Gluttony. 6. Anger. 7. Indolence.

Of these Pride, Avarice, and Envy, are vices of the soul; Luxury, Gluttony, Anger, are vices of the body. Indolence is a vice of the soul and of the body.

Of Pride it is said, “Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.” (Prov. xvi. 5.) “God resisteth the proud.” (James iv. 6.) “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth do I hate.” (Prov. viii. 13.)

Of Avarice it is said, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God,” and S. Paul says that among these are “the covetous” who “shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.” (1 Cor. vi. 10.) “No covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God.” (Eph. v. 5.) David speaks of “the covetous, whom God abhorreth.” (Ps. x. 3.)

Of Luxury, there are many and strong denunciations in Scripture, it is one of those conditions which, like avarice, shuts out from the Kingdom of God. (1 Cor. vi. 10.) S. John saw the luxurious shut out from the gates of the New Jerusalem. See also Gal. v. 19.

Of Gluttony, that is of indulgence to excess in eating and drinking, the same is said. “The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these—drunkenness, revellings, and such like, of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.” (Gal. v. 21.)



Of Envy it is the same, “Envyings,” are included among the works of the flesh.

So also is Anger.

Indolence is the torpor of the soul and body, which will not exert itself to do what is right, or to resist what is wrong. It is a state of indifference to the true ends for which man has been made, and in Scripture is called sleep—“Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.”

## Fifth Monday in Lent

### *IN WHAT THE VICES ARE ROOTED.*

The soil in which the Seven Vices find their root is Self-love, or rather in an undue and disordered love of Self. If we really loved ourselves we would seek to mortify and kill all the vices in us; but it is through undue and irrational self-love that the vices find root and opportunity to grow and flourish.

1. Self-love is not in itself sinful. God has planted in every man a love for himself. It is part of the nature of every man and of every intelligent creature to take care of self, and seek those things which conduce to its welfare. God has even set self-love as the measure to us of the love we should bear to our fellows. (Matt. xix. 19.)

2. Self-love becomes sinful when it is excessive and unreasonable. When, for instance, the love of self makes a man disregard another's need or comfort. When, moreover, it becomes a dominating passion in the soul, obscuring and even extinguishing the love of God. When it seeks wrong ends for self, the indulgence of selfish pleasures, selfish comforts, passion, glorification. Then self-love is sinful. When a person takes no interest in any subject but what concerns self, has no talk save of what touches self, sees everything in the light in which it affects self, then self-love is unduly great.

Moreover, self-love may be disordered when it seeks for its end apart from God, in its pleasures, in its self-glorification, in its self-righteousness. Some people dethrone God and set up self in His place, and make self-interest their only law, and self their only law-giver. Again, self-love becomes sinful when it sees good where good is not, and takes the appearance for the reality.

Self-love is disposed to self-delusion whenever it is allowed to consider itself too highly.

3. Self-love once excessive and unreasonable, draws on to pride, avarice, luxury, gluttony, anger, indolence, because it shows man his supreme good in honours that flatter, riches and pleasures that puff up and indulge self-love, revenge against such as offend self-love, and that neglect of duty which comes so easy to those who give way to self-love. All the Seven Vices minister to self-love, pamper and feed it, assist in its growth, and tend to make it take the place of God in the heart.

Self-love is harmless so long as it does not encourage the growth of these noxious vices. We must therefore be very watchful of ourselves, and hold our love of self under severe control, never allowing it to become a soil in which vices may luxuriate, but seeing that it be a garden plot in which Christian graces spring up, which it well may, for the same soil that grows weeds will grow flowers.

4. Self-control, self-renunciation, are required of us by Christ. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." (Matt. xvi. 24.) The true love of self has a far eye and looks to eternity, and seeks those things that are above, not the things that minister to self-love below; seeks the salvation of the soul, not the pampering of the flesh and the flattery of pride. And the only way of obtaining the imperishable riches and unfading joys, is by resisting the inclinations of the carnal nature towards such as are for a time, and perish in the using. There is a true love of self and a false love of self; or rather love may be directed towards the elevation of the better self, or to the degradation of the inferior self. It is necessary to distinguish between the elements that make man, Body, Soul, and

Mind, and to seek those things which minister to the superior elements—Mind and Soul, not to the animal part of man—Body. Or again, not to serve only the Mind and neglect the Soul, but to seek the welfare of the Soul first of all.

## Fifth Tuesday in Lent

### *PRIDE.*

1. Pride is the love and estimation man has for himself beyond measure. Every man should have a proper pride in himself as a creature of God, an heir of everlasting life, and so maintain his dignity and self-respect, not degenerating into buffoonery, and making himself a laughing-stock to men.

