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ST. BERNARD'S, SERMONS  
ON THE  
CANTICLE OF CANTICLES





# ST. BERNARD'S SERMONS

ON THE

## CANTICLE OF CANTICLES

*TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN*

BY

A PRIEST OF MOUNT MELLERAY

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# ST. BERNARD'S SERMONS

## ON THE

### CANTICLE OF CANTICLES.

#### SERMON XLIV.

##### ON THE MYSTICAL OIL AND WINE.

*'A cluster of Cyprus is my Love to me in the vineyard of Engaddi.'*

'A CLUSTER of Cyprus \* is my Love to me.' If the Bride loves her Bridegroom in the bitterness of the myrrh, how much more in the sweetness of the cyprus-cluster? My Lord Jesus Christ, then, is as myrrh to me in His death, and in His resurrection as a cluster of delicious grapes. In this way He has made Himself

\* "Botrus cypri"—*βότρυς τῆς κύπρου*. This expression appears to have given the commentators a great deal of trouble. Of Hebrew scholars, some understand by cyprus the camphor-tree, an aromatic shrub found in India; others take it to mean the palm tree. Christian exegetists are also divided. According to Origen the Greek *βότρυς τῆς κύπρου* is equivalent to *βότρυς κυπριάζων*, which signifies a "flowering branch." Bede regards cyprus as synonymous with balsam. Delrio thinks that by the "cluster of cyprus" is meant a cluster of Engaddi grapes, which are peculiarly flavoured from their vicinity to the odoriferous tree called cyprus. But the most simple and natural interpretation is that given by St. Gregory the Great, according to which the "cluster of cyprus" means a cluster of grapes from a vine imported from the island of Cyprus, where the best vines are found. This is the view held by St. Bernard, St. Anselm, Cassiodorus, etc. A Lapide mentions St. Bernard as favouring the opinion of Bede, but with how little reason a perusal of this sermon will show.—(Translator.)

for me a most salutary draught, and has given me for my drink "tears in measure." He died "for our sins and rose again for our justification," to the end "that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice." Hence, my brethren, if you have wept over your sins, you have thereby drunk the pungent draught of myrrh; but its bitterness has been changed for you into the wine which "cheereth the heart of man," if you are now established in the hope of a more perfect life. And perhaps it was thus, as a symbol of penance, that the Saviour was offered myrrh upon the cross. He refused to drink it, however, to teach us that the cup He now thirsted for was the bliss of a glorious resurrection. You also, as I have said, whilst you enjoy the wine of gladness after the bitter potion of affliction, may confidently exclaim, "A cluster of cyprus is my Love to me in the vineyards of Engaddi." This word "Engaddi" has a manifold signification. But the various senses complete each other, and can be combined in one adequate interpretation. It may mean "the Fountain of the Kid," or "the Baptism of the Gentiles," and thus manifestly has reference to the tears of penitence; another meaning is "the Eye for Temptation." Now, the eye that sheds the tears, the same it is that discovers the temptations, which, in truth, are never wanting to the life of man upon earth. For the gentile peoples, who walked in darkness, were unable to detect the snares of the tempter, and consequently to avoid them, until, through the grace of Him Who giveth sight to the blind, they were endowed with the vision of faith, until they entered the Church which has "the eye for temptation," until they submitted themselves for instruction to persons of virtuous life, who,

enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom and taught by their own experience, can truthfully say with St. Paul that they are not ignorant of Satan's deceits and devices.

We are told that Engaddi produces balsam-bearing shrubs, which the natives cultivate and dress after the manner of vines. And perhaps it is to these the Spouse refers when she speaks of the vineyards of Engaddi. For otherwise what would be the meaning of a "cluster of Cyprus in the vineyards of Engaddi"? Who ever thought of carrying clusters of grapes from one vineyard to another? It is only to places, which produce no wine that wine is wont to be brought. Therefore, in the mystical sense, we are to understand by the vineyards of Engaddi the different branches of the Catholic Church, which abounds in the spirit of mildness, as in the sweetness of balsam, wherewith she lovingly fosters the tenderness of such as are still but little ones in Christ, and soothes the sufferings of her penitents. And if any brother should have the misfortune to fall into sin, the priests of the Church, imitating their mother's example, shall take care to "instruct such a one in the (same) spirit of mildness, considering themselves, lest they also be tempted." It is to typify this spiritual balsam that the Church is accustomed to anoint with material oil the bodies of all whom she admits to baptism.

But inasmuch as that poor man who "fell among robbers," and who was carried rather in the arms than on the beast of the Good Samaritan to the inn of the Church, had his wounds healed and his health restored not by means of oil alone, but through oil and wine; therefore the spiritual physician has need



to provide himself with the wine of burning zeal as well as with the oil of mercy. For to correct the froward is quite as much a part of his duty as to encourage the pusillanimous. Thus, should he observe that the wounded man, that is, the brother who has committed sin, derives no benefit from the mild and loving exhortations addressed to him, but is rather abusing his patience and clemency and taking occasion therefrom to grow more remiss and to lull his conscience to sleep in greater security ; he must desist from using the oil of gentle admonition, which has proved ineffectual, and apply the sharper remedy of the mordant wine. I mean to say, such obstinate transgressors have to be reproved and reprimanded with great severity. Even the rod of ecclesiastical censure ought to be wielded to chastise the contemner of authority, whenever the occasion requires and gentler methods are found unavailing. But whence is this wine to be obtained ? For the vineyards of Engaddi yield only oil. We must seek it in Cyprus, in that island which abounds with wine, and wine of the very best quality. Thence must we carry off an immense cluster of grapes, such as that which was brought from the Promised Land by the spies of Israel, hung upon a pole between two bearers, and thus presenting a most beautiful image of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who came to us preceded by the prophets and followed by the apostles. He, therefore, who obtains such a cluster, can say with all confidence, " A cluster of Cyprus is my Love to me in the vineyards of Engaddi."

I have now said enough concerning the cluster. Let us next consider how the wine of holy zeal is to be pressed therefrom. When a man, who is himself but

a sinner, sees another committing some fault, if he feels his heart overflow with charity as with oil of the sweetest balsam, and, instead of showing indignation, manifests towards the offending brother an affection of tender compassion, we know whence this kindness comes and you have already heard, though perhaps without due attention. I have said in a preceding discourse that it is from a consideration of ourselves we learn to be gentle with others. For in order to "instruct in the spirit of meekness" the brother who has been "overtaken in any fault," it is necessary, according to the wise prescription of St. Paul, that "thou shouldst consider thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Indeed, is not this regard to self the very root of that fraternal charity enjoined in the law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"? For it is quite certain that our love for our fellow-men has its source deep down amongst the most intimate and primordial feelings of the human heart, and that it is from the instinctive, natural affection wherewith each loves himself, as from a vivifying, soil-sprung sap, it draws the nourishment and energy by which, under the influence of heavenly grace, it is enabled to bring forth the fruits of piety, causing us to esteem it a duty not to deny to any of those who participate in our nature, I mean to any man, the good which, by natural necessity, we desire for ourselves; but rather to share it with all, freely and spontaneously, according to our capacity and the wants of our brethren, as if they were entitled to such communication by belonging to the same human family. From human nature, therefore, as it was in its sinlessness, is derived that balsam of sweet and delightful savour. And its presence should

be revealed in the disposition, felt and made manifest, rather to pity than reproach the transgressor.

But sin has played havoc with our natural benignity, just as, in the words of the Wise Man, "Dying flies spoil the sweetness of the ointment." And because we have not in ourselves wherewith to repair the damage done, by a most lamentable change we find ourselves fallen to that condition of which Holy Scripture truly says, "The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth." Nothing good, therefore, but something evil is designated by the youthfulness of that younger son who demands the sequestration of his own portion of the patrimony, and wants a division of the inheritance which would be more sweetly enjoyed in common, yea, who would have exclusive possession of that which communication does not diminish, but which is lost when divided. For it is written that "he wasted his substance living riotously" with evil companions. Who are these evil companions? It seems to me that by them, as by the "dying flies" which "spoil the ointment" of our innocence, we are to understand our carnal passions, against which Holy Scripture most wisely warns us, where it says, "Go not after thy lusts." And very properly are the "flies" represented as "dying," since "the world passeth away and the concupiscence thereof." Thus, by endeavouring to secure to ourselves the private and personal good of sensual gratification, we forfeit the enjoyment of the sweeter good which is social and communal.\* But how filthy and venomous

\* See Sermon XXIII, where this same subject is more fully treated. What the Saint wants to impress upon us here is that all sin is selfishness.—(Translator.)



must these flies of passion be, seeing that they can so destroy the original beauty of our nature, so torment our minds with cares and anxieties, so "spoil the sweetness of the ointment" of social love and good fellowship! Hence, in the Gospel, man is called the "younger son," because having degraded his nature by following the lusts of his thoughtless youth, he lost all the vital sap of virile sobriety and prudence. As a consequence, his soul has been dried up and abandoned to bitterness, so that he now despises everyone except himself, "being without affection."

Accordingly, from the very beginning of this his most unholy and most unhappy youth, "the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil," and his fallen nature more inclined to anger than to pity. Indeed, it may be said that man has put off his nature completely, inasmuch as he is unwilling that other men should receive in their necessities the assistance which he would not have denied himself in his own. A man himself and a sinner, he nevertheless judges, despises, and scorns other men who are sinners, "not considering himself, lest he also be tempted." From this deplorable condition, as I have already remarked, human nature will never of itself be able to rise, nor can it recover unaided the ointment of spontaneous benignity, the sweetness whereof has been spoiled by sin. But grace can accomplish what is impossible to nature. Whomsoever, therefore, the Holy Spirit by His unction deigns out of compassion to re-invest in his original and natural kindliness, *he* shall be restored forthwith to the integrity of his manhood, yea, shall receive from grace a perfection more sublime than ever belonged to his nature. For



“ He shall sanctify him in faith and meekness,” and shall give him not ointment only, but also balsam “ in the vineyards of Engaddi.”

To me it seems evident that the “ better gifts ” flow from the “ fountain of the kid,” by being washed in which the kids are transformed into lambs, and sinners transferred from the left hand to the right, in order that “ where sin abounded, grace might more abound.” And you also, my brethren, do you not suppose that he may be regarded as reinstated in his manhood, who, having laid aside the ferocity of a worldly disposition and recovered, even with the added unguent of grace, the ointment of human gentleness, so utterly spoiled by the “ dying flies ” of carnal concupiscence, discovers now in the very human nature in which he participates, or rather which he is, the motive and the measure of the meekness to be exercised towards other men, and recoils in horror, as from the open jaws of a wild beast, from the bare thought not only of doing to any man the evil he would not have done to himself, but even of omitting to do to all the good he wishes done to himself ? This, as I believe, is the source of the oil. But whence comes the wine ? Unquestionably from the “ cluster of Cyprus.” For if you love the Lord Jesus with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with all your strength, can you possibly restrain your feelings when you behold Him exposed to insult and injury ? No, surely not. Rather each one of you, carried away by the spirit of righteousness and the spirit of zeal, “ like a mighty man that hath been surfeited with wine,” and inflamed with the holy ardour of Phinees, shall say with the Psalmist, “ My zeal hath made me pine away, because my enemies forgot Thy words,”

and with the Saviour, "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up." Fervent zeal, therefore, is this wine, pressed from the cluster of Cyprus; for an inebriating chalice is the love of Christ. "Our God," so we read, "is a consuming fire," and the Prophet Jeremias declares that "from above He hath sent fire into my bones," because he was all inflamed with divine charity. Having, then, the oil of meekness from the love of your neighbour, and the wine of zeal from your love of God, you may securely undertake to heal the wounds of the man who "fell among robbers," being fully qualified to act the part of the Good Samaritan. Securely also can you say with the Spouse, "A cluster of Cyprus is my Love to me in the vineyards of Engaddi." That is to say, "the zeal of justice is the love of my Beloved to me amidst the affections of fraternal piety."

Let so much suffice for the present. As often on other occasions, so now also my weakness obliges me to break off. You know yourselves, my brethren, how frequently I am thus compelled to interrupt my discourses and to reserve their completion for another day. But am I complaining? No, no! "I am ready for scourges," knowing well that what I suffer is far less than my deserts. Let Him scourge me by all means, let Him scourge me, I repeat, as a wicked servant, provided only my stripes be accounted as merits. Perchance after punishment I may obtain mercy from Him Who can find in me no good to reward, the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XLV.

### ON THE TWOFOLD BEAUTY OF THE SOUL AND THE LANGUAGE EMPLOYED BETWEEN HERSELF AND HER BELOVED.

*“ Behold thou art fair, O My love, behold thou art fair, thy eyes are as those of doves.*

*“ Behold thou art fair, my Beloved, and comely.”*

“ Behold thou art fair, O My love, behold thou art fair, thy eyes are as those of doves.” How beautiful, my brethren, how admirable ! Love is the cause of the Bride’s presumption, and the cause of the Bridegroom’s severity is also love. This is manifest from the event. For presumption has been followed by correction, correction by amendment, and now amendment obtains its reward. Dignity is put off, reverence is forgotten, the Master is gone, the Monarch has retired, only the Lover is present. Thus, wherever love reigns supreme, there is no room for pomp and ceremony. And just as of old Moses spoke to the Lord “ as a man is wont to speak to his friend,” and the Lord replied to him, so here the Word Divine and the holy soul, like two intimates, converse familiarly together. Nor should this surprise us. For the same power of love binds them together in mutual affection and leads them to delight in each other’s company. Sweeter than honey, therefore, are the words that pass between them ; the very glances they interchange are full of tenderest feeling and speak the language of holy love. The Bridegroom calls the Bride His love, He pronounces



her fair and that with reiteration, whilst she, in her turn, addresses Him in the very same terms. Such repetition is not without meaning. It points to the intensity of their mutual love. Perhaps it also points to some mystical truth which we shall do well to investigate.

Now, it appears to me that the repetition of the epithet "fair" in my present text implies the existence of a twofold loveliness in the soul. Let us therefore inquire what this double beauty may be. Humility is beyond question one principle of spiritual beauty. I am not saying this of myself. The inspired Psalmist has said the same before me. "Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop," so he sang, "and I shall be cleansed." Hyssop, which is a lowly herb valued for its medicinal properties, symbolises humility. It was by this virtue, then, that the Royal Prophet hoped to be purified after his terrible fall, and to recover the snowy whiteness of his former innocence. Even in a sinner, humility has doubtless wherewith to attract our love, but it can hardly excite our wonder: it is amiable without being admirable. But if he who has preserved his innocence should likewise show himself humble, will you not allow that such a one is adorned with two kinds of spiritual beauty? \* The Blessed Virgin Mary never

\* It is this twofold spiritual beauty of humility with innocence that Our Lord is commending to His followers where He says, "When you have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which we ought." The reason why the innocent find it hard to be humble, as the Saint implies (p. 13), can only be ignorance of the proper motive of humility, which is not consciousness of sin—that being only subsidiary—but the condition of utter and absolute dependence, essential to every created nature. Now, such dependence is not lessened by preservation from sin, for this is only a very special mercy of God; and, according to



soiled her first sanctity, yet was never otherwise than humble; and therefore "the King hath desired her beauty," which resulted from this union of humility with innocence. So she sings in her canticle, "He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid." Therefore, "Blessed is he that keepeth his garments clean," that is, the robes of innocence and simplicity, if yet he be careful to set them off with the ornament of humility. Certainly, the soul that is such shall hear herself addressed in the words, "Behold thou art fair, my beloved, behold thou art fair." Lord Jesus, how I wish that Thou couldst say to this soul of mine, even once and without reiteration, "Behold thou art fair!" How I wish that Thou wouldst help me to maintain myself in humility! My first robe of innocence I have soiled by sinning. Therefore, I can only say, "I am Thy servant." For I dare not presume to call myself Thy friend, unworthy as I am to hear Thee bearing repeated testimony to my beauty, and saying, "Behold thou art fair, O my love, behold thou art fair." Well content should I feel wert Thou even once to call me fair. But what if this also should be beyond my desert? "I know what I will do." Being but a slave myself, I will reverence her who is Thy beloved. A miserable

St. Augustine, there is no crime committed by any man which every other would not be capable of except for grace.

The Fathers appear to be unanimous in understanding the repetition "Behold thou art fair, O my love, behold thou art fair," of two distinct kinds of spiritual beauty. But they differ in explaining what these are. According to St. Gregory the Great the two beauties are the love of God and the love of our neighbour; St. Anselm makes them to be holiness of soul and holiness of body, referring to the words of St. Paul, "holy in body and in spirit" (1 Cor. vii. 34); Hugh of St. Victor interprets them to mean Our Lady's virginity and humility; whilst Rupert understands them of her virginity and maternity.—(Translator.)

wretch, full of deformity, I will occupy myself with admiring her multiplied beauties. I will exult and be glad at the sound of the Bridegroom's voice, marvelling at its ravishing sweetness. Who knows but I may so find favour in the eyes of the Spouse, and be numbered for her sake amongst the friends of her Beloved? For "the friend of the Bridegroom, who standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth with joy because of the Bridegroom's voice." Behold, His voice is now sounding in the ears of His Spouse. Let us listen and be glad. The Bridegroom and the Bride are present to each other. They converse together. Let us stand by. Let no worldly cares, no allurements of the flesh be allowed to distract our attention from this sacred colloquy.

"Behold thou art fair, O my love," says He, "behold thou art fair." The first word here, "behold," is expressive of admiration, the others of praise. And surely she is well worthy of admiration, in whom not the loss but the preservation of sanctity furnished the motive of humility. Rightly, too, is she pronounced to be fair, as being adorned with the double beauty of humility and innocence. Such a combination is rarely found on earth, for either innocence is lost, or, where it is preserved, humility is excluded. Consequently she is truly blessed in whom both are found coexistent. She is proved to be innocent in that she is conscious to herself of nothing, and humble because she has willingly endured correction. What a contrast, my brethren, between this Spouse and ourselves! We can hardly bear to be reproved, even when we are guilty of grave offences; whereas she, although blameless, submits with humble patience to the bitterness of reproach. For surely there was nothing wrong in

the desire she expressed to see her Bridegroom's glory. Rather it was deserving of praise. Nevertheless, on being reprimanded she does penance, and exclaims, "A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me, He shall abide between my breasts." As if she should say, "It is enough for me. I wish to know nothing henceforth but 'Jesus and Him crucified.'" O admirable humility! She who never contracted the stain of sin assumes the disposition of a penitent! She who has done nothing needing to be atoned for, yet does not dispense herself from making atonement! You may ask, why she is rebuked if she has done no evil. My answer shall commend the providence and the prudence of the Bridegroom, so be attentive. Just as of old the Lord tried the obedience of Abraham, so now He puts to the test the humility of His Spouse.

~ And as the Patriarch, after proving his obedience, heard addressed to him the words, "Now I know that thou fearest God," so the Bride receives here a similar testimony to her humility, though expressed in different words. For the encomium, "Behold thou art fair," is intended to signify something like this, "Now I know that thou art humble." And the compliment is repeated in order to indicate that the beauty of humility has been added to the glory of innocence. Thus the Bridegroom seems to say, "Now I know that thou art beautiful, not only by reason of My grace and love, but also through the merit of thine own humility. I do not now pronounce thee to be fair among women, or beautiful in thy cheeks or neck only, as I did before. But I proclaim thee beautiful, simply and absolutely, not relatively beautiful, not beautiful with qualification or distinction."



The Bridegroom goes on to say, "Thy eyes are as those of doves." This plainly is another commendation of the Bride's humility. For it is intended to reward the docility she showed when, having been corrected for her presumption in inquiring into things too sublime, she immediately descended to the lowliness that became her, and said, "A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me." There is surely a vast difference between the vision of glory which she asked for before and the bundle of myrrh which now contents her. Hence it is a sign of no ordinary humility to be willing to receive the latter grace instead of the former. It is by such acquiescence that she has earned the eulogy, "Thy eyes are as those of doves." "Now," we may fancy the Bridegroom saying to her, "now thou art not 'walking in great matters nor in wonderful things above' thee. Like the dove, thou art satisfied with what is lowly; and just as that most simple of birds builds her nest in the fissures of the rock, so dost thou abide in My Wounds, contemplating Me with thy dove-like eyes, at least in the mysteries of My Incarnation and Passion."

But perhaps it is her spirituality rather than her simplicity that the Bridegroom wishes to commend by comparing her eyes to those of a dove, because we read in St. Matthew how the Holy Spirit once revealed Himself under the image of that bird. If anyone prefers to adopt this view, it will be necessary to connect our present text with the words of the Bridegroom's companions, spoken a little before, wherein they promised to make for the Spouse "chains of gold inlaid with silver." There is here no question of ornaments for the body, as I have already explained, but only of



instruction for the ears of the mind. It is therefore possible that, her heart being more perfectly purified by the faith which comes from hearing, she has now the power to see what before was beyond her capacity. And since the gift of the golden chains appears thus to have improved her faculty of spiritual perception, she has been advanced in the Bridegroom's favour. For, so far as He is concerned, He always takes special pleasure in the soul which has learned to contemplate Him in the spirit. Hence He is but adding to her other merits this progress in spiritual discernment when He declares to His Spouse, "Thy eyes are as those of doves." "Regard Me no longer," He seems to say, "according to the flesh, but according to the spirit, because 'a Spirit before thy face is Christ the Lord.' And thou hast now the capacity for such contemplation, inasmuch as 'thy eyes are as those of doves.' Before thou wert wanting in this higher faculty, and therefore it was that thou didst meet with repulse. But now since 'thy eyes are as those of doves,' that is to say, spiritual, thou art permitted to enjoy the spiritual vision of Me, not indeed in the fulness which thou hast solicited, but in a degree proportionate to thy present capacity. It is necessary that thou shouldst be led on gradually 'from glory to glory.' Therefore, exert to the utmost the faculty thou now possessest; when thou hast attained to greater power, a higher vision shall be granted thee."

I do not suppose, my brethren—I am very far from supposing—that this spiritual vision of Christ is either common to all or of but little importance, although it is inferior to that which is reserved for the life to come. Its dignity can be estimated from the words

which follow. The Spouse is now speaking, and she says in reply, "Behold Thou art fair, my Beloved, and comely." You perceive, my brethren, how wonderfully she has been exalted, and to what lofty heights she has lifted her gaze, since she thus, as by incommunicable right, claims as her Beloved the Lord of the universe. You will take notice how she does not speak of Him simply as *the* Beloved, but calls Him "*my* Beloved," as if wishing to assert her special prerogative. Assuredly that must be a noble vision which has raised the Spouse to such a degree of confidence and dignity that in the Lord of all she no longer recognises a Lord but a Lover. There is here, as I think, no need or use for material, sense-transmitted images of Christ's Flesh or cross, or any other representations which belong to the weakness of His mortality. For there "is no beauty nor comeliness in Him," comparatively, when so considered. When, therefore, the Spouse, after contemplating her Beloved in this vision, declares Him to be both beautiful and comely, she gives us to understand that He has manifested Himself to her in some more excellent and spiritual way. For to His Spouse, as of old to Moses, He speaks face to face; and to her, as to the Law-giver, it is given to see God openly and not in signs and symbols. And just as He has revealed Himself to her contemplation, in a vision as sweet as it was sublime, so do her words describe Him. Her "eyes have seen the King in His beauty," yet not as a King but as a Lover. Isaias "saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and elevated." Another prophet also testifies that He even beheld Him face to face. Yet it seems to me that the Spouse has been more highly favoured

than either, because to them He showed Himself as the Lord, whereas He appeared to her as a Bridegroom. "I saw the Lord," writes Isaias, "sitting upon a throne, high and elevated, and His train filled the temple." And Jacob exclaims, "I have seen God face to face, and my soul hath been saved." But in the Prophet Malachy we read, "If I be a Master, where is My fear? saith the Lord of Hosts." Hence the revelations vouchsafed the prophets always inspired them with terror, for where the Lord is there must be the fear of Him. For my part, then, were the choice given me, I would gladly and lovingly choose that vision of Him wherein He appears as a Bridegroom; because as charity is nobler than fear, so is this manifestation more excellent than the others. "Fear hath pain," as you have read in St. John, "but perfect charity casteth out fear." Surely, then, there is a very great difference between that vision where the Lord appears "terrible in His counsels over the sons of men," and that where He shows Himself "beautiful above the sons of men." "Behold," cries the Spouse on beholding Him in His character of Bridegroom, "behold Thou art fair, my Beloved, and comely." There is nothing here indicative of terror, but every word is redolent of charity.

But perhaps "thoughts are arising in your hearts," and you are asking yourselves in perplexity, "How is this? In what sense are we to understand that the Word Divine addresses words to the soul, and that she replies with words of her own so that she can hear His voice proclaiming her beautiful, and returns His salute immediately with the self-same eulogy? 'How can this be done?' We indeed employ words



to speak, but not so He Who is Himself the Word of the Father. Neither can the soul make use of words unless she employs the corporeal mouth to fashion and utter them." Such, my brethren, are the doubts which you may find suggested to your thoughts and not unreasonably. But remember that it is the Holy Spirit Who speaks, and that the words which He utters must be spiritually interpreted. Whenever, therefore, you either hear or read of the Word and the soul conversing together or holding communication by means of amorous looks, be on your guard against conceiving anything like an interchange of external words or glances, just as you would not suppose the two corporally present to each other. Listen, whilst I try to explain what thoughts such language should suggest to your minds. The Word is a Spirit and the soul is a spirit, and they both have their own spiritual tongues wherewith they converse together and manifest their presence to each other. The tongue of the Word is the grace of His condescension, whilst that of the soul is the fervour of her devotion. Hence, the soul which is indeavour, as being tongueless and speechless, has no means of entering into conversation with the Word. Now, it is impossible for the soul not to hear, when the Word, wishing to speak to her, sets this spiritual tongue of His in motion ; " for the Word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword ; and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit." Much less, on the other hand, can the Word fail to catch what is spoken by the soul, both because He is everywhere present, and also for the reason that the tongue of her devotion can never move at all, except under the impulse of His inspiring grace.



When, therefore, we are told that the Word speaks to the soul, saying to her, "Thou art fair," and calling her His love, we must take the meaning to be that He gives her the grace to love and the confidence to presume that she is loved in return. And when she, on her side, is represented as addressing Him as her Beloved and pronouncing Him comely, the sense is that without fraud or deceit she ascribes her love of Him and His love of her to His unmerited bounty, admiring His goodness and marvelling at His beauty. This beauty of the Bridegroom is nothing else than His love of the Bride, a love which is all the greater for that it is prevenient. Realising, therefore, that He was her Lover before He was her Beloved, she cries out from the inmost recesses of her soul, with all the tenderest affections of her heart, that her love for Him must be the more ardent and strong because of its having been anticipated. Thus, the speech of the Word is the infusion of His grace; the reply of the soul, admiration and thanksgiving. She loves Him the more, the more she sees herself outdone in loving. And she marvels the more, the more she sees herself prevented by His grace. Therefore, not content with having once pronounced Him "fair" she also proclaims Him "comely," intending by the addition to signify the perfection of His beauty.

Or perhaps by calling Him "fair and comely" she designs to teach us that the two Natures of Christ are endowed with a loveliness worthy of all admiration. His Divinity being beautiful by essence, His Humanity by grace. How beautiful Thou art to Thy angels, Lord Jesus, "in the Form of God," "in the day of Thy eternity," "begotten before the daystar in the

splendours of the Saints," Thyself the "Splendour" and the "Figure" of the Father's Substance, the everlasting and unspotted "Brightness of Eternal Life"! Yet how beautiful dost Thou appear to us in the very laying aside of Thy immortal glory! For when Thou, Who art the Light Unfailing, didst strip Thyself of Thy natural rays, when Thou didst empty Thyself, "taking the form of a servant," then Thy loving-kindness became more clearly manifest, then Thy charity shone forth more brightly, then Thy grace was more lavishly poured out.

How brilliant a Star dost Thou arise for me "out of Jacob"! How bright a Flower comest Thou forth "from the root of Jesse"! How gladdening a Light hast Thou shone upon me out of darkness, the "Orient from on high"! How glorious, how stupendously grand dost Thou appear, even to the contemplation of the powers supernal, in Thy conception by the Holy Ghost, in Thy birth of the Virgin Mary, in the innocence of Thy life, in the purity and abundance of Thy doctrine, in the splendour of Thy miracles, in Thy revelation of heavenly secrets! How resplendent after Thy setting didst Thou rise from the heart of the earth, as the Divine Sun of Justice! How beautiful in the robe of Thy glorified Flesh didst Thou, the King of Glory, return to Thy throne on high! \* And as I ponder

\* Similarly St. Augustine in his preface to Psalm xlv. : "To us who now believe how beautiful the Bridegroom everywhere reveals Himself! As the Word Divine He is beautiful in God. He is beautiful in the Virgin's womb where He assumed our humanity without laying aside His Divinity. He is beautiful as an Infant born for us. . . . Therefore He is beautiful in heaven, He is beautiful on earth, He is beautiful in His mother's womb, He is beautiful in the arms of His parents, beautiful in His miracles, beautiful under the lash, He is beautiful when inviting

on these sacred mysteries, surely "all my bones shall say, Lord, who is like to Thee?"

You may suppose, then, my brethren, that the Spouse had been admiring those and similar glories in her Bridegroom when she exclaimed, "Behold Thou art fair, my Beloved, and comely." Nor was her contemplation confined to the grandeurs of His Humanity. There can be no doubt that something of the beauty of the higher Nature, which escapes our vision and transcends our experience, was also revealed to her gaze. Hence by the repetition, "fair and comely," she desires to commend the loveliness of the two Natures. And hear how she exults at the sight and the salutation of her Beloved, and sings to Him a nuptial song, inspired with the sentiments of most ardent affection. "Our bed is flourishing," she cries, "the beams of our house are of cedar, our rafters of cypress trees." But this love-song shall supply matter for the next discourse, so that, when rest has restored our mental vigour, we may be better disposed to "rejoice and be glad in it," unto the praise and glory of the same Bridegroom, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

us to eternal life, beautiful in His indifference to death, He is beautiful in laying down His life and beautiful in taking it up again, He is beautiful on the cross, beautiful in the sepulchre, beautiful in His glory, beautiful in our minds."—(Translator.)



## SERMON XLVI.

### ON THE VIRTUES WHICH BELONG TO SUPERIORS AND INFERIORS.

*" Our bed is flourishing ; the beams of our houses are of cedar, our  
rafters are of cypress trees."*

" Our bed is flourishing ; the beams of our houses are of cedar, our rafters are of cypress trees." The Spouse, my brethren, is here singing her epithalamium ; and in beautiful language she describes the marriage-bed and the bridal-chamber. She invites the Beloved to repose. For this is the better part, to rest and " to be with Christ." However, the duty of co-operating in the salvation of souls requires her to be constantly employed in external activities. But now, availing of what she considers an opportune time, she announces that the bridal-chamber is ready and pointing to the couch, solicits the Bridegroom to rest Himself thereon, as I have just remarked. Like the two disciples journeying to Emmaus, unable to endure the burning fervour of her heart, she begs Him to accept the hospitality of her love, and constrains Him to pass the night with her, saying with St. Peter, " Lord, it is good for us to be here."

Let us now endeavour to ascertain the spiritual sense of these words of the Spouse. I should say, then, that, as regards the Church, her cloisters and monasteries



represent the bed, because it is in them alone we can live our life undisturbed by temporal cares or worldly distractions. And this bed is manifestly "flourishing" when the conduct of the brethren, faithfully adhering to the examples and institutions of the fathers, borrows therefrom a glory and a fragrance, like a couch bestrewn with sweet-smelling blossoms. Next, we are to understand by the "houses" the communities of simple Christians, who, as walls by girders, are strongly bound together by the justly imposed laws of those "in high station," I mean, ecclesiastical and civil rulers. For by their authority the subjects are prevented from following their own will and desires, lest, like "leaning walls and tottering fences," they should thus fall asunder and involve in their ruin the whole spiritual edifice. As for the "rafters" which are firmly fastened to the "beams" or girders and serve as beautiful ornaments to the "houses," by these, I think, are designated the virtuous and orderly lives of a well-trained clergy, as also their fidelity in the due discharge of their functions. I have said the "rafters" must be attached to the "beams," for how can there be any stability or regularity in the clerical orders or in their various offices unless they be supported by the beneficence and munificence of their rulers, as rafters on girders, and protected by their power? \*

But you will notice that the comparison is made

\* Similar to this is the exposition given by Origen, who by the beams understands the hierarchy and by the rafters the inferior clergy. According to St. Gregory the Great, the beams signify the preachers of the Gospel, and the rafters the laity. Another view is that by the beams are represented the prophets and the apostles by the rafters. The Hebrew commentators understand this text of Solomon's temple. Cf. A Lapide, v. vii. in Cant., p. 546.—(Translator.)

with "beams of cedar" and "rafters of cypress trees." The reason doubtless is because in the nature of such trees we find properties analogous to those which should characterise the two orders aforesaid, viz., the supreme governors in Church and State, and the subordinate clergy. The incorruptibility and fragrance of cedar wood, and the great height to which the tree attains sufficiently indicate the virtues which should adorn those who are selected to fill the position of girders in the spiritual house of the Church. Therefore firm and resolute ought to be the character of such as are appointed to rule over others. They should be men of invincible hope, men who keep the eye of their soul steadfastly fixed on the things above. In short, the sweet fragrance of their faith and their virtue must be everywhere diffused, so that they can say with the Apostle, "For we are the good odour of Christ unto God in every place." The cypress also has a pleasant odour and its wood likewise is incorruptible, thus symbolising the inviolable purity of faith and morals which should belong to each of the subordinate clergy, in order that they may serve as "rafters" for the decoration and ornamentation of the Bridegroom's houses. For it is written, "Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days." Here we have clearly prescribed not only the ornament of sanctity, but also an uninterrupted perseverance in grace. It is therefore necessary that no one should be set up as an ornament or embellishment of the house who is not himself adorned with virtues; and although he, as a "rafter," must be always inside, yet he ought to have good testimony even from those "who are without." There are other respects also in which the cypress and

the cedar tree may be taken as representative of the same two orders. But for the sake of brevity I pass them over.

It is a matter worthy of observation how beautifully this one short versicle embraces all the properties which characterise the different grades in the Church, the authority of prelates and princes, the sanctity of the clergy, the docility of the people, the peace and quiet of monks. Whenever holy mother Church sees that everything is as it ought to be with regard to each of these orders, she certainly rejoices at the view, and she also invites her Bridegroom's attention to the pleasing spectacle, since she attributes nothing to herself, but refers all the glory to His bounty as to the source of all good. And if she speaks of *our* bed and *our* houses, this is evidence not of usurpation but of love. In the confidence begotten of exceeding charity, she esteems nothing not her own of all that belongs to Him. It has been her custom to seek not her own interests but His, and therefore she believes herself entitled to share with Him both His dwelling and His repose. Hence she associates herself with Him in speaking of the houses, etc., as if all things were common to the Bridegroom and His Bride. "*Our* bed is flourishing," she says, "*our* houses are of cedars, *our* rafters of cypress." Thus she boldly represents herself as united in ownership with One with whom she knows she is united in love. Very different the soul which has not yet fully renounced her self-will. *She* lives alone and takes her repose by herself. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that she spends her time, not in solitude, but in the evil company of her carnal passions, with which she wastes "her substance, living riotously," and, like the



Prodigal, squanders the portion of the inheritance divided unto her at her own demand.