But Pride must be within due limits. Let no man think more highly of himself than he ought to think.

2. There are five ways in which Pride may become excessive and sinful.

(a) When a man is puffed up with self-esteem because of the natural gifts he has received, as though they came from himself, and were not the unmerited gift of God. Thus a girl may become vain and conceited because she has good hair or eyes, and is esteemed a beauty. A man because he has wealth. He becomes purse-proud. Or because he has great abilities. Or because he has great strength and health. This leads to vain boasting, to an insolent demeanour, to great self-opinionativeness.

(b) When a man regards what successes he has met with as due to his merits. Success may be, and probably is, due in most cases to frugality, sound judgment, caution at one time and daring at another; but there is ever in it an element of the unforeseen, due to God's ordering. Moreover, the good qualities, the prudence, frugality, and so on, in the man are the growth of good elements implanted in him by God. A man must always acknowledge God as the Giver of all good things, recognize His hand in the inception and the carrying out of whatever succeeds, and must not attribute it solely to himself. The thought of self drives the thought of God out of the mind.

(c) When a man boasts himself of what he has not. When, that is, in order to flatter his self-pride before others, he pretends to be, or to have what he is not, or has not got. Thus living under false appearances, living beyond one's income, are due to Pride.

(d) When a man despises others. Every man who looks down on, disparages, and regards others as common and vile, is guilty of Pride.

The rich have no occasion to despise the poor, those of one social class to talk contemptuously of those of another, or as being *common* people, as *Nobodies*. With God nothing is common, and not one of His creatures is a Nobody. Moreover, it is possible to sin through pride if those who have committed no mortal sins despise such as have sinned. Spiritual Pride is the worst kind of Pride.

3. Pride produces a good many children, all bad when overgrown.

(a) *Ambition*. The desire to distinguish oneself above others. Harmless when moderate, evil when excessive.

(b) *Vain-glory*. The desire to make parade of those qualities one has, and to attribute to oneself qualities one has not. Always bad.

(c) *Ostentation*. The affectation of making display of those advantages we possess—wealth, cleverness, knowledge, &c. Always not only bad, but vulgar.

(d) *Contempt for others*, leading to disparaging what is good in others, and exaggerating their faults. Never other than bad.

(e) *Presumption*, which impels to attempt what is beyond one's powers. It is not wrong to have self-confidence in what one has. It is wrong when one presumes on what *one has not*.

(f) *Hypocrisy*, which seeks to show to the world a better face than what one really has, to pretend to be what one is not. Ever bad.

(g) *Obstinacy*, which follows self-determination as if that must be right; and a stubbornness which does not suffer a man to give way when his reason has been convinced that he is wrong.

(h) *Disobedience*, which follows on self-conceit, making a man follow his own wishes and opinions, and disobey just commands, because he desires independence, or because he despises his superiors and those in authority over him.

## Sixth Wednesday in Lent

### *AVARICE.*

1. Avarice or Covetousness is a disorderly and unreasonable and excessive attachment to the things of this world, especially to money.

Now the love of the good things of this world is by no means sinful in itself, it is legitimate. God gives them to us to enjoy. God gives to us earthly things to be possessions, to keep, and to enlarge, and multiply. To throw away wantonly what has been given to us is sinful. For instance, it is sinful to squander money in extravagance, in horse racing, in gambling. Riches are a trust, land and houses are a trust, given us from God, and we must not diminish what we have received, in amount and value, but endeavour to make them more. It is a token of gratitude to God for this gift that we appreciate them, and use them profitably.

2. Worldly goods are given to us to satisfy the necessities of life, not only in the matter of eating, and drinking, and clothing, but of our mental and spiritual life also. Our worldly goods are given to us to enable us to cultivate art, and science, and literature, all that goes towards the furtherance of the amenities of life: music, painting, architecture, sculpture, horticulture, &c.

Worldly goods are given to us that with them we may do what we can to mitigate the miseries of the poor and suffering, and to advance God's Kingdom, and enrich and adorn His Sanctuaries and His Service. Consequently we are using our riches aright when we seek out means of relieving distress, when we assist in the propagation of the Gospel among the heathen, and when we build and decorate Churches, and provide for the beautiful musical rendering of the worship of God.

3. Avarice is a mortal vice when we:—

(a) Desire the good things of this world for the sole gratification they yield to our senses, when they minister to our luxury. When we love them for a selfish reason, and value them only as they minister to the comfort, ease, indulgence, and pampering of self.