But as for you, my brethren, when you hear or read these words of the Spirit of God, do you think you can apply to yourselves any part of what is said? Does it ever seem to you that you recognise in your own experiences something of the Bride's felicity which the Holy Ghost Himself celebrates in this Canticle of love? If not, then of you also it may be said that you "hear His voice, but you know not whence He cometh and whither He goeth." Perchance you also long for the repose of contemplation. You do well. But do not forget the flowers wherewith, as you read, the bed of the Spouse ought to be decorated. Therefore do you likewise take care to bestrew with the flowers of good works the nuptial couch of your own consciences, making the practise of virtue to precede the holy quiet of contemplation, as the blossom precedes the fruit. For if you seek repose without being well exercised in labour, your rest will be only the lazy lolling of the luxurious: neglecting the fruitfulness of Lia, you will abandon yourselves to the delightful but unprofitable embraces of Rachel. Besides, it is altogether contrary to right order to demand the reward before you have earned it, to desire to eat before you have laboured. "If any man will not work," writes the Apostle, "neither let him eat." And the Psalmist, "By (obedience to) Thy commandments I have had understanding." We are thus given to understand that it is only by observing the commandments we can make ourselves worthy to taste the sweetness of contemplation. Do not imagine, then, that the satisfaction of your private devotion should be



allowed to withdraw you in the very slightest from the practice of holy obedience or from following the traditions of the fathers. Otherwise, the Beloved will certainly refuse to take His repose with you. Especially when He finds the couch you have prepared for Him littered with the hemlock and nettles of self-will, instead of the sweet-smelling flowers of obedience. Consequently, He will not hear your prayers, nor will He come to you when you call upon Him. For such a Lover of obedience as He, Who chose to die rather than to disobey, will undoubtedly give Himself only with reserve to the soul that is unsubmitive. Neither need you expect any blessings on your unprofitable leisure from Him Who has said, through His Prophet, "I have laboured in patience," \* alluding to the time when, as an exile from His home in heaven, where alone perfect repose is possible, "He wrought salvation in the midst of the earth." Rather it is much to be feared that you will bring down upon yourselves those dreadful words of reprobation which sounded of old like a clap of thunder in the ears of the perfidious Jews, "Incense is an abomination to Me. The new moons and the sabbaths and the other festivals I will not abide." Also, "My soul hateth your new moons and your solemnities; they are become troublesome to Me." Then the Prophet shall have to lament over you as over Jerusalem, saying, "The enemies have seen her and have mocked at her sabbaths." For the soul which the Bridegroom rejects becomes the sport of her infernal enemies.

I must here, my brethren, confess my extreme

\* "Laboravi sustinens," Jerem. vi. 11, translated in the Douay Version, "I am weary with holding in," which meaning does not suit St. Bernard's context.—(Translator.)

astonishment at the impudence of some amongst us, who, whilst they are throwing the whole house into confusion by their singularities, whilst they are scandalising the community by their impatience, and by their insolence and insubordination showing their contempt for authority, have nevertheless the presumption to invite the Lord of all holiness with importunate solicitation to repose on the polluted bed of their evil consciences. But He has answered them beforehand where He says by His Prophet, "And when you stretch forth your hands I will turn away My eyes from you, and when you multiply your prayers I will not hear." What? To a bed such as thine, covered not with the flowers of virtue but with the filth of vice, hast thou the temerity to invite the King of Glory? Is it to repose with thee He shall come and not rather to reprove thee? The Centurion, although the sweet perfume of his faith was diffused throughout all ~~Israel~~ Israel, yet, conscious of his unworthiness, begged the Saviour not to enter under his roof. And wouldst thou, polluted as thou art with the filth of every vice, wouldst thou compel Him to enter not thy house, but thy heart? The Prince of the apostles cries out in awe, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." And dost thou dare to say, "Come to me, O Lord, for I am holy"? "Be ye all," writes St. Peter, "of one mind in prayer; love the brotherhood." \* And the Vessel of Election, "I will therefore that men

\* "Omnes unanimes in oratione estote, fraternitatem diligite." The latter clause of this text is found at 1, ii. 17; the other occurs nowhere in St. Peter. The words "omnes unanimes" are read in 1, iii. 8, but in quite a different context. Very likely the Saint was thinking of Acts i. 14, where we read, "All were persevering with one mind in prayer."—(Translator.)

pray in every place, lifting up pure hands without anger and contention." You see, my brethren, how perfectly in accord are the Prince of the apostles and the Doctor of the nations, and how by the inspiration of the same Spirit they both speak of the peace and tranquillity of soul which ought to accompany our prayers. Do thou, therefore, who art a constant source of annoyance to thy brethren, who wagest war on concord, and revoltest from unity, do thou, I say, continue all the day long stretching out thy hands towards the Lord. Thou shalt only have thy labour for thy pains. But perchance you will ask, "What wouldst thou have us to do?" In the first place, you must cleanse your consciences from every stain of anger, dissension, discontent, and jealousy; and you must hasten to exclude from the home of your hearts whatever you may find there to be opposed either to domestic peace or to the obedience which you owe your superiors. Next, it is requisite to adorn the spiritual couch with the flowers of all kinds of good works and holy desires, and to perfume it besides with the odours of the various virtues. I mean to say, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever great, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame, if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline," you must take care to "think on these things" and to exercise yourselves in the same. When the bed is thus adorned, then you may with confidence invite the Bridegroom to repose therein, because like the Spouse, you can now truly say to Him at His entrance, "Our bed is flourishing." That is, your consciences shall be redolent of piety, peace, gentleness, justice, obedience, joy, and humility. So much for the bed.



My brethren, every man who walks not according to the flesh but according to the spirit should recognise himself to be the spiritual temple of God. Such is the doctrine of St. Paul, for he says distinctly, "The temple of God is holy, which you are." Be careful, then, of this spiritual edifice which is yourselves, lest haply when it begins to rise towards heaven, it should suddenly totter and fall for want of strong beams to support and secure it. Take care, I say, to furnish it with firmly-fixed and incorruptible girders, such as the "fear of the Lord" which "is holy, enduring for ever and ever"; patience, whereof it is written, "Patience hath a perfect work," "The patience of the poor shall not perish for ever"; perseverance also, which can continue steadfast under any weight of superstructure, and extends itself unfailingly throughout the endless ages of a blissful immortality, according to the word of the Saviour, "He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved"; but above all divine charity which "never falleth off," "for love is strong as death, jealousy as hard as hell." In the next place, it is necessary to bind and fasten to the girding beams lighter wood-work which may serve for rafters and for the ornamentation of the house. It is a duty to have this also of precious and beautiful material, but only for such as may have timber of that kind within reach. For by these rafters I understand the word of wisdom and knowledge, the gift of prophecy, the grace of healing, the interpretation of tongues, and such-like endowments, which are recognised to be rather useful for embellishing the soul than essential to her salvation. "Now, concerning" matters of this kind "I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give counsel."

Considering that such cypress-wood is sought for with labour, found with difficulty—this earth of ours, especially in the present times, \* being known to produce but very little of it—and elaborated with danger, my counsel and advice is that you should not be over-solicitous in your search for it. Let your rafters be made from the wood of other trees, which, although less beautiful in outward show, is proved by experience to be equally strong, whilst it is at the same time more easy to obtain and is possessed with more security.

Would to God that I, like so many others, were abundantly supplied with the wood of those trees which grow in such numbers in the Bridegroom's garden, that is, in the Church! The trees I am speaking of are "peace, goodness, benignity, joy in the Holy Spirit," to "shew mercy with cheerfulness," to "give with simplicity," to "rejoice with them that rejoice," and to "weep with them that weep." Would you not, my brethren, deem that house, so far at least as concerned the rafters, sufficiently, even richly adorned, which you observed to be fully and properly raftered with this kind of wood? "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house." Give me always, I beseech Thee, of this wood, that I may have wherewith to adorn for Thy repose the bridal-chamber of the conscience. I do not mean my own conscience only, but my brother's also. So shall I be content. There shall be others no doubt, who will follow my counsel and example herein, contenting themselves with what, as I

St. Bernard himself was provided in an abundance not often equalled with this mystical cypress-wood, viz., supernatural gifts, being, according to Bellarmin, "distinguished for more miracles than any other saint whose acts have been recorded and preserved." Tom. ii., controv., l. iv. c. 14.—(Translator.)

think, gives contentment to the Bridegroom. As for the more precious material of the cypress-wood, I leave that to the holy apostles and other apostolic men. And you, dearest brethren, although you also may lack this nobler timber, nevertheless, if you possess the other, be of good cheer ; approach with all confidence to Him Who is the " chief Corner-Stone, elect, precious " ; be you " built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets " as " living stones " unto " spiritual houses, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ " Our Lord, and the Bridegroom of the Church, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.



## SERMON XLVII.

ON THE FLOWER OF THE FIELD, THE FLOWER OF THE GARDEN, AND THE FLOWER OF THE BED-CHAMBER.

*"I am the Flower of the field and the Lily of the valleys."*

"I am the Flower of the field and the Lily of the valleys." It appears to me, my brethren, that these words of the Bridegroom \* are intended as a reply to what the Spouse has just said in commendation of the bed adorned with flowers. Lest she should be tempted to attribute the possession of such flowers to her own industry, the Beloved now proclaims Himself to be "the Flower of the field." He thus reminds her that it is not the bridal-chamber but the field that produces the flowers, and that they owe their beautiful colours and their sweet smell to His bounty and communication. Being an affectionate Mentor as well as a jealous Lover, He kindly and condescendingly explains to His beloved Spouse to Whom she should ascribe the adornment and fragrance of the couch whereof she is boasting, so that no man may be able to address her

\* Not all commentators agree with St. Bernard in assigning these words to the Bridegroom. According to St. Ambrose the Bride is here the speaker and is explaining why the bed is "flourishing." The Church, says this author, calls herself the "flower of the field" on account of the odour of her virtues, and the "lily of the valleys" because of the splendour of her actions. Or, as others explain, she is the "flower of the field" amongst the Jews, the "lily of the valleys" amongst the Gentiles. There are others who declare the Bride to be the "flower of the field," and the Bridegroom the "lily of the valleys." But the majority of writers refer both epithets to Christ.—(Translator.)

in the words of reproach, "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" Therefore He tells her, "I am the Flower of the field. That in which thou gloriest is My gift." To us also, my brethren, this is a salutary reminder that "it is not expedient indeed" to glory in anything, but that "he that glorieth" should "glory in the Lord." Thus far the literal sense. Let us now endeavour to ascertain the underlying spiritual meaning, with the help of Him to Whom the words belong.

First of all, I wish you to consider the three places where flowers are wont to be seen, viz., in the field, in the garden, and in the bed-chamber, as this will make it more easy to explain why the Bridegroom is pleased to call Himself the "Flower of the field." Now, although there are flowers in the bed-chamber as well as in the garden and in the field, they are found growing in the two latter places only. Again, they serve to adorn and perfume the chamber no less than the garden or the field; yet not there as elsewhere do they do this standing erect on their roots, but rather lying prostrate, as not being indigenous but imported. Consequently, the flowers in this place have to be renewed repeatedly, because they lose both their beauty and their fragrance in a very short time. I have said in a preceding discourse that the bed bestrewn with flowers is a figure of the conscience laden with the memory of good works. If that be so, you will certainly allow, as the perfection of the analogy requires, that it is by no means sufficient to perform a good work once or twice, but that one must be constantly adding new merits to the old, for "he who soweth in blessings shall also

reap blessings." The flower of a good work soon droops and withers and loses all its beauty and life, if it be not frequently renewed, so to speak, by an unceasing succession of similar acts of piety. All this with reference to the flowers in the bed-chamber.

With the flowers of the garden and the field the case is entirely different. For to these, when once produced, the soil which gives them birth supplies the necessary support and nourishment, so that they can preserve for a considerable time the loveliness of their origin. But even as between the garden and the field there is a difference which concerns the manner of their florescence, in this respect, namely, that whereas the latter blooms of itself and naturally, without the need of any co-operation on the part of man, the former cannot flourish at all unless it be cultivated and tended by human hands. Does it not seem to you, my brethren, that you can now recognise that fertile field, which has never been furrowed by the ploughshare, nor digged with the spade, nor enriched by human culture, nor sown by human hands, and nevertheless is adorned with the magnificent Blossom upon which the Spirit of the Lord, as we know, has been pleased to rest? For it is written, "Behold the smell of my Son is as the smell of a plentiful field which the Lord hath blessed." This Flower of the field had not yet put on Its beauty, although It was already giving forth Its fragrance, when the holy old Patriarch Isaac, in bodily decrepitude, dim-sighted but keen-scented, was given in the Spirit a foretaste of Its sweetness, and expressed his delight in the words I have quoted. It would not therefore have been right for Him Whose bloom is everlasting to proclaim Himself the flower of the



bed-chamber ; nor could He be called the flower of the garden, lest it should be supposed that He had a human father. But what He says of Himself, " I am the Flower of the field " is most beautiful and most appropriate. For not only has He sprung up from virgin soil without any human co-operation, but He is also from His origin eternally exempted from the power of blight or decadence, so that the word might be fulfilled, " Thou wilt not give Thy Holy One to see corruption."

But listen, please, to another interpretation, which, I think, is well worthy of your attention. The reason why the Wise Man represents the Spirit of God as " manifold " is, so it seems to me, because this Divine Spirit is wont to conceal manifold significations of wisdom profound under the one same rind of the letter. Retaining, then, the above threefold distinction of flowers according to the places where they are found, we have the flower of virginity, the flower of martyrdom, and the flower of good works. Virginity blooms in the garden, martyrdom in the field, good works in the chamber. Rightly have I assigned to the garden the flower of virginity, whose characteristics are modesty, avoidance of publicity, love of retirement, and patience under discipline. For flowers are strewn in the chamber, exposed in the field, but enclosed in the garden. So we read, " My Spouse is a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up." By this enclosure is meant the virgin's protecting modesty and her watchful care to live a life of unblemished sanctity. That is, if she is one who aims at being " holy both in body and in spirit." Rightly also is the flower of martyrdom said to flourish in the field, because the holy martyrs are exposed to

the insults of all the world, being made "a spectacle to angels and to men." Is it not their tearful voice which we hear in the psalm, "We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us"? Nor is it with less propriety that the flower of good works which tranquillises and lulls to rest the conscience, has been allotted to the bed-chamber. For the repose of contemplation is enjoyed with greater security after the performance of external good works. And the soul approaches the study and pursuit of divine things with the more confidence in proportion as she is the more conscious of not having neglected the duties of charity through love of her own ease.

All this applies in varying senses to Our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Flower of the garden, inasmuch as He is a virgin Blossom produced from a virgin stem. He is the Flower of the field, because He is a martyr, the Crown of martyrs, and the Model of martyrs. For He was led forth from the city, "He suffered without the camp," He was lifted up on the cross, in the sight of all, for the mockery of all. He is finally the Flower of the chamber, being the Example and Pattern of all well-doing, as He Himself declared to the Jews, when He said, "Many good works have I shown to you from My Father." And the Scripture bears witness of Him that He "went about doing good, and healing all." But if the Lord Jesus is thus each of the three flowers, what motive can He have for choosing to call Himself the Flower of the field rather than the flower of the garden or the flower of the chamber? The reason doubtless is that He desires to animate His Spouse to patient endurance, as knowing

that she would have to suffer persecution, since she wished "to live godly in Christ." \* Therefore, He presents Himself to her under the type of that in which He particularly wants her to imitate Him. This is only what I have said elsewhere, viz., that the Bride is ever longing for repose, and the Bridegroom as constantly urging her to labour, warning her "that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God." Hence, when He was on the point of returning to the Father after newly espousing to Himself His young Bride on earth, He said to her, "The hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth a service to God." Again, "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." You can discover for yourselves in the Gospel many similar predictions of sufferings to be endured by the Spouse.

"I am the Flower of the field, and the Lily of the valleys." Thus, whilst the Bride invites her Beloved to repose, she is summoned by Him to the field and exhorted to devote herself to labour. And it appears to Him that He can find no surer means of inducing her to enter the conflict than by proposing Himself both as the Pattern of the combatant and as the victor's Crown. "I am the Flower of the field." In these few words He is manifestly designated in this twofold character, namely, as the warrior's Example and the Prize of conquest. Thou art both to me, O Lord Jesus, Thou art my Model in suffering and the Reward of my suffering. And whether Thou showest Thyself as Pattern or as Prize, we are powerfully attracted to Thee and violently inflamed. It is Thou "who teachest my

\* "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. iii. 12).



hand to fight " by the example of Thy virtues. It is Thou Who crownest me after victory by the unveiling of Thy Majesty. For I keep constantly before my mind the representation of Thy combat; and I hope not only to receive the recompense from Thy Hands, but to receive even Thyself as that recompense. Yes, as my Model and my Crown Thou dost draw me to Thyself in a wonderful way, as it were with two chains exceedingly strong. Draw me still after Thee; gladly shall I follow Thee and more gladly enjoy Thee. O Lord, if Thou art so good to those who seek Thee, what wilt Thou be to those who find? \* "I am the Flower of the field," Thou sayest. "Let him who loves Me enter the field. Let him not refuse to engage in the conflict for My sake and by My side, so that he may be able to say, 'I have fought the good fight.' "

But because it is not the proud and arrogant that are deemed worthy of the grace of martyrdom, but rather the humble and such as know not how to presume on their own strength, therefore the Bridegroom goes on to say, "I am the Lily of the valleys." That is, He declares that He will be the Crown of the humble, the special exaltation in store for whom is indicated by the tallness † of the lily. For the time will come

\* "Si sic bonus es sequentibus Te, qualis futurus es consequentibus." Compare with the second distich of the third stanza of the hymn *De Nomine Jesu*:

"Quam bonus Te quaerentibus,  
Sed quid invenientibus?"

—(Translator.)

† The lily of the valleys mentioned in the text is entirely different from the flower which goes by that name in these countries. It is described as follows by the classical writer Pliny, l. xxi., c. v., "The lily yields to no other flower in tallness, attaining sometimes to the height of three cubits, whilst

when "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low." Then, certainly, He Who is the "Brightness of Eternal Life," shall appear as "the Lily" not of the hills but "of the valleys." It is written, "The just shall spring as the lily."\* Now, who is just but the humble? When the Lord Jesus bowed Himself beneath the hands of His servant John, He saw the Baptist trembling with awe in presence of His Divine Majesty, and "said to him : suffer it to be so now. For so it becometh us to fulfil all justice."✓ Thus He made it clear that the consummation of justice consists in the perfection of humility. The just man, consequently, is the humble man ; † the just man is he who resembles the lily of the valleys in his love of lowly places. And if we, my brethren, are found to be humble, we also "shall spring as the lily," we "shall flourish forever before the Lord." Do you not agree that the Bridegroom shall then in an especial manner prove Himself "the Lily of the valleys," when

the neck is always bent beneath the weight of the blossom. Its petals of dazzling white are fluted on the exterior, widen gradually from below and have an outward curve at the lips, so as to present the appearance of a wine-cup. . . . At the centre of the chalice a number of golden rods stand erect. Thus it has a twofold colour and also a twofold odour."—(Translator.)

\* "Justus sicut lilium florebit." This text is not found in the Vulgate, though there are several more or less resembling it, such as, "Justus ut palma florebit" (Ps. xci. 13) ; and, "Israel germinabit sicut lilium" (Os. xiv. 6).—(Translator.)

† He that is perfectly just will give everyone his due and attribute to himself nothing but what belongs to him. He will consequently ascribe to God whatever good he beholds in himself, whether it appertains to the order of nature or to the order of grace, and acknowledge as his own only nothingness and sin. This is what St. Teresa meant when she said "Humility is truth." Moralists regard humility as belonging to the cardinal virtue not of justice but of temperance, of which they make it a "potential part." See Hickey, *Ethic.*, 117.—(Translator.)

He "will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the Body of His glory"? Notice how the Apostle does not say "our body," but the "body of our lowness," thereby insinuating that none save the lowly shall be glorified by a participation in the transcendent and everlasting brightness of this Divine Lily. Let so much suffice concerning the words of the Bridegroom, "I am the Flower of the field, and the Lily of the valleys."

It would be profitable to treat here also the Bridegroom's eulogy of His dearly beloved. But the time will not permit. For our Rule tells us that nothing ought to be preferred to the work of God.\* By this name of the "work of God" our holy Father St. Benedict willed should be designated the solemn service of praise which we daily discharge in our churches, and his purpose was to impress upon our minds the necessity of devoting ourselves with all earnestness to that great duty. Therefore, I exhort you, dearest brethren, to assist at every hour of the canonical office with zeal and recollection. You must be zealous in order to join fervently, yet reverently, in chanting the praises of God, not lazily, not drowsily, not yawningly, not sparing yourselves, not mutilating the words or omitting any, not with weak and mincing voices effeminately stammering or sounding through the nose;† but singing with the manly fulness and sonorousness and the religious affection proper to songs which have been inspired by the Holy Ghost. Recollection is also necessary so that your minds may entertain no other

\* Cf. Holy Rule of St. Benedict, chapter xliii.—(Translator.)

† "Muliebre quiddam balba de nare sonantes." This is evidently an adaptation of the poet's, "Rancidulum quiddam balba de nare locutus" (Persius, i. 33).—(Translator.)



thoughts than such as are suggested by the psalms you sing. Observe, I do not say you are only bound to refrain from thinking of vain and unprofitable things during the divine office. Even such thoughts as the officials of the monastery are frequently obliged to occupy themselves with for the common good, and which are therefore necessary, must be put away at that time and in that place. Nay, I would strongly recommend you not to let your minds dwell—whilst engaged in the work of God—on what perchance you had been reading in a spiritual book just before, sitting in the cloister, or what might be still fresh in your memories after listening to my lectures in this auditorium of the Spirit of God. Reflections of this kind are doubtless wholesome, but it would not be wholesome for you to admit them during the hour of public prayer. For the Holy Ghost will not take pleasure in any offering whatever which you may make Him at that time to the neglect of the one which He demands of you, and which alone can content Him. May He give us the light and the strength ever to accomplish His will, according to His will, through the grace and mercy of the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XLVIII.

ON THE EXCELLENCE AND DIGNITY OF CHRIST'S SACRED  
HUMANITY, AND ON WHAT IT IS TO BE, TO LIVE,  
AND TO SIT UNDER HIS SHADOW.

*"As a lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters.  
"As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved  
among the sons. I sat down under His shadow, Whom I  
desired, and His fruit was sweet to my palate."*

"As a lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters." No dutiful daughters these, if they would like thorns. But take notice, my brethren, that the daughters mentioned here represent the most pernicious progeny of this earth of ours, which has lain from the beginning under the heavy curse of its own Creator. "When thou shalt till it," thus spoke He to Adam, "thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." As long, therefore, as the soul abides in the body, so long shall she be encompassed with thorns. That is to say, she must always inevitably suffer the miseries of temptation, and the bitter pangs of tribulation. Now, if she be really what her Bridegroom calls her, a lily, consider how watchful and anxious a guard she is obliged to keep over herself, hedged in as she is with thorns, whose sharp points threaten her on every side. So tender a flower can in nowise resist even the slightest attack, and the very least pressure from a thorn is enough to pierce it through. Do you not now see the reason and the necessity of the Psalmist's exhortation to us to "serve the Lord in fear"; and of the Apostle's injunction that we should "work out our salvation with

fear and trembling" ? Both these inspired writers had doubtless learned from their own experience the value of what they recommend to us ; for, as friends of the Bridegroom, they could have had no hesitation at all about applying to their own souls what He says here, " As a lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters." Thus the same Prophet says of himself in another place, " I am turned in my anguish while the thorn is fastened." Truly that was a wholesome fastening which resulted in turning him to a holier life ! It is a good thing to suffer a puncture that leads to compunction. There are many whom the severity of their chastisement induce to renounce their sins. Such as they can say with the Psalmist, " I am turned in my anguish while the thorn is fastened." Spiritual thorns are manifold. Sin is a thorn, and its penalty is a thorn ; a false brother is a thorn, and an evil companion a thorn.

" As a lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters." O snow-white lily ! O most tender and delicate flower ! Thou art surrounded by unbelievers and enemies, ever plotting thy ruin. See, then, with what circumspection it behoves thee to walk amidst so many thorns. The whole world is bristling with them. They menace thee on the earth and in the air. They lie concealed in thy very flesh. It is only by the power of God, not through thine own strength, that thou canst live thus encompassed with thorns and never receive a wound. " But have confidence," the Bridegroom whispers to thee, " I have overcome the world." Therefore, " let not thy heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid," even though thou seest tribulations besetting thy path on all sides, as if they were so many thorns



waiting to wound thee. For thou oughtest to know that tribulation "worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope, and hope confoundeth not." "Consider the lilies of the field, how they " flourish and bloom in the midst of the thorns. " And if the grass of the field which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God doth so " protect, " how much more " thee, His own most dear and tenderly loved Spouse? Is it not written that " The Lord keepeth all them that love Him " ? " As a lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters." It is a proof of no ordinary degree of virtue to live a good life in the midst of the wicked,\* and amongst the malignant to preserve sweetness of disposition and the spotlessness of innocence. But it is of greater merit still to be " peaceful with them that hate peace," and to show oneself a friend even towards one's enemies. O Spouse of Christ, if thou hast deserved to be thus compared, by singular and exclusive right, to a lily among thorns, it is surely because of this charity of thine, whereby thou dost not cease to communicate the lustre and the beauty of thy native splendour even to the thorns that wound thee. My brethren, do you not see that one has to make himself such a lily in order to practise perfectly the teaching of the Gospel, which commands us to pray for them that calumniate us and to do good to them that persecute and hate us? Therefore to each

\* St. Gregory the Great, writing of Job, says, " The place of his habitation is mentioned, because it adds to his merit that he was good amongst the wicked. For it is more praiseworthy to live virtuously with the vicious than to live virtuously with the virtuous: the merit of being good amongst the bad is proportionate to the demerit of being wicked amongst the good "—Moral. lect., v. lib. II, cap. I.—(Translator.)

of you I say, "Go and do thou in like manner," and thy soul shall be the spouse of the Lord, and He will commend thee for thy beauty, saying, "As a lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters."

But the Bride makes answer, "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons." So does she return the eulogy addressed to her by the Bridegroom, by Whom to be praised is to be made worthy of praise, and Whom to praise is to have understanding and admiration of His praiseworthiness. Just as He used the symbols of the lily's tallness and beauty to describe the excellence of His Bride, so she in her turn designates His singular glory and greatness under the figure of a noble tree. Yet concerning the aptness of this image some doubt may arise. For the apple-tree is surpassed in excellence by several other trees; and consequently, so it should seem, is unworthy of being selected to represent the Bridegroom, as incapable of symbolising the supereminence of His glory. "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons." It is evident from these very words that the Spouse herself has no great esteem for the apple-tree, since she is careful to prefer it only to the "trees of the wood," that is, to trees which yield no fruit at all, or none fit for the use of man. Why, then, does she make choice of this mediocre tree from amongst so many others that are better and nobler, and employ it to typify the perfection of her Beloved? Shall we say that He ought to receive glory in measure to Whom is given the Spirit without measure? For the similitude of the apple-tree seems to indicate that the Bridegroom has a superior, whereas

He is without even an equal.\* How shall we solve the difficulty? I grant at once that the praise is little, because it is meant for One Who has made Himself little. In this place the announcement is not: "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised," but rather, "Little is the Lord and exceedingly to be loved."† He is regarded here as the Little One Who "is born for us." Here, consequently, the Spouse is concerned not with the glorification of His majesty, but with the commendation of His humility.

And surely it is right and reasonable that the "foolishness of God" and the "weakness of God" should be preferred to the wisdom and the strength of man. For by the barren forest trees, amongst which the apple-tree stands distinguished, we are to understand the race of men, of whom the Prophet testifies that "they are all gone aside; they are become unprofitable together: there is none that doth good, no, not one." "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons." Of all the trees in the wood, there is only One that yields fruit, I mean the Lord Jesus, Who, in His Human Nature, although exalted over the rest of men, is made "a little less than the angels." For, by a wonderful and admirable dispensation, He has made Himself as Man inferior to the angels over whom as God He holds sovereign sway. "You shall see the angels of God," He said to Nathaniel "ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

\* The Saint is not thinking now of the Bridegroom's personality as the Word—for so considered, He has as Co-Equals the Father and the Holy Ghost—but only of His Divine Nature, in which respect He is manifestly without peer.—(Translator.)

† "Non enim hoc loco praedicatur 'magnus Dominus et laudabilis nimis,' sed parvulus Dominus et amabilis nimis."



That is, in one and the same Person, Jesus Christ, the angels ascend when they worship with awe the Divine Majesty, and descend when they lovingly minister to the weakness of the flesh. Therefore, as the Spouse finds a sweeter consolation in thinking of His voluntary lowness than in the thought of His infinite greatness, she is more ready to magnify His grace, to extol His mercy, and to stand amazed at His marvellous condescension. She prefers, then, to admire Him as a Man amongst men, rather than as God exalted above the angels ; for it is only amongst men He is admirable as a Man, just as the apple-tree is conspicuous, not amongst the garden trees, but only amidst the trees of the wood. Nor does she think His glory will be lessened by the consideration of His infirmity which magnifies His goodness and His loving-kindness. For whatever is subtracted from that glory in one respect is added to it in another ; because if she desists from the praise of the loftiness of His Majesty, it is only to render more manifest the graciousness of His condescension. Therefore, just as the Apostle declared the " foolishness of God " and the " weakness of God " to be wiser and stronger than men, not wiser and stronger than the angels ; and just as the Prophet proclaimed the Word Incarnate to be " beautiful above the sons of men," not above the angels, in the same way here, and evidently speaking under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, the Spouse, using the image of the fruitful apple-tree and the unprofitable trees of the forest, asserts the superiority of the God-Man over every merely human greatness, but not in comparison with angelic excellence.\*

\* This is also the teaching of the Apostle, who in his Epistle to the Hebrews (ii. 9) interprets of Christ the words of David,

"As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons." Not without reason does the Spouse say, "among the sons." For whereas the Bridegroom is the Only-Begotten of the Father, yet He laboured without envy to acquire unto Him many other sons by adoption, and "He is not ashamed to call them brethren," "that he might be the First-born amongst many brethren." But it is only right that He Who is the Son by nature\* should be preferred to all who are sons by the adoption of grace. Hence it is said, "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons." And very properly is the Beloved compared to the apple-tree, which He resembles both in the refreshing shade He affords, and also in that He produces excellent fruit. For unquestionably He may be called a fruit-bearing Tree, Whose "flowers are the fruit of honour and riches," and of Whom, under the form of Wisdom, it is written, "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her." Amongst all the trees of the spiritual forest not one is found worthy to be compared to this; because however great and beautiful the others may appear, however capable of assisting us by their prayers, their ministrations, their instructions, and their examples, Christ alone, the Wisdom of God, is the Tree of life, Who alone is "the

"Thou hast made Him a little less than the angels." Both St. Paul and St. Bernard are speaking of the Sacred Humanity as It is in the order of nature, not as It is in the order of grace. For according to grace Christ even as man is immeasurably superior to the highest of the angels.—(Translator.)

\* Even in His Human Nature, according to which (in St. Bernard's view) He is compared to an apple-tree, Christ is the *natural*, not the *adoptive* Son of God. This is the teaching of St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, III. q. xxiii., a. iv. And the reason he gives is that filiation being a personal property, and there being but one Person in Christ, there can consequently be but one mode of sonship.—(Translator.)

Living Bread which came down from heaven and giveth life to the world."

Therefore, since He is the Tree of life, the Spouse goes on to say, "I sat down under His shadow, Whom I desired; and His fruit was sweet to my palate." No wonder she desired the shadow of Him from Whom she hoped to receive both food and shelter. For the other woodland trees do indeed offer a cooling shade, but they yield no nourishment for the support of life, no fruit of everlasting salvation. There is but one "Author of life," "and one Mediator of God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." It is He Who says to His Spouse, "I am thy salvation," and to the Jews, "Moses gave you not bread from heaven, but My Father giveth you the true Bread from heaven." This, then, is the reason why the Spouse yearned particularly for the shadow of Christ, because, namely, in Him alone could she hope to be sheltered from the noxious heat of the passions, and at the same time to be fed and filled with the sweet food of the virtues. "I sat down," she says, "under His shadow, Whom I desired." The shadow of Christ is the Flesh of Christ. Faith in Him may also be considered His shadow. For Mary the Flesh of her own Son served as a shadow. But my shadow is the faith of which He is Author and Object. And yet is it not true, that to me also, when I eat It in the Sacrament, His Flesh becomes a shadow? Whilst Mary, on the other hand, must have participated with me in the refreshment afforded by the shadow of faith, seeing that it was said to her, "And blessed art thou that hast believed." "I sat down under His shadow, Whom I desired." Compare this with the words of the Prophet Jeremias, "A Spirit



before our face (is) Christ the Lord, under His shadow we shall live among the gentiles." That is to say, we live in His shadow whilst we are amongst the gentiles, but when we are with the angels we shall live in His light. We are in the shadow so long as "we walk by faith, and not by sight." Therefore, the just man who "liveth by faith," liveth in the shadow. But not only just but blessed is he who liveth by understanding, because he is no longer in shadow, but in the light. David was a just man, and lived by faith, when he said to God, "Give me understanding and I will learn Thy commandments, that I may live." For he knew that understanding follows upon faith, and that to understanding is to be revealed the Light of life, and the Life of light. We must first enter the shadow and thence pass out into the light beyond the shadow; for, as it is written, "If you will not believe, you shall not understand."

You observe, my brethren, that faith is at once life and the shadow of life; just as, on the contrary, a life that is lived in pleasures is death and the shadow of death. "She that liveth in pleasures," says the Apostle, "is dead while she is living," for "the wisdom of the flesh is death." But a life of pleasure, whilst a death in itself, is also the shadow of a second death, of that, namely, which shall torment its victims eternally. We ourselves in times past were "seated in darkness and in the shadow of death," when instead of walking by faith, "we all conversed in the desires of the flesh," having already died to justice and on the point of being swallowed up by the second death. For in the degree in which the shadow is nigh to the body by which it is thrown, in the same degree "my life hath drawn nigh

to hell." For "unless the Lord had been my Helper," as the Psalmist confesses, "my soul had almost dwelt in hell." Now, however, we have passed from the shadow of death into the shadow of life. Rather "we have passed from death to life" and are living now under the shadow of Christ, if indeed we are truly alive and not still dead in sin. I say this, because, so far as I can see, the fact that a man is in the shadow of Christ does not necessarily imply that he is there as one living, since, as is evident, not everyone who has the faith "liveth by faith." For "faith without good works is dead," and so cannot communicate life, for the reason that it possesses no life in itself. Therefore, when the Prophet had declared that "A Spirit before our face (is) Christ the Lord," he was not satisfied to proceed and say, "under His shadow we shall *be*," but he added, "under His shadow we shall *live* among the gentiles." Do you, therefore, my brethren, follow the example of Jeremias, by endeavouring to live here in the shadow of Christ that hereafter you may reign with Him in the light of His glory. For Christ has not shadow only : He is also a source of light. He produces the shadow of faith by the Flesh, but by the Spirit the light of understanding. He is Flesh to us whilst we live in the flesh, but He is "a Spirit before our face." That is, He will manifest Himself to us spiritually in the life to come, provided, however, that "forgetting the things that are behind," we "stretch forth" ourselves "to those that are before." Then, when we have attained our goal, it shall be given us to experience of the Word that which He has said of Himself, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the Flesh profiteth nothing." I am

not unaware that there has been one, at least, who was able to say, even whilst still a sojourner on earth, "And if we have known Christ according to the flesh, but now we know Him (so) no longer." But this was the great St. Paul. As for us, who have never yet been admitted to paradise, who have not yet deserved to be rapt up to the third heaven, we must be satisfied, whilst still in the flesh, to feed on Christ's Flesh, to reverence His mysteries, to imitate His example and to preserve His faith, that so we may live in His shadow.