(b) Avarice is a sin when we desire the good things of this world inordinately. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John ii. 15, 16.)

Excessive love of the things of this world becomes idolatry. (Eph. v. 6.)

(c) Avarice is a sin when it agitates the mind, and occupies it with excessive anxiety after the good things of this world. "Take no thought for the morrow," says our Lord, "for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. vi. 33, 34.) That is to say, the mind is to be mainly occupied with the true end of life, and strain for that, and the striving after all material interests must be kept in subordination to that.

(d) Avarice, or Covetousness, has several daughters. It produces in man—1. *Callousness* to distress. He loses feeling for the distress of the poor and suffering. He begrudges everything given to them as something taken from himself. 2. *Dishonesty*. In order to increase wealth, the Conscience is hushed to pass over certain fraudulent or dishonest acts whereby money may be gained unfairly, by false representation, by selling a thing at what is beyond its worth, &c. 3. *Unrest*. The mind is engrossed by the cares and anxieties of the pursuit of wealth, so

that no good seed can grow in it. The calm and peace of a Conscience at rest in God pursuing the true end is gone, and is replaced by constant uneasiness as to how certain speculations will turn out, what profit will come from a certain sale, or how certain losses are to be made up.

## Sixth Thursday in Lent

### LUXURY.

1. Luxury incites to the indulgence of the senses excessively, beyond what God's law permits. As a vice, it consists in the love of what is sensuous, and the inclination to yield to the pleasures of the sense.

It leads to forgetfulness of God and idolatry. That is to say, to the enthronement of self in the place of God. Everything is made to give way to the indulgence of the pleasures and caprices of self. God exacts of us the homage of the entire man—body, soul and spirit; luxury corrupts the body so that it can no longer be presented holy and without blame to God; stains and enervates the soul, and dulls the mind, filling it with lassitude and indifference.

It leads to sacrilege, for sacrilege is the profanation of that which is dedicated to God. Now, man's body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and S. Paul shews that sensuality is a defilement of this temple.

Moreover, Christ took human nature upon Him to restore human nature, to purify it, and if we by indulgence desecrate the body, we are dishonouring that nature which Christ stooped to assume.

2. Luxury indulged in becomes a *servitude*. He that doeth sin is the servant of sin. (John viii. 13.) The more that the carnal nature is yielded to, the more exacting it becomes. It is never satisfied, it is ever crying out for fresh pleasures, and even when the faculty of enjoyment is over, the burning craving after new pleasures remains.

Luxury indulged in *gives the Evil One power over us*. At first he advised, suggested evil, then he commands as a master, and will be obeyed. The sinner groans in his bondage and desires to escape, but remains in chains, his efforts to escape are powerless.

Luxury indulged in *weakens the power of resistance*. The sinner becomes with every sin yielded to more frail and more cowardly. His will becomes more powerless every time he yields, he makes the next fall more easy, recovery more difficult.

3. Luxury is not merely the yielding to gross sins of the flesh. It is a root of inclination in man to yield to and pamper the body in many ways not in themselves sinful. Any excessive indulgence in pleasure, in ease, in dress, in entertainments, in distractions, in æstheticism, may be, and often is, mortal vice. To take a simple case, the reading of novels. A novel may be read as a distraction from laborious thought, or painful thought. But to make fiction the main nutriment of the mind and imagination is to indulge in the vice of luxury.

Man is sent into this world to do some good to others, to fill some social gap, and to educate his mind, discipline his body, and cultivate his soul. But luxury bids him distract his mind from serious pursuits, and seek distraction as an end. Luxury, instead of bracing, enervates the body, and it neglects the soul, if it does not cover it with stains.

4. Gross indulgence in luxury, and long continuance in luxurious living degrades the heart. The heart is rendered incapable of responding to noble thoughts.

It blinds the mind to Divine things. As the pure in heart see God, the impure have their understanding darkened to Divine things.

It chokes the spiritual life. To the luxurious prayer gives disgust, religious counsel irritates.



It hardens the heart, it leads from sin to sin, till sin becomes a habit, and habit becomes impenitence. Then the grace of God leaves the soul entirely, and spiritually the soul is dead.

## Sixth Friday in Lent

### ENVY.

1. Envy is a sadness which affects the mind on the contemplation of advantage accruing to a fellow-being, and which we resent as though what was his good was our ill. Or else it is a gladness which we feel when we see or hear of some disadvantage happening to a fellow-being. Or again, it may be a dissatisfaction at his having some natural gifts or divine favours accorded to him which we are without, or a satisfaction at his having certain natural defects, faults, or infirmities.