"I sat down under His shadow Whom I desired." Perhaps the Spouse is here glorying in some more sublime and special favour vouchsafed her, inasmuch as she does not say, like the Prophet, that she lives under His shadow, but that she has seated herself there. For sitting means resting. But it is a greater thing to rest under the shadow than to live in it, just as to live in the shadow is better than simply to be there. Jeremias, therefore, is but claiming for himself a grace common to many when he says, "In His shadow we shall live." But the Spouse, as more highly privileged, proclaims with exultation that to her alone it has been given not merely to live but even to rest under His shadow. For she does not say in the plural number, "*we* sat down," just as the Prophet had said, "*we* shall live," but in the singular, "*I* sat down," in order to signify the incommunicability of her prerogative. Consequently, where labour is the only condition of life for the rest of us, who, conscious of sin, have to serve in fear, there she enjoys the pleasant repose of love and devotion. For "fear hath pain," but love is all sweetness. Hence she adds, "and His fruit was sweet



to my palate." By "His fruit" is meant the delight of contemplation which she experienced when blissfully elevated on the wings of holy love. But this was under the shadow, because as yet even she can only see "through a glass, in a dark manner." But the time will come when "the day shall break and the shadows retire," yea, disappear utterly, giving place to the unclouded light. Then she shall enjoy a vision of infinite brightness and eternal duration, and a fruit which shall not only afford pleasure to her palate, but satisfaction without satiety to all her desires. "I sat down under His shadow Whom I desired, and His fruit was sweet to my palate." Let us, my brethren, rest here with the Spouse, and having tasted somewhat of the mystical feast, let us glorify the Father of the family, Who has invited us to so great a supper, the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON XLIX.

### ON DISCRETION AS NECESSARY FOR WELL-ORDERED CHARITY.

*"The King \* brought me into the cellar of wine, He set charity in order in me."*

"The King brought me into the cellar of wine, He set charity in order in me." The literal signification of this verse, my brethren, may be presented as follows. On the departure of the Bridegroom, after gratifying the wishes of His Bride, by holding with her a very sweet and familiar colloquy, the latter returns to her companions, the young maidens; but so filled is she and inflamed with charity from the presence and conversation of her Beloved, that she resembles one who is intoxicated with wine. The young maidens, astonished at the change they behold in her, anxiously inquire the cause. Her reply is that it is nothing surprising if she, who has been "brought into the cellar of wine," should show some signs of intoxication. Such appears to be the direct and obvious meaning. If we now consider her words according to their mystical signification, the Spouse acknowledges that she is inebriated, not however with wine, but with holy love, unless indeed love may be regarded as wine. "The King," she says, "brought me into the cellar of wine." Observe that whenever the Bridegroom is present and

\* "Introduxit me Rex." The word Rex belongs to the original Hebrew text, although it is omitted from the Greek and the Latin versions. Cf. a Lapide, *Comment. in Cant.*, tom. vii. p. 432.—(Translator.)

the Spouse addresses her speech to Him, she calls Him by such names as "my Bridegroom," or "my Beloved," or "Thou Whom my soul loveth"; whereas, when speaking of Him to the young maidens, in His absence, she gives Him the title of "King." What does this signify? It signifies, in my judgment, that, although the Bridegroom and Bride may with perfect propriety address each other by such familiar and affectionate names as love inspires, the young maidens, on the contrary, as still requiring discipline, must have their frowardness restrained by the august titles proper to majesty.

"The King brought me into the cellar of wine." I will not pause now to explain what is meant by the "cellar of wine," for, as I remember, the matter has been sufficiently discussed already. But if we regard these words as spoken by the Church, at the time when the disciples, filled with the Holy Ghost, were accused by the populace of being drunk from wine, then Peter must be considered the "friend of the Bridegroom," for it was he who, "standing up in the midst," replied in behalf of the Spouse, saying, "These are not drunk as you suppose." And here I would have you notice, my brethren, how he did not absolutely deny that they were drunk, but only that they were drunk in the sense the people supposed. For they were in fact intoxicated, though not with wine, but with the Holy Spirit. So, as if bearing witness that he and his fellow-disciples had been brought "into the cellar of wine," Peter again spoke in the name of all, "But this is that which was spoken of by the Prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith the Lord, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh, and



your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams." Nor do I suppose you would think me extravagant were I to regard as a "cellar of wine" the house where the disciples were gathered together when "suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting," and verified the prophecy of Joel. And was not each one of the assembly, coming forth from that house, and "inebriated with the plenty" thereof, having "drunk of the torrent of its pleasures"—was not every one of them able to say with truth, "The King brought me into the cellar of wine"?

And thou, my brother, if recollected in spirit and with a mind sober and free from distracting thoughts, thou shouldst enter alone the house of prayer, and standing before God at one of the altars, shouldst touch the very gate of heaven with the hand of holy desire, and lifted up by the ardour of thy devotion to the choirs of glorified saints (for the prayer of the just man shall pierce the clouds) shouldst in their presence bemoan with tears of misery the afflictions and sorrows that oppress thee, and with frequent sighs and "unspeakable groanings" shouldst confess thy necessities and implore compassion—if, I say, thou shouldst act in this wise, I have too much confidence in the word of Him Who said, "Ask and you shall receive," to believe that thou shalt go out empty-handed, provided only that thou dost persevere in knocking. And when thou art restored to us, full of devotion and charity, if in fervour of spirit thou art unable to conceal the grace bestowed on thee, but freely and without envy dost share it with all, if after having been so highly favoured, thou

makest thyself not alone pleasing, but even admirable in the eyes of thy brethren, then canst thou truly declare with the Spouse, "The King brought me into the cellar of wine." Nevertheless, thou shouldst be careful to glory not in thyself, but in the Lord. I would not say that every gift, even though belonging to the spiritual order, is brought forth from the "cellar of wine"; for there are different cellars and storerooms in the palace of the Bridegroom, wherein are hoarded up all His multiform treasures and graces, "according to the riches of His glory," and of which I remember to have treated at length in an earlier sermon. "Are not these things stored up with Me," saith the Lord, "and sealed in My treasures?" Therefore, according to the diversity of the storerooms are the distinctions of graces, and the Spirit manifests Himself to each soul in the way most conducive to her profit. But although "to one is given the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another prophecy, to another the grace of healing, to another diverse kinds of tongues, to another interpretation of speeches," and other similar gifts to others; nevertheless, the reception of such favours does not entitle any soul to say that she has been brought into the cellar of wine. For these gifts are taken out of the other cellars or repositories.

But if it were given to any one of us during prayer, in a spiritual ecstasy, to penetrate so far into the secret recesses of the Divinity that, when he comes back by and by, he is found to be all on fire with the love of God, animated with a burning zeal for justice, and full of fervour at every spiritual office or exercise, so that he can say in the words of the Psalmist, "My heart grew hot within me; and in my meditation a fire shall flame

out," such a one might justly claim to have been admitted into the cellar of wine; since he is beginning already to eructate from the abundance of holy love and the good and wholesome repletion of the wine of gladness. There are two kinds of ecstasy experienced in divine contemplation. One of them belongs to the intellect, the other to the will.\* One results from an excess of light, the other from an excess of love. Knowledge predominates in the one, charity in the other. Now it is evident that the affection of piety, and the love-enkindled heart, and the infusion of fervent devotion, and the spirit all inflamed with ardent zeal, can have no other source save the wine-cellar. Hence every soul to whom it is granted to rise from prayer replenished with graces of this kind, every such soul, I say, can confidently make her own the words of the Spouse, "The King brought me into the cellar of wine."

But the Spouse goes on, "He set in order charity in me." A most necessary thing. Zeal without knowledge is a thing insupportable. And the more ardent the zeal, the greater is the necessity that it be accompanied by discretion, to which it belongs to regulate charity.

\* "These two ecstasies of the will and understanding are not so closely united as that one may not exist without the other. For as the knowledge which the pagan philosophers attained of their Creator was much greater than their love for Him, the charity of the perfect Christian is, on the contrary, greater than his knowledge. Whence it follows that the excess of knowledge which produces the ecstasy of the understanding is not always followed by the excess of love from which springs the ecstasy of the will; just as the excess of love is not always accompanied by that of knowledge. The ecstasy of admiration (or knowledge) when alone, does not serve to render us better" (St. Francis de Sales, *Love of God*, Bk. VII. c. v. p. 286). See also St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, II. ii. q. clxxv. a. 11; and St. John of the Cross, *Obscure Night*, Bk. II. c. xiii. —(Translator.)



Zeal without knowledge, instead of being efficacious or useful, generally turns out to be extremely pernicious. Consequently, my brethren, according as our zeal grows hotter, our fervour more intense, and our charity fuller, it is necessary that the light of knowledge also should proportionately increase. For it is the function of knowledge to moderate zeal, to regulate fervour, and to set charity in order. The Spouse, therefore, lest she should be feared as excessive and insufferable, especially by the young maidens, on account of that impetuosity of spirit which she appears to have brought forth from the wine-cellar, makes haste to assure them that she has also received what is the effect of discretion, namely, the setting in order of charity. Indeed, it is discretion that sets all the virtues in order, from which order are derived both their limits and their loveliness, yea, even their stability. For it is written, "By Thy ordinance the day goeth on," where by "day" the Psalmist means virtue. Discretion, consequently, is not so much a distinct virtue as the governor and guide of every virtue, the regulator of the affections, and the teacher of morals.\* Take away this, and virtue becomes vice. Take this away, and the very affections implanted in us for the perfection of our nature, turning aside from their destiny, begin at once to work

\* "Est ergo discretio non tam virtus quam quaedam moderatrix et auriga virtutum, ordinatrixque affectuum, et morum doctrix." Compare with Cassian's: "Omnium virtutum generatrix, custos, moderatrixque discretio est." Denis the Carthusian is plainly borrowing from St. Bernard where he says, "In omni actu virtuoso, moderatrix, doctrix, et velut auriga esse debet discretio."

In his sermon, *De domo spirit.*, the Saint defines discretion as the virtue by which we distinguish real from counterfeit virtues: "virtus qua veras a palliatis atque simulatis virtutibus discernimus."—(Translator.)

for the disturbance and the ruin of our nature. "He set in order charity in me." This the Bridegroom did when, in the Church, "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints." But all these ought to be bound together by the one same bond of charity, in order that all may be gathered into the unity of the Body of Christ. Now, charity cannot thus give order to other things unless it first be set in order itself. For if each one follows the impulse of his own will, according to the spirit which he has received, and applies himself to everything indifferently, making feeling his guide instead of the judgment of reason, the result must be that none is content with the department assigned him, but all functions are indiscriminately and simultaneously undertaken by all, so that in place of the unity of order, there is now nothing but confusion.

"He set in order charity in me." Would to God that my own little stock of charity were likewise set in order by Him Who gave it, the Lord Jesus! So should I keep faithful watch over all His interests, but in such a way that what I recognise as belonging most particularly to my duty and office, should have my first attention. Yet although this must engage me before everything else, there are many other matters which, whilst not concerning me personally in any especial way, ought nevertheless to appeal more strongly to my affections. For that which ought to be the first object of our solicitude need not always of necessity have the strongest claim to our love. Indeed, it is often the case that what should get precedence as regards our care and attention, is less conducive to our

advancement, and must, therefore, be less attractive to our love. In other words, our reason must often give second place in esteem to what duty requires us to put first in solicitude. But that which obtains the preference from right reason, rightly ordered charity would have us embrace more affectionately. For example, am I not obliged, in virtue of my position, to have care of you all? Now, were I to devote myself to any other object with so much attention that I could no longer exercise properly the office of superior, by discharging the duties appertaining thereto in as worthy and profitable a manner as my best endeavours can reach, I should most certainly offend against the claims of good order; even though I appeared to be actuated by a motive of charity. On the contrary, if I am faithful in giving my first attention, as I am bound to do, to the duties of my office, yet do not experience a greater joy at the greater progress in divine love which I observe another to be making, it is plain that my charity is in one part rightly ordered, wrongly in the other. But if I make that for which I am most specially responsible the object of my most special solicitude, and at the same time feel myself more strongly attracted to what appears to be possessed of more intrinsic nobility, then, without doubt, my charity shall be found perfectly regulated, and there shall be nothing to prevent me from saying, "He set in order charity in me." \*

But perhaps you will tell me that it is difficult to

\* The gist of these remarks is that rightly ordered charity, whilst proportioning its esteem to intrinsic worth, regulates its solicitude by the rule of duty: we should love that most which is most deserving of love, but our first care should be given to the functions of our office.—(Translator.)



feel more satisfaction at the greater good of one's neighbour than at the lesser belonging to oneself. I answer that this very fact demonstrates the excellence of the grace given to the Spouse, and also how few are those who can affirm with her, "He set in order charity in me." "Why is the countenance of" some of you "fallen" at this word? The deep sighs you heave bear witness to the sadness of your souls and the heaviness of your hearts. For when "we measure ourselves by ourselves," some of us realise, from the experience of our own imperfection, how rare a virtue it is not to envy the virtue of others, to say nothing about rejoicing at their progress in perfection, to say nothing of our delight growing greater according as we see them advancing beyond ourselves. But "a little light is yet among" \* us, as many of us, I mean, as recognise this disposition to be their own. Let us "walk whilst" we "have the light, that the darkness overtake us not." To walk is to advance. The Apostle was walking when he said, "I do not count myself to have apprehended. But (there is) one thing: forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark." What does he mean by the words, "There is one thing"? He desires to inform us that there still remains to him one remedy, one hope, one consolation. What is that? He tells us himself: "forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark." Admirable confidence! The great "Vessel of

\* This is how St. Bernard understands John xii. 35, "*Adhuc modicum lumen in vobis est.*" But the Greek is plain, "*ἔτι μικρὸν χρόνον τὸ φῶς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐστίν.*" (Yet a little while, the light is among you.)—(Translator.)

Election," whilst admitting that he has not yet attained perfection, claims nevertheless to be making progress thereto. As for me, who instead of walking in the light am still sitting down, there is danger that I shall be overtaken by the darkness of death. For who sits down but the man that has no desire to go forward? My brethren, be on your guard against such relaxation. Then to each of you may be applied what is written, "The just man, if he be prevented with death, shall be in rest." Then can you say to God, "Thy eyes did see my imperfection." And yet you may add, "And in Thy book all shall be written." All of whom? All who shall be found possessed with the desire of advancing. For the Psalmist goes on, "Days shall be formed, and no one in them"—supply, "shall perish." By "days" we are to understand here those persons who are making progress in virtue, and who, "if prevented with death," shall have made up to them that wherein they may be found wanting. They "shall be formed and no one in them" shall appear imperfect.

Now, some one may say to me, "How can *I* hope to advance who am envious of my brother's progress?" But I ask, dost thou suffer this against thy will? If so, there is only feeling, not consent. What troubles thee is a passion which time shall weaken, not an action deserving of reproof. Only be careful not to make friends with it, by "devising iniquity on thy bed." That is to say, do not consider how thou mayst foster the malady and feed the pestilence by persecuting the innocent, finding fault with his virtuous actions, thwarting, misrepresenting, or otherwise impeding his praiseworthy undertakings. Provided I am endeavouring to go forward, and am "stretching forth

myself to the things that are before," I shall suffer no harm from that whereof I can say, "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." "There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them that" yield not their "members to serve iniquity"; who preserve their tongues from detraction, and their other members and faculties from hurting or injuring the innocent in any way whatever; who are rather ashamed of the evil disposition they discover in themselves, and by prayer, by tears, and confession are striving to subdue their passions, grown strong by previous indulgence; and who, finally, have learned from their indifferent or ill success in this matter to be more gentle towards their brethren and more humble in themselves. What right-minded judge shall condemn the man who has learned from his Lord to be "meek and humble of heart"? No, it is impossible that he should be out of the way of salvation, who proves himself an imitator of the Saviour, the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.



## SERMON L.

### ON AFFECTIVE AND EFFECTIVE CHARITY, AND THE ORDER TO BE OBSERVED IN BOTH.

*"He set charity in order in me."*

You are expecting I suppose, that having completed my exposition of the words which formed the text of the last discourse, I shall to-day pass on to the following verse. Yet such is not my intention. I have still the fragments remaining after yesterday's feast, which I took the trouble to gather up "lest they be lost," and which I purpose to set before you now. For lost they must certainly be unless they are distributed. What is more, I should lose myself with them, did I attempt to keep them for my own exclusive enjoyment. I have therefore no desire to defraud that insatiable appetite of yours, which I know so well, of these broken meats, especially since they are from the dish of charity, as sweet as they are delicate, and only the more savoury because so small. Were I to act otherwise, I should offend most grievously against charity by neglecting to communicate it to my brethren. And so we shall occupy ourselves to-day with a further consideration of the words of the Spouse, "He set charity in order in me."

Charity, my brethren, must be exercised in two ways, in action and in affection.\* Now, in my opinion,

\* "There are two ways of exercising our love for God, one affective, the other effective or active. By the first we place our affections in God, and all that He loves becomes interesting to us; by the second we serve God, and accomplish what He ordains. The former unites us to the goodness of God, the latter makes us submissive to His holy will. By the one

the law of charity imposed upon men, and the definite precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul, with all thy strength and with all thy mind and thy neighbour as thyself," concerns not affective but effective or active charity. For who could obey the command if it referred to feeling? We may therefore assume that effective charity is enjoined as the principle of merit, and affective rendered in reward. However, I do not deny that even in this present life we can, by the grace of God, make a beginning and some progress in affective charity; my contention is that its *perfection* and *consummation* belong exclusively to the happy life to come.\* How

a kind of correspondence is established between us and God, by the communication of His Spirit to our souls, and hence arise sentiments of complacency, of benevolence, transports, ecstasies, desires, sighs, and spiritual ardours; the other imparts solidity to our resolutions, and an inviolable fidelity to our obedience, which enables us to accomplish the will of God, to suffer, to accept and embrace everything that He pleases to order. Affective love conceives the work, effective love brings it forth, if I may so speak. By the first our happiness and delight are centred in God; by the second we serve and obey Him" (St. Francis of Sales, *Love of God*, Bk. VI. ch. i. p. 223).—(Translator.)

\* In his treatise *De diligendo Deo*, c. viii., ix., x., the Saint distinguishes four degrees of charity, viz., the love of God purely for our own sakes, as the Source of blessings to us; the love of God partly for our own and partly for His sake; the love of God purely for His own sake; the love of God in which the soul loses herself and is in a sense annihilated, her will being completely merged in the divine will, a transforming, *deifying* love (*sic affici deificari est*) which belongs more to heaven than to earth. This fourth degree, he says, perfectly fulfils the precept of charity, yet is impossible of attainment, at least as an abiding habit, except in heaven. St. Augustine expresses the same opinion in the last chapter of his book *De Spiritu et littera*. And St. Thomas (*Sum. Theol.*, II. ii. q. 24, a. 7) declares that such a perfection of charity as would keep the whole heart always actually directed to God and the whole mind always engrossed with the thought of Him is not attainable in this life, "*propter humanæ vitæ infirmitatem*."—(Translator.)

then, it may be asked, could God have laid upon us an obligation which it is absolutely impossible for us to discharge? Nevertheless, if you still insist that the precept of charity has reference to charity of affection, I shall not quarrel with your conviction, provided you are willing to allow that the commandment has never been and never shall be perfectly fulfilled by any mere mortal. For who would be so presumptuous as to pretend to a perfection which was beyond the reach of St. Paul, as he confesses where he says, "I do not count myself to have apprehended"? The Divine Legislator knew perfectly well that the burden of this law exceeded human strength. But He deemed it profitable for men to be reminded thus of their own insufficiency, and to learn at the same time what is the perfection of justice to which they must strive to approximate by every means in their power. Therefore, in commanding what is impossible He designs to make us humble, not to prove us prevaricators, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world be made subject to God, because by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified before Him." For, receiving the command, and being conscious of our sinfulness and incapacity, we shall cry aloud to heaven and the Lord God will have mercy on us; and in that day we shall know "that not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us."

Thus, my brethren, should I speak were we convinced that the charity enjoined is affective charity. But in truth the object of the law appears to be rather effective charity. This becomes the more evident from the fact that after saying, "Love your enemies," the Lord added



immediately, "Do good to them that hate you," which refers to good works, or to charity in operation. And elsewhere we read, "If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he be thirsty give him to drink." Here also, as you perceive, there is question of love not in feeling but in effect. But attend once more to the Lord, where He is laying down the law concerning the love of Himself. "If you love Me," He says, "keep my commandments." In this place, again, by enjoining the observance of the commandments, He manifestly directs our attention to the works of charity. But if the love of Him whereof He is speaking, were only a matter of feeling, it would surely be superfluous to make mention of good works. It is in the same way, therefore, we must understand that other precept whereby we are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves, even though this is not so clearly expressed. And for yourselves, my brethren, do you not consider yourselves to have sufficiently discharged the duty of fraternal charity, when you have fully observed that precept of the natural law, equally binding on every man, "See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another"; and also this, "All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them"?

But I do not mean to say that we should be devoid of affection, and that with hearts hard and dry we should exercise nothing but our hands in the works of piety. Amongst the other great and grievous crimes with which the Apostle charges the gentiles, I find this also enumerated, that they were "without affection." Now, there is an affection which is begotten of the flesh; and there is an affection which is obedient to the

rule of reason ; and there is an affection which is seasoned with the salt of wisdom. The first is that whereof St. Paul declares, " It is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be." Of the second the same Apostle bears opposite testimony, for it is the affection which " consents to the law (of God) that it is good." These two, therefore, must differ from each other, since to one and the same law the latter is subject and the former insubordinate. But far removed from either is the last, which tastes and understands " that the Lord is sweet," thus extinguishing the first and rewarding the second. For the affection of the flesh is pleasant but vile ; the rational affection has strength without savour ; whilst the affection of wisdom is both unctuous and sweet. Hence it is by the affection of reason that good works are performed ; and it is truly a love of charity, not that emotional charity, which, as has been said, is seasoned and enriched with the salt of wisdom, and which replenishes the mind with a " multitude of (God's) sweetness," but the charity which I have called effective and operative. This indeed does not as yet delight and refresh the soul with the delicious love just mentioned, but it inflames our hearts with a vehement love of that love. " Let us not love in word nor in tongue," says the Evangelist, " but in deed and in truth."

Observe, my brethren, how carefully the beloved Disciple steers here a middle course between the vicious carnal love and the affective spiritual love, distinguishing from both one and the other the charity which is active and salutary. From this he excludes the falsity of a deceitful tongue, without requiring, however, as an evidence of its possession, that savour of sweetness which belongs to the affection of wisdom." " Let

us love," he says, "in deed and in truth." He speaks in this manner because he knows that we are moved to the performance of good works rather by the impulse of vivid truth than by the attraction of affective charity. "He set charity in order in me," exclaims the Spouse. But is it affective charity or effective? Both surely, yet in opposite ways. For whereas the latter loves best what is low, the former prefers what is high. It cannot be questioned, for example, that in well-ordered affective charity the love of God takes precedence of the love of one's neighbour, and as amongst men, the more perfect are preferred to the less perfect, heaven is preferred to earth, eternity to time, the soul to the body. But well-regulated active charity moves in the inverse order, if not always, at least as a rule. For we feel ourselves pressed with greater solicitude and occupy ourselves more frequently in what concerns our neighbour than in the things appertaining to God; we show more care and assiduity in assisting the weak brother than him that is stronger; by the laws of humanity and the very necessity of our condition we pay more attention to the peace of earth than to the glory of heaven; we are so taken up with the worries of temporal affairs that we can scarcely give a thought to the interests of eternity, the wants of the soul receive little consideration, whereas we are all but constantly ministering to the needs of the body; "and such as we think to be the less honourable members of the body about these we put a more abundant honour," as the Apostle speaks. Thus do we fulfil in a manner the word of the Lord Who said, "So shall the last be first and the first last." Who can deny that in prayer we converse with God? Yet how often are we not obliged to



interrupt and abandon that exercise at the bidding of charity, for the sake of those who need the help of our words or works ! How often are we not compelled in the interests of piety to exchange the repose of pious contemplation for the turmoil of worldly affairs ! How often without prejudice to conscience do we not put aside our spiritual book in order to devote ourselves to manual labour ! Nay, how often do we not find in the necessity of looking after our temporal concerns more than sufficient reason for intermitting even the celebration of the Holy Mysteries ! \* Surely a preposterous order. But necessity recognises no law. Effective charity thus pursues its own course, "beginning from the last," according to the command of the Father of the family. That it is just and pious we must certainly acknowledge, seeing that it has no respect of persons, and considers not so much the worth of objects as the necessities of men.

The case is very different with affective charity, which begins not from the last, as the other, but from the first. For it is that wisdom by which we value and esteem things in accordance with the worth and merit of each, so that what possesses the highest intrinsic perfection attracts our affection most strongly ;

\* " Quoties pro administrandis terrenis justissime ipsis super-  
sedemus celebrandis missarum solemnitiis." During the harvest  
season, Cistercian communities, who in their poverty had to  
depend upon themselves to save and gather in the crops, were  
wont to go forth to the fields at daybreak, intermitting the  
solemn celebration of Holy Mass, and reciting the diurnal  
hours at the place of work. But St. Bernard himself appears  
to have scarcely ever omitted his daily Mass. In the life by  
Gaufridus (lib. v. cap. 1) we read, " In oblatione Hostiae salu-  
taris, quam usque ad defectum ultimum vix aliquando intermisit  
artus sibi vix coherentes vigore spiritus sustentabat, semit-  
ipsum pariter offerens acceptabilem hostiam in odorem sua-  
vitatis."—(Translator.)

what has the less high, less ; and what has the lowest, least. Such is the order demanded by the charity of truth ; whereas the contrary is observed by the truth of charity. For it is evidently required by the truth of charity that they whose needs are greatest should be the first attended to ; whilst, on the other hand, the charity of truth is then made manifest when the affection of the will follows the same order as the judgment of the reason. Therefore, my brother, if thou lovest “ the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength ; ” and if with a more ardent affection, lifting thyself higher than the mere love of divine love which contents effective charity, thou hast already arrived at the end whereto this is but the means, so that thou art now all inflamed with holy fire from thy proximity to the Godhead, having received the fulness of the Spirit—if thou hast attained to this, certainly God will give thee now an appreciation of Himself, which, if not worthy of His perfection—for no created intellect can form an adequate idea of that—shall at least be proportionate to thy limited capacity. Then thou shalt also esteem thyself at thy proper value. For thou shalt clearly understand that thou hast nothing at all in thyself which could found a title to even thine own love, except that, and in so far as, thou art God’s. I mean to say, thou shalt ascribe to Him exclusively whatever thou mayst find in thyself deserving of love. Thou shalt then, I repeat, value thyself at thy real worth, since by the very experience of the love and regard thou shalt feel for thyself, \* it will become plain

\* He means to say that the exercise of this commendable self-love will make the soul conscious that its motive is something extrinsic to herself, namely, God.—(Translator.)

to thee that thou hast absolutely no right to be loved, even by thyself, save only for His sake without Whom thou art nothing.

As for thy neighbour, whom thou art plainly obliged to love as thou lovest thyself, in order to appreciate him as he deserves, thou must estimate his worth not otherwise than as thou hast determined thine own. For he is what thou art, that is, a man. Consequently, since thou lovest thyself only for the reason that thou lovest God, it follows that thou wilt love equally with thyself all who equally love God.\* But the man who hates thee, by that fact does not love God, and is therefore nothing.† Hence thou canst not love him as thyself, who art something, because of thy love for God. Nevertheless, thou mayst love him in order to excite him to love. There is a great difference between loving a man because he loves God, and loving him in order to lead him to the love of God. Therefore, if thou wouldst have an esteem for thine enemy, it will be necessary to appraise him not according to what he actually is, that is, as nothing, but according to what he may become, which, as being still uncertain, we may consider as next to nothing. But if we have certitude with regard to any creature that he is never to be

\* With regard to this point St. Thomas makes a distinction. Since the object measures the act and God is the object of charity, the more of God any person possesses in himself, the more he is to be loved, in the sense that *greater good* is to be desired for him. But as the intensity of an act depends upon the disposition of the agent, we love with *greater tenderness* those who are more nearly related to us, and desire a lesser good for them with more ardour than a greater good for others who are more perfect (*Sum. Theol.*, II. ii. q. xxvi. a. vii.).—(Translator.)

† Such is the teaching of St. Paul: "And if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 2).—(Translator.)



restored to the love of God, such a one must be estimated, not according to what he may become and as next to nothing, but according to what he now is, and as nothing absolutely ; since it is his destiny to remain for ever nothing. So far from being obliged to love one thus excluded eternally from the charity of God, we have rather the duty to hate him, conformably to what is written, " Have I not hated them, O Lord, that hated Thee, and pined away because of Thy enemies " ? But this is the sole exception to the law of love. For the rest, charity, which is particularly jealous of its rights herein, allows us to leave no man, even our bitterest enemy, without some little degree of affection. \* " Who is wise and will understand these things ? "

My brethren, give me a man who loves God above all and with his whole being, and proportions his love of himself and his neighbour to his own and his neighbour's love for God ; who loves his enemies in the hope that they will at length recover the grace of divine charity ; who loves the parents of his flesh with tenderness, by the instinct of nature, and the directors of his spirit with abundance, at the prompting of grace ; and

\* The precept of loving our enemies is explained by St. Thomas in the *Sum. Theol.*, II. ii. q. xxv. a. viii. We are not to love our enemies formally as such, because that would be loving them as they are the enemies of God, and therefore not virtue but vice. We are not obliged to love them with a *special* love, or to show them *special* marks of love. We have satisfied the obligation of charity when we do not exclude them from that ordinary love and respect due to all men for God's sake. In a. xi. the holy Doctor discusses the question as to whether the reprobate come under the law of charity. His decision is that as they are God's irreconcilable enemies we may not love them with a love of friendship, nor desire their happiness, yet we may love their spiritual natures and will their continuance in being, as the goods of God, which serve to manifest His justice.—(Translator.)

whose well-ordered love for God extends itself in the same manner to all the other creatures of God ; who despises the earth, keeps his eyes lifted up to heaven, "uses this world as if he used it not," and by the interior spiritual sense of taste can so distinguish between what is meant to be employed as a means and what must be embraced as an end, that he passes over things transitory in a transitory way, caring only for such of them as are necessary and in so far only as they are necessary, whilst he longs for the things of eternity with an insatiable desire—give me, I say, a man like this, and I will confidently declare him wise with the wisdom which esteems all things at their proper worth, so that he may glory like the Spouse with all justice and security, and may say, "He set charity in order in me." But where shall we find such a man ? Or when shall it be granted us to attain to such perfection ? How long, with tears I ask it, how long must the homeland appear to us in the distance, without our being able to reach it ? How long shall we sigh and salute it from afar, enjoying its perfumes, but unable to relish its sweetness ? O Truth Divine, the exile's home, and the end of his exile ! Already I behold Thee ; but, held back by the flesh, I am not able yet to enter Thee. Besides, I do not deserve to be admitted, all covered, as I am, with the soil of my sins. O Wisdom, Who "reacheest from end to end mightly" in creating and embracing the universe, "and orderest all things sweetly" in regulating and beautifying our affections, direct our actions, we beseech Thee, according as our temporal necessities demand, and dispose our wills conformably to the requirements of Thy eternal truth, so that each one of us may at last

securely glory in Thee, saying with the Spouse, " He set charity in order in me " ! For Thou art the " Virtue of God " and the " Wisdom of God," the Bridegroom of the Church, Christ Jesus Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.



## SERMON LI.

### ON THE MYSTICAL FLOWERS AND FRUITS, AND THE BRIDEGROOM'S RIGHT AND LEFT HAND.

*"Stay me up with flowers, compass me about with apples, because I languish with love. His Left Hand is under my head, and His Right shall embrace me."*

Stay me up with flowers, compass me about with apples, because I languish with love." The charity of the Spouse, my brethren, has grown stronger than ever, having gathered new energies from the extraordinary succession of favours just now bestowed. For you have seen how generously she was allowed to enjoy not alone the presence, but even the familiar conversation of her Beloved. Moreover, He appeared to her in this visitation with a more serene countenance than usual, His language was pleasanter, and He gave her more of His company than on former occasions; and not content to delight her with His loving communications, He crowned her happiness by adding words of praise. Nor was this all. She obtained besides the privilege of resting under the shadow of Him Whom she desired, of eating of His fruit, and drinking of His chalice. For it is not to be supposed that she came forth thirsty from the "cellar of wine," into which she was boasting just now of having been introduced. But perhaps it would be better to say that she did come forth thirsty, since we read in Ecclesiastes, "They that drink me shall yet thirst." After granting her all these favours, the Beloved retired, according to His custom. Immediately she proclaims herself languishing

with love, that is to say, reduced to a state of weakness by the violence of love. And the bitterness which she suffers at the departure of her Bridegroom is proportionate to the delight which she experienced in His presence. For the deprivation of what one loves, increases one's desire of it, and the pain of separation varies in intensity with the ardour of desire. The Spouse, therefore, begs to be consoled with the pleasant odours of flowers and fruits, until the hour when He shall again come back to her Whose absence she can scarcely endure. So much for the order of discourse.

Let us now endeavour, under the guidance of the Spirit of truth, to extract the mystical meaning which lies underneath the rind of the letter. If we suppose the speaker in this place to be the universal Church of the saints, the flowers and the fruits must be understood as representing ourselves, and not us only, but all others, equally, throughout the whole earth, who have been converted from a worldly life. By the flowers are designated the young and tender virtues of those who are still in their spiritual beginnings, whilst the fruit is meant to symbolise the strength and maturity of the perfect. Stayed up, therefore, with such flowers and compassed about with such apples, holy mother Church, fruitful even in her exile, to whom "to live is Christ and to die gain," supports doubtless with equanimity the bitterness of her banishment; because according to Holy Scripture, there is given to her "of the fruit of her hands," as of the first-fruits of the Spirit, and "her works praise her in the gates." But if we wish, according to the moral sense, to assign both the fruit and the flowers to the same soul, the flowers must be taken to signify faith, and the fru

good works. Nor, as I think, will you judge this to be fanciful, when you remember that good works must always follow faith, just as the fruit is preceded by the blossom. For we have it on the authority of St. Paul that "without faith it is impossible to please God." Nay, the same Apostle teaches that "all that is not of faith is sin." And so it is quite as impossible to have good works without faith, as it is to have fruit without flowers. Furthermore, just as the flower has no value if the fruit does not follow it, so, "faith without works is dead." "Stay me up with flowers, compass me about with apples, because I languish with love." By these words we are given to understand that the soul, accustomed to the tranquil repose of prayer, must find her consolation in the good works which spring from the root of a sincere faith, whenever, as frequently happens, the light and grace of contemplation is temporarily withdrawn. For it is a great thing and a rare thing to be favoured even occasionally with such a grace, not to speak of enjoying it uninterruptedly, whilst we are still abiding in the flesh. But, as I have said, whenever the divine light is eclipsed in the soul, she should immediately apply herself to the practice of the virtues, so that she may the more easily return to the happier state, as being still in its neighbourhood, so to speak. For the contemplative and the active life are closely related to each other and live under the same roof. Remember that Martha is Mary's sister. ✓ Therefore, when the soul loses the light of holy contemplation for a time, she does not fall into the darkness of sin, or into the lethargy of sloth, but keeps herself bright and active by the performance of good works. And lest you should find it hard to believe



that good works are light, listen to the words of the Lord: "Let your light shine before men," where by "light" He evidently means virtuous actions, visible to human eyes.