2. There is no sin in the feeling of the heart when we are sad at the success of another, which has not fallen to us, so long as it does not embitter us, and so long as it serves to spur us to activity. *Emulation* is not sinful. On the contrary, God allows of inequalities, in order to stimulate us to use our energies, and exercise our faculties to the utmost. Emulation is only sinful when with it goes loss of charity.

There is no sin in the feeling of the heart when we are sad or wrath at persons obtaining advantages which they do not deserve. This is *Indignation*, and springs out of a wounded sense of justice. But such indignation must not prompt us to disparage, backbite, and injure those who have succeeded without just cause for success.

There is no sin in the feeling of the heart when we are disconcerted at certain persons obtaining positions of trust and authority which we believe they will misuse. This is *Fear of Evil*, and is legitimate. At the same time, as we cannot see the hearts and measure the understandings of others, it is possible we may undervalue them, and that they will do better than we have thought probable.

There is no sin in the feeling of the heart when we feel glad that a person whom we deem unworthy has failed to obtain, or has lost an employment for which he was incapable.

Nor is there anything wrong in the feeling of satisfaction at the punishment of an evil-doer.

3. Envy is that gall of the heart which is the reverse of charity. Envy is bred of self-esteem, and it hates to see others better, happier, more esteemed, more prosperous than self. It is *selfish egoism*, desiring to possess all advantages itself. It is a *baseness of the soul*, which cannot endure to see anything superior to its own mean self. It is a *falsity of judgment*, for it interprets awrong everything done by the person it envies. It is *hypocritical*, for it knows the despicable quality of its emotions, and veils them under all kinds of disguises.

4. It is the most distressing of spiritual maladies. It is to the soul what rust is to iron, canker to a tree, corroding and destroying all happiness, brightness, amiability.

It poisons the entire life.

It is, moreover, the fruitful mother of many sins.

It produces (a) slander, backbiting, malicious words, (b) uncharitable and cruel acts of animosity and vengeance.

It is a vice most hateful to God. "Envy," says Solomon, is "the rottenness of the bones." (Prov. xiv. 30.) "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing," says S. Paul. (1 Cor. xiii. 3.) It is one of the works of the flesh that excludes from the kingdom of God. (Gal. v. 21.) "If ye have

bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not ... this ... is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” (James iii. 15, 16.)

5. One belief among theologians is that the Devil fell through Envy; when he knew for what God had created man, he was filled with jealousy of man, and therefore revolted. As charity is the greatest of virtues, and sweetens and glorifies the whole life, and is that virtue most near to Christ, so is Envy the greatest of vices, souring and darkening the whole life, and bringing most into likeness to the Devil.

## Sixth Saturday in Lent

### GLUTTONY.

1. Gluttony is the vice of greedy love of eating and drinking beyond measure. If it be a love of eating too much it is *greediness*; if a love of eating and drinking only choice and palatable things, then it is *daintiness*. Now God requires us to eat and drink what is necessary for our life and health, and He gives to us a sensation of pleasure in eating and drinking in order to encourage us to eat and drink what is good and healthful.

Gluttony is the opposite vice to the virtue of temperance.

Some people are particular not to drink fermented liquors, but gorge themselves with food. They are quite as guilty of excess in one way as those who drink beyond measure. The gifts of God are bestowed to be used, and used in moderation. To despise and reject any gift of God as in itself bad is to sin against God. So S. Paul speaks of those who forbade meats, and so nowadays some intemperate advocates of temperance forbid all fermented liquors as in themselves bad. Sin does not exist in eating and drinking, but in eating and drinking immoderately.

2. There is sin when (a) one eats and drinks in excess of what nature requires, merely for the sake of the pleasure of eating and drinking.

(b) One eats or drinks with daintiness, picking and choosing, and disparaging food or drink if it be not quite what suits our pampered tastes.

(c) One spends too much time, or thought, or money, over food and drink.

(d) One disorders the health, and confuses the mind, through overmuch eating and drinking.

3. There is a virtue in self-denial in eating and drinking. Our Lord Himself exhorts to fasting (Matt. vi. 16), and Himself set us the example to fast. It must, however, never be done to excess, so as to injure the health. And as it is well to abstain from food, so is it well to abstain from intoxicating drinks, if done merely as an act of self-denial, and to avoid scandal.

4. Gluttony or Drunkenness is the fruitful mother of several evil children.

(a) The *degradation of the superior faculties*, which are weakened by surfeiting and drunkenness. The mind is abased, and the soul smothered by excessive eating and drinking.

(b) *Forgetfulness of Salvation*. The soul becomes so lost in the grossness of the life led by the glutton, and the gourmand, and the drunkard, that it does not care for the things of the life to come.

(c) *Laxity of Morals*. When the thoughts are given up to pampering the animal man in one particular, the power to resist temptation to indulge the animal appetites in other particulars is weakened, if not lost.

(d) *Passion*. The glutton and the drunkard are liable to give way to explosions of rage and anger, to quarrels and discords. Self-restraint being sacrificed in one quarter is lost in another.

# Palm Sunday

## ANGER.

1. Anger is an agitation of the heart against persons or things that displease us, impelling us to reject them and injure them. It urges us to avenge ourselves on them for the wrong they have done, or that we imagine they have done to us.

Anger is not necessarily in itself sinful. It is legitimate when it is just, when the feeling is moderate, when the desire of punishment is proportioned to the offence, and when it is soon passed.

It is sinful when it is *unjust, excessive, vengeful, and lasting*.

We feel angry when we see a wrong done, the weak oppressed, the truth spoken against, religion mocked. Such a feeling is right, it is *righteous zeal*. But Anger must not be allowed to get the dominion over us. That is what the Apostle says when he bids us, "Be ye angry, and sin not."

2. Anger is criminal in its *object*, when it seeks vengeance on a person for a wrong he has not really done, or in excess of his deserts.

Anger is criminal in its *means*, when it goes about to avenge a wrong by some illicit means, as by slander, by bringing hurt upon the person who has given the offence in a secret, underhand way.

Anger is criminal in its *motive*, when it pursues the offender remorselessly, even though he deserves punishment.

Anger is criminal in its *motions*, if they be allowed to pass the bounds of moderation, and obscure the judgment, that is to say, if it become a blazing passion.

Anger is criminal in its *expression*, when it impels to extravagant, insulting, false words, or violent acts.

3. Let us now return to the consideration of the four qualities of Anger that justify or condemn it.

(a) It is sinful if it be *unjust*, and lawful if *just*. We must, therefore, be very careful not to allow our eyes to be blinded by passion so as to judge wrongfully. We are very liable to mistake, and may suppose a thing is done against us intentionally, when it has been done accidentally. We must, therefore, not be impulsive in our Anger.

(b) It is sinful when *excessive*. We must not give way to the feeling of Anger, so as to allow it to grow out of indignation at the sense of wrong done into a hot personal passion that, like a whirlwind, will sweep us away with it.

(c) It is sinful when *vengeful*. God says, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." We must seek only the redress of the wrong, not the injury of the wrong doer. We must seek his good, not his hurt, in the exercise of punishment. That makes all the difference between retribution and revenge.

(d) It is sinful when *lasting*. "Let not the sun go down on your wrath," is S. Paul's rule. If we bear anger and malice in the heart, the longer we harbour it the more unreasonable it grows. Anger must be soon over, ready to die out at once when the opportunity presents itself for forgiveness.

# Monday in Holy Week

## *SLOTH.*

1. Sloth is that love of indolence, or dislike to exertion, which induces man to neglect his duties.

The will is given to man as a determining faculty to impel him to action in the right course, and to hold him back from activity in the wrong direction. Sloth is that inertness which holds back the will from forming a determination, and therefore usually holds man back from fulfilling his duties. It may hold him back from doing what is wrong, and so may be of a negative advantage, and yet it so saps the life of the will as to make it incapable of doing any good, that it would in some cases be better in the end for a man to have chosen what is wrong, and to have repented, than to have remained inert in the presence of a question set before him to decide upon.

It cannot be sufficiently impressed on Christians that they have *positive* duties, that they are not called on to be a kind of moral jelly-fish, but to a life of activity, and of activity healthy and well-directed. It is in order that they may live this life of healthy, well-directed activity, that Conscience is given them. Nor can any man *shirk his duties* without mortal sin, for he is going contrary to the Will of God, and frustrating the intention of God in sending him into the world. There is a place for every man, there is work for every man, a line for every man to walk along, and Conscience to direct, and will to determine, are given to every man to enable him to take his place, do his work, follow his course. He may take the wrong place, do the wrong work, and follow the wrong road, and he sins when he so does. But he also sins, and sins quite as gravely, when he refuses through indolence to take his proper place, and fulfil his predestined duties.