"Stay me up with flowers, compass me about with apples, because I languish with love." The flame of love burns brightly, my brethren, in the presence of the person beloved, but languishes in his absence. This languishing is nothing else than the weariness begotten of impatient desire, which must inevitably come upon the soul when her love is strong and the loved one absent, whilst in the eagerness of her longing the swiftest haste is reputed tardy. Therefore, the Spouse is here expressing the wish to be surrounded with the fruits of good works, and the sweet odours of faith, wherein she may find consolation whilst "the Bridegroom tarries." Let me now tell you something of my own experience in this matter. Whenever I discover that any of you is making better progress towards perfection in consequence of my exhortations and admonitions, I confess I feel no regret for having given up my own leisure and repose to the labour of preparing my discourses. For example, if after the sermon the hot-tempered monk is found to be gentle, the proud monk humble, and the pusillanimous trustful; further, if those who were already conspicuously gentle, humble, or trustful are seen to have advanced each in his special virtue, and are now more gentle, more humble, or more trustful; if again, they who perhaps had grown tepid and languid in the service of God, going through every spiritual exercise in a sluggish and drowsy manner, appear to have been aroused and renewed in fervour by the "burning word" of the Lord; and, finally, if they

who, forsaking the well of wisdom, had "dugged to themselves broken cisterns" of self-will, "that can hold no water," who consequently with hearts heavy and dry, as containing no moisture of devotion, were wont to murmur against every order of authority: when these, I say, prove themselves to have "flourished again" unto the perfect practice of obedience, and appear now docile and devout in all things, because of the "free rain," the dew of the word, which God has "set aside for His inheritance"—I assure you, my brethren, that it is impossible for my soul to admit any sadness, or to grieve over the loss of the delights of contemplation, when thus encompassed with these flowers and fruits of piety. Patiently shall I suffer myself to be withdrawn from the embraces of the barren Rachel, provided I can obtain from the fertile Lia an abundant fruit in your advancement. I certainly shall never begrudge the time consumed in the preparation of these discourses, which otherwise I should have spent in the repose of contemplation, so long as I behold the seed of my words germinating in your hearts, and springing up into a plentiful harvest of the fruits of justice. For charity, which "seeketh not her own," easily persuaded me long ago that my own private satisfaction should never be preferred to the common good. Prayer, reading, writing, meditation, and if there be any other spiritual exercise "that was gain to me, the same I have counted loss for" your sakes.

"Stay me up with flowers, compass me about with apples, because I languish with love." These words, my brethren, may be accordingly understood as addressed to the young maidens by the Spouse in the absence

of the Beloved, in order to admonish them of the necessity of advancing in faith and good works "until He come." For she was well aware that by doing so they would be fulfilling the good pleasure of her Bridegroom, securing their own salvation, and bringing consolation to herself. I remember to have explained this verse more fully and in a different sense in my book "On the Love of God"; but whether better or worse than now, I leave him to decide who may wish to compare the two expositions. But surely no person of prudence will find fault with me for giving various interpretations of the same text, provided nothing is said anywhere contrary to truth. For charity, which every part of Holy Scripture is intended to subserve, will be able to accomplish its work of edification all the more efficaciously, in proportion to the number of apt expositions discoverable for each passage. Why should we condemn in scriptural exegesis what we are constantly doing in the use of other things? Take water, for example. How many are the purposes for which it is employed in relation to our bodies! In the same way, there should be no objection to the practice of drawing out from any single text of Scripture a variety of apt significations, suited to the necessity or the use of different souls.

But the Spouse continues, "His Left Hand is under my head, and His Right Hand shall embrace me." These words also, as I recollect, have been discussed at length in the above-mentioned treatise. But let me explain the sequence of the discourse. The Bridegroom has evidently returned. He came back, as it seems to me, in order to console by His presence His languishing Spouse. And surely she must have recovered



her spirits in the society of Him Whose absence had filled her with sadness. He, on His side, has been unable to endure the sight of His dear one in sorrow. So He has come back to comfort her. How could He delay, when invoked with such ardent desires? And seeing that during His absence she has been faithful in the performance of good works and diligent in the pursuit of spiritual profit, inasmuch as she has bidden her daughters, the young maidens, to compass her about with the fruits and flowers of virtue, therefore is He now returned to her with a more generous largess of graces than on any former occasion. For with one of His arms He supports her drooping head, and is preparing to encircle her with the other and to clasp her to His Bosom. Happy the soul that rests on the Bosom of Christ and reposes in the arms of the Word! "His Left Hand is under my head, and His Right Hand embrace me." Observe how she does not say, "His Right Hand embraces me," but "His Right Hand shall embrace me." By this we are given to understand that, far from showing herself ungrateful for the first grace received, she even anticipates the second with her thanksgiving.

Learn from the Spouse, my brethren, to be neither slow nor slack in expressing your gratitude; learn to render thanks for every favour bestowed. "Consider diligently what is set before your face," so that none of the gifts of God, the ordinary no more than the extraordinary, the least no more than the greatest, may fail to be duly and gratefully acknowledged. Remember that we are ordered to "gather up the fragments, lest they be lost." That is to say, we are required to return thanks for even the very smallest of God's

favours. For we always lose the benefit of divine graces when we neglect to requite them with thanksgiving. Ingratitude is the enemy of the soul, the extinguisher of merits, the destroyer of virtues, the waster of benefits. Ingratitude is a burning wind that dries up the fountains of piety, and the dews of mercy, and the springs of grace.\* Therefore it is that the Spouse hastens to give thanks as soon as she experiences the grace of the Left Hand, without waiting for the plenitude which belongs to the Right. For after mentioning that her Bridegroom's Left Hand is under her head, she does not say, in the present, that she is, but in the future, that she shall be embraced with His Right Hand.

But, my brethren, what are we to understand by the Right Hand and the Left Hand of the heavenly Bridegroom, of the Word of God? Surely even of that which is called the word of man we would not say that it is divided in itself into such a variety of corporeal parts, or that it possesses a plurality of material members distinct from each other and distinguishing the whole into right side and left. Much less, therefore, does the Word of God, Itself very God, admit any diversity of what kind soever; for It is what is, as simple in Its nature to the exclusion of parts, as It is in essence unique to the exclusion of number. For the Word is

\* "Ingratitudo inimica est animae, exinanitio meritorum, virtutum dispersio, beneficiorum perditio. Ingratitudo ventus urens, siccans sibi fontem pietatis, rorem misericordiae, fluenta gratiae." Compare with the following from St. Augustine (*Soliloq. An.*, cap. 18): "Ingratitudo . . . est radix totius mali spiritualis, et ventus quidam desiccans et urens omne bonum, obstruens fontem divinae misericordiae super hominem." And with this from St. Laurence Justinian, "Grande prorsus malum est ingratitude, quae divinae bonitatis exsiccat fontem, hominum benevolentiam dirimit, spoliatur donis, dignitate privat" (*De regim. praelat.*, cap. xxi.).—(Translator.)

that Wisdom of God of Which it is written, "And of His Wisdom there is no number." Now that which excludes from itself all variety and distinction is necessarily incomprehensible, and by consequence ineffable. Where, then, I ask, shall we find words with which we may worthily describe that awful Majesty, speak of It with propriety, or define It accurately? However, I shall express as well as I can whatever little of that infinite Object I am enabled dimly to apprehend by the light of the Holy Spirit. We are taught by the example of the holy fathers, and by the custom of the inspired authors, that it is permissible to borrow suitable images from the things we know, wherewith to represent to ourselves the perfections of God; and instead of coining new words, to weave from the old a proper and becoming vesture for the ideas thus acquired. Otherwise we should commit the absurdity of attempting to explain the unknown by the unknown.

Therefore, since by right and left are wont to be designated prosperity and adversity, it seems to me that the Left Hand of the Word may be understood here as signifying His threatenings of chastisement, and His Right as representing the promise of the kingdom. There are times, my brethren, when the servile fear of punishment weighs heavy upon the soul. Whilst this is the case, the Left Hand of the Beloved should be described rather as over than as under her head; for so long as she is thus affected she certainly cannot say with truth, "His Left Hand is under my head." But if she mounts higher, and exchanges the spirit of servitude for the more worthy disposition which makes obedience spontaneous, so that she is now more drawn by the hope of heaven



than driven by the terror of hell, or, better still, makes the love of the good for its own sake the motive of her actions, then without doubt she will be able to say, "His Left Hand is under my head." For she has now lifted her head above the slavish fear of chastisement, which is in the Left Hand, and has attained to a better and nobler disposition of mind. Nay, by the force of her worthy desires, she is even drawing near to the Right Hand, which holds the promises, as the Psalmist says, speaking to the Lord, "At Thy Right Hand are delights even to the end." Therefore she has conceived an assured hope which she expresses in the confident anticipation, "And His Right Hand shall embrace me."

Consider now, with me, my brethren, whether a soul in such dispositions, and raised to such a height of blissful love, may not also apply to herself the words of the Psalmist, and sing with security, "In peace in the self-same, I will sleep and I will rest"; especially since she has the same reason for her peace as that assigned in the words which follow, "For Thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope." The case is this. So long as the soul is influenced by the spirit of servitude she has but little hope and an excessive amount of fear. For her, as appears sufficiently manifest, there is no possibility of either rest or peace whilst her conscience is thus wavering between security and alarm; and the less so, inasmuch as terror predominates and tortures her above measure, for "fear hath pain." Such a soul, consequently, cannot say sincerely, "In peace in the self-same, I will sleep and I will rest," because she is not as yet able to make her own the acknowledgment which succeeds, "For Thou, O Lord,

singularly hast settled me in hope." But when, little by little, fear begins to fail and hope to wax strong under the gradually growing influence of grace ; when at length that stage is reached at which charity, rising up in its might, runs to the help of the sister virtue and " casteth out fear," does it not seem to you, my brethren, that this soul is now " singularly settled in hope," and may therefore sing with the Psalmist, " In peace in the self-same, I will sleep and I will rest " ?

" If you sleep among the midst of lots," says holy David, " you shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver." By these words, as I think, he designs to teach us that the intervening space between fear and assurance is occupied by hope, wherein the mind or the conscience most sweetly reposes, reclining at ease on the soft couch of charity. And possibly there is another reference to this intermediate place in a subsequent verse of this Canticle of Canticles, where in the description of Solomon's litter we read, amongst other things, " The midst he covered with charity for the daughters of Jerusalem." For the soul which feels herself to be " singularly settled in hope," can no longer serve in fear, but thenceforward reposes in charity. So the Spouse rests and slumbers, since it is said with regard to her, " I adjure you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and the harts of the fields, that you stir not up nor make the beloved to wake till she please." O marvellous and unspeakable condescension ! That the Word of God should make the contemplative soul rest upon His own Bosom, and, not content with this, should deign to defend her against the incursions of care, to protect her from the disquiet of her natural activities, and from the weariness of worldly distractions,

and should even take precautions to prevent her being awakened until she herself pleases! But I must not now attempt a discussion of this verse. Instead of treating it in a superficial manner at the end of a sermon already long enough, I will rather hold it over to serve as the text of the morrow's discourse, in order that words so full of sweetness may not suffer in the exposition from any want of due diligence. Not that even then we shall be "sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves," especially concerning a subject so noble, so excellent, so transcendently sublime, "but all our sufficiency is from God," the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.



## SERMON LII.

### ON THE MYSTICAL SLEEP OF THE SPOUSE, AND THE TWO KINDS OF ECSTASY.

*"I adjure you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and the harts of the fields, that you stir not up nor make the beloved to wake till she please."*

"I adjure you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and the harts of the fields, that you stir not up nor make the beloved to wake till she please." This adjuration, my brethren, is addressed to the young maidens. For they are the "daughters of Jerusalem," so called because although delicate and tender, and still weak and girlish in their actions and affections, nevertheless they cling close to the Spouse, in the hope of advancing towards and ultimately reaching the heavenly Jerusalem. These therefore the Bridegroom charges not to intrude upon His beloved whilst she is taking her repose, and on no account to presume to awaken her until it is her pleasure. For the reason why He places His Hand under her head, like a most affectionate husband (according to what has been said already), is in order that He may make her rest and slumber on His Bosom. And now the Holy Scripture further tells us that He most lovingly and condescendingly watches over her while she sleeps, lest the young maidens, with their frequent little troubles, should disturb her quiet and compel her to interrupt her repose. Such appears to be the literal connexion of our present text with the preceding. Yet as regards that solemn adjuration "by the roes and the harts of

the fields," if we take the words literally they seem to bear no relevant sense, so entirely are they appropriated to the spiritual signification. But however this may be, at all events, "it is good for us to be here," and to spend a little time contemplating the goodness, the sweetness, the gracious condescension of the heavenly Bridegroom. What tenderness, O man, hast thou ever found in any human affection to be compared with that which is revealed to us here from the Heart of the Most High? And the revelation is made by the Holy Ghost Who "searcheth the deep things of God," Who cannot be ignorant of anything contained in the Heart of Him Whose own Spirit He is, and, as being the Spirit of truth, cannot speak anything other than what He finds therein recorded.

Nor is there wanting of our own race one who has been so happy as to merit the joy of being made the object of this divine tenderness, and of experiencing in herself this delightful secrets of heavenly love. To question this would be to doubt the truth of the inspired passage which I am now discussing. For the celestial Bridegroom is clearly represented here as most anxiously concerned for the repose of a human Spouse very dear to Him, whom with affectionate solicitude He holds in His arms whilst she slumbers, fearful lest a sleep so pleasant should be disturbed by any annoyance or agitation. My brethren, I cannot contain myself for joy, when I think of how that infinite Majesty disdains not to stoop so low as to engage thus in sweet and familiar intercourse with our poor nature, when I think of how the Most High God vouchsafes to contract a marriage alliance with the soul even during the time of her exile, and to manifest towards her all

the tender affection which the most loving of bridegrooms could show to his bride. I have no doubt that what we read of on earth is perfectly accomplished in the case of every soul in heaven. I believe that we shall fully experience there what we here find described in the holy Book ; except that no language can give a true idea of the capacity for love which the soul shall have in the next life, nor even of that with which she is at present endowed. What, think you, is the happiness awaiting her in heaven, when even on earth she is treated so affectionately that she feels herself embraced with the arms of God, fostered on the Bosom of God, guarded by the watchfulness and jealousy of God, lest anything should disturb her slumber and cause her to awake before it is her pleasure ?

But now, my brethren, let me explain, if I can, what is this sleep which the Bridegroom wants His Spouse to enjoy, and will not allow her to be awakened out of it except at her own desire. An explanation is necessary, because otherwise, when some one happens to read in the Apostle, " It is now the hour for us to rise from sleep " ; or, in the psalms, that verse where David says to God, " Enlighten my eyes that I may never sleep in death," he may easily be puzzled by the ambiguity of the term sleep, and be quite unable to discover any worthy interpretation for the slumber of the Spouse, of which there is question here. Nor has this sleep anything in common with that whereof Christ spoke in the Gospel, when He said, " Lazarus our friend sleepeth ; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." For the sleep He meant was the sleep of bodily death, although the disciples understood His



words as referring to ordinary slumber. The sleep of the Spouse has nothing to do with the body. It is as distinct from that gentle sleep which for a time sweetly seals up the material senses, as it is from the more terrible which finally extinguishes the life of the flesh. Still less is it identified with the sleep of spiritual death which paralyses the soul whilst she obstinately perseveres in a state of sin. For instead of bringing darkness and torpor, the sleep of the Spouse is wakeful and life-giving; it illuminates the mind, expels the death of sin, and bestows immortality. Nevertheless, it is a true sleep, which transports rather than stupefies the faculties. It is also a true death. This I affirm without the least hesitation, since the Apostle says, in commendation of some who were still living in the flesh, "You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Therefore I also can be guilty of no absurdity when I describe the ecstasy of the Spouse as a kind of death, not the death which terminates life, but that which delivers her true life from danger, so that she may say with the Psalmist, "Our soul hath been delivered as a sparrow out of the snare of the fowlers." For in the present life the soul is always surrounded by the snares of temptation, which, however, have no power to frighten her as often as she is transported out of herself by some holy and irresistible attraction, if yet the mental exaltation and ravishment be so great as to lift her above the common and usual modes of thinking and feeling. So we read in Proverbs, "A net is spread in vain before the eyes of them that have wings." For what has such a soul to fear from sensuality, since she has lost even the faculty of sensation?

No longer conscious of material impressions, though remaining still the principle of life to the body, she is necessarily inaccessible to temptations from the senses. "Who will give me the wings of a dove and I will fly and be at rest?" Would to God that I could often endure a death of this kind and thus escape the snares of a more terrible death! So should I be insensible to the fatal allurements of luxury; so should I be unconscious of the stings of the flesh, of the suggestions of avarice, of the swellings of anger and impatience, of the torments of anxiety and the miseries of care. "Let my soul die the death of the just," so that deception may no longer have power to ensnare me nor sin to seduce! Happy death which destroys not life, but changes it to better! Happy death which lifts the soul to heaven without laying the body low!

Yet this manner of dying is peculiar to men. Therefore, "Let my soul die the death of the angels" also (if I may use the expression), so that escaping from the memory of all present things, she may strip herself, not alone of the desires, but even of the images of inferior and corporeal objects, and may converse spiritually with them whom she resembles in spirituality! The name contemplation, as it seems to me, belongs either solely or principally to such a mental ecstasy.\* It is the part of human virtue to live on

\* St. Bernard gives several accounts of contemplation which appear to be inconsistent with each other. But he does not always intend his words to be taken as strict definitions. Sometimes, imitating St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great, he gives special prominence to the activity of the will, which, although the more salient element, is also the less essential. Thus in the *Scala Claustralium* he speaks of contemplation as "an elevation of the soul, held suspended in God and tasting the joys of His eternal sweetness"; and in the fifth book of his *De Consideratione* he declares that the "first and highest

earth unfettered by earthly desires ; but to be able to contemplate truth without the help of material or sensible images is the characteristic of angelic purity. Yet each of these two is the gift of God. Each is a true ecstasy. In each the soul rises above herself, but in the second far higher than in the first.\* Blessed is the soul which can say in this sense, " Lo, I have gone far off, flying away ; and I abode in the wilderness " ! It is not enough for her that she is transported out of herself, unless she can fly far away and be at rest. Thou hast obtained such a victory over the temptations of the flesh that thou dost no longer gratify its concupiscence nor yield assent to its enticements. This certainly is progress. Thou hast truly gone forth from thyself. But thou hast not yet flown afar, unless, by the purity of thy mind, thou art able

contemplation is admiration of majesty." But in the second book of the latter treatise he says, " Contemplation may be defined as the true and certain intuition of any object, or the certain apprehension of truth." Here he makes the intellectual act the formal constituent of contemplation, in which he is followed by St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, II. ii. q. clxxx. a. iii. Ecstasy is merely an effect of divine contemplation. Cf. Suarez, t. xiv. l. ii. c. ix.-xvii.—(Translator.)

\* The difference between the two kinds of ecstasy here mentioned seems to be that whilst both interrupt the activity of the external senses, the latter but not the former, suspends also the operations of the imagination and memory, leaving free only the spiritual faculties of intellect and will ; hence it is called an angelic sleep or death. The two states are plainly mystical, and seem to correspond to St. Teresa's Prayer of Quiet and Prayer of Union, which she thus describes (*Int. Cast.*, M. v. c. 1) : " Do not imagine that this state of prayer (Prayer of Union) like the one preceding it (Prayer of Quiet) is a sort of drowsiness—I call it drowsiness because the soul seems to slumber, being neither quite asleep nor wholly awake. In the Prayer of Union the soul is asleep, fast asleep, as regards the world and herself ; and in fact during the short time it lasts, she is deprived of all feeling whatever, being unable to think on any subject even if she would."—(Translator.)



to rise above the images of sensible objects, which are constantly rushing in upon thee from every side. Until thou hast attained to this, do not promise thyself any rest. Thou art in error if thou thinkest that the place of repose, the quiet of solitude, the perfection of light, and the dwelling of peace can be found any nearer. But show me the man who has arrived at this point, and I shall unhesitatingly pronounce him to be at rest and qualified to say, "Turn, O my soul, into thy rest; for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee." Here truly is a home in solitude, and a dwelling in the light, and, according to the Prophet Isaias, "a tabernacle for a shade in the day-time from the heat, and a security and covert from the whirlwind and from the rain." It is of the same the Psalmist sings, "For He hath hidden me in His tabernacle; in the day of evils He hath protected me in the secret place of His tabernacle."

It appears to me, therefore, that it is into this solitude the Spouse has retired, and there, overpowered by the beauty of the place, has sweetly fallen asleep in the arms of her Beloved. In other words, she has been visited by the slumber of spiritual rapture, and this is the sleep out of which the young maidens are forbidden to awaken her, until she herself pleases. But let us examine the mode of the Bridegroom's prohibition. It is not a mere warning, couched in the usual mild and simple language, but is expressed in the form of an earnest entreaty, accompanied with the very strange and solemn adjuration, "by the roes and the harts of the field." Now these animals are chiefly remarkable for keenness of sight and powers of leaping, and for that reason have been fittingly selected, as I

suppose, to symbolise the holy souls which have parted from the body, and the blissful angels who dwell with God. For both orders of spirits are known to be gifted with analogous endowments, whereby they can either soar to the loftiest things or penetrate the most profound. Again, the roes and harts are described as living at large in the open fields, because in this they typify the free and unconfined flights of spiritual contemplation. Why, then, are the young maidens adjured by the harts and the roes? Doubtless, to remind them that they should not through wantonness or levity call away the Spouse from the society of blessed spirits, human and angelic, to which she gains admittance as often as she is rapt in ecstasy. Very properly, therefore, are the daughters kept in check by the authority of these heavenly princes, from whose company, as they know, their importunity will recall their mother. Hence, let the young maidens bear in mind against whom they offend whenever they needlessly disturb the Spouse; and let them not so far presume on her maternal love as to have no fear of intruding rashly into this celestial assembly; and finally, let them know that they are guilty of such irreverence and rudeness every time they oblige their mother, without just cause, to interrupt her contemplation. It is for her alone to determine how much of her time ought to be devoted to the care of herself, and how much to the interests of her daughters. This is plain from the fact that they are not allowed to awaken her until she herself pleases. Well does the Bridegroom know with what ardent charity His beloved is inflamed even with respect to her neighbours, and with what motherly affection she keeps anxious watch

over her daughters' spiritual progress, so that she is always ready and willing to put herself at their service as often as occasion requires. He therefore considers that this administration may be safely entrusted to her prudence. For she is not like so many other superiors whom we may observe to be incurring the Prophet's malediction, for that they take to themselves the fat and the strong and cast the weak away as nothing worth. Surely it is not the sound whom the physician should seek but rather the ailing. And if sometimes he does visit the hale, it is only as a friend not as a healer. Pray, tell me, good master, whom wilt thou consent to teach, if thou rejectest all that are ignorant? To whom, I ask, wilt thou show thyself a zealous instructor in discipline, if thou avoidest or repellst the wayward? To whom shalt thy patience be proved if, excluding the perverse, thou admittest none but the docile?

Nevertheless, my brethren, "there are some of them that (sit) here," whom I could wish to see more exactly observing what our present text enjoins. They would not then forget the reverence due to their superiors, whose repose they so often disturb without necessity, and thus make themselves displeasing even to the citizens of heaven; and perhaps they would begin at last to give me also a little more peace than usual, and might not as now intrude upon my leisure with as little good cause as good manners. They are well aware that, even though they treated me with all consideration, the duty of attending to our visitors would seldom leave me an hour to myself. However, I feel somewhat scrupulous about complaining in this manner, lest some pusillanimous soul should overtax her powers of



endurance by concealing her necessities, because she is afraid of disturbing me. I shall therefore say no more on the subject. Otherwise, instead of edifying the weak, I should rather appear to be setting them an example of impatience. The "little ones" of the Lord are they who believe in His name. I will not allow them to take scandal from me. I will not make use of my authority to protect myself from their importunity. Let them use me as much as they like. I shall be content, provided only they save their souls. They will spare me most by not sparing me at all ; and I shall be never more at ease than when they fearlessly invade my hours of repose for the relief of their necessities. I am determined to accommodate myself to their desires as far as my powers may permit me. So long as I live, I will serve the Lord by serving my brethren "in charity unfeigned." I will not seek the things that are my own ; neither will I judge that to be profitable which advances my personal interests, but rather what is of use to the brotherhood. This only I ask, that my ministry may be made acceptable and fruitful to my brethren. So perhaps, "in the evil day," I may find mercy, for their sakes, in the eyes of their heavenly Father, and of the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LIII.

### ON THE SPIRITUAL HILLS AND MOUNTAINS, AND THE LEAPINGS OF THE BRIDEGROOM.

*"The voice of my Beloved : behold He cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills."*

"The voice of my Beloved." The Spouse, my brethren, already perceives that the young maidens have become unusually shy and reverentially fearful. She perceives it from the fact that they do not now dare as formerly to intrude upon her leisure, nor presume, "as yesterday and the day before," to disturb the quiet of her contemplative repose. She recognises that this is due to her Bridegroom's care and diligence in her behalf. Therefore she rejoices in spirit, whether over the young maidens' amendment, forasmuch as they have now, under obedience, desisted from causing excessive and needless commotion ; or because of the security from interruption which she shall henceforth enjoy during prayer ; or on account of the condescension and favour of her Beloved, Who so watchfully prevents the disturbance of her slumber and so zealously protects against intruders the delights of her leisure, which is in reality the time of her busiest application. And by the words, "The voice of my Beloved," she acknowledges that the change in the young maidens is the result of the rebuke which He has addressed to them. For one who is burdened with the anxious responsibility of directing others can rarely, if ever, give himself to himself without scruple. He

is always afraid that he is neglecting his subjects, and so displeasing God, by preferring his own repose and the sweetness of contemplation to the care of the community. However, it sometimes happens that a certain fear or reverence, infused from heaven into the hearts of his children, not only allows him an hour of leisure, but also gives him to understand that his retirement is acceptable to the Lord—from Whose grace it comes that the little ones are willing to suffer their trials in patience rather than trouble their spiritual father. And whenever this happens, what gladness, what peace inundates his soul! For this proper respect, manifested towards him by the “little ones,” plainly shows that they have heard within them the voice—threatening, as it were, and reproving—of Him Who says through the Prophet, “I (am He) that speaketh justice.” His voice is His inspiration, His voice in the infusion of holy fear.

The Spouse, therefore, on hearing this voice is filled with gladness and exultingly exclaims, “The voice of my Beloved.” For she is “the friend of the Bridegroom, who rejoiceth with joy because of the Bridegroom’s voice.” And she adds, “Behold He cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills.” She discovered His presence by the sound of His voice. Now, with the commendable curiosity of holy love, she strains her eyes, being anxious to see as well as to hear Him. Thus hearing leads to seeing, since “faith is from hearing.” And it is faith that cleanses our hearts and so enables us to see God, as it is written, “purifying your hearts by faith.” Therefore, Him Whom she has heard speaking, she now sees approaching. For the Holy Spirit observes here the order which the Psalmist indicates, where he says, “Hearken, O



daughter, and see." And the better to convince you that it is not by accident or chance that hearing is put before sight in this place, but rather by deliberate design, and for the purpose I have mentioned, I want you to examine if it is not the same order holy Job is found to follow, when he thus addresses God, "With the hearing of the ear I have heard Thee, but now my eye seeth Thee." Again, in the passage which describes the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles on Pentecost Sunday, is it not expressly mentioned that hearing anticipated sight? We read, "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty, wind coming," and afterwards "there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were, of fire." In this place, then, we have it stated explicitly that the advent of the Holy Spirit was revealed first to the hearing, and secondly to the sight. But there is no need to labour the point further. You yourselves, if you care to take the trouble of searching, will doubtless succeed in discovering many similar testimonies in different parts of Scripture.

Let us now turn our thoughts to a question which calls for more careful consideration as presenting greater difficulties to the inquirer. And here I confess that I stand in particular need of the help of the Holy Ghost, whilst I am endeavouring to explain what those mountains and hills are, which the Church, with gladdened eyes, beheld her Bridegroom leaping upon and skipping over. He was then, as I suppose, hastening to effect the redemption of her whose beauty He desired. I am led to take this view and to hold it firmly by the fact that something very like it occurs in the psalms, where the Prophet, evidently foreseeing and

heralding the coming of Christ, expresses himself thus, "He hath set His tabernacle in the sun : and He as a Bridegroom, coming out of His bride-chamber, hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way. His going out is from the end of heaven, and His circuit even to the end thereof." We know perfectly well, my brethren, what that setting forth was, and what that return. We know likewise by Whom and with what intent that course was undertaken and that circuit consummated. For surely when we read of such things, whether in the psalms or in the present Canticle, we are not to represent to ourselves a man of gigantic stature who is captivated by the human love of his absent human spouse, and who in the heat of his hurry to embrace her, comes leaping and skipping over the mountains and hills. Neither should we suppose that the mountains and hills here in question are the huge piles of earthy matter, such as we see around us, which tower high above the level plain, and some of which seem to lift their crests over the clouds of heaven. Indeed it would be altogether unbecoming to entertain such gross material conceptions when explaining the Holy Scriptures, especially when treating of a canticle so spiritual as this. It would even be unlawful, since, as you remember, Christ tells us in the Gospel that, "God is a Spirit, and they that adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth."

What, then, my brethren, are these spiritual mountains and hills ? When this has been decided, we shall be able to give an accordant account of the Bridegroom's leaping upon and skipping over them. For He is God, and therefore a Spirit. We may suppose the mountains and hills in question to be the same on which, as the Gospel mentions, the ninety-nine sheep

were left of old, when their devoted Shepherd descended to earth in quest of the one that had wandered away. But here we encounter a difficulty and the mind sticks fast in doubt. For it is not easy to understand what are those spiritual hills and mountains (and of what kind) said to be occupied by the heavenly and angelic spirits (represented beyond question by the ninety-nine sheep) as a habitation and a place of pasture, so to speak. Yet, unless such things really existed, Truth would not have spoken a parable that implies them. Neither would the Royal Prophet have said of the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem, long ages before, that 'the foundations thereof are in the holy mountains,' if there were no holy mountains in heaven. Finally, we have the testimony of Isaias for the fact that the blessed kingdom above possesses not only spiritual, but even living and rational mountains and hills, where he says, "The mountains and the hills shall sing praise before God." \*

What therefore can these hills and mountains be but the very spiritual inhabitants of heaven, whom the Lord calls His sheep? Hence mountains and sheep signify the same. But perhaps some of you may think it absurd that mountains should be represented as pasturing on mountains, or sheep upon sheep. And indeed in the literal signification it does sound rather strange. But spiritually examined, it will be found to contain a very beautiful meaning. That is to say, if you consider carefully how Christ, the Pastor of both flocks, and the Wisdom of God, ministers one and the same

\* "Montes et colles cantabunt coram Deo laudes." In the Vulgate we have "montes et colles cantabunt coram vobis eundem" (Is. lv. 12), which translates the Greek and better suits the context.—(Translator.)



food of truth in one way to the sheep of heaven and in another to those of earth. For we, mortal men, whilst here we sojourn in the place of our banishment, are obliged to eat our spiritual bread in the sweat of our brow, and in labour and pain to beg it outside ourselves, namely, from the learned, from holy books, or at any rate, "clearly seeing the invisible things of God, being understood by the things that are made." The angels, on the contrary, obtain in all plenitude and with equal ease and felicity, if not from themselves, certainly in themselves, the means not only of supporting life, but also of living happily. For they are all "taught of God." We have received an infallible promise that the elect amongst men shall all be admitted sooner or later to participate with them in the same high privilege. But it is not given them to enjoy it here below in a happy security.

The mountains, therefore, feed on the mountains and the sheep on the sheep, when those celestial spiritual essences find abundantly within themselves, from the Word of life, wherewith to sustain a blissful immortality. They are at once mountains and sheep. They are mountains because of their loftiness and fulness. They are sheep on account of their mildness. For, although full of God, lofty in merits, eminent in virtues, yet with humble obedience they bow their exalted heads and submit to the authority of the Divine Majesty, at an infinite height above them; like the gentlest of sheep which are directed in all things by the will of their shepherd, and follow him faithfully whithersoever he goes. And, according to the Prophet David, in these truly holy mountains, as in wisdom, the first of creatures, have been firmly laid from the beginning

and securely repose the foundations of the city of God ; which, although in part triumphant in heaven and in part still sojourning on earth, is nevertheless one city. But from the same mountains, as if from living "high-sounding cymbals," there is constantly resounding, as Isaias informs us, "thanksgiving and the voice of praise." Thus with their sweet and never-ceasing songs they fulfil what the same Prophet promised for them in the words above quoted, "The mountains and the hills shall sing praise before God," or what the Psalmist says, speaking to the Lord, "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord ; they shall praise Thee for ever and ever."

We must now return to the subject whence we have made a short, but, as I think, not unnecessary digression. The angels, therefore, are the mountains and hills on which the Church saw her heavenly Bridegroom leaping with extraordinary agility, and not only leaping on, but skipping over them, what time He was hurrying to enjoy the pleasure of her company. Do you wish me to explain, from the writings of the prophets and apostles, what these leaping and skippings were ? Well, you shall be satisfied. But I do not undertake to put before you now all the relevant testimonies which you can collect for yourselves in the Scriptures at your leisure. It would be too tedious a task to attempt in a sermon, besides being unnecessary. I shall, therefore, adduce now only those passages which appear to confirm briefly and clearly what is here said by the Spouse concerning the Bridegroom's leaping and skipping. It is of the Beloved the Psalmist sings, "He hath set His tabernacle in the sun ; and He, as a Bridegroom coming out of His bride-chamber, hath rejoiced

as a giant to run the way. His going out is from the end of heaven." See what a leap He gave here, from the height of heaven even unto the earth! For certainly I can find no other place, except this earth, where He, "Who dwelleth in light inaccessible," "hath set His tabernacle in the sun," that is to say, has condescended to reveal and manifest His presence to mortal eyes. So it is written, "He was seen upon earth and conversed with men." On earth, I say, "He hath set in the sun," viz., made clearly manifest, the tabernacle of His Body, which He vouchsafed to fashion for Himself from the flesh of the Virgin, in order that He might therein be rendered visible, being invisible in Himself, and that "all flesh might see the Salvation of God," Who had come in the flesh.

He leaped, therefore, upon the mountains, that is to say, upon the superior angelic orders, when He descended to their level, graciously revealing to them the "mystery which hath been hidden from eternity," the "great mystery of godliness." But skipping over these greater and more lofty mountains, the Cherubim, namely, and the Seraphim, and the Dominations, and the Principalities, and the Powers, and the Virtues, He disdained not to come down even to the lowest celestial choirs, which may be regarded as the hills. Yet He skipped over the hills also. For as the Apostle says, "Nowhere doth He take hold of the angels, but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold," in order that the word might be fulfilled which was spoken by holy David, when he said to the Father concerning the Son, "Thou hast made Him a little less than the angels"; for the seed of Abraham is evidently inferior to the angels. However, it is also possible to understand



these words of the Prophet as spoken in commendation of our human dignity, and signifying that man, made to God's image and likeness, and endowed just as the angels with the faculty of understanding, falls short of the perfection of these spiritual essences only by his dependence on an earthly body. But listen to St. Paul speaking unambiguously of the Incarnation of the Son: "Who, being in the Form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man." And again, "When the fulness of time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them who were under the law." He, therefore, who was "made of a woman" and "made under the law," undoubtedly, in descending so low, skipped over not alone the mountains, that is, the higher and greater heavenly spirits, but also the inferior angelic choirs, which, in comparison with the others, are properly designated by the name of hills. But he that is lesser in the kingdom of God is greater than "any flesh-burdened spirit on earth, not even excepting the great Baptist. And although we acknowledge that God is made man, and that even as united to man He is exalted incomparably over all Powers and Principalities; nevertheless by reason of His human infirmity, He yields to those whom He excels by His Majesty. In this way, then, did He leap on the mountains and skip over the hills, when He condescended most graciously to make Himself inferior to the lowest as well as to the highest of the heavenly spirits. And it was not the angels only whom He placed Himself beneath. He became subject even to

human spirits that dwell in houses of clay, the humility of God skipping over and conquering the humility of man. For when He was twelve years of age, He submitted Himself to Mary and Joseph at Nazareth ; and in the Jordan He bowed beneath the hands of John, although He was then in His prime. But behold, the day is declining, and still we may not yet descend from these mystical mountains.\*

But if I attempted in the present discourse to examine all the beauties of the heavenly heights which we are now contemplating, and to explore all their secret recesses, it would indeed be a pleasing occupation ; nevertheless I should have reason to fear lest either the sermon should lose the desirable character of brevity, or else lest such precious and abundant matter should be deprived of due consideration by overhaste in the discussion. Therefore, if it is agreeable to you, let us for to-day rest here on these holy mountains and hills, because " it is good for us to be here," where, placed in the same pasture with the angels by Christ, the Shepherd of the whole flock, we can find more pleasant and more plentiful food. For we no less than the angels are " the sheep of His pasture." We should consequently, like the " clean

\* This interpretation is common to many of the Fathers. St. Gregory the Great writes (Hom. 29, in Evang.), " When coming to redeem us, Our Lord made certain leaps, if I may be allowed the expression. Would you like to know, dearest brethren, what are the leaps I refer to ? He leaped from heaven to His mother's womb, from the womb to the manger, from the manger to the cross, from the cross to the sepulchre, from the sepulchre back to heaven." St. Ambrose (in Ps. cxviii.), " Let us see Him leaping. He leaps from heaven to the virgin, from the womb to the manger, from the manger to the Jordan, from the Jordan to the cross, from the cross to the tomb, from the tomb to the sky." Similarly St. Gregory Nazianzen.—(Translator.)

animals" of the Good Shepherd, ruminate diligently what we have swallowed down with such avidity from to-day's discourse. So shall we assemble for the next sermon with even keener appetites to enjoy what remains to be said on our present text, through the bounty of the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.



## SERMON LIV.

### ON THE MANNER OF THE BRIDEGROOM'S SKIPPING, AND ON THE THREE KINDS OF FEAR.

*"Behold He cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping over  
the hills."*

To-day, my brethren, I intend to propose to you another interpretation of those words of the Spouse which occupied us on the last occasion. I have reserved it purposely for the present. And it shall be for you to compare the two expositions and to select the one which pleases you most. There is no need, I suppose to recall to your minds what was spoken yesterday, as I am sure you cannot have forgotten it in so short space. But even if anything should have escaped your memory, it can easily be recovered, because all I said then has been written down exactly as it was delivered and inscribed with the style, as have been my other sermons also.\* Wherefore, listen now to something

\* "*Scripta sunt ut dicta sunt, et excepta stylo sicut caeteri sermones mei.*" This sentence is extremely important as proving beyond the possibility of a doubt what might otherwise be fairly questioned. For, as Mabillon has pointed out (*Praef. in t. iii. n. 10*), we have here unequivocal testimony from the Saint himself that the sermons preserved to us are identical both in matter and form with those preached 800 years ago to the Cistercian community in the auditorium of Clairvaux. The same words seem to imply that the sermons were committed to writing after delivery either by himself or by others at his dictation. It is not certain whether we are to understand what he says here of other discourses besides those on the Canticle. It cannot clearly be understood of all, for many of the sermons *De Diversis* consist of only a paragraph or two, and are apparently nothing more than abstract summaries. The Saint's first letter to the Apostolic Legate Cardinal Peter, contains evidence of this.

new. "Behold," exclaims the Spouse, "He cometh, leaping on the mountains, skipping over the hills." She is speaking of her Bridegroom, Who then undoubtedly leaped upon the mountains when He was sent by His Father to preach the Gospel to the poor. For whereas He was Lord of all, He disdained not to discharge the angelic office, and made Himself the "Angel of the great Counsel." He Who was wont heretofore to employ created spirits as His messengers, now descended to the earth in person. He Himself "hath revealed His justice in the sight of the gentiles." Of the angels St. Paul says, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" He, therefore, Who was above them, descended to their level and made Himself as one of them, disregarding the interests of His own glory in His desire to accumulate grace for us. But attend to Himself. "The Son of Man is not come," He says, "to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a redemption for many." Now, none of the other angels can be said to have ever done anything like this, so that in the devotedness and fidelity of His service, He has skipped over every one of them, as many as seemed to minister to the necessities of man. Faithful Minister, Who gave His Flesh for our food, and His Blood for our drink, and His

The Cardinal had sent a request for copies of his treatises and discourses. In his reply, the holy Abbot says, "I have never composed any work on moral questions which I could consider worthy of your Excellency's perusal. But some of the brethren have taken down in their own hand (*stylo*) summaries of the sermons I have preached in their presence. One of these brothers is now near you, I mean Gebuin, the Archdeacon and Precentor of Troyes, who will lend you his notes, if you care to see them." It is hard to resist identifying these notes with the shorter sermons referred to above.—(Translator.)

life for our ransom ! Surely faithful, Who, in the fervour of His Spirit, in the ardour of His love, and in the zeal of His piety, not alone leaped upon the mountains, but even skipped over the hills ! That is to say, He surpassed and exceeded all others in His devotion to our service. For He is the same Whom " God, His God hath anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows," and therefore with unrivalled alacrity " He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way." Thus, He skipped over the Archangel Gabriel and reached the Virgin before him, as the same heavenly prince acknowledged when he said, " Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." What is this thou sayest, O Gabriel ? Hast thou found in Mary's womb the Lord Whom but now thou didst leave behind in heaven ? Yet how can that be ? The explanation is that " He flew upon the wings of the winds " and so was first to arrive. Thou art conquered, O Archangel. Thou hast been skipped over by Him Who sent thee to herald His coming.

Or, at all events, He may be said to have leaped upon or in the mountains when He showed Himself to the patriarchs of old in the persons of His angels. This interpretation appears to be more in harmony with the propriety of the words. For it is not said that He leaped *on* the mountains (*saliens in montes*), but *in* the mountains (*saliens in montibus*) ; which seems to imply that He leaped in the angels by giving them the power and the impulse to leap themselves. In the same sense He is said to speak in the prophets and to work in the virtuous, inasmuch as He enables the former to utter good words and the latter to perform good actions. Besides, some of the angels have acted as His vicegerents, so that they spoke, not in their own name



as celestial princes, but in the name of the Lord. For instance, the angel who conversed with Moses did not say, "I, the servant of the Lord," but, "I the Lord." And he repeated this several times. The Bridegroom, therefore, leaped in the mountains, viz., in the angels in whom He spoke and manifested His presence to men. For He leaped *to* men, but *in* the angels. He leaped in the subject creature, since He could not leap in Himself, in His own Divine nature. He who leaps must pass from one place to another, which is manifestly impossible to God. He leaped, then, in the mountains, that is, in the angels, being unable, as remarked, to leap in Himself. And He leaped even as far as the hills, namely, to the patriarchs, and the prophets, and the other spiritual persons on earth. But He went yet further, for He skipped over the hills when He deigned to manifest Himself and to speak in the same angelic representatives, not only to great and holy men but even to some ordinary people, aye, and to many women also.

But perhaps by the name of hills are here designated the "powers of the air," who are no longer classed with the mountains, as having lost, through their pride, the eminence of virtue. Yet neither have they stooped to the humility of valleys, or should I say, to the valleys of humility? It is to them, I have no doubt, the Psalmist is alluding, where he says, "The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the Lord." Therefore He, Who leaped in the mountains, skipped over the hills—the swelling but barren hills, which hold an intermediate place, as it were, between the lofty eminences of the perfect and the deep valleys of the penitent—and disregarding and despising them,

descended to the low-lying regions, in order that the "vales might abound with corn." The hills, on the contrary, have been cursed with an everlasting barrenness and sterility. For it is against them that the Prophet pronounced the malediction, "Let neither dew nor rain come upon you." And lest there should be any doubt that he was addressing the angels who prevaricated, under the figure of the mountains of Gelboe, he added, "Where many fell wounded." \* How many of the army of Israel have fallen on those accursed hills from the beginning of the world, and still daily fall! It is of such the same Prophet speaks in another place, where he says to the Lord, "Like the slain, sleeping in the sepulchres, whom Thou rememberest no more; and they are cast off from Thy Hand."

It is no wonder, therefore, my brethren, that those heights, which are aerial hills rather than heavenly mountains, should be found barren and unfruitful, since they are visited neither by dew nor rain. For the Author of grace and the Bestower of all blessings has skipped over them, on His way down to the valleys, that He might there refresh the humble amongst men with the spiritual waters of holiness, and so enable them to "bring forth fruit in patience," some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, and some a hundred-fold. Hence the Psalmist says, "Thou hast visited the earth, and hast plentifully watered it, and hast many ways enriched

\* "Ubi ceciderunt vulnerati multi." These words are nowhere to be found in the Vulgate. Mabillon refers to 2 Kings i. 21, but there is not even a remote resemblance between that text and this. St. Bernard's text is found in the Cistercian Breviary as the verse of the fourth lesson of the first nocturn in the Office for the fourth Sunday after Pentecost. It is therefore safe to conclude that it belongs to some more ancient version.—(Translator.)

it." He visited, not the air, but the earth, and so "The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord." For, "He hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth," not surely in the midst of the air. This I maintain against Origen, who, by his impudent heresy, crucified again the Lord of glory, but now in the air, for the redemption of the demons ; whereas, St. Paul, the confident of God's mysterious designs, distinctly affirms that "Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more ; death shall no more have dominion over Him."\*

But He Who skipped over the air, visited heaven as

\* "Hoc adversus Origenem, qui in aere Dominum gloriæ denuo pro daemonibus impudenti crucifigit mendacio." The following are the principal errors imputed to the illustrious Alexandrian (185-254) : (1) that matter is eternal ; (2) that God is necessitated to create ; (3) that all spiritual creatures were produced simultaneously, and for certain faults committed, have been condemned to exile in the angelic forms of demons or in the human forms of men ; (4) that the fire of hell is nothing more than remorse of conscience ; (5) that the demons and the reprobate shall at last repent and be admitted to heaven. According to St. Augustine, he denied the eternal duration not alone of the punishment of the damned, but also of the reward of the just, who may still fall from grace and be condemned, so that there shall be (apparently) for each created spirit, an everlasting alternation of happiness and woe—"alternantes sine cessione beatitudines et miseriae" (*De Civ. Dei*, xxi. 17). See also Suarez, t. ii. l. viii. c. vii. These errors constitute what is called Origenism, and were condemned by the Second Council of Constantinople, 553. There have been many great and holy men, including Saints and Fathers of the Church who maintained that Origen never held the heretical doctrines attributed to him, but that they were either foisted into his works (he wrote 6,000, according to St. Epiphanius) or unfairly deduced thence. The error to which St. Bernard is alluding in the text is that which concerns the final repentance and salvation of the demons, who shall at length obtain pardon through the merits of a second death which Christ is to suffer for their redemption. In his sermon "De verbis Origenis," the Saint admits that Origen may have spoken metaphorically, yet declares that he is to be read with caution, since several of the Fathers hold him guilty of heresy, and that he is "more abundant than circumspect, more eloquent than sober-minded."—(Translator.)



well as the earth, since we read in Holy Scripture, "O Lord, Thy mercy is in heaven, and Thy truth reacheth even to the clouds." "Even to the clouds," my brethren, extends the heaven which is peopled by the holy angels, whom the Bridegroom does not skip over, but rather leaps upon, and leaves on them the impress of His two feet, namely, His mercy and His truth. Concerning these feet of the Lord, I remember to have discoursed at length in one of the preceding sermons. From the clouds downwards through this misty lower atmosphere is the dwelling of the demons. On them the Bridegroom disdains to leap. He skips over them and hastens on, so that they retain in themselves no footprints from the passing of the Lord. For how could truth have place in the devil, of whom it is stated in the Gospel that "he stood not in truth, but was a liar from the beginning"? Neither will any one call him merciful whom the same inspired Book pronounces to have been also a "murderer from the beginning." And as is the head of the household, so shall be the members thereof. The Church, therefore, when singing of her Bridegroom, that He "dwelleth on high, and looketh down on the low things in heaven and on earth," rightly omits all mention of the proud spirits who inhabit the air, because "God resisteth the proud and giveth His grace to the humble."

The Spouse, consequently, beheld her Beloved leaping upon the mountains and skipping over the hills, when He was fulfilling the imprecation of David, "Let the Lord visit all the mountains which are round about, but Gelboe let Him pass over." For the devil, here designated under the name of Gelboe, occupies a middle place between the mountains visited by the Lord, the

angels above, and men below. After falling from glory, he was condemned, as part of his punishment, to make his abode in the air, midway between heaven and earth, that he might thence see the favours bestowed both on angels and men, and seeing be further tormented with jealousy, according to what the Psalmist says, "The wicked shall see and shall be angry, he shall gnash with his teeth and pine away." What misery he must feel whenever he looks up to heaven, and beholds there innumerable mountains glittering in the light of God, resounding with the divine praises, exalted in glory, abounding in grace! But how much greater misery, as often as he turns his gaze down towards the earth, whereon he also observes countless multitudes of mountains belonging to the "purchased people," sound in faith, sublime in hope, spacious in charity, adorned with virtues, and covered with the fruits of good works, deriving a daily blessing from the dew of heaven, as if it were from the Bridegroom's leaping! How great must be the anguish and envy of one so ambitious of glory when, on the one hand, he sees the mountains round about him all resplendent with glory, and himself and his followers, on the other hand, without ornament, without light, without any capability for good of any kind; so that he who reproaches all is obliged to acknowledge himself the reproach of all, both men and angels, according to the testimony of David, "The sea-dragon which Thou hast formed for the purpose of mocking him"! \*

\* Such is the sense in which the Saint understands the verse, "Draco iste quem formasti ad illudendum ei" (Ps. ciii. 26) and it is the only sense admitted by the Greek, "δράκων οὗτος ὃν ἐπλασας ἐμπαίζειν αὐτῷ." The Douay Version, however, has "This sea-dragon which Thou hast formed to play therein," which exactly translates the Hebrew. Cf. Bellarmin.—(Tran or.)

Such, my brethren, is the sterility with which these hills have been cursed, because, on account of their pride, they were skipped over by the Bridegroom, when He leaped upon the mountains that are round about ; like the fountain which sprang up in the midst of paradise, refreshing the whole world, and " filling every animal with blessing." Happy they who are accounted worthy to drink of this " torrent of pleasure," even though it be at rare intervals ! If the " water of wisdom " from the well-spring of life does not flow in them continuously, at any rate it leaps from time to time, so that in them also it becomes a " fountain of living water, springing up unto life everlasting." It is of this fountain the Prophet says, " The stream of the river maketh the city of God joyful," and that eternally and abundantly. God grant that the same river may sometimes overflow its banks, so to speak, and leap down upon our own mountains on earth ; and that they, being thus themselves sufficiently watered, may send down a few little drops even to us who are the valleys. Then we shall no longer remain altogether barren and unproductive. But whatsoever regions are irrigated by none of these leapings of the fountain or distillations therefrom, but are entirely skipped over and disregarded, there, beyond question, misery, and poverty, and fearful famine must prevail. Hence we read in the Prophet Baruch, " And because they had not wisdom they perished through their folly."

" Behold He cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills." He leaps upon some in such a manner that He skips over others, since it is not His pleasure to visit all ; for not all are pleasing to God. My brethren if, as the Apostle in his wisdom declares,



These things "are written for our correction," let us study the deliberate and prudent conduct of the Bridegroom, and notice how both amongst the angels in heaven and amongst men on earth He leaps upon the humble and skips over the proud ; " " For the Lord is high, and looketh on the low ; and the high He knoweth afar off." Let us, I repeat, consider these matters attentively, so that we may be careful to prepare ourselves for His leapings. Otherwise we may be found unworthy of His visitation and He will skip over us as over the mountains of Gelboe. " Why is earth and ashes proud ? " Even the angels the Lord skipped over, because their pride was an abomination to Him. Then let their reprobation be the cause of our reformation, since it has been recorded only " for our correction." Let the fall of Satan co-operate unto good, for me, and in this way let me " wash my hands in the blood of the sinner." Do you wish to know how ? Then listen. It is evident enough that the awful and terrible malediction, " Let the Lord visit the mountains which are round about, but Gelboe let Him pass over," was pronounced against the proud demon, whom David, as I have said, speaking in the Spirit, designates here under the symbolic name of Gelboe. Now when I read this, I turn my eyes upon myself ; and after a careful scrutiny, I discover my own soul to be infected with the same disease which, when exhibited in Satan, inspired the Lord with such horror that He skipped over him, although all the other mountains round about, whether angels or men, were honoured with His gracious visitation. Then, with fear and trembling I say to myself, if such has been the fate of the angel, what will become of me, who am but dust and ashes ?

He grew proud on a heavenly throne, I on a dunghill. And who does not feel more indulgence for pride in the rich than for pride in the poor? Alas for me! If that mighty spirit has been chastised so terribly, because his heart was lifted up, if the natural affinity which is known to exist between pride and greatness did not avail to excuse his sin, what punishment must I expect who am proud even in my misery!

Indeed, I am already paying the penalty, I am already writhing under a most cruel scourge. Not without reason surely has my soul been invaded since yesterday or the day before by this heavy languor, this dulness of mind, this unusual sluggishness of spirit. I had been running well. But behold! In the way has appeared a "stone of stumbling." I tripped upon it and have fallen. Pride has been found in me, and the Lord has departed in anger from His servant. Hence the sterility of soul, hence the want of fervour which I experience. How has my heart grown so hard and dry, "congealed like milk," and become "as earth without water"? No longer am I able to shed tears of contrition, because of my exceeding obduracy. I find no pleasure now in psalmody, no satisfaction in pious reading, no consolation in prayer, no taste for my customary meditations. Where now are those spiritual transports which I once enjoyed? Where that serenity of soul, that peace and joy in the Holy Spirit? Therefore am I become slothful in labour, drowsy at vigils, prone to anger, obstinate in antipathies, more indulgent to the tongue and the palate, less vigorous and zealous in preaching. Alas! all the mountains round about, the Lord vouchsafes to visit, but me He comes not nigh! Am I not, then, or

of the hills which the Bridegroom skips over? For looking around me I behold one brother endowed with an extraordinary gift of abstinence, a second possessed of admirable patience, a third excelling in humility and meekness, a fourth conspicuous for mercy and piety, this one enjoying frequent raptures in contemplation, that one penetrating the clouds and knocking at the very gate of heaven by the importunity of his prayers, and others equally distinguished for other virtues. I see them all fervent, all devout, all united in Christ, all abounding with heavenly gifts and graces, as so many spiritual mountains which have been visited by the Lord, and often receive the Bridegroom leaping upon them. But as for me, who can discover in my soul none of these evidences of the divine visitation, what else ought I to consider myself but as one of the mountains of Gelboe, which are skipped over by Him Who so graciously leaps upon the others round about?

My little children, it is sentiments like these that remove the "haughtiness of the eyes," draw down upon us the grace of God, and prepare our souls for the leaps of the Bridegroom. All that I have just said, "I have in a figure transferred to myself for your sakes." "Be ye followers of me" in this respect. I do not mean, in the practice of virtue, or in the observance of regular discipline, for I am not so foolish as to pretend to have anything therein worthy of your imitation; but I want you not to spare yourselves, I want you to accuse yourselves in the way I have done, whenever you may happen to notice that your fervour is diminishing, even in the slightest degree, or your virtue growing slack. To act in this manner is the characteristic of the prudent religious, who keeps



a zealous watch over himself, diligently examines all his ways and works, and is ever and in everything on the alert to prevent the vice of arrogance from finding entrance to his soul. I have learned this in truth, that there is no more efficacious means of obtaining grace, of preserving it when obtained, or of recovering it when lost, than to appear always in the sight of God "not high-minded but fearful." Hence we read in Proverbs, "Blessed is the man that is always fearful." Be afraid therefore when grace rejoices you with its presence; be afraid when it departs; be afraid when it returns to you. Thus you shall be always fearful. Let these three fears succeed each other in your souls, according as grace condescends to abide with you, or is perceived to have withdrawn in resentment, or to have come back appeased.\* When present, be afraid of not co-operating with it faithfully. Hence the Apostle's admonition, "Receive not the grace of God in vain"; and again, addressing his disciple Timothy, he says, "Neglect not the grace that is in thee"; finally, he says of himself, "His grace in me hath not been void." This great man, the confidant of the divine counsels, knew well that to neglect the gift of grace, and not to use it for the purpose for which it was given, redounds to the dishonour of the Giver. He judged such conduct to be intolerable pride, and therefore avoided it most studiously himself, and taught his disciples to do the same. But there is here concealed another pitfall which I desire to put you on your guard against. It is that wherein the spirit of pride himself, as the Psalmist says, "lieth in wait in secret, like a lion in his den," and the danger is only all the greater because it is so

\* There is question here not of sanctifying grace, but of the grace of devotion.—(Translator.)

unsuspected. What I wish to say is this : when the devil cannot prevail upon you to omit a good work, he will endeavour to corrupt your intention, and by prompting and persuading will urge you to appropriate to yourselves what is but the fruit of divine grace. Now, there can be no doubt that this species of pride is far more detestable than the other. What indeed can be more hateful than the arrogance which once led men to say, " Our mighty hand, and not the Lord, hath done all these things " !

Therefore, fear is necessary even when grace is with us. But what if it retires ? Have we not then more cause to be afraid ? Aye, and much more, for when grace fails us, we also shall fail. Hear what the Giver of grace teaches : " Without Me," He says, " you can do nothing." Fear, then, when you are abandoned by grace, as knowing yourselves to be on the point of falling. Be afraid and tremble, as aware that you have incurred the displeasure of God. Be frightened at the thought that your defence has left you. And doubt not that pride is the cause of your abandonment, even though it is not apparent, even though you are conscious to yourselves of nothing. For God can see what escapes us, and He is our Judge. And " not he who commendeth himself is approved, but he whom God commendeth." But surely God commends not him whom He deprives of His grace. Surely He Who " giveth His grace to the humble," will not recall His gift as long as we continue humble. Therefore, the deprivation of grace is a proof of pride. Nevertheless grace is sometimes withdrawn or subtracted, not on account of any pride that is actually present but because of the pride that would exist, if the grace were allowed

to remain. We have an evident example of this in the case of the Apostle, who in spite of himself had to endure the sting of the flesh, not because he was lifted up, but lest he should be. Thus whether already present, or not yet brought forth, pride is always the cause of the subtraction of grace.

But it is when grace comes back appeased that we ought to feel most afraid, lest haply we should suffer a relapse. So we read in the Gospel, "Behold thou art made whole: go and sin no more lest some worse thing happen to thee." You perceive, my brethren, that a second fall would be more terrible than the first. Therefore should our fear increase in proportion with our danger. Blessed art thou, whosoever thou be, that fillest thy heart with this threefold fear, so that thou art afraid on account of grace received, more afraid on account of its loss, and still more afraid when it has been recovered! In this way thou dost make thyself as a "water-pot" at the banquet of Christ, "filled up to the brim," and containing not one or two, but three "measures"; and dost deserve that the Lord should bless thee, and by His blessing change thy waters of fear into the wine of gladness. For "perfect charity casteth out fear."

My meaning is this. Fear may be compared to water, because of its power to cool the heat of carnal desires. "The fear of God," says the Psalmist, "is the beginning of wisdom." And we read in Ecclesiasticus, "And she shall give him the water of wholesome wisdom to drink." Now, if fear is wisdom, and wisdom water, fear may rightly be called water. Hence it is written in Proverbs, "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life." Furthermore, our minds may be



likened to the water-pots which are described as "containing two or three measures apiece." The three measures are the three fears. "And they filled them," says the Evangelist, "up to the brim." It is not one of the fears, nor two, but all three together that can thus fill our minds "up to the brim." \* Fear God, my brethren, at all times, and with your whole hearts, and thereby you shall have filled your water-pots up to the brim. God loves integrity in the gift, fulness in the affection, perfection in the sacrifice. See, therefore, that you bring your water-pots full to the celestial espousals, so that of each one of you it may be said, "And he hath been filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord." He who is thus entirely possessed with this fear, neglects nothing. How indeed can negligence find room for itself in a soul which is already full? For that which has capacity for more is not as yet completely filled. In the same way, this fulness of fear excludes high-mindedness. There can be no place for pride in him who is filled with the fear of the Lord. And similarly with the other vices. The fulness of holy fear leaves no room for any of them. But when your fear is thus full and perfect, then, at the blessing of the Lord, charity will mingle its sweetness with your waters, as without charity, "fear hath pain." For charity is the wine which "cheereth the heart of man." But "perfect charity casteth out fear," so that where before was water, there is now wine, unto the praise and glory of the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

\* "Toti tres simul." It may be asked how can these three fears be together present in the soul since any one of them necessarily excludes the others? The answer is contained in the sentence which follows. For the three kinds of fear respecting grace are only the fear of God manifesting itself variously according to the state of the soul.—(Translator.)

## SERMON LV.

### ON THE DIVINE MERCY AND JUSTICE AS SIGNIFIED BY THE HART AND THE ROE, RESPECTIVELY.

*" My Beloved is like a roe, or a young hart."*

" My Beloved is like a roe or a young hart." These words, my brethren, must be understood with reference to what precedes. He Who has been described as running and bounding in His hurry to reach the Spouse is now aptly compared to a roe or a young hart. I say " aptly," because such animals are remarkable for fleetness of foot and agility in leaping. The Spouse of course, is speaking of her Bridegroom, Who is Himself the Word of the Father. And it is of the Father the Prophet says, " His Word runneth swiftly." This agrees very well with the passage now under consideration, where the Bridegroom, the Word of God, is represented as leaping and skipping, and consequently likened to a roe or a young hart. Such, I take it, is the meaning of this comparison. However, lest the similitude should seem, in the very least point, to be lacking in significance, I may mention that the roe is distinguished as much for keenness of vision as for fleetness of foot. And it is the same perfection of sight that is attributed to the Beloved in the foregoing verse, where He is said to appear not only leaping, but skipping over. For were He not possessed of sharp and penetrating sight, He could not possibly, whilst running at full speed, discriminate between what was to be leaped upon and what skipped over. And the

roe is introduced as typifying this property; for to designate the Bridegroom's rapidity of approach the similitude of the young hart (which is particularly noted for speed) would have been sufficient. But although the Bridegroom here shows Himself all on fire with love, and hurrying as fast as He can to the embraces of His Spouse, nevertheless He knows how to direct His steps, or rather His leaps, with prudent consideration, even while He runs, and is careful as to where He plants His Feet. Therefore, the similitude of the roe, which expresses the discrimination of the divine election, is as necessary as that of the hart, representing the eagerness of God's desire to save us.\* For Christ is both just and merciful. He is our Saviour, and also our Judge. Because He is our Lover, "He will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." And because He is our Judge, He "knoweth who are His," He "knoweth whom He hath chosen from the beginning."

Let us therefore believe that the Holy Ghost is here bringing before our minds, under the figure of the hart and the roe, the Bridegroom's attributes of mercy and justice, to the end that we may testify to the fulness and perfection of our faith, and say with the Psalmist, "Mercy and judgment I will sing to Thee, O Lord." I have no doubt that those who are curious and well-informed concerning such things, could point to many additional properties of the above-mentioned

\* That is to say, although Christ came down from heaven with an ardent desire to save all and really died for the salvation of all, He nevertheless exercised discrimination, leaping upon or electing some whom He foresaw would freely correspond with His grace—for whom He *foreknew* He also predestinated (Rom. viii. 29) and skipping or passing over the rest. See note at p. 249, vol. i.—(Translator.)



animals, which might serve to illustrate, usefully and aptly, other of the Bridegroom's perfections. But what has been said is quite enough, I think, to account for the comparison. Yet I would have you notice also how beautifully the Holy Spirit uses the image, not of the hart, but of the young "of the harts" (*hinnulo cervorum*) in order to make mention of the "fathers, from whom is Christ according to the flesh," and also of the Saviour's childhood. For the Child Who was born for our sakes truly revealed Himself as a young hart. But do you, my brethren, who long for the Saviour's advent, be afraid of the scrutiny of the Judge, dread the Eyes of the Roe, be afraid of Him Who has said by His Prophet, "And it shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps." He is very keen-sighted, and His Eye shall leave nothing unexamined. He will search even the "hearts and the reins"; yea, the very "thought of man shall confess to Him." What, then, can be safe in Babylon if even Jerusalem shall be scrutinised? In my opinion, the Prophet by the name of Jerusalem here signifies those who live a religious life in this world, imitating as well as they can, by the practice of virtue and the observance of discipline, the life and conversation of the dwellers in the heavenly Jerusalem, and who have nothing in common with the natives of Babylon, that is to say, with such as waste their souls in the tumult of vices and the disorder of sin. For the offences of these are open and manifest. They precede them to the judgment, and await, not scrutiny, but chastisement. But I seem to be a monk and a Jerosolymite, and my sins are covered with the religious name and habit. It is therefore necessary that they be subjected

to a more strict and minute examination and that lamps should be used, so to speak, to dispel the darkness in which they are hiding.

I can also present you with a verse from the psalms which confirms what is said here concerning the scrutiny of Jerusalem. "When I shall take a time," sings the Psalmist, speaking in the person of God, "I will judge justices." Hereby the Lord declares His intention, if I do not mistake, to examine and investigate the ways and the works even of the just. When that time comes, my brethren, we have much reason to fear lest, under so strict a scrutiny, many of our justices—as we suppose them—shall turn out to be sins. However, one hope still remains to us. If only we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged. O blessed judgment, which delivers and hides me from that most searching divine investigation! For me certainly, "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God." I desire to be presented before the face of His anger as one already judged, rather than as one awaiting judgment. "The spiritual man," says the Apostle, "judgeth all things, and he himself is judged of no man." Therefore, I will judge whatever is evil in myself; but I will also judge whatever seems to be good. I will endeavour to atone for my sins by the performance of good works, to wash them away with tears, to punish them with fastings and the other painful practices of holy penance. As to what may appear commendable in my conduct, I will entertain humble sentiments; I will repute myself, according to the precept of the Lord, an unprofitable servant, who has but done that which he was bound to do. I will be careful not to offer cockle instead of wheat, nor chaff with the grain. I will

consider all my actions and all my affections, so that He Who is to "search Jerusalem with lamps," may find in me nothing unscrutinised, nothing unexamined. For He will not judge anew that on which judgment has already been pronounced.

Who will enable me to follow up and to chastise all my transgressions with such thoroughness, that there may be no longer anything for which I need dread the Eyes of the Roe, no longer anything for which I should be put to confusion under the light of the lamps! I am seen now, though I do not see. I am under the gaze of that Eye to Which all things are visible, whilst It is invisible Itself. But the time will come when "I shall know even as I am known." Now indeed I know in part, yet in part I do not know; whereas I am known, not in part, but completely. I fear the glance of that Scrutiniser Who "standeth behind our wall." For the Spouse goes on to say of Him Whom, on account of His keen-sightedness, she has compared to a roe, "Behold He standeth behind our wall, looking through the windows, looking through the lattices." Of these words I shall treat in their proper place. It is He, therefore, Whom I am afraid of, this secret Observer of my secret thoughts and actions. The Spouse has no fear, because she is conscious to herself of nothing. Why should she be afraid, who is His love, His dove, His beautiful one? Hence she says further on, "Behold my Beloved speaketh to me." But to me He does not speak, and therefore I fear, as not having testimony of His voice. O Bride of Christ, what hearest thou of thyself? What sayest thy Beloved to thee? "Arise, make haste, My love, My dove, My beautiful one, and come." But this also must be left for another



sermon, lest what demands full and careful discussion should be confined within limits of inadequate extent, and I should have yet another sin laid to my charge, that, namely, of not having advanced you thereby in the knowledge and the love of the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LVI.

### ON THE MYSTICAL SENSE OF THE WALL, THE WINDOWS, AND THE LATTICES.

*" Behold He standeth behind our wall, looking through the windows,  
looking through the lattices."*

" Behold He standeth behind our wall, looking through the windows, looking through the lattices." Taking these words, my brethren, in their literal signification, we learn that He Who was observed approaching with leaps and bounds, has now drawn nigh to His loved one's dwelling ; but being too bashful to enter, He remains behind the wall, eagerly watching His Spouse through the windows and other apertures. According to the spiritual sense also, we are given to understand that the Beloved has arrived. But the actions mentioned in this place must be so interpreted as that they shall appear not unworthy either of being performed by the Word or of being described by the Holy Ghost. For the true and mystical meaning of this verse can admit of nothing unbecoming the Majesty either of the Bridegroom, Who is revealed here as the Agent, or of the Spirit Who has recorded His doings. Let us therefore say that the Word approached the wall when He united Himself to our nature. The wall signifies the flesh, the drawing near of the Bridegroom the Incarnation of the Word. Furthermore, by the windows and lattices, through which He is represented as looking, we are to understand our bodily senses and human feelings and affections, which He made His

own, in order, so it seems to me, that by them He might have personal experience of all our human miseries. For "He hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows." Therefore, being now made man, He used as windows and lattices, our corporeal faculties and natural sensibilities, for the purpose of acquiring an experimental knowledge of the evils men endure, that so "He might become merciful." Our wretchedness was known to Him even before He took flesh, but in a different manner.\* Thus, the "Lord of virtues" could never have been ignorant of the virtue of obedience, and yet we are assured by the Apostle that "He learned obedience by the things that He suffered." In the same way, He learned mercy, although "the mercy of the Lord is from eternity," as the Psalmist says. We are informed of this also by the Doctor of nations, where he tells us that Christ was "tempted in all things, like as we are, without sin, that He might become merciful." Do you not see, my brethren, how He became what He was already, how He learned what He knew before, and how He sought for Himself in our nature windows and lattices, through which He could observe more closely our misery and wretchedness? And He found in the chinky and dilapidated wall of

\* There are three kinds of knowledge to be distinguished in Christ, namely, the divine and beatific knowledge which belongs to Him as He is God; the supernatural knowledge infused into His Human Soul at the moment of the Incarnation; and the experimental knowledge, derived like our own from the activity of the bodily senses whilst He lived upon earth. Only the third of these was ever capable of increase. Not that Our Lord acquired by it any knowledge which He did not already possess, but He learned to know in a new way, i.e., experimentally, what He knew before in a higher way. It is in this sense St. Luke says (ii. 52), "And Jesus advanced in wisdom." Cf. Suarez, III. vii. 12; also A Lapide, *Com. in Lucam.*, ii. 52. —(Translator.)



our humanity as many spy-holes as were the evidences of our infirmity and mortality which He experienced in His Body.