2. Every man has faculties of some sort, and for some end. He has intellectual powers, manual dexterity, a sensitive eye or ear, and so on, and it is the duty of every man to come early and clearly to a perception of what his special abilities are, and then to cultivate them to his utmost. So is he fulfilling God's will. But if he says, "I am a man of private means, there is no occasion for me to exert my intellect to acquire knowledge, to work at painting, study music, follow mechanics," and so he does not develop his natural gift, he sins against God, he is *wasting his talent*, through sloth.

Again, no man is justified in half doing what he is set to do. A good many men and women are content to obtain a smattering of knowledge, and to dabble in the fine arts, to trifle with science, merely so as to be able to chatter in society about these things. But if anyone has a faculty enabling him to do anything; if anyone has a task set him to do, he must do it thoroughly; do it "as unto the Lord, and not unto men." The servant must not half do his work, the tradesman leave the article he turns out unfinished off, nor the man of culture be content with a smattering of knowledge. All must alike *make full exercise* of their talents. What their hands or minds find to do, they must do well, or they sin through the vice of sloth.

3. Sloth is hateful to God. "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence," said Christ. The violent, *i.e.*, the active, take it by storm. The *unprofitable* servant is condemned because he did not put his talent to usury.

The barren fig-tree was cursed because it produced no fruit.

4. Sloth is the fruitful mother of vicious children.

- (a) *Indolence*, and loss of time, and for the use of our time we must give account.
- (b) *Cowardice*, which makes us shrink from doing what is right because we fear it will give us trouble or inconvenience.
- (c) *Inconstancy*, which is the changing about from one course to another, to avoid present discomfort, instead of acting directly in accordance with the principle.
- (d) *Deadness of heart* to God's calls.

## Tuesday in Holy Week

### *THE SACRIFICE FOR SIN.*

1. We have considered Conscience as the faculty by which we discern between Good and Evil, and then have considered Sin itself.

Now we will briefly turn our attention to the Sacrifice offered by Christ in expiation for the Sins of the World.

If Christ had not come to release us of the *guilt* of sin, and to strengthen us to overcome the *weakness* produced by sin, we could have no hope of salvation.

2. It is not a matter on which we will tarry, to ask, Why it is so, but we will accept the fact that by God's Will, *transgression of His Commandment carries with it guilt, and can only be expiated by suffering*. That it should carry with it guilt is indeed not a matter to perplex us, for guilt is the sense of transgression and the privation or stain that attends it, together with the sense of alienation from God. But that sin can only be expiated by suffering, is a law of God concerning which we will not now argue, but accept it. We see that a sense of sin has ever impressed on mankind consciousness of guilt before God, and a conviction that only through suffering could that guilt be done away.

The Sacrifices inexplicable in themselves and even absurd, find their signification in the consciousness of guilt: men felt that they were alienated from God, sinful before God, and they sought by Sacrifice, *i.e.*, by suffering, to atone for their guilt.

The *idea of Sacrifice* contained in it these elements:

(a) It must be one of *blood*. Suffering and the shedding of blood was considered expiatory. "Without shedding of blood was no remission." (Heb. ix. 22.)

(b) It must be either a *human* sacrifice, or it must be the sacrifice of that which was most useful, essential to man: not of a wild beast, for instance, but of a tame beast of domestic utility.

(c) It must be *innocent* and pure, without defect or spot. It was sometimes the first-born lamb or calf.

(d) It must be, if possible, *voluntary*. A Sacrifice was thought to lose half its efficacy unless it were a free-will offering. Among Greeks and Romans, water was poured into the ears of oxen brought to sacrifice, to make them nod their heads, and so give an appearance of consent to their death.

(e) It must be in part consumed by the fire, in part by the offerer. The fire was the symbol of God accepting; the participation in the sacrifice showed the man who offered that he received the benefits of the Sacrifice.

3. Sacrifice was not only expiatory, but it was also *vicarious*; that is to say, from the beginning man saw that the innocent might die for the guilty. Now this could only be so seen because indistinctly the human Conscience looked to the One Sinless Victim Who would by His Sacrifice of Himself, put away the sins of the world. But for this it would have been unreasonable.

It was, however, an universal belief that the just might suffer for the unjust, the blameless for the guilty, and that was why the sacrificer sought out the spotless victim as the victim.



This belief also was the occasion of numerous sublime heroic acts of self-devotion in the heathen world, when one man offered himself for the fault of all the people: as when Codrus died for his people, Curtius plunged into the gulf in the Forum, Decius offered his breast to the weapons of his enemies.

It was this belief which caused sacrifices to be multiplied, and yet it was certain that these numerous sacrifices never really took away the sense of guilt that weighed on mankind. "The law, having the shadow of good things to come, and not the very image (*i.e.*, reality) of the things, can never with these sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered, because that the worshippers once purged should have no more conscience of sin. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance (or recapitulation) again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." (Heb. x. 1-4.)