It is in this sense, therefore, that the Bridegroom appeared standing behind our wall, and looking through the windows and the lattices. And rightly is He represented as standing, because He alone has ever really stood in the flesh, Who alone knew not the sin of the flesh. We may also piously consider that the same Christ Who lay prostrate through the infirmity of the flesh, was enabled to stand erect by the power of His Divinity, according to what is written "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." It seems to me that this view receives some support and confirmation from what the Psalmist said of the Lord, speaking with reference to the same mystery. For David was a prophet, and it is as a prophet he spoke here. And although he has the name of Moses on his lips, it is not of Moses but of Christ he is thinking. Christ indeed is the true Moses, "Who came by water," indeed, yet "not by water alone, but by water and blood." The Psalmist therefore sings, "And He—viz., God the Father—said that He would destroy them, had not Moses, His chosen, stood before Him in the breaking to turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy them." In what way, I ask, could Moses have stood "in the breaking"? \* If he were broken, how was it possible for him to stand? And if he stood, in what sense could he have been broken?

\* "In confractione." St. Bernard understands this phrase in a reflexive sense, as equivalent to "in confractione sui" (in the breaking of himself). Such an interpretation seems to do violence to the text and is found nowhere else. It is purely an adaptation.—(Translator.)

But allow me to tell you, my brethren, who it was that really stood "in the breaking." None other, I believe, could have done this, except my Lord Jesus, Who certainly lived even in death; Who by His Divinity was standing with His Father, the while His Body hung broken upon the cross; Who on Calvary was making supplication as a Man amongst men and for men, whilst in heaven showing mercy as God with God. And so He was standing behind the wall whilst the weakness whereby He lay prostrate, as it were, was manifested in the flesh, and the strength wherein He stood remained hidden behind the flesh, He being in both one and the same Bridegroom, revealed in His Humanity, concealed in His Divinity.

But in another sense the Bridegroom, as I judge, stands behind the wall for each one of us who desire His coming, because this body of ours, which the Apostle calls the "body of sin," hides His Face from us for a time, and shuts out His presence. For "while we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord," as St. Paul declares. He does not mean, while we are in the body simply, but in this body, which is the "body of sin," and cannot be without sin. And if you would know for certain that it is not our bodies but our sins which stand as a wall between the Bridegroom and ourselves, listen to the Prophet Isaias: "Your iniquities," he tells us, "have divided between you and your God, and your sins have hid His Face from you." But would to God the wall of my body were the only one! Would to God the sole obstruction were the sin which exists in my flesh, and that between the Bridegroom and me there were not multiplied fences of vice! For I fear I have added, by my personal

guilt, innumerable other walls to the one which my nature inherits, and thus placed a barrier exceedingly wide in the way of the Beloved ; so that, if I wished to be sincere, I should acknowledge that in my regard He stands behind, not one wall, but many.

I will try and make this plainer. In virtue of the immensity of His Divine Majesty, and the omnipotence of His power, the Bridegroom is equally and indiscriminately present to all the works of His Hands. But, as regards His rational creatures, whether angels or men, He is said to be near to some and far from others, according as He communicates or withholds His grace. Hence the Psalmist says, " Salvation is far from sinners." And the same Prophet asks, " Why, O Lord, has Thou retired afar off ? " But in the case of His friends, although by a gracious dispensation of His love He occasionally conceals His presence from them, it is only for a time and in part. From sinners, on the other hand, He is always and distantly remote, and that not in mercy but in anger. For of these it is written, " The pride of them that hate Thee ascendeth continually " ; also, " Their ways are filthy at all times." Wherefore holy David prays to God and says, " Decline not in Thy wrath from Thy servant." He begs Him not to decline in His wrath, because he knew that He might also decline in His mercy. The Lord, therefore, is nigh to His saints and His chosen, even when He appears far removed. Nevertheless, He does not make Himself equally present to all but to some more, to others less, according to the diversity of their merits. For although " the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him in truth," and also " nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart," still perhaps



He is not so nigh to all as that they can truly say, "Behold He standeth behind our wall." But to the Spouse He is singularly present, because in her case there is only one dividing wall. Hence she desires to be dissolved, so that, when this wall of separation has been broken down, she may enjoy the company and vision of Him Who as she trusts is standing behind.\*

I, however, who am but a sinner, instead of desiring to be dissolved, am rather terrified at the thought of it, as knowing that "the death of the wicked is very evil." How can death be other than very evil, if He Who is our Life is not at hand to deliver us? I am afraid to die, I am seized with trembling terror under the very portal of death, because I have no assurance that He is standing nigh to receive me at my exit from the body. What? Can I expect to make that exit in safety, if the Lord does not "keep my going out"? Alas! I shall become the sport of the demons, who are waiting to intercept me, unless He be at hand "to redeem and to save." No such fears could trouble the soul of St. Paul. He was divided from the vision and the embrace of the Beloved by only a single wall, namely, by the "law of sin" which

\* In this paragraph we have distinguished for us the four modes of the divine presence, namely, presence by Essence, which is necessary and common to all creatures, without distinction; presence by grace, proper to the friends of God; presence by consolation, whereby the soul is sometimes allowed to feel in a sensible way the proximity of the Beloved; and presence by vision or glory, reserved for the life to come. Elsewhere (Ser. 6 in dedicat. Eccles.) the Saint gives the same distinctions in different words, "God is present in every place and to all His creatures, as containing and disposing all; yet not in the same manner is He present to all. . . . He is present to the wicked in dissimulation, to the just in fidelity, to heaven in joy, and to hell in vengeance." Cf. Hurter, *Comp. Theol. Dogmat.*, t. II, n. 67.—(Translator.)

he found in his members. This law of sin is the "concupiscence of the flesh," which he could not be without so long as he lived in the flesh. But the obstruction of this one wall did not remove the Lord far off from him. Hence that yearning cry, "Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" For he knew that the short passage of death would bring him straight to life. St. Paul therefore confessed that there was but one wall in his way, that is, the law of concupiscence irremovably planted in his flesh, and to which he submitted unwillingly. As for the rest, he could say, "I am conscious to myself of nothing."

But which of us, my brethren, is like St. Paul, in that he does not sometimes consent to this concupiscence "so as to obey the lusts thereof"? Now he who has consented to sin should know that by this unlawful and wicked act he has enclosed himself within a second wall. Therefore, such a one cannot boast like the Spouse that the Bridegroom is standing behind his wall, since it is no longer one wall that makes the division, but two. Much less can he make this boast, if the internal consent issues in the external act of sin, because the Bridegroom's approach is now obstructed and prevented by a third wall, namely, the fulfilment of an evil purpose.\* But what, if by repetition the act of sin hardens into a habit, and the habit of sin induces contempt, as it is written, "The wicked, when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth"? Shouldst thou happen to die in this state, O my brother,

\* The external action contains no independent morality; of itself and directly it does not add anything to the morality of the will's determination. Yet indirectly, in so far as it prolongs and intensifies the interior act, it may be said to render the latter better or worse. Cf. Lehmkuhl, *Theol. Moral.*, v. 1, n. 36.—(Translator.)

what is there to prevent thee from being devoured a thousand times by "the lions roaring, ready for their prey," before thou canst reach the Bridegroom Who is parted from thee, not by one, but by a numerous succession of walls? The first wall is concupiscence; the second, consent; the third, the external act of sin; the fourth, the habit of sin; the fifth, the callousness of contempt. Be careful, then, to resist the first of these, namely, concupiscence, with all thy power, lest otherwise it should lead thee to consent. If thou art faithful here, the malignant one can set up no other wall against thee. There shall consequently be nothing but the wall of the flesh between thy Beloved and thee to prevent His access. Thus shalt thou also be able to glory with the Spouse, and to say of the Bridegroom, "Behold He standeth behind our wall."

But there is another matter which thou shouldst attend to with all possible vigilance. Thou must see to it that the Beloved shall always find wide open the windows and the lattices of thy confessions, if I may so speak, so that through these openings He may regard thee within with a gracious glance. For His regard is thy progress. Lattices (*cancelli*) are narrow windows, which persons who make a business of writing cause to be opened in the wall, in order to obtain light for their work. Hence, as I believe, the name "chancellors" is given to those who have the office of drawing up charters and other formal instruments. Now there are two species of confession, the one consisting in a sorrowful declaration of our sins, the other in a glad-some acknowledgment of the divine benefits. Whenever, therefore, I make that confession which is always accompanied with anguish (*angustia*) of heart—I mean



the confession of sin—it appears to me that I have opened the lattice, that is to say, the narrow window (*angustiore fenestram*). Nor can there be any doubt that He who stands behind the wall as a loving Observer, will gladly avail Himself of this aperture and look in upon me, because “a contrite and humbled heart God will not despise.” He Himself has told me to open my lattice for Him, saying by His Prophet, “Do thou first confess thy iniquities, that thou mayst be justified.”\* But if occasionally my heart dilates under the influence of charity and, thinking of the divine condescension and compassion, I feel moved to let my soul expand in the confession of praise and thanksgiving, at such times I may be truly said to open, not now the lattice, but the widest of my windows, for the sake of the Bridegroom Who stands behind the wall. And I think He will look in through this ampler opening the more willingly in proportion as the “sacrifice of praise glorifieth” Him more. I could easily discover Scripture testimonies relating to both these confessions. But I am speaking to persons who are too well informed to have any need of such evidence. And it would be very unreasonable in us to burden ourselves with superfluities, considering that we have scarcely time for the investigation of what is necessary, namely, the secrets of this celestial love-song, and the praises of the Church therein celebrated, and of the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

\* “Dic tu iniquitates tuas prior ut justificeres” (Is. xliii. 26). This corresponds exactly with the Greek, “λέγε σὺ τὰς ἀνομίας σου πρῶτος ἵνα δικαιωθῇς.” But the Vulgate reading is, “Narra si quid habes ut justificeris,” which the Douay Translators have rendered, “Tell if thou hast anything to justify thyself.”—(Translator.)

## SERMON LVII.

### ON WATCHING FOR THE DIVINE VISITATION AND THE SIGNS BY WHICH IT IS KNOWN.

*"Behold my Beloved speaketh to me."*

"Behold my Beloved speaketh to me." Observe here, my brethren, the progress of grace. Notice the order of the divine condescension. Mark also the devotion and vigilance of the Spouse, how her watchful eye discovered the Bridegroom's coming, and with what diligence she has studied all His actions. He comes, He hastens, He draweth nigh, He is present, He looks, He speaks, and nothing of all eludes her zeal or escapes her attention. The Bridegroom comes in the angels, He hastens in the patriarchs, He draws nigh in the prophets, He is present in the flesh, He looks in His miracles, He speaks in His apostles. Or thus : He comes in His love and in His purpose to show mercy, He hastens in His zeal to accomplish our redemption, He draws nigh in His voluntary humiliations, He is present to His contemporaries, He looks forward upon the future generations, He speaks in His instructions and exhortations concerning the kingdom of God. Such therefore is the Bridegroom's coming. He brings with Him the blessings and the riches of salvation. All that belongs to Him overflows with delights, abounds with consoling and salutary mysteries. Now because the Spouse loves, therefore she is vigilant and circumspect. And blessed the soul "whom the Lord shall find watching." He will not "skip over"

her, nor pass her by. Rather He will stand and speak to her. He will speak to her in the language of love, for He will speak to her as a bridegroom is wont to speak to his bride. Hence, such a soul can say, "Behold my Beloved speaketh to me." Rightly does she call Him her Beloved, since He has come, not to reproach her for her faults, but to assure her of His affection.

The Spouse, my brethren, is not one of those whom the Lord justly reproves for that they "know how to discern the face of the sky, and yet cannot know the signs" of His coming. For she is so sagacious, so prudent, and so faithfully vigilant, that she observes His approach whilst He is yet afar off, notices that He leaps in His haste, and marks most particularly how He skips over the proud in order to come by humility to her who is humble. And when He stood outside and tried to conceal Himself behind the wall, she discovered His presence. She even became aware that He was looking at her through the windows and lattices. And now as a reward for so much devotion and loving watchfulness, she is permitted to hear His voice. For had He looked at her without speaking, she would have been troubled rather than consoled, not knowing whether the silent regard expressed love or indignation. Thus, He once looked at Peter whilst speaking not a word, and the Apostle wept, haply because the Bridegroom had gazed upon him in silence. The Spouse, on the contrary, has not only been allowed to feel the glance of His Eye, but has merited also to hear the sound of His voice; and therefore far from weeping, she exults in an excess of gladness, and joyously exclaims, "Behold my Beloveth speaketh to me." You see,



my brethren, that the look of the Lord, whilst in itself it remains always the same, has not always the same efficacy. Its influence varies in conformity with the varying merits of those upon whom it is bent, inspiring some with fear, imparting to others consolation and peace. Thus, "He looketh upon the earth and maketh it tremble." On the other hand, He looked on Mary and filled her with His grace. "He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid," she says, and for this reason "behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." This is not the language of sorrow or of terror, but the language of joy. It is in the same manner that He has looked upon the Spouse here. Therefore she does not tremble like the earth ; neither does she weep as Peter wept, because she does not, as he did, "savour the things that are of men" ; but her soul is full of gladness, inasmuch as the words of the Bridegroom declare with what affection He has regarded her.

Only listen, my brethren, to the salutation which He addresses to her, and you will understand how little of anger there is in it and how much of love. "Arise," so he calls to her, "Arise, make haste, My love, My dove, My beautiful one, and come." Happy the soul which deserves to hear herself greeted in this way ! Do you suppose, my brethren, that we shall find amongst ourselves one who is so vigilant, so observant of the time of his visitation, so diligent in watching for the Bridegroom's coming, and in noting its every circumstance, that "when He cometh and knocketh he may open to Him immediately" ? What is said here is indeed to be understood of the universal Church, yet not in such a sense as that each of the

faithful (who, taken collectively, constitute the Church) may not claim a participation in the plenitude bestowed upon her. For in this respect we are all equally called, without distinction as without exception, "that we may possess the blessings by inheritance." Hence a certain holy man made bold to say to the Lord, "I have acquired Thy testimonies for ever by inheritance, because they are the joy of my heart." He is speaking no doubt, of the inheritance which was to him the evidence as it was the consequence of his being the son of the Father Who is in heaven. For "if a son, an heir also, an heir indeed of God, and a joint heir with Christ." And surely that is a precious possession which he boasts of having acquired by inheritance, namely, the testimonies of the Lord. Would to God that I were found worthy to receive even one testimony from the Lord! But it is not over one, but over many such testimonies that the Psalmist exults. Thus he says again, "I have been delighted in the way of Thy testimonies, as in all riches." And in truth, what are the riches of salvation, what the infusion of spiritual joy, what that real yet cautious tranquillity which the just enjoy, but so many testimonies of the Lord? "For not he who commendeth himself is approved," says the Apostle, "but he whom God commendeth."

How is it, my brethren, that *we* are strangers even still to these divine attestations and commendations? How is it that *we* have not yet come in to our spiritual patrimony? We have as little recollection of being ever so commended in anything by the Lord, and of receiving from His Lips any testimony in our favour, as if He never "of His own will hath begotten us by the word of truth." What do *we* know of that experience

whereof the Apostle says, "The Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God"? How can we be the sons of God if we do not enjoy the inheritance? But this very poverty of ours convicts us, beyond a doubt, of negligence and sloth. For if any amongst us were perfectly and entirely, according to the counsel of the Wise Man, to "give his heart to resort early to the Lord That made him, and to pray in the sight of the Most High," and should also endeavour with all diligence to "prepare the way of the Lord, to make straight the paths of our God," so that he could say with the Psalmist, "My eyes are ever towards the Lord," and, "I set the Lord always in my sight"—would not such a one, think you, deserve to "receive a blessing from the Lord, and mercy from God his Saviour"? He that watches so shall in truth have many visitations from the Bridegroom. Nor shall he ever fail to observe the time of his visitation, no matter how secret and stealthy may be the advent of this shy Lover, Who visits us in the Spirit. With a vigilant soul and a sober mind, he shall perceive the Beloved whilst He is yet afar off; and then he shall discover all that the Spouse, as I have explained, so attentively and sagaciously noted in the approach of her Bridegroom. For He Himself has promised that "they that in the morning early watch for me shall find Me." Such a one, I say, shall be able to observe when the Beloved is hastening in the eagerness of desire; he shall know at once when He is drawing nigh, and when He is actually present; he shall feel His Eye regarding him, shining in upon him like a sunbeam, through the windows or the lattices of the wall, and the consciousness shall make him glad; and finally,



he shall hear Him uttering words of exultation and of tender affection, and saying to his soul, "Arise, make haste, My love, My dove, My beautiful one, and come."

"Who is wise and will understand these things," so as to be able to distinguish rightly between them, to define them exactly, and to explain them in a way that others can comprehend? You, my brethren, are perhaps expecting me to do this; but for my part, I should prefer to hear about such matters from one who is acquainted with them by experience and use. Yet a person so privileged would rather through modesty conceal in silence what he has received in silence, and would judge it safer to keep his secret to himself, like the Prophet. Therefore, since I am bound by my office as superior to instruct you, and not to keep back what I know, I will tell you all that I have been able to learn concerning these things both from my own experience and from the experience of others. I will touch upon nothing which many of you are not competent to ascertain for themselves with facility, leaving the loftier truths to such as can reach them. Whenever, then, I am admonished, whether interiorly by the Spirit or exteriorly by a human being, of the necessity of guarding justice and preserving equity, this salutary warning is certainly for me a herald of the Bridegroom's speedy advent, and a kind of preparation for the worthy reception of the heavenly Visitor. The Prophet assures me of this when he says, "Justice shall walk before Him," and again, when he says to God, "Justice and judgment are the preparation of Thy seat." And the same hope gladdens me, whenever I hear a discourse on humility, or on patience, or on fraternal charity, or on the obedience and submission due to superiors; but more

especially when I listen to something concerning the pursuit of peace and sanctity, or the acquiring of purity of heart. For it is written, "Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord," and, "His place is in peace," and "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God." As often therefore as anything relating to these, or indeed to any of the other virtues, is suggested to my thoughts, that will be for me, as I have already remarked, an intimation that the Lord of virtues is coming to visit my soul.

But if "the just man shall correct me in mercy, and shall reprove me," then also I may look for the divine visitation, because this charitable zeal and benevolence of the good "make a way for Him who ascendeth over the setting." Happy setting, when at the reproof of a just man a soul is lifted up and her sins sink down, and over their setting the Lord "ascendeth," trampling them under His Feet to prevent their ever rising again. Not to be despised, therefore, is a good man's reproof which thus destroys sin, brings healing to the heart, and prepares the way of the Lord to the soul. Nor should we ever hear with indifference any discourse, no matter of what kind, provided it edifies unto piety, or unto virtue, or unto moral perfection. For "there is the way by which is shown the salvation of God." But if the word of the Lord should sound sweet and consoling, so that instead of producing weariness it is listened to now with delight, I am to infer from this that the Bridegroom not only is coming, but is coming in haste, because coming with ardent desire. For it is His desire of me that awakens my desire of Him; and when I feel an eagerness to hear His words, this is an indication that He is hastening to visit my soul.

We have not been beforehand with Him in charity, but He hath "first loved us." Again, if I should hear an inflamed discourse, and should feel my conscience kindling, whilst I listen, at the thought of my sins, I ought, then, to call to mind Him of Whom the Psalmist says, "A fire shall go before Him," and be persuaded that He is nigh. For "the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart."

But shouldst thou not only feel compunction at the word of the Lord, but be converted to Him with thy whole heart, so that thou canst say, "I have sworn and am determined to keep the judgments of Thy justice," thou mayst now be certain that the Bridegroom is even present to thee, especially if thou perceivest thy heart beginning to glow with the heat of His holy love. For not only is it said of Him in the Holy Scriptures that "A fire shall go before Him," but also that He is Himself a fire, "a consuming fire," as Moses called Him. There is a great difference between these two fires. That which precedes the Bridegroom's coming has heat indeed, but no charity. It warms without melting; it moves without advancing. It is sent on before with only the mission of arousing and preparing thee, and to remind thee at the same time of what thou art when left to thyself; in order that thou mayst afterwards with greater delight understand what thou hast become through the grace of God. But the fire which is God, although it consumes, yet does not afflict, burning sweetly, blissfully devastating. For it is truly a "desolating fire," which, however, so exercises its destructive energy against sin, that it acts on the soul as a healing unction. Therefore, in the virtue which adorns thee and in the charity which



inflames thee, acknowledge the presence of the Bridegroom. For it is "the Right Hand of the Lord that hath wrought virtue." But "this change of the Right Hand of the Most High" only takes place in fervour of spirit and sincere charity; so that he who experiences it may say with the Prophet, "My heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall flame out."

Furthermore, when every stain of sin and all the rust of evil habits have been burned out by this fire, and when the conscience is thoroughly cleansed and tranquillised, if thou dost now experience a sudden and unusual expansion of mind, with an infusion of heavenly light, which illumines thine intellect and gives it either an understanding of the Scriptures for the instruction of others, or a knowledge of secrets for thine own consolation, here, beyond doubt, is the Bridegroom's Eye looking in through thy window, "and bringing forth thy justice as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day." Thus shalt thou have fulfilled in thee the word of Isaias, "Then shall thy light rise up in darkness, and thy darkness shall be as the noon-day." But surely it is not by the open door but rather through the smaller apertures of windows and lattices, that this ray of dazzling brightness obtains admission, so long, at least, as the dilapidated wall of the flesh remains standing. Thou errest, my brother, if thou art hoping for anything better, no matter to what purity of heart thou mayst have attained, since the great contemplative, St. Paul himself, has affirmed, "We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face." \*

\* It is the teaching of St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, II. ii. q. clxxv. a. iii. that both Moses and St. Paul were privileged

Now, after this glance of wonderful condescension and compassion, thou shalt hear the Bridegroom's voice sweetly and gently intimating the divine will. This voice is nothing else but the love of God in thy heart, which cannot remain idle,\* and which is now soliciting and urging thee concerning what relates to the service of the Lord. For the Spouse has heard that voice bidding her to arise and make haste, doubtless to labour for the salvation of souls. It is the characteristic, my brethren, of true and pure contemplation that it not only inflames the soul with the fire of divine charity, but it also occasionally fills her with such zeal and desire to gain others to God who shall love Him as she loves Him herself, that she gladly interrupts her contemplative repose and devotes herself to the labour of preaching. Afterwards, having satisfied this longing, at least to a certain extent, she returns to her solitude with all the more eagerness in proportion as she knows that her apostolic efforts have been fruitful. Then, when she has recruited her strength once more with the sweet food of prayer, she again issues forth with renewed zeal and energy to resume her work for souls.

whilst still in the flesh to contemplate the Divine Essence directly by the light of glory, which, however, they possessed as a transient act, not like the blessed as an abiding habit. The reason he assigns why these were so specially favoured is that the one was the first doctor of the Jews and the other the first doctor of the gentiles. He thus seems to insinuate that to none other has this privilege been accorded. St. Augustine also teaches (*De vid. Deo ad Paul*, c. 13) that the object of the vision granted to Moses and St. Paul was the very Divine Essence. There is, however, no contradiction between these doctors and St. Bernard, who is only telling his hearers that no one has any right to hope for such a grace.—(Translator.)

\* "Amor qui otiosus esse non potest." In St. Gregory we find, "Nunquam est Dei amor otiosus; operatur etenim magna si est; si vero operari renuit, non est," Hom. 30, sup. Evang.—(Translator.)

But during such alternations of labour and repose, the soul, as a rule, is very uneasy. She is agitated by fears and anxieties lest, whilst being drawn this way and that by the rival attractions, she should bend more than is right to one side or the other, and so deviate even by a hair's-breadth from the straight way of the divine will. Perhaps holy Job was experiencing something like this when he said, "If I lie down to sleep, I shall say, when shall I rise? And again I shall look for the evening." That is to say, "when enjoying leisure, I accuse myself of neglecting my external work; and when exteriorly occupied, I again accuse myself of having interrupted my prayer." You see the holy man, how anxiously he hesitates between the fruit of zealous action and the quiet of loving contemplation; and although ever occupied in what is good, yet ever also doing penance for imaginary shortcomings, and never ceasing to pray with tears that God would manifest to him His will. For in such perplexities the sole remedy, the sole refuge is prayer and repeated sighs to God, that He may vouchsafe to instruct us unceasingly as to what He would have us do, at what time, and in what measure. It seems to me that we have these three things, viz., preaching, supplication, and contemplation, designated and commended to us in the three titles given to the Spouse. For deservedly does the Bridegroom call her His love, since she labours so loyally and zealously to promote His interests, by preaching, by teaching, and by other ministrations. Deservedly, too, is she called His dove, because sighing, like a dove, and making supplication for her sins, she never ceases to conciliate for herself the divine compassion. And with equal justice she is named His ✓



beautiful one, for always glorified with the longing after things supernal, she puts on, besides, the loveliness of heavenly contemplation, whenever she can obtain a vacant and opportune hour.

But consider also, my brethren, if we have not a type of this threefold occupation of the same soul, in the three persons who dwelt under the one roof, and who were all the dear and familiar friends of the Saviour. I am speaking of Martha, who ministered to Him ; of Mary, who sat in repose at His Feet ; and of Lazarus, who lay groaning, as it were, beneath the sepulchral slab, supplicating the grace of a resurrection.\* These remarks have been suggested by the admirable sagacity and vigilance which the Spouse is represented as exercising, whilst she watches the ways for the appearance of her Bridegroom, so that she can tell exactly when and with what haste He is approaching ; and is so keenly on the alert that by no suddenness of change can she be so surprised and taken unawares as not to know when He is far from her, when near, and when actually present. Thus has she deserved that He should not merely condescend to look upon her with mercy, but should also deign to console her with words of tender affection, making her to “ rejoice with joy because of the Bridegroom’s voice.”

But I have also affirmed—although it is a bold thing to say—that each and every soul amongst us, provided she watches like the Spouse, shall also, like

\* The same figure is employed by St. Paul (Rom. viii. 22), where he says, “ For we know that every creature groaneth and travaileth in pain even till now, and not only it, but ourselves also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God, the redemption (resurrection) of our body.” —(Translator.)

the Spouse, be saluted as His love, consoled as His dove, and embraced as His beautiful one. And perfect shall be reputed every soul wherein the virtues represented by these three titles are found together in due order and degree ; so that she knows how to weep ✓ for herself, to rejoice in God, and at the same time has the will and the power to assist others in their necessities, pleasing to God, watchful over herself, helpful to her neighbours. Yet where shall we find one so perfect ? However, if we have not all the three characters existing together in each of our souls, we seem at least to possess them singly in different sections of the community, and all in the whole. And God grant they may be long preserved amongst us ! For have we not Martha, the beloved of the Bridegroom, in those who are employed in the faithful administration of exterior offices ? Have we not Lazarus, His mourning dove, in our novices, who, but recently dead to their sins, are yet groaning with the pain of still smarting wounds and the terror of judgment ; and who believe themselves to be “ like the slain sleeping in the sepulchres, whom (no one) remembereth any more,” until, at the bidding of Christ, the heavy tombstone of their oppressive fear shall at last be taken away, and they shall rise to a new life in the assured hope of pardon ? And have we not also the contemplative Mary in the persons of those who, after many years of co-operation with the grace of God, have been able to attain to a higher and more blissful state, wherein, confident of their forgiveness and no longer brooding anxiously over the sad memory of their sins, they experience an unfailing delight in meditating continually upon the law of God, and even sometimes “ beholding the glory

of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord " ? We shall examine in the next sermon why He Who a little before seemed to guard the repose of His Spouse, and forbade her to be disturbed, now exhorts her to arise and even to make haste. May He Himself be with us, to reveal to us the meaning of this mystery also, for He is the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.



## SERMON LVIII.

### ON THE SPIRITUAL SEASONS AND THE NEED OF CONSTANT MORTIFICATION.

*“ Arise, make haste, My love, My dove, My beautiful one, and come ; for winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land ; the time of pruning is come.”*

“ Arise, make haste, My love, My dove, My beautiful one, and come.” Who is it, my brethren, that speaks thus ? Doubtless it is the Bridegroom. But was it not also the Bridegroom who, a short time since, adjured the young maidens so earnestly not to awaken His beloved ? Why therefore does He now command her not only to arise, but even to make haste ? I have here suggested to my mind the thought of something similar, which is mentioned in the Gospel. On the night when the Lord was betrayed, He said to the disciples who were with Him and were worn out with their long watching, “ Sleep ye now, and take your rest,” and yet added immediately, “ Rise, let us go : behold he is at hand that will betray Me.” Here, in the same way, He forbids His Spouse to be awakened, and almost at the same moment awakens her Himself, saying, “ Arise and come.” What can be the meaning of this sudden change of will or of counsel ? Shall we suppose that the Bridegroom is capricious in His purpose, and that what He enjoins at one moment He prohibits at the next ? God forbid ! But rather see illustrated in this apparent change of mind what, if you recollect, I have commended to your notice

before, and indeed more than once, touching the alternation of necessary action and prayerful leisure ; and also what I observed about the impossibility of enjoying uninterrupted contemplation and undisturbed rest in the present life, in which external offices and the ministrations of charity have the stronger claim upon us, as yielding more abundant fruit. The Bridegroom, therefore, is acting here in accordance with His wont. When He perceives that His Spouse has enjoyed a little repose on His Bosom, He does not hesitate to invite her forth again to the more fruitful occupations of the active life. Not that she is unwilling to leave her rest. For surely He would not do Himself what He has forbidden to be done, viz., "to make the beloved wake before she please." But the Bridegroom invites His Spouse when He gives her an attraction that draws her, an attraction to good works, a desire to bring forth fruit unto Him. For to her to live is her Bridegroom and to die gain.

So strong, my brethren, is this desire that it urges her not only to arise but even to arise in haste. And therefore we read, "Arise, make haste, and come." It is no small consolation for her to hear the word "come" rather than "go." For thereby she is given to understand that she is not so much sent to labour as led, and that she is to have the company of her Beloved. And what can she find difficult with such a companion ? "Set me beside Thee," cried holy Job, "and let any man's hand fight against me." And the Psalmist, "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me." Therefore the Spouse is not awakened against her will, since the will to be awakened has first been excited in

her. That is to say, the desire of gaining souls to God has been infused into her heart. Her zeal is also stimulated and her alacrity further enlivened by the Bridegroom's words concerning the seasonableness of the time. " 'It is time to do,' O My Spouse," He says to her, " 'for winter is now past,' that spiritual winter when no man could work. 'The rain' also, which, by the floods and inundations it caused, covered the earth, impeded cultivation, and either prevented the sowing of crops or ruined what was sown, 'the rain,' too, I say, has disappeared, it 'is over and gone'; and 'the flowers have appeared in our land,' signifying that the genial spring-time has come, the time most suitable for field-labour, the seed-time of harvests and fruits." He then goes on to explain what is the work which should first engage her, reminding her that "the time of pruning is come." She is therefore called forth to the cultivation of the vineyards, which then only will reward the labour expended on them with more abundant fruit, when all sterile branches have been cut off, and all noxious growths cleared away, and whatever is superfluous pared down with the pruning-knife. Thus much for the literal sense.

Let us now consider, my brethren, what spiritual lessons or truths are intended to be conveyed to us by these words, which apparently are but a part of an ordinary human narrative. As regards the vineyards, "I have already told you and you have heard" that they symbolise souls or churches, and there is no need to explain again what you understand sufficiently well. In this place, therefore, the more perfect soul hears herself invited to the work of watching over and correcting and instructing and saving the more weak,



provided, however, she has not, by ambitious intrigues, "taken the honour (of the ministry) to herself, but is called to it by God, as Aaron was." And what is this invitation but the interior impulse of charity, piously urging us to be zealous for our brother's salvation, to be zealous for the "beauty of God's house," to be zealous for the advancement of the interests of His glory, and for the multiplication of the fruits of His justice, and for the honour and praise of His name? As often, then, as he who is charged with the direction of souls, or with the work of preaching, feels himself moved in his interior man by such devout affections towards God, so often he may be perfectly sure that the Bridegroom is present and calling upon him to come forth to the vineyard. And wherefore is he summoned thither except "to root up, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to build, and to plant"?

But because for this work, as indeed for everything else under heaven, all seasons are not equally opportune and suitable, therefore He Who calls His Spouse forth to the vineyard tells her that "the time of pruning is come." The Apostle was well aware that this season had come when he said, "Behold now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation, giving no offence to any man that our ministry be not blamed." He therefore warned his disciples that they should now prune and cut off whatever was vicious and superfluous, and everything that could be an obstacle or a hindrance to the fruit of salvation, because he knew that the time of pruning had arrived. Therefore also he exhorted the faithful vine-dresser, St. Timothy, to "reprove, entreat, rebuke," for to reprove and to

rebuke is to prune and cut away, whilst entreating and planting signify the same. Here the Bridegroom is admonishing us concerning the time for labour by the mouth of St. Paul. But listen to what He says by His own Mouth regarding the observation of the seasons, where, using other words and images, He thus addresses His newly-wed Bride, the Church of the apostles: "Do you not say that there are yet four months, and then the harvest cometh? Behold I say to you, lift up your eyes and see the countries. For they are white already to harvest." And again, "The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth labourers into His harvest." Therefore, just as in the Gospel the Bridegroom points out that the time is at hand for reaping the harvest of souls, so here in the Canticle He reminds His Spouse that the time is come for pruning the spiritual vines, viz., individual souls or particular churches. And perhaps the reason why He varies the simile is to give us to understand that by the harvests is meant the ordinary faithful, and by the vineyards communities of religious persons.

Furthermore, it appears to me that by the winter season, which is said to be past, we are to understand the time when the Lord Jesus would no longer walk openly among the Jews, because they were conspiring ✓ against Him and wished to put Him to death. Hence, to some of them He said, "My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready," and, "Go you up to this festival day, but I go not up to this festival day." But afterwards, "He went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret." It was winter from that

time until the coming of the Holy Ghost, when the frozen hearts of the faithful began again to grow warm, heated by the fire which the Lord cast down upon the earth. Do you doubt, my brethren, that it was then really winter when "Peter was standing and warming himself at a fire of coals," as chilled in heart as he was in body? The Evangelist expressly states that "it was cold." Truly a hard frost had congealed the heart of the faithless Apostle. Nor should we be surprised, since the Divine Fire had been taken from him. A short time before he manifested no little zeal, when he drew his sword and cut off the ear of the servant, because he was then close to the Fire and fought lest he should lose It. But the time of pruning had not yet come. Therefore it was said to him, "Put up thy sword into thy scabbard." For it was then "the hour of the power of darkness," during which, if any of the disciples were to wield the sword—whether the material sword or the sword of the word—either he would himself "perish with the sword," without even the consolation of gaining any heart or producing any fruit; or certainly he would be driven to an act of apostasy and so again "perish with the sword" of fear, according to the word of the Lord which immediately follows, "all that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Who indeed amongst the other disciples would have fearlessly faced death's awful image, when Peter himself, their prince and leader, trembled and gave way,—Peter, who had been singularly fortified by the strengthening words of the Saviour, and fortified thus in order that he might confirm his brethren?