## Wednesday in Holy Week

### *THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.*

1. As the sin of the world was infinite, it was not possible that any sacrifice that man could offer could put away the guilt of sin.

Therefore our Lord Jesus Christ came down from Heaven to make a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice for sin. He died the Just for the unjust, the Sinless for the guilty, to reconcile us to God by the taking away of the guilt of our transgression.

2. Christ sacrificed for this purpose everything that He had, withholding nothing, so that the oblation might be complete. In the Garden of Olives He yielded up His Soul to sorrow even unto death, feeling the natural shrinking from death; endured the revulsion and loathing that accompanied the sense of the vileness and hatefulness of the sins He took upon Him; and by the sense of pain that the presence of sin brings on the soul.

He suffered the bereavement of friends, their cowardice and desertion; the betrayal by Judas, the denial by Peter.

He suffered the privation of His liberty, for He was made fast, and was dragged away by the soldiers and servants.

Before His judges He suffered in His honour. He was buffeted and mocked, and smitten in the face, and spit upon, and exposed to the multitude as a criminal.

He suffered in His reputation. The robber, Barabbas, was chosen in His place.

He was publicly condemned as a criminal. He was made to bear His Cross, and was crucified between two thieves.

He suffered in His Body. He was scourged. He was crowned with thorns, and then smitten over the head. He was tormented by the driving of the nails through His hands and feet. He was tortured by suspension on the Cross; by thirst and fever.

He was despoiled of His garments, and exposed in nakedness to the derision of His enemies.

He was deprived of the succour of His mother, and of His faithful friends in the agony of death.

Finally, He gave up His life, when He had suffered in every way He could suffer, and with a loud cry died.

3. Our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross by His suffering *expiated* our guilt.

Our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross died as a *vicarious* sacrifice for us.

# Thursday in Holy Week

## *THE EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE.*

We will consider Christ's Sacrifice in its relation to God and in its relation to man.

1. In relation to God, it was a full and sufficient sacrifice satisfying the Divine Justice.

A satisfaction is, in general, the voluntary reparation made to one who has been injured or wronged. It may be equivalent to the wrong, when the reparation is equal in degree to the offence. It may be suitable when it is proportioned to the powers of him who offers the atonement.

The satisfaction due to God from man could never have been equivalent to the injury or wrong done; therefore Christ made atonement, and His Sacrifice is equivalent, for it is in proportion to the offence; as the offence is infinitely great, so is His satisfaction infinite in its greatness.

An offence is more or less grave according to the exaltation of the person offended. And an expiation is more or less full and perfect according to the dignity of the person who offers expiation. Now God was offended by man's sin; and it is the God-Man Who makes atonement for that sin.

The distance between God and man was so great that no man could possibly, even measurably, have approached God and made satisfaction for his grave offence. Moreover, the sum of offences was so great that nothing in the world could atone for it.

2. Our Lord Jesus Christ by His Sacrifice for sins became our *Expiation*. "When He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a Body hast Thou prepared Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast no pleasure: Then said I, Lo, I come to do Thy Will (to make a free-will offering), O God. Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering ... Thou wouldest not ... which was offered by the Law; then said I, Lo, I come to do Thy Will (to make a free-will offering), O God. He taketh away the first (the symbolic Sacrifice) that He may establish the second (the full, perfect, free-will Sacrifice of Christ)." (Heb. x. 5-9.)

He became our *Substitute*. "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (1 Pet. iii. 18.) "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us—He took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross." (Col. i. 14.)

He became our *Redemption*. "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Pet. i. 18, 19.)

3. Thus we see that Christ, by His full and voluntary Sacrifice of Himself, by His incomparable sufferings and death, made atonement to God for the transgressions we had committed against Him, thus removing the barrier that stood between the just and righteous God and man. That He suffered in our place; a vicarious victim enduring the wrath of God, and the pains due to us for our transgression of God's law. And that He paid the price whereby we were bought back out of servitude to evil, and set at liberty to serve God in freedom.

# Good Friday

## *THE EFFECTS OF THE PASSION.*

(Continued.)

1. The satisfaction offered by our Lord Jesus Christ was perfect.

His offering was a *free will* one. He came down from Heaven to redeem men. "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." (John x. 17, 18.) Although His human will recoiled from the prospect of humiliation and death, yet He submitted it to the Divine Will, "Not Mine, but Thine be done."

It was *complete*, and fulfilled all the requirements of justice. None but God Himself could offer a complete and perfect atonement for the mass of transgressions committed against God.

2. By His Sacrifice for sin, our Lord Jesus Christ has *redeemed* us from sin, taken away from us the stain of sin. "Jesus Christ ... Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." (Rev. i. 5.) Consequently our sins are no more imputed to us. They have been cancelled. We are no more under wrath, but are children of God. He has *delivered us from the power of sin*. He that committeth sin is the servant of sin. (John viii. 34.) He has delivered us from the power of sin. Sin hath no more dominion over us. We are no longer under sin, but under grace. By nature we were in bondage to Satan, who held men in hard servitude, with no power of escape from it, but by Christ's redemption we have been brought out of the Egypt of bondage, and set in the glorious liberty of the children of God. We are, as S. Paul says, "made free from sin." We are, by the merits of Christ's atonement, placed in the same position in which Adam was before he fell. And if we fall after we have been placed in a state of grace, we fall by our own fault.

*He has delivered us from the chastisement due for our sins.* All sin entails punishment. But Christ has not only taken from us the guilt of sin, but also to a large extent the suffering due as a penalty for sin. Not indeed wholly, as it is necessary for our education that we should still feel pain if we transgress a law, but He has removed all save what is necessary for our discipline. Sin indeed deserved eternal separation from God, as it was an alienation from God, it must have led further and further away from Him into outer darkness and eternal death. But Christ has delivered us from this. He is always ready to restore us to our former position in the way of salvation.

3. By the Sacrifice of Christ's death, the expiation is *universal*. That is to say, Christ made atonement for the sins of the whole world. He did all that was necessary to redeem the souls of those already dead, of those then alive, but also of all those who should live in ages to come. He did not die for the Jews only, or for the Gentiles only, or for only a few elect, but for all mankind, that all mankind might be saved.

How is it then that some are lost? It is because all will not accept His redemption; they refuse the benefits He offers, reject His precious blood, and will have nothing to do with His salvation. Brought, may be, out of darkness into light, they go back into thralldom to the Evil One, trample on God's mercy, and wilfully resist Him. Grace and pardon are offered to all, but all will not receive.

No man, not even the heathen, is lost eternally, except by wilful opposition to what he knows to be the truth. Some may have little light, others have more, but whosoever will follow his light as far as it shines, he will not have his shortcomings imputed to him, but through the abounding mercy and merits of Jesus Christ will be saved.

# Easter Eve

## *THE APPLICATION OF THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.*

1. Having seen how Christ made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, we will now see how we can apply the merits of His Sacrifice to our own souls, to *cleanse* them from dead works, and to *strengthen* them for obedience in His service.

2. The *atonement blood of Christ is applied in the Sacraments*. First, in the Sacrament of Baptism the blood of Christ is the efficient cause of the neophyte passing out of the bondage of Satan into the Kingdom of God. By that blood we obtain remission of original sin.

But we sin after Baptism. How is past baptismal sin to be effaced?

(a) There must be a *right disposition* on our part. We must *come to a knowledge* of our sinful state; then we must *bitterly grieve* over our transgression, and we must then *resolve not to sin again*; in other words, knowing our sin we must acknowledge it, be contrite, and have full purpose of amendment. These three elements go to make up *true repentance*. And without true repentance there can be no pardon accorded us.

(b) When there is this right disposition, then we must *plead the Sacrifice of Christ's death*. This we do in the way Christ Himself appointed, by the oblation of the Holy Eucharist. In this we show forth the Lord's death till He come. In this we offer up before God the atoning blood of Christ in expiation for our offences. Then we go before the Throne of the Eternal Father, and righteous Judge; we show that we are ourselves in the right disposition, *i.e.*, truly repentant, we acknowledge our offences, show Him that we bewail them, earnestly entreat for grace to amend, and then plead that all-prevailing Sacrifice, through which alone our repentance can be accepted.

(c) But all prayer is an echo of the great Eucharistic Sacrifice, for all prayer is offered through the name, the merits, and mediation of Jesus Christ. Prayer is availing, because we have access to the Father through Christ.

3. *The Sacrifice of Christ obtains for us strength*, and this is distributed to us in the Sacraments. At the Lord's table we are strengthened and refreshed with the Body and Blood of Christ, enabled through Him to resist temptation, overcome natural weakness, grow strong in His grace, and attain to the likeness of Christ. We should have no help from above were it not that Christ has won it for us by His Sacrifice.

Thus through Jesus Christ, we who were sometime aliens are brought nigh to God, made the children of God, and perfected unto the Day of the Lord.

THE END

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