But neither Peter nor the others were as yet "endued



with power from on high." Hence it was not safe for them to go out into the vineyards in order to cleanse the soil with the hoes of their tongues, and with the sword of the Spirit to prune the vines and trim the branches, so that they might bring forth fruit in greater abundance. Even the Lord Himself held His peace during His Passion ; and although interrogated concerning many things, " He answered never a word." In the words of the Psalmist, He " became as a man that heareth not, and that hath no reproofs in his mouth." But " He said to them : If I shall tell you, you will not believe Me, and if I shall also ask you, you will not answer Me, nor let Me go." For He knew that the time of pruning had not yet come. He knew that His vineyard would not yet make any return for the labour of its cultivation, would yield no fruits of faith and good works. Why ? Because it was still winter in the hearts of unbelievers ; because the earth was still flooded by the wintry rains of malice, which were more likely to rot than to nourish any seed that might be sown in it, and to render useless all the care devoted to the culture of the vineyards.

What rain, my brethren, do you suppose me to be speaking of now ? Is it the rain which we see pouring down upon the earth in a violent tempest, from the clouds that move across the face of the heavens ? Surely not. But I refer to that which is thrown up from earth towards the sky by men of turbulent disposition, who " have set their mouth against heaven, and their tongue hath passed through the earth " like a pestilential rain, rendering it muddy and sterile, and as useless for plants as for seeds. I do not mean those visible plants and seeds, ordained for the

satisfaction of our corporal necessities, of which plainly God hath no care, any more than he hath care of oxen, as the Apostle tells us. Which, then? I speak of the spiritual seeds and plants, which have been sown and planted, not by human hands, but by the Hand of God, which can germinate or take root in faith and charity, and bring forth the fruits of salvation, yet only on condition that they are watered with wholesome and seasonable rain. In fact they are the souls for which Christ died. Woe to the clouds that distil upon such plants and seeds the bad rains, more conducive to corruption than to germination! For just as there are good trees and evil trees, both yielding fruit according to their nature, the good tree producing good fruit, and the evil tree evil fruit; so, it seems to me, there are good clouds that distil good rain, and evil clouds distilling evil rain. And see if the Lord Himself does not insinuate to us this distinction of clouds and rains, when He says, speaking through His Prophet, Isaias, "I will command My clouds to rain no rain upon it." Why should He expressly say, "*My* clouds," if there were not evil clouds also which were not His? "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him"—here my brethren, you have evil clouds distilling the evil rain. O black and turbulent clouds! O tempestuous rain! O torrent of iniquity better qualified to sweep away than to nourish the seeds and plants! Not less bad and bitter, although poured with less violence, was that other shower which followed: "He saved others, Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him." Neither can we regard as good rain the windy words of philosophers, which brought to the

earth more barrenness than fertility. And with much less reason can the perverse doctrines of heretical teachers be called good rain, since instead of fruit they produce only "thorns and thistles." Evil rains, too, were the traditions of the Pharisees which the Lord denounced, just as the Pharisees themselves were evil clouds. And if you do not think me unjust to Moses, I will venture to say that, although he was certainly a good cloud, nevertheless not all the rain which he distilled was good rain. Indeed, were I to speak otherwise, I should be contradicting Him Who has declared, "Therefore I also gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments in which they shall not live." For it is manifest that these judgments and statutes were given through Moses. The sabbatarian laws, for example, which, when literally observed, allowed no rest on the day of rest ; the prescribed sacrificial ceremonial ; the prohibition to use for food the flesh of swine and of some other animals reputed unclean by Moses,—what are all these ordinances but so many showers of rain descending from the Mosaic cloud ? But God forbid that such rain should ever fall on my field or garden ! It was wholesome in its proper season. But I should not consider it good if it came now after its time. For even a gentle and lightly falling rain is rather harmful than helpful, if its coming be inopportune.

Therefore, whilst such pestilential rains were prevailing on the earth and submerging it beneath their waters, the vineyards had not yet their season, nor was the time come for summoning forth the Spouse to the work of pruning. But when these waters cleared away, and the dry land appeared, then appeared also



the flowers, indicating that the time of pruning had at last arrived. Do you ask, my brethren, when this was? Surely it could only have been at the time when Christ's "Flesh flourished again" in His Resurrection. For He is the first and the most beautiful of the flowers which "have appeared in our land." "Christ, risen from the dead, is the first-fruits of them that sleep," says the Apostle. "The Flower of the field, and the Lily of the valleys," is, I say, "Jesus Himself (as it was supposed) the Son of Joseph" of Nazareth. He therefore appeared as the first Flower, yet appeared not alone. For with Him "many bodies of the saints that had slept arose," and they also as most brilliant "flowers appeared in our land." Hence the Evangelist says that "they came into the holy city and appeared to many." Flowers also were those of the people who were first to believe, the early spring-flowers of the saints. Their miracles too were flowers, because, like flowers, they were followed by the fruit of faith in the spectators. For when the rain of unbelief was "over and gone," altogether or in some degree, the "free rain which God hath set aside for His inheritance," immediately descended, and "the flowers appeared in our land." "The Lord gave goodness and our earth yielded her" flowers, in such profusion that in one day three thousand, in another five thousand, of the people professed the faith. So rapid was the increase in the number of the flowers, that is to say, in the multitude of believers.\* And the frost of malice could neither blight the flowers as they made their

\* Several of the Fathers, such as Origen, Theodoret, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory the Great, have given a similar explanation of the rains and the flowers.—(Translator.)

appearance, nor prevent them, as it is wont to do, from bringing forth the fruit which they promised.

All who believed were "endued with power from on high," and there arose amongst them some who, "strong in faith," despised the threats of the wicked. They had to endure contradictions beyond counting. Still they yielded not, neither did they dissemble, but continued to perform and to proclaim the wonderful works of God. That is to say, they fulfilled in a spiritual manner what is written in the psalm, "They sowed their seeds, and they planted vineyards, and they yielded fruit of birth." In course of time, the storm of persecution abated and peace was restored to the earth. Then the vineyards grew, and increased, and expanded, and "were multiplied beyond numbers." And at length the time came for inviting the Spouse forth, not to plant, but to prune what was already planted. Very seasonably was she summoned then, since the time of peace is the time for pruning. How indeed could such a work be done whilst the persecutions were raging against her? For to prune the vines is to "take the two-edged sword in hand, to execute vengeance upon the nations, chastisements among the people, to bind their kings with fetters and their nobles with manacles of iron, to execute upon them the judgment that is written." Even in times of peace these things can scarcely be done in peace. I have now said enough in connection with this matter.

The sermon also might have ended here, only that I have not yet admonished each one of you, according to my custom, of the careful attention due to his own particular vineyard. Which of us, my brethren, has so completely cut away from himself every superfluity,

that he can now discover nothing whereon to use the pruning-knife? Take my word for it: vices, when pruned, will grow again; when driven out, will come back; when extinguished, will revive; when lulled to sleep, will reawaken. It is not enough to have once pruned your vineyards. You must often prune, aye, and be always pruning, if that is possible. For if you be honest with yourselves, you shall always find something which ought to be cut off. Whatever progress you may have made, so long as you abide in the flesh, you are mistaken if you suppose your passions to be dead and not merely dormant. Whether you will or no, they shall dwell within you, as the "Jebusite dwelt in Jerusalem with the sons of Benjamin." You may conquer, but you cannot exterminate them.\* "I know," says the Apostle, "that there dwelleth not in me that which is good." But it is not enough to disclaim what is good without acknowledging besides the presence of evil. Therefore he continues, "For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do. Now if I do that which I will not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Thou, therefore, my brother, must either have the daring to prefer thyself to St. Paul, who makes this confession of himself, or else thou must avow that in thee also there are vices dwelling. Virtue itself holds the golden mean between the extremes of vice, and hence thou hast need, not only of constant pruning,

\* "Gravissima passio est concupiscentia, quam ratio molliet et comprimit; emollire enim potest, eradicare non potest" (St. Ambrose, *De Jacob et Vita beata*, lib. i. c. 1). "Concupiscentia in hac vita potest minui, non potest consumi" (St. Augustine, *Contra Jul.*, cap. 7). "Quamdiu caro mortalis est non potest a concupiscentia penitus esse libera; minui quidem quotidie possunt concupiscentiae, sed ex toto non possunt auferri quamdiu hic vivitur" (St. Anselm, *Sup. Ep. ad Rom.*).  
—(Translator.)



but even of circumcision. Otherwise there is reason to fear lest thy virtues, surrounded as they are by contiguous and corrupting vices, should lose their vigour little by little, whilst thou art unaware, and at last be overgrown and suffocated. In such danger, thy only wisdom is to keep a close and constant watch ; and as soon as ever the pruned passions begin again to sprout, to use the knife with prompt severity. It is impossible for virtue and vice to increase together. Therefore, if the former is to flourish, the latter must be held in check. Remove what is superfluous, and thou shalt see an increase of what is good and necessary. What thou subtractest from superfluity is added to utility. Let us therefore apply ourselves to the business of pruning. Let us cut away cupidity in order to strengthen virtue.

For us, my brethren, the time of pruning is always present, because there is always something in us which it is necessary to cut away. And I trust that for us the "winter is now past." Do you understand what I mean by winter ? The winter I am speaking of now is that fear which consists not with charity, which is for all "the beginning of wisdom," but leads none to the consummation thereof, because charity super-venes ; and "perfect charity casteth out fear," as summer excludes winter. For charity is the spiritual summer. If this summer has come,—rather let me say, because it has come (as I have reason to believe) to the souls of many amongst you, it must have dried up in you all the wintry rain, that is to say, all the anxious tears which the bitter memory of your sins and the fear of the judgment were formerly wont to excite. As regards many of you, therefore, if not indeed for all, I have no hesitation in saying that

this "rain is over and gone"; since the "flowers have appeared in our land," as the fruit of a more genial moisture. For summer has its rain also, but a more pleasant and prolific rain. What indeed can be more delightful than the tears of holy love? Charity weeps indeed, but weeps from the sweetness of love rather than from the bitterness of sorrow. It weeps from the desire of the Beloved. It weeps also "with them<sup>4</sup> that weep." I have no doubt that your acts of obedience are irrigated abundantly with this rain. I am most happy to behold them, not blackened, so to speak, with murmuring, not discoloured with sadness, but brightened and blooming with spiritual joy.

Therefore if "the winter is now past," and "the rain over and gone," if "the flowers have appeared in our land," and if, finally, the vernal mildness (so to speak) of spiritual grace warns us that "the time of pruning has come," what remains but to devote all our energies henceforth to this work, so holy and so necessary? "Let us search our ways," as the Prophet Jeremias counsels. Let us search our affections as well. And let each of us consider that he has made progress, not when he finds nothing to be reprehended, but rather when he reprehends what he finds. Then only you have not examined yourselves in vain, when you have understood the need of yet another scrutiny. For you have not been deceived in your investigation, if it has left you persuaded of the necessity of repeating it. And if you are always willing to prune yourselves whenever you see the need of it, you shall certainly be always pruning. Therefore be ever mindful of your dependence on heaven's help and on the mercy of the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LIX.

### ON HOLY DESIRES AND CONTINENCE AS SYMBOLISED BY THE TURTLE.

*"The voice of the turtle is heard in our land."*

"The voice of the turtle is heard in our land." My brethren, I cannot dissemble the joy I feel when, now for the second time, I hear Him "who cometh from heaven" speaking of the earth as His home. And He speaks with as much kindness and familiarity as if He were in truth but one of the children of earth. The Speaker is the Bridegroom, Who after saying that "the flowers have appeared," explicitly added, "in *our* land"; and here again announces that "the voice of the turtle is heard in *our* land." Shall we suppose such expressions—I shall not say so unworthy of, but—so unusual with God, to be without special significance? Nowhere, as I believe, does He speak in this way of heaven, and nowhere else of the earth. Consider, then, how sweet a condescension it is that the God of heaven should speak of the earth as "our land." "All you that are earth-born, and you sons of men," attend and see how "the Lord hath done great things for us." He hath done great things for the earth, great things for the Spouse whom He has been pleased to take to Himself from the earth. "In our land," He says. This is not the language of lordship or domination, but the language of fellowship and friendship. The Word is speaking here not as the Lord but as the Bridegroom. What? He is



our Creator and does He make Himself as one of us ? But it is love that speaks, and love knows nothing of lordship. For this is the Canticle of love and ought to contain no other sentiments than the sentiments of love. God also loves, although the love wherewith He loves is nothing really distinct from Himself. Yea, He loves all the more vehemently for that He is rather Himself substantial Love than possesses love as a quality. And those whom He loves He regards not as servants but as friends. Hence from our Master He has become our Friend. For certainly He would not have called the disciples His friends unless they were so in truth.

Do you observe how even Majesty must yield to love ? So it is, my brethren. Love can no more look up to, than it can look down upon, any one. It allows of no distinction between lovers who truly love,\* but ever brings high and low to an equality in itself. Indeed, not alone does it make them equal, but it even makes them one. Perhaps you have imagined that God is to be excepted from this law of love ? But the Apostle tells you that " he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." Why should we be surprised at this, since He has made Himself as one of ourselves ? I have not said enough. For He has made Himself not merely *as one*, but really *one* of ourselves. He is truly Man. Hence it is that He speaks of " our land," not as a lord but simply as a citizen. And why should He

\* " Omnes ex aequo intuentur qui perfecte se amant." " Amicitia pares aut accipit aut facit ; ubi inaequalitas est et alterius subjectio, ibi non tam amicitia quam adulatio " (St. Jerome, *Sup. Michaeam.*, l. ii.). " Pietatis custos amicitia est et aequalitatis magistra, ut superior inferiori se exhibeat aequalem et inferior superiori " (St. Ambrose, *Offic.*, l. iii. c. 15.) —(Translator.)

not? It is from the earth He has obtained His Spouse and the very substance of His Body; the Bridegroom Himself is also from the earth, and the "Two in one flesh." \* If Bridegroom and Bride have but one flesh, why not also one home-land? "The heaven of heaven is the Lord's," says the Psalmist, "but the earth He hath given to the children of men." Therefore, the Word as the Son of man has inherited the earth, as Lord He dominates it, as Creator He governs it, and as Bridegroom He shares it with His Bride. For when He speaks of the earth as "our land," He clearly renounces His exclusive proprietorship, and makes Himself a joint-owner. Thus far I have been giving you the thoughts suggested to my mind by the Bridegroom's gracious condescension in using the familiar expression "our land." Let us now see what further lessons can be gathered from the words of our text.

"The voice of the turtle is heard in our land." Taken according to the literal sense, this also is a sign that "winter is past," and that "the time of pruning is come." The voice of the turtle does not sound so very sweet; but very sweet are the things it signifies in the mystical sense. The bird itself does not cost much to buy; yet priceless in value is that

\* That is, Christ and His mystical Bride, the Church. Or perhaps the Divine and Human natures, as hypostatically united in Christ, which in Sermon XXVII are said to be "Two in one flesh," the Sacred Humanity being regarded as the primary Spouse of the Word. Cf. A Lapide, *Proleg. in Cant.*, c. ii. For although the Divinity is in no sense of the earth, of the earth is Its union with the Humanity, as well as the Humanity Itself. Hence it may be said that the two Natures, *as united*, are of the earth. In the same sense St. Paul says (Gal. iv. 4), "God sent His Son, made of a woman." Besides, by what is called in theology the "communication of idioms," we may attribute to Christ as He is God properties which belong to Him only as He is Man.—(Translator.)

which it typifies. Its voice, which mourns rather than sings, reminds us of our banishment. Gladly, my brethren, will I listen to that preacher who seeks not to gain applause for himself but compunction for me. Thou wilt prove thyself a turtle indeed, if thou teachest sinners to mourn. But if thou wouldst bring others to penance, thou must rely less upon thine eloquence and persuasion and more upon the example of thine own compunction. Example is in many things more efficacious than counsel, but it is so especially in this matter. Thou wilt add to thy voice the "voice of power," if thou art known to have first convinced thyself practically of what thou art endeavouring to bring home to thy hearers. The preaching of thy life is more powerful than the preaching of thy lips. Practise what thou preachest, and thus not only shalt thou the more easily convert me, but thou shalt also deliver thyself from no light reproach. For then no one can any longer apply to thee what is said in the Gospel, "They bind heavy and insupportable burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders; but with a finger of their own they will not move them." Nor needest thou then have any fear that it shall ever be said to thee, "Thou that teachest others, teachest not thyself."

"The voice of the turtle is heard in our land." So long as men received for their service of God only the temporal and earthly reward of a "land flowing with milk and honey," they were very far from considering themselves as exiles on earth, very far from mourning like turtles, yearning for their heavenly country. Rather they mistook for their fatherland the place of their banishment, and gave themselves up to eating



what was fat and drinking what was pleasant. During all this time, therefore, the voice of the turtle had not yet been heard in our land. But when the promise of the kingdom of heaven was made to them, then men understood that they "have not here a lasting city"; then they began with all eagerness to "seek one that is to come"; and then, for the first time, the voice of the turtle was distinctly heard in our land. For whilst each holy soul was now longing for the presence of Christ, and looking impatiently for the coming of His kingdom, and with sighs and tears saluting from afar her much-desired home in heaven, does it not seem to you, my brethren, that every such soul then on earth was acting the part of a most chaste and mournful turtle? From that time onward the voice of the turtle has been heard in our land. Why should not the absence of Christ excite me to constant tears and daily groanings? "Lord, all my desire is before Thee, and my groaning is not hidden from Thee." "I have laboured in my groanings," as Thou knowest. But blessed is he who can add with the Psalmist, "Every night I will wash my bed, I will water my couch with my tears." But such groanings are familiar "not only to me, but to all them also that love His coming." For this our mourning is the fulfilment of the word of the Lord which He addressed to the disciples of John, "Can the children of the Bridegroom mourn as long as the Bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they shall mourn."—As if He should say, "and then the voice of the turtle shall be heard in our land."

So it is, sweet Jesus. The days whereof Thou

spokest have come. For "the creature itself groaneth and travaileth in pain even till now," "waiting for the revelation of the sons of God." And not alone the irrational creature. For "even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God, the redemption of our body," "knowing that while we are in the body we are absent from the Lord." Nor are such groanings fruitless, since they deserved to receive the merciful response from heaven, "By reason of the misery of the needy and the groans of the poor, now will I arise, saith the Lord." Even in the days of the patriarchs these mourning voices were heard. But they were rare; and each holy soul kept her mourning within herself, saying with the Prophet, "My secret to myself, my secret to myself." Even he who said, "My groaning is not hidden from Thee," plainly implied that his groaning was hidden from all others, since to the Lord alone he declared it to be manifest. At that time, therefore, it could not be said, "The voice of the turtle is heard in our land," because the mourning was still confined to a few and had not yet reached the ears of the multitude. But when that loud cry went forth, "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the Right Hand of God," then all began to imitate the mourning turtle, because all had the same motive for mourning. For all then had knowledge of the Lord, according to what is written in the Prophet Jeremias, "All shall know Me, from the least of them even to the greatest, saith the Lord."

But if the mourners be many, why is there but the voice of a single turtle? "The voice of the *turtle*," so we read. Why not rather "of the *turtles*"?

Perhaps the Apostle gives us the reason where he says that "The Spirit Himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings." So it is, my brethren. The mourning turtle here referred to is the Holy Spirit, Who makes men to mourn. Hence, however many they may be whom we hear mourning, it is always one and the same voice that issues from the lips of all. And why should we not call that the voice of Him Who forms it in the mouths of mortals according as the necessities of each require? "For the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit," as the Apostle declares. But hear from Christ Himself in the Gospel that the Holy Ghost has really a voice, "The Spirit breatheth where He will, and thou hearest His voice, but thou knowest not whence He cometh and whither He goeth." Yet although Nicodemus, as a dead teacher, instructing the dead in the "letter that killeth," was ignorant of this, we, my brethren, should not be ignorant, we who "have passed from death to life" through the grace of the vivifying Spirit, and who, enlightened by the same Spirit, and taught by certain and daily experience, feel assured that our desires and our groanings come from Him and go to Him, and through Him find mercy in the eyes of God. For how could God refuse to hear the voice of His own Spirit? "And He knoweth what the Spirit desireth, because He asketh for the saints according to God."

Nor is it for its mourning alone that the turtle is commended; it is also commended for its chastity. It was indeed by this characteristic that it deserved to be appointed as the ransom for the Virgin's Child. "They carried Him to Jerusalem to offer for Him a



✓ sacrifice, as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons." And although the image of the pigeon \* (columba) is usually employed elsewhere to designate the Holy Spirit; nevertheless, on account of this bird's lustful habits, it would have been unbecoming to offer it as a sacrifice for the Child Jesus, except at an early age, when its instincts were as yet undeveloped. But as the turtle is known to live its whole life chastely, there was no necessity to mention its age at all. Moreover, the turtle is content with a single mate. If it loses the first, it does not seek a second, thereby rebuking even successive polygamy amongst men. The reiteration of marriages may perhaps be excused from serious fault,† inasmuch as it is a remedy for the greater evil of incontinence. Yet it is a shameful thing to stand in need of such a remedy.

It is a shameful thing, I say, that reason and virtue cannot accomplish for man, what natural instinct does for the turtle. You may observe this bird, during the time following the death of its partner, fulfilling with constancy and diligence all the duties belonging to a faithful widowhood. You will find it always alone; you will everywhere hear it mourning. Never can you behold it perched upon any green bough—by which it would warn you to avoid the dangerous bloom of

\* The word "columba," translated by "pigeon" at Luke ii. 24, is elsewhere commonly rendered "dove," for instance in this Canticle, i. 14, ii. 10, ii. 14; and in Matt. iii. 16.—(Translator.)

† The Saint does not mean that successive polygamy is in itself even venially sinful, as is clear from what he says in Sermon LXVI. He is therefore complaining, not of anything which he considers to be positively evil, but of what he regards as less perfect.—(Translator.)

corrupting pleasure.\* Besides, it spends most of its time on the high mountain peaks or on the tops of trees,† in order to teach us to despise earthly things and to love the things of heaven, as is especially becoming in persons vowed to the observance of chastity.

From what has been said we may gather that the preaching of continence is also the voice of the turtle. For the counsel of chastity was not known in the beginning, when to the children of Adam it was rather said, "Increase and multiply and fill the earth." Indeed, that turtle's voice would have been heard to no purpose whilst the kingdom of the resurrection had not yet been announced, in which men shall live far more happily than here, though "they shall neither be married nor take wives, for they shall be equal to the angels of God." Or do you suppose, my brethren, that it was then the time for preaching chastity when every barren daughter of Israel lay under a heavy curse? when the patriarchs themselves practised polygamy? when the law obliged a brother to marry his brother's widow? But when from the mouth of the

\* The Christian poet Baptista Mantuanus has described these habits of the bereaved turtle in beautiful Latin hexameters, of which the following is a translation:—

"When widowed of her mate, the turtle dove  
Forsakes the pleasant haunts of joy and love,  
And lives retired. In vain you'll seek her now  
By sparkling waters or on green-wood bough.  
Her consort's image, hovering still in sight,  
Forbids her e'er again to taste delight."

In St. Gregory Naziazene's Prayer to the Virgin, these lines occur:—

"The turtle seeks no second mate  
When that her first love dies,  
But single lives and mourns her fate  
In never ceasing sighs."—(Translator.)

† "Nec gemere aëria cessabit turtur ab ulmo" (Virgil, *Eclog.*, 59).—(Translator.)

heavenly Turtle there sounded forth that commendation of the "eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven," and when the voice of another most pure turtle was heard throughout the world counselling virginity, then, for the first time, it could be said with truth, "the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."

Therefore, my brethren, if "the flowers have appeared" and "the voice of the turtle is heard in our land," truth has been discovered both by sight and by hearing. The voice is perceived by the ear and the flowers by the eye. Now, as was said in the previous interpretation, the flowers represent miracles, which, when added to the voice of preaching, engender the fruit of faith. For although "faith comes from hearing," the confirmation thereof comes from sight. The voice has sounded in our ears, the flowers have glittered before our eyes, "and truth is sprung out of the earth" by the confession of believers, whilst words and signs concur in bearing witness to the faith. "Thy testimonies are become exceedingly credible," since the flowers corroborate the evidence of the voice, and the eye that of the ear. Sight and sounds confirm each other, so that the testimony of two witnesses—I speak of the eye and the ear—may obtain credence, according to the word of the Lord. Therefore Christ said to the Baptist's disciples, "Go and report to John what you have heard and seen." He could not have demonstrated to them more briefly and clearly the certainty of the faith. In a short time, the like conviction was spread over the whole earth, and by means of the same compendious mode of persuasion. "Report what you have heard and seen." O truly "abbreviated



word"! Yet how "living and efficacious"! Surely it is not with any dubious misgiving I shall proclaim that which I have witnessed with my eyes and my ears. The world listens to the trumpet of salvation, it is dazzled with the splendour of corroborating miracles, and it believes. Men are easily convinced of a doctrine, when they see it confirmed by wonders. So we read in the Gospel that the apostles "going forth preached everywhere, the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed." We read again how Christ was transfigured on the mount and shone with dazzling brightness, and yet received also from heaven the testimony of the Father's voice. Finally, in the account of His baptism in the Jordan, we have the Spirit, in the form of a dove, manifesting Him to the eye, and the heavenly voice witnessing of Him to the ear. Thus, by the mercy of God, these two, the word and the sign, ever co-operate for the producing of faith, so that truth may find easy admission to the soul through the open windows of sight and hearing.

The Bridegroom continues, "The fig-tree hath put forth her green figs." Let us not eat of such figs, my brethren, for being yet unripe they are not wholesome. They do indeed resemble good figs, but more in outward appearance than in flavour, herein, perhaps, typifying hypocrisy. Nevertheless, we ought not to throw them away, because we may find them useful at another time. They will fall from the branches of themselves, and before the season, "as the grass upon the tops of houses, which withereth before it be plucked up," as the Psalmist says, speaking, I believe, of hypocrites. Nor is it without reason that there is mention made of

the green figs in this marriage hymn. Many things besides comestibles have to be provided at a wedding ; and if these green figs will not serve as food, they may be useful for some other purpose. And so little to be disregarded or passed lightly over do I judge that purpose, whatever it may be, that I will not attempt to confine the discussion thereof within the time I could now give to it at the close of this sermon. I prefer to postpone it to another day and a freer hour. As to whether this is necessary it will be for you to decide, after you have heard what I shall have to say. And meantime, do not forget to obtain for me by your prayers the power and the opportunity to express what I have in my mind, unto your own edification, and the praise and glory of the Spouse of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LX.

### ON THE TWO KINDS OF FIGS, AND ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE VINE AND THE FIG-TREE.

*“ The fig-tree hath put forth her green figs ; the vines in flower  
yield their sweet smell.”*

“ The fig-tree hath put forth her green figs.” The sense of these words, my brethren, depends upon what has preceded. The Bridegroom has declared that “ the time of pruning is come,” inferring this both from the flowers which have appeared in the land, and also from the sound of the turtle’s voice. He offers yet another reason now, namely, the putting forth of green figs by the fig-tree. For the signs of the seasons may be observed in the fig-tree as well as in the flowers and the voice of the turtle. It is when the weather is beginning to get warm that “ the fig-tree puts forth her green figs.” This tree produces no leaves, and its early figs make their appearance at the same time as the foliage on other trees. But just as the leaves flourish and fade, of no other value except in so far as they serve to herald the advent of the fruit which follows them, so is it also with the first-fruits of the fig. They come forth but never ripen, and hence never become fit for food, falling green from the branches to make room for the second crop, which remains till it is matured. The Bridegroom, therefore, as I have said, takes the appearance of these green figs as a sign of the season, and uses it as an argument to persuade



His Spouse to proceed with haste to the vineyards, so that, arriving there in good time, she may not lose her labour. Such appears to be the literal connection.

But what is the mystical signification of our text? For surely there is question here not of material fig-trees, but of peoples. It is of human souls God hath care, not of insentient fruit-trees. And truly there is a close analogy between fig-trees and peoples, who are frail in their flesh, little in their intelligence, depressed in their mind, and to complete the comparison—whose first-fruits are green and earthly. For it is not the custom of the peoples to “seek first the kingdom of God and His justice,” but rather, as the Apostle says, to be “solicitous for the things of the world, how they may please their wives.” “Such shall have tribulation of the flesh.” However, I do not deny that in the end they will bring forth the fruits of faith, if at the last they shall have made a good confession, particularly if they redeem by alms-giving the works of the flesh. Therefore the first-fruits of the peoples deserve the name of fruit as little as do the first-fruits of the fig-tree. But if they afterwards produce “fruits worthy of penance”—for “not first that which is spiritual, but that which is natural,” then it shall be said to them, “What fruit had you then in those things of which you are now ashamed?”

Nevertheless, I do not think that what is said here can be interpreted of every people. It seems to me that only one people is referred to. For it is not said, as of several, “The fig-trees have put forth”; but, as of one, “The fig-tree hath put forth her green figs.” And in my opinion the fig-tree mentioned here represents the Jewish people. How many lessons and

reproaches did not the Saviour address to this people, parabolically, using the image of the fig-tree, as may be read in the Gospel ! For example, " A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none." Also, " See the fig-tree and all the trees." And to Nathanael He said, " When thou wert under the fig-tree I saw thee." On another occasion He cursed a fig-tree because He found no fruit on it. And justly is the nation of the Jews compared to a fig-tree, because in spite of the excellence of the patriarchal root from which it sprung, it has never been desirous of attaining to greatness of stature, has never purposed to lift itself from the earth, has never cared to correspond with the nobility of its stock by the loftiness of its branches, the magnificence of its flowers, or the abundance of its fruit. Poorly indeed dost thou answer to thy root, O tree of Israel, little as thou art, and twisted, and gnarled ! For thy root is holy. But what of holiness dost thou exhibit in thy branches ? " The fig-tree," says the Bridegroom, " hath put forth her green figs." Degenerate fig-tree ! It is not from thy noble root thou hast derived these green figs. Whatever is contained in *it*, is of the Holy Ghost, and so is entirely sweet and spiritual. Whence then hast thou drawn them ? And in truth, my brethren, it may well be asked was there anything at all which was *not* green and gross in that people ? Neither their actions, nor their affections, nor their understanding, nor even the rites they observed in the worship of God, were lacking in these characteristics. For their actions were all concerned with war, their affections—were absorbed in the quest for the riches of this world, their understanding could not pierce through the

grossness of the letter, their worship consisted in offering the blood of sheep and goats and oxen.\*

But somebody may now object and say to me, "Since the Jewish nation never ceased to put forth such green figs, it seems to follow that for it, at any rate, the time of pruning is always present, for these two seasons are represented as synchronising." There is a mistake here, my brethren. A mother is not said to have brought forth her child whilst she is yet in travail, but only after the infant has been born into the world. Similarly we say that trees have put forth their leaves, not when they are in the period of florescence, but when that process has been completed. In the same sense it is said here, "The fig-tree hath put forth her green figs," not to signify that some have been put forth, but that the whole have been put forth, that the time for putting forth has come to an end. Do you ask when this happened in the case of the Jews? It was when they put Christ to death. For it was then that they filled up the measure of their iniquity, as had been predicted of them by the Lord when He said, "Fill ye up the measure of your fathers." Hence, when hanging on the cross, and about to breathe forth His Soul, He uttered the words, "It is consummated." Oh, what a consummation was thus given to its green figs by that fig-tree, cursed by Christ, and condemned thereafter to everlasting sterility! Oh, how

\* Similarly St. Ambrose, "*Specta nunc cultos et animos Judaeorum, qui, quasi primi fructus male feracis Synagogae, grossi labentis similitudine corruerunt, ut mansura supra aevum nostri generis poma succederent*" (*In Lucam*, l. vii. c. xiii.). And St. Anselm, "*Ficus protulit grossos suos, id est, legis veteris praecepta, velut fructus inutiles deciderunt.*" Cf. A Lapid, *In Cant.*, p. 584. Elsewhere St. Bernard takes the green figs to signify ecclesiastical dignities, which, as having the appearance of good fruit, are sought after by many.—(Translator.)



much worse were its last fruits than its first ! Beginning with figs that were worthless, it came at length to produce pernicious and poisonous ones. O most gross and viperish disposition, to hate the Man Who came to heal our bodies and to save our souls ! O truly gross and brutish understanding, not to recognise God even in the works of God !

Perhaps the Jew will complain that I am unduly severe in describing his understanding as brutish. But let him read Isaias and he shall find even something less flattering. "The ox," says that Prophet, speaking in the name of the Lord, "knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib : but Israel hath not known Me, and My people hath not understood." Thou perceivest now, O Jew, that I am not so hard on thee as is thine own Prophet. I have compared thee to the brute beasts in understanding, but he has placed thee beneath them ; although Isaias speaks here not in his own person but in the person of Him Who proclaims Himself God both by works and words ; so that He could say to the Jews, "If I do not the works of My Father believe Me not ; but if I do, though you will not believe Me, believe the works." Yet even thus they were not brought to understanding. The expulsion of demons from the possessed, the obedience of the elements, even the re-✓suscitation of the dead could not penetrate that bestial and more than bestial stupidity of theirs. It was from this blindness, as miserable as it was marvellous, that the fig-tree produced the green fig of a most horrible and heinous crime, when the people laid sacrilegious hands on the Lord of Majesty. Thenceforward it could be said with truth, "The fig-tree hath put forth her green figs." For the legal rites of the Jewish people]

began now to give place to others, according to what is written in Leviticus, "The new coming in, you shall cast away the old," in the same way as the first-fruits of the fig-tree fall off, yielding place to the second and [better crop. We may therefore fancy the Bridegroom speaking thus to His Bride, "So long as the fig-tree continued to put forth its green figs, I did not call thee, O My Spouse ; for I knew that the good figs could not appear with the bad ; but now that it has produced all the evil fruit which had first to be put forth, it is seasonable to summon thee to the vineyards where, as thou knowest, the good and wholesome figs shall come out immediately after the fall of the other kind."

And He adds, "The vines in flower yield their sweet smell," which is an indication of the speedy appearance of the fruit. This odour has power to banish serpents. We are told that when the vine begins to flower every venomous reptile vanishes from the vicinity, unable to endure the scent of the opening blossoms. I wish our novices to attend to this, and to act manfully, remembering what spirit they have received, the very first-fruits whereof can put the demons to flight. But if the fervour of a novice be so efficacious, what potency shall we attribute to the sanctity of the perfect ? Let ✓ the fruit be judged from the flower ; let the quality of the taste be estimated from the quality of the odour. "The vines in flower yield their sweet smell." So indeed it was at the begininng.

The preaching of the new grace was followed by newness of life in them that believed, "having their conversation good among the gentiles." Like the Apostle, they were "the good odour of Christ in every place." A good odour is a good testimony. A good

testimony proceeds from a good work, just as a good odour from a flower. And because, in the early days of the infant Church, faithful souls, like so many spiritual vines, appeared to be full of such flowers and odours, "having a good testimony even from them that were without," I think we may reasonably apply to them what is here said, "The vines in flower yield their sweet smell." To what purpose? In order that such as had not yet believed might be attracted by it, and witnessing their good works whence it proceeded, might thus themselves be led to glorify God; and so the sweet smell of the vines would become an "odour of life unto life." Justly, therefore, are they described as giving forth their odours, who seek not their own glory in their own fair fame, but rather the salvation of others. For, after the example of many, they might have made "godliness a source of gain," rendering it subservient to greed or ambition. That, however, would not be giving but selling their odour. But now, whilst "all their things are done in charity," as St. Paul recommends, it may be truly said of them that they do not barter but "yield their sweet smell."

But if the soul be the vine, and good works the flower, and fair fame the odour, what is the fruit? It is martyrdom. The fruit of the vine is the blood of the martyr. As the Psalmist sings, "When He shall give sleep to His beloved, behold the inheritance of the Lord are children; the reward, the fruit of the womb." I was nearly saying, "the fruit of the vine." And why should I not speak of the blood of the innocent, the blood of the just, as the purest blood of the grape? Why not regard it as wine unmixed, ruddy, rich, precious, extracted from the vintage of Sorech in the wine-press



of suffering? Hence it is written, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Such appears to be the meaning of the words of the Bridegroom, "The vines in flower yield their sweet smell." I mean to say, thus I should interpret them, if they are considered to refer to the seasons of grace.

But if we prefer to understand this passage as applying to the patriarchs and prophets, "for the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel," the sense will be: The patriarchs and prophets inhaled the sweet odour of Christ, Who was preordained to be born and to die in the flesh; yet they did not then give forth the same odour, because they could not exhibit in the flesh Him of Whom they had a fore-scent in the spirit. They did not yield "their sweet smell," nor publish their secret, but waited for the revelation to be made in its proper season. For who, at that time, would have received the Wisdom "hidden in a mystery," and not yet manifested in the body? So the vines did not yet begin to "yield their sweet smell." But they yielded it later on, when, after a long series of passing generations, Christ, sprung from them according to the flesh, was brought forth into the world by a virginal birth. Then, I say, these spiritual vines "yielded their sweet smell," "when the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared," and the earth began to have Him present, Whose fragrance when absent only a few could enjoy. Thus, for instance, the holy Patriarch Isaac scented the sweet odour of Christ when, laying hands on his son Jacob, he blessed him with the words, "Behold the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field which the Lord hath blessed." Nevertheless, whilst speaking thus,

he kept to himself his consolation, nor would he share it with any. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them who were under the law." Then, indeed, the odour secretly enjoyed by the Patriarch, diffused itself abroad, so that the Church, from the ends of the earth perceiving the perfume, exclaimed, "Thy name is as oil poured out," and even the young maidens began to run to the odour of this ointment. Thus, then, the vine I have instanced yielded at last its sweet smell, as did also the other patriarchal vines at the same time; for in them all had pre-existed the same odour of life. How could it have been otherwise, since from them all was Christ according to the flesh? What is said, therefore, "The vines yield their sweet smell," may be interpreted to mean either that faithful souls everywhere diffuse a good esteem of themselves, or that the oracles and revelations of the patriarchs were made manifest to the world at the coming of Christ, and their odour "hath gone forth into all the earth,"—with reference to which the Apostle says, "And evidently great is the Mystery of godliness, which was manifested in the flesh, was justified in the Spirit, appeared unto the angels, hath been preached unto the gentiles, is believed in the world, is taken up in glory."

It would be strange, my brethren, if neither from the fig-tree nor from the vine we could obtain for ourselves any fruit of edification. And so it seems to me that this passage is also susceptible of a moral interpretation. I say, then, that, "by the grace of God which is in us," we have here amongst us both vines and fig-trees. By the fig-trees I mean those religious who are distinguished for their sweetness of disposition. The vines are those who excel

in fervour of spirit. Every individual who practises faithfully amongst us the social and domestic virtues, who not only lives in the community "without blame," but with unfailing sweetness puts himself at the service of each of his brethren, for all the offices of charity—every such religious, I say, is most certainly worthy of being compared to the fig-tree. Yet he must first have put forth his green figs. That is to say, he ought to have got rid of the fear of judgment, which "charity casteth out"; and of the afflicting recollection of his sins, which must yield to the tranquillising influence of a good confession, to the infusion of grace, and to the frequent outpouring of tears; and of all other such imperfections, which, like the green figs, precede the sweet and perfect fruit, but which I will not specify, leaving you to discover them by your own meditation. However, I will make one further remark which occurs to me, and is connected herewith. Do you not suppose that even the endowments of knowledge, prophecy, the gift of tongues, and the like, may be reckoned amongst the green figs? For, like the green figs, they also are destined to fall off and to give place to things better. The Apostle assures us of this when he says "Prophecies shall be made void, tongues shall cease, (and) knowledge shall be destroyed."\* Faith, too, shall be excluded by understanding and hope must yield to vision. "For what a man seeth, why doth he hope for?" Only "Charity never falleth away," and that charity only whereby we love God with our whole heart, with our whole soul, and

\* The Saint is here taking liberties with the text, 1 Cor. xiii. 8. St. Paul is speaking conditionally. His words are, "Charity never falleth away, whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed."—(Translator.)



with all our strength. Consequently, I would by no means regard this virtue as one of the green figs. I would not even consider it as belonging to the fig-tree at all, but rather to the vine. Now, they that are vines in the mystical sense exhibit in their conduct more severity than sweetness, borne on by the spirit of ardour, full of zeal for discipline, extremely sharp in correcting abuses, and in short, appropriating to themselves the words of the Psalmist, "Have I not hated them, O Lord, that hated Thee, and pined away because of Thy enemies?" And this also, "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up." As it seems to me, such religious are particularly given up to the love of God; whereas, it is love of their neighbour that characterises the former class whom I have likened to fig-trees. But let us rest here, my brethren, under this vine and this fig-tree, in the shadow of the love of God and man. Both loves I exercise when I love Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, Who art truly my Neighbour, because Thou art truly man and "hast dealt mercifully with me," and nevertheless art also over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXI.

### ON THE WOUNDS OF CHRIST TYPIFIED BY THE CLEFTS OF THE ROCK.

*" Arise, My love, My Spouse,\* and come ; My dove in the clefts  
of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall, shew Me thy face,  
let thy voice sound in My Ears."*

" Arise, My love, My Spouse, and come." The Bridegroom, my brethren, reveals the greatness of His love by thus repeating these titles of affection. For such repetition is the language of love. And by again inviting His Spouse forth to the labour of the vineyard, He shows His anxious solicitude for the salvation of souls. I have already explained that souls are here designated by the name of vines. But let us not lose time in examining words which have been sufficiently discussed already. Let us pass on to what follows. However, I will first remark that, so far as I can remember, the Bridegroom has not before, in this Canticle, addressed His beloved one by the title of Spouse, but He does so now because she is about to enter the vineyard, and is approaching to the wine of charity. When she attains to this, and has been made perfect, then shall she celebrate her mystical nuptials with Him, then her Beloved and she shall be two, not indeed in one flesh, but in one spirit, according to the testimony of the Apostle, where he says, " He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit."

\* " Sponsa Mea." There seems to be no authority for this reading. The Vulgate has 'speciosa Mea' (My beautiful one), and the Greek, "καλή μου."—(Translator.)

The Bridegroom goes on, " My love in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall, shew Me thy face, let thy voice sound in My Ears." Because He loves He continues to speak the language of love. For the second time He affectionately calls her a dove, *His* dove, to signify that she belongs to Him exclusively. And what she has been wont to request so earnestly of Him He now in His turn solicits from her, namely, that she would show Him her face and delight Him with her conversation. He appears here in the character of a shy lover, who, because of his modesty, desires to shun publicity and seeks a sequestered spot for the satisfaction of his affection, such as the " clefts of the rock " or the " hollow places of the wall." We may therefore fancy the Bridegroom thus addressing His beloved, " Do not be afraid, O My spouse, that the work of looking after the vineyard, to which I am inviting thee, will hinder or interrupt our loving conversation. For that occupation will afford us many opportunities for the intercourse which we both so ardently desire. The vineyard must certainly have an enclosing wall, and the ' hollow places ' thereof offer welcome trysts to lovers." Such is the play of the literal sense. Why should I not call it a play, since if we stop at it and go not beyond the surface meaning, it is impossible to discover in these words anything like a serious purpose. Indeed, as they sound on the external ear, they suggest nothing even worthy to be heard, unless the Holy Spirit shall deign to strengthen with His interior light the weakness of our understanding. Therefore lest we should remain outside in the letter, lest, which God forbid ! we should seem to be only listening to the arts and blandishments which belong to



profane love, let us attend with chaste and sober minds to this discourse on divine charity. And if there should be mention of lovers, think not of male and female, but of the Word and the holy soul, or of Christ and the Church, which is the same thing, except that by the name of the Church is designated not a single soul, but rather the unity, or better still, the unanimity of many souls. Neither should we suppose the "clefts of the rock" and the "hollow places of the wall" to be the coverts of "them that work iniquity," lest any suspicion should arise in our minds of the works of darkness.

Some one else\* has expounded this passage in a different sense, interpreting the "clefts of the rock" to mean the Wounds of Christ, which I entirely approve of, since "Christ is the Rock." O blessed clefts, which fortify our faith in the resurrection and in the Divinity of the Saviour! "My Lord and my God," exclaimed Thomas the Apostle. But whence did he derive this confession save from the clefts of the Rock? Therein "the sparrow hath found herself a house, and the turtle a nest for herself, where she may lay her young ones." In them the dove rests secure, and beholds with fearless eye the hungry hawk's gyrations. Therefore the Bridegroom here calls His Spouse, "My dove in the clefts of the Rock." And it is the voice of the dove we hear in the psalm saying, "He hath exalted me upon a Rock," and, "He hath set my feet upon a Rock." The wise man builds his house upon the Rock, because on such a foundation he shall have nothing

\* The reference is probably to St. Gregory the Great, who writes, "*Per foramina petrae vulnera Manuum et Pedum Christi in cruce pendentis libenter intellexerim, cavernam vero maceriae vulnus Lateris quod lancea factum est, eodem sensu dixerim.*"—(Translator.)

to fear from the violence of floods or tempests. What can be found in the Rock except what is most excellent? It lifts me up from the ground, It renders me secure, It affords me firm footing. On the Rock I am safe from my enemies, I am prevented from falling, and that because, standing on the Rock, I am exalted above the earth. For everything on the earth is unstable and insecure. But if "our conversation is in heaven," then we need have no fear either of falling or of being thrown down. In heaven is the Rock, wherein alone can be found strength and security. "The Rock is a refuge for the irchins," as the Psalmist says. And in truth where shall the weak find a safe rest or a secure asylum except in the Wounds of the Saviour? There shall I dwell with a confidence proportionate to the greatness of His power to save me. Let the world rage, let the body bear me down, let the devil plot against me: I shall not fall, for I am founded on the Rock. I have sinned most grievously; my conscience is indeed much disquieted, yet is not confounded, because I will call to mind the Wounds of my Saviour. For "He was wounded for our iniquities." What sin can be so much "unto death" as that it cannot be "loosed" by the death of Christ? Therefore no disease, however desperate, shall have power to drive me to despair, if only I keep in mind so potent and efficacious a remedy.

Cain consequently was in error when he said, "My iniquity is greater than I may deserve pardon"; unless it be that he was not one of Christ's members, and had no share in Christ's merits, entitling him to regard them as his own and to call them his own, just as the members can claim as its own what belongs to the head. But as

for me, my brethren, whatever I perceive to be wanting, to me I appropriate to myself with all confidence from the Heart of my Lord Jesus. For that Heart overflows with mercy, neither does It want for clefts for the outpouring of Its treasures. They dug His Hands and Feet and opened His Side with a lance. And through these clefts I am permitted to "suck honey out of the Rock, and oil out of the hardest stone." That is to say, I am enabled to "taste and see that the Lord is sweet." He was thinking "thoughts of peace" and I knew it not. For "who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor?" But the nail that pierced Him has been for us a key to unlock the mind of the Lord \* and to expose to our view His secret counsels. Why should I not look through these fissures into the Heart of the Rock? The nails announce to me, the Wounds proclaim to me that "God indeed is in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." "The iron pierced His Soul" and "His Heart hath drawn near" to us in order that He may no longer be as one "who cannot have compassion on our infirmities." The secret of His Heart is revealed to us through the clefts of His Body; the "great mystery of godliness" is revealed to us; and revealed also are "the bowels of the mercy of our God, in which the Orient from on high hath visited us." Surely the Heart of Christ can be seen through the openings of His Wounds. For what can prove to me so clearly as Thy Wounds that Thou, O Lord Jesus, "art sweet and mild and plenteous in mercy"? "Greater (mercy) than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life," not for his friends, but for his enemies, criminals devoted and doomed to death.

\* "Clavis reserans clavus penetrans factus est."—(Translator)



My merit, therefore, is nothing but the mercy of the Lord. Hence I cannot be poor in merit so long as He is rich in compassion. And if "the mercies of the Lord are many," many too must my merits be. I may be "conscious to myself" of a multitude of sins, but what of that? For "where sin abounded, grace did more abound." And if "the mercies of the Lord are from eternity and unto eternity," "the mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever" also. But shall I sing my own justice? "O Lord, I will be mindful of Thy justice alone." For Thy justice is also my justice, because Thou art made unto me "justice of God," as the Apostle declares. But is there any reason to be afraid lest the one justice should not suffice for us both? Surely not, because it is not a "short covering" which, as the Prophet Isaias says, "cannot cover two." In the words of the Psalmist, "Thy justice is justice for ever." And what is longer than eternity? Oh, yes, an eternal justice is wide enough and long enough to cover fully both Thee and me. In me it shall cover "a multitude of sins"; but in Thee, what save the treasures of piety and the riches of goodness? These treasures and riches are laid up for me in the clefts of the Rock. "Oh, how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness which Thou hast" covered therein! But covered only from "them that perish." For why should pearls be cast before swine? Why should that which is holy be given to dogs? "But to us God hath revealed them by His Spirit," hath even brought us into the sanctuary through the open clefts of the Rock. And what a "multitude of sweetness" have we discovered there, what a plenitude of grace, what a consummation of all virtue!

As for me, my brethren, I will go to these store-rooms thus replenished with good things. Following the Prophet's advice, I will "leave the cities and dwell in the Rock." I will "be like the dove that maketh her nest in the mouth of the hole in the highest place," so that, like Moses, "set in the hole of the Rock," when the glory of the Lord shall have passed by, I may be able to see at least "His back parts." For who can gaze upon His Face whilst He stands? That is to say, who can behold the Brightness of the Unchangeable, except one that has been already admitted not only into the sanctuary, but even into the holy of holies? Nor ought we to regard as mean or contemptible the vision which shows us the "hinder parts"\* of God. Let Herod despise Him thus beheld; but the more despicable He shows Himself to Herod the less shall He be despised by me. Even the "hinder parts" of the Lord have wherewith to delight the beholder. And "who knoweth but He will turn around and forgive, and leave a blessing behind Him?" The time will come when He will "shew us His Face and we shall be saved." But meanwhile let Him deign to "prevent us with the blessings of sweetness," with those, namely, which He is wont to leave after Him. Let Him now show us the humility of His "back parts" in condescension, as He will show us hereafter the Majesty of His Face in glory. In heaven He displays His magnificence; on the cross He manifested His sweetness. With the latter vision He prevents me; with the former He will fill me, according to the words of holy David, "Thou shalt fill me with joy with Thy

\* By the "hinder parts of God" he means the weakness of His human Nature as exhibited in the Passion.—(Translator.

Countenance." Salutory are both visions, and both are sweet. But in the one the Lord appears in loftiness, in the other, in lowliness. The one is all resplendent, paleness characterises the other.

Hence, my brethren, it is said in the psalm, "And the hinder parts of (His) back in the paleness of gold."\* And surely He must have grown pallid in death. But better is pale gold than glittering brass; and "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." The Word of God is gold, gold too is the Wisdom of God. This Divine Gold discoloured Itself, concealing the Form of God, and exposing to view the form of a servant. It also discoloured the Church, since she says, "Do not consider that I am brown, because the Sun hath altered my colour." Therefore to the Church likewise can be applied the words, "And the hinder parts of her back in the paleness of gold." For she has not been ashamed of the ignominy of the cross, she has not been scandalised at the infamy of the Passion, she has not shrunk from the unsightliness of the Wounds. Nay, she even takes her pleasure in these things and desires that her own "last end shall be like to them." Therefore she hears it said to her, "My dove in the clefts of the Rock"; because she is always devoutly pondering on the Wounds of Christ, and abides therein by her constant meditations. It is from these Wounds she derives

\* This is merely an adaptation of the second part of verse 14, Psalm lxvii.: "*Si dormiatis inter medios cleros, pennae columbae deargentatae, et posteriora dorsi ejus in pallore auri,*" which the Douay Translators render, "If you sleep among the midst of lots, you shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and the hinder parts of her back with the paleness of gold." In the Greek, as in the English, the feminine form of the pronoun (*αὐτῆς*) refers the "hinder parts" to the dove (*περιστερὰς*). For the meaning of this very difficult verse, cf. Bellarmin's classical commentary.—(Translator.)



the fortitude exhibited by her martyrs; thence also proceeds her invincible trust in the Most High. There is no reason why the martyr should be afraid to lift up his pallid and livid face to Him in Whose bruises he has been healed, to present to Him a glorious image of His own bitter death, "in the paleness of gold." Why should he fear, since the Lord even asks him to do this, saying, "Shew Me thy face"? But wherefore such a request from the Bridegroom? As it appears to me, my brethren, He is rather expressing here a desire to show Himself. So indeed it is. He wants to be seen, not to see. For what is there which He does not see? He has no need that anyone should show himself, from Whose all-seeing Eye nothing can escape, nothing be concealed. He therefore wills to be seen. The gracious Captain wants the devoted soldier to lift up his face and his eyes in order to contemplate his Leader's Wounds, and to draw from that contemplation and that example fresh courage and strength for the conflict. For the servant shall not feel his own wounds whilst gazing on the Wounds of his Master.

See the martyr! See how he stands triumphant and jubilant, although his whole body is mangled and rent! And whilst the cruel iron tears open his sides, he watches with fortitude, yea, even with joy, the sacred blood spurting out from the lacerated flesh. Where, then, I ask, is the martyr's soul? She is in security, my brethren, she is on the Rock, for she is in the Heart of Jesus; and it was to give her admission thither that the Wounds have been opened in the Saviour's Body. Had she remained in her own flesh, she certainly would feel the rending iron; the pain would overpower her; she would succumb; she would deny the faith. But now whilst she abides in the Rock, is it any wonder that

she exhibits the unyielding firmness of the Rock? Is it any wonder that, sojourning outside the body, she does not feel the pains of the body? And this is due not to any stupefaction but to the force of affection. Sensibility is not lost but subjected to love. Pain is not wanting, but it is vanquished and despised. Therefore from the firmness of the Rock comes the fortitude of the martyr.\* Thence is derived the courage to drink the chalice of the Lord. And that "chalice, which inebriateth, how goodly it is!" Goodly indeed, and pleasant too, not only for the Emperor Himself Who is looking on, but also for the soldier who celebrates his triumph. "For the joy of the Lord is our strength," as we read in the Prophet Esdras. Why should He not rejoice as He listens to the martyr's fearless confession? Yea, it is a joy He longs for with eagerness. Hence He says, "Let thy voice sound in My Ears." Nor will He be slow in making a return, according to His promise. As soon as He shall be confessed before men by the martyr, He will also confess him before His Father Who is in heaven. Let me here, my brethren, interrupt the discourse, as I should not have time to finish to-day. For if all that remains to be said in connexion with my present text were to be included in this one sermon, it would be necessary to prolong it beyond all reasonable limits. It is better therefore to keep for another time what further remarks I intend to offer, in order that both our speech and our silence may give joy to the Spouse of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

\* There is a very close resemblance between this passage and paragraph 8, chapter iii. of the Mystical Vine, one of the doubtfully Bernardine treatises. See Appendix A at the end of this volume.—(Translator.)

## SERMON LXII.

### ON THE TWO KINDS OF CONTEMPLATION CORRESPONDING TO THE HOLLOWS OF THE WALL AND THE CLEFTS OF THE ROCK.

*“ My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall, shew me thy face, let thy voice sound in my ears ; for thy voice is sweet, and thy face comely.”*

“ My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall.” It is not only in the clefts of the Rock, my brethren, that the dove finds a secure refuge. She has also a safe asylum in the hollow places of the wall. Now if we take this wall to mean, not a structure of material stones, but rather the communion of saints, let us consider lest perchance by the hollow places of the wall are designated the places in that blessed society which the angels who fell through their pride left empty, so to speak, and which, like the fissures of a ruin, have now to be built up and repaired with the living stones of human spirits. It is in this sense the Apostle Peter exhorts us, saying, “ Unto Whom coming, as to a Living Stone, be you also built up, a spiritual house.” Nor do I think we should be far wrong if we conceived the guardianship of the angels to be the enclosing wall, as it were, of the Lord’s vineyard, which is the Church of the predestinate. For St. Paul says, “ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation ? ” And the Psalmist witnesses to the same in the words, “ The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him.”



Assuming this to be so, our text may be explained as follows. There are two things which console the Church in the time and the place of her banishment, namely, the recollection of Christ's sufferings in the past, and, as regards the future, the thought and the confidence that she shall be received one day into the society of the holy angels. With her memory and her hope, as with two eyes, one behind and one before,\* she lovingly and insatiably contemplates both these objects, namely, the Lord's Passion and her own future bliss. Each of the two visions is a source of consolation to her, because in each she finds a refuge from what the Psalmist calls "the trouble of evils and sorrow." It is her perfect consolation that she knows not merely what she ought to hope for, but the ground and reason of her hope as well. Joyous and assured must be the hope which has been confirmed by the death of Christ. Why should the magnitude of the reward make her diffident, when she calls to mind the worth of the ransom? How gladly does she visit in spirit those "clefts of the Rock," those Wounds of the Saviour through which flowed the thrice-holy Blood of her redemption! How gladly does she explore the "hollow places," the inns and the mansions, many and various, which are in the Father's house, and in which He is pleased to place His children according to the variety of their merits! At present, indeed, nothing better

\* "*Ambo haec, veluti ante et retro oculata, desiderio insatiabili contuetur.*" It is the same fancy we find in the poet Gray:

"The herd stood drooping by:  
 Their raptures now that widely flow  
 No yesterday nor morrow know,  
 'Tis man alone that joy describes  
 With forward and reverted eyes."

—"Ode on the Pleasures of Vicissitude."

being as yet in her power, she reposes there only in thought, and mentally visits the heavenly habitations above. But the day will come when she shall "fill up the ruins"; when she shall dwell in the hollow places of the wall in body as well as in mind; when with the multitude of her children she shall occupy and adorn the tabernacles left untenanted by the fall of their original possessors. Then hollow places shall no more be seen in the celestial wall, but it shall rejoice everlastingly in the bliss of its consummation and in the restoration of its integrity.

But perhaps you will be better pleased if I say that these hollow places are not so much found by devout and studious minds as effected and formed. Do you ask, by what means? "By thought and desire." For the spiritual wall, like a structure of soft material, readily yields to the desires of the soul, readily yields to pure contemplation, readily yields to frequent prayer. We read in Holy Scripture that "the prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds." It is not meant surely that humble prayer can cleave this corporeal atmosphere, diffused around in its wide expanses, as does the flying bird with the oars of its wings. Nor are we to suppose that prayer, like a sharp sword, cuts its way, in a material sense, through the high and solid dome of the visible heaven above us.\* But there are the heavens of blessed spirits, my brethren, the living, rational heavens, which "show forth the glory of God." These, on account of the fostering love which they feel for us, gladly incline to our prayers; and whenever with a pure intention we

\* The Saint is speaking in accordance with the astronomical theories in vogue in his day.—(Translator.)

knock at them, their affection yields to the force of our devotion, and through the hollow thus made we obtain admission to their interior. For "to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Therefore it is in the power of each one of us, even during the present time of our mortality, to form for himself such hollows in the heavenly wall, and in whatever part of it he may choose. For whenever we please we can visit the patriarchs, or salute the prophets, or associate ourselves to the august council of the apostles, or mingle with the choirs of the martyrs; nay, we may even pass through and examine, with all pious curiosity, the various orders and mansions of the pure celestial spirits, from the lowest of the angels to the Cherubim and the Seraphim, according as each one's devotion shall incline him. And if we stand and knock there whither our attraction draws us, the Holy Ghost, guiding us by His grace as He wills, a hollow shall at once appear in the living wall of happy spirits, who will affectionately curve themselves to enfold us, so that we may enjoy a little repose amongst them. Well pleasing to God are the face and the voice of every soul that thus hollows the heavenly wall. Her face is pleasing because of its beauty, her voice on account of its praise. For, as the Psalmist says, "Praise and beauty are before Him." Hence every soul that is such hears herself addressed in the words, "Shew Me thy face, let thy voice sound in My Ears." Now the voice of the soul is the holy admiration she feels in contemplating the things of God and also her thanksgiving for the divine benefits. And God takes great pleasure in those hollows of the wall whence proceeds the voice of thanksgiving, the voice of admiration and praise.



Blessed is the man that devotes and applies himself fervently and frequently to the work of hollowing this mystical wall. But still more blessed he who makes for himself hollows in the Rock. For we are permitted, if we have the power, to excavate even the Rock. Yet for this the soul has need of a purer keenness of edge, of a more strongly-directed intention, and of greater merits of sanctity. But who can pretend to such qualifications? He, at all events, might do so who said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Same was in the beginning with God." Does it not seem to you, my brethren, as if the Evangelist had plunged into the very Heart of the Word, and brought forth from Its innermost recesses the sacrosanct essence of Wisdom Divine? And shall we not say the same of him who used to "speak wisdom among the perfect, the wisdom of God hidden in a mystery, which none of the princes of this world knew"? Did not that pious explorer, after penetrating with a keen yet devout curiosity, the first and second heaven, bring down to earth from the third this mystery of wisdom? Neither did he keep it to himself, for he has faithfully delivered it to us in the most faithful words he could find. But he also "heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter." That is, it was not granted to him to utter these secrets to his fellow-men, but he was allowed to speak of them to himself and to God. We may therefore imagine the Lord consoling St. Paul's solicitous charity, and saying to him, "Why art thou troubled because human ears cannot take in what thou hast conceived in thy mind? 'Let thy voice sound in My Ears.' Even though thou art not permitted to reveal

thy secret to mortals, be not grieved thereat, since thy voice may give pleasure to the Ears of God." Do you not observe how this holy soul is now "sober" out of charity for us, and now "transported to God" because of her purity? Holy David was another soul qualified to excavate the Rock. And consider if he is not himself the man of whom, as of a different person, he speaks to God and says, "For the thought of man shall give praise to Thee : and the remainders of the thought shall keep holiday to Thee." Therefore as much of the prophetic thought as could be expressed by the Prophet's words and example he immediately made manifest to all, in order thereby to "give praise to the Lord among the people." But the rest, "the remainders of the thought," he reserved to God and to himself, keeping holiday with the Lord, in "gladness and rejoicing." This is what the verse I have just quoted is intended to convey to us. Hence we may infer that the Prophet, by zealous preaching, used to expend for the people's salvation whatever he could of all that his curious and eager mind was able to draw from wisdom's secret fountain ; whilst the incommunicable residue became for himself an additional motive for praising God with festive jubilee. Notice how nothing goes to loss in divine contemplation. For whatever cannot contribute to the edification of the people, with that especially we may render "to our God joyful and comely praise."

It follows from what I have said that there are two kinds of contemplation.\* The one considers the

\* Modern writers on mysticism distinguish in the same way two species of supernatural contemplation, according as the object is God Himself or some creature. The first kind is called *deific* (*indeique*), the other *ex-deific* (*exdeique*). See Poulain, *Graces of Interior Prayer* (Eng. Trans.), p. 53.—(Translator.)

stability, the state, the happiness, and the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem, and in what manner of repose or activity the mighty multitude of its citizens occupy themselves. The other has for object the King Himself, His Divinity, His Majesty, His Eternity. By the former we make hollows in the wall, by the latter in the Rock. And if the excavations in the Rock are the more difficult to make, more precious in proportion are the treasures they reveal to us. Nor need you be afraid of that penalty wherewith Holy Scriptures threaten the "searchers of Majesty," provided you bring a pure and simple eye to this contemplation. You shall not be "overwhelmed by glory," but rather admitted to glory, unless indeed you seek your own glory instead of the glory of God. For it is not God's glory but his own that overwhelms a man, because whilst he is bent on the latter and pressed down by the weight of ambition, he cannot lift up his head to contemplate the former. Let us, therefore, my brethren, shake off this yoke from our necks, and then we may securely excavate the Rock, "in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." But if you are not yet reassured, listen to what the Rock Himself says, "They that work in Me shall not sin." Oh, "who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest!" For the meek and the simple shall find rest there where the deceitful shall be overwhelmed, as well as the proud and the lovers of vainglory. The Church is a dove, and is therefore at rest. She is a dove because of her innocence and because of her mourning. She is a dove, I say, because she has "with meekness received the ingrafted word," according to the advice of St. James. And she rests in the Word, that is to say, in



the Rock, for the Word is the Rock. The Church, consequently, dwells in the clefts of the Rock, through which she looks into the interior and beholds the glory of her Bridegroom. Neither does that glory overwhelm her, because she does not attempt to arrogate it to herself. She is not "overwhelmed by the glory," because she is not a "searcher of Majesty," but a seeker of the divine will. As regards the Divine Majesty, she does indeed venture to look upon it occasionally, not however as a searcher but merely as an admirer. But even if she happens sometimes to be drawn up to that Majesty in a spiritual ecstasy, "this is the finger of God" mercifully exalting the creature, not the creature's temerity impudently invading the privacy of God. For when even the Apostle thinks it necessary to excuse the boldness of his intrusion, by explaining that he then suffered a rapture, what other mortal shall presume to take upon himself the fearful responsibility of searching out, by his own efforts, the secrets of the Divine Majesty, and of intruding as a rash inquirer into the most awful mysteries of the Godhead? Therefore I believe that by the "searchers of Majesty" are meant such irreverent invaders of Majesty, not they who are ravished but they who encroach. And it is of these we are told that they "shall be overwhelmed by glory."

It is therefore a very dangerous thing to search into the Majesty of God. But to search out His will is as safe as it is pious. Why should I not persevere in scrutinising the mystery of the glory of that divine will with all diligence, since, as I know, I am bound to render it universal obedience? Sweet is this glory which comes from no other source than the contem-

plation of Sweetness Itself, which has no other fountain save the prospect of the riches of God's goodness and the "multitude of His tender mercies." As the Evangelist says, "We saw His glory, the glory, as it were, of the Only-Begotten of the Father." For whatever of glory has been manifested in the divine will is entirely paternal, entirely condescending. This glory shall never overwhelm me, even though I contemplate it with all my powers. Rather I shall be impressed with its likeness, agreeably to what is written, "We all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." We are so transformed, my brethren, when we are conformed. But God forbid that any man should have the presumption to expect to be conformed to the Lord in the glory of His Majesty and not rather in the meekness of His will. This shall be my glory, if ever I am deemed worthy to hear Him say of me what He said of David, "I have found a man according to My own Heart." The Heart of the Bridegroom is the Heart of His Father. And what are the dispositions of the Father's Heart? Christ Himself has told us, where He says, "Be ye merciful as your Father also is merciful." This is the image which He desires to see when He says to the Church, "Shew Me thy face," the image, namely, of His own meekness and piety. And when her face exhibits these lineaments, she may raise it with all confidence to the Rock, to Whom she is thus proved to be conformed. "Come ye to Him," cries the Psalmist, "and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be confounded." How indeed could an humble Bride be confounded by an humble Bridegroom, a holy Bride by a loving-kind

Bridegroom, a modest Bride by a gentle Bridegroom? No, the pure face of the Spouse can no more be repelled by the purity of the Rock than virtue can be repelled by virtue, or light by light.

But the Church cannot as yet, whilst she is still in exile, draw nigh in all her members to form fissures in the Rock; because not all who belong to the Church have the power to scrutinise the mysteries of the divine will, or to comprehend of themselves "the deep things of God." This appears to be the reason why she is here represented as dwelling not only in the clefts of the Rock, but also in the hollow places of the wall. We may suppose, then, that she abides in the clefts of the Rock in the persons of her perfect members, who, by reason of their purity of conscience, have the courage to scrutinise and penetrate the secrets of divine wisdom, and have the power to do so from the acuteness of their minds. In her other members she occupies the hollow places of the wall. For such as lack either the strength or the daring necessary for piercing the Rock, employ themselves in making hollows in the wall, and are satisfied with contemplating the glory of the saints. But should there be any amongst her children to whom even this is impossible, to them she proposes "Jesus and Him crucified"; so that now, without any effort on their own part, they may abide in the clefts of the Rock, the opening of which has cost them nothing.\* The Jews have laboured in forming these fissures, and they, that they may remain faithful, enter into the labours of the unfaithful. Nor need they be apprehensive lest

\* "If thou knowest not how to meditate on high and heavenly things, rest in the Passion of Christ and willingly dwell in His sacred Wounds" (*Imitation*, II. i.).—(Translator.)



they should meet with a repulse, since they are even invited to seek sanctuary in the clefts. "Enter thou unto the Rock," so we read in Isaias, "and hide thee in the digged earth from the face of the fear of the Lord and from the glory of His Majesty." To the weak and sluggish soul, which can say of herself, like the unjust steward in the Gospel, "To dig I am unable and to beg I am ashamed," to such a soul the Prophet here points out ground that is already excavated. In these pits she may lie concealed until she has acquired sufficient strength and energy to be able of herself to pierce holes in the Rock, through which, by means of purity and vigour of mind, she shall gain admission to the Heart of the Word.

If by the "digged earth" we understand the Saviour's Body, whereof He said, "They have digged My Hands and My Feet," then there can be no doubt that the wounded soul that hides herself therein shall soon be restored to health. For what can be so efficacious for curing the wounds of the conscience and for purifying the eye of the soul as assiduous meditation on the Wounds of the Redeemer? But until she has been perfectly healed and cleansed, I do not see how she can understand as addressed to herself the words of the Bridegroom, "Shew Me thy face, let thy voice sound in My Ears." For how will she dare to show her face or to raise her voice, after receiving a command to hide herself? "Hide thee in the digged earth," says the Prophet. Wherefore? Because her face is not yet entirely pure and worthy of the Bridegroom's regard. And as long as she lacks the power of contemplating Him, so long shall she remain unworthy of being looked upon by Him. But when, by

dwelling in the hollow places of the digged earth, she shall have made such progress in the purification of her interior eye, that she also can "with open face behold the glory of the Lord," then, at last, being now able to see, she may speak too with all confidence; for both in voice and face she has become pleasing. Pleasing beyond doubt must that face be which can bear to be turned towards the Brightness of God. For this would be intolerable to it, were it not itself pure and lustrous and transformed into the image of the same glory which it contemplates. It would be repelled by reason of the dissimilitude and would be dazzled and beaten back by the unwonted splendour. Therefore, when the Spouse is herself pure she will be able to contemplate the pure and naked truth. Then she will desire to see the Face of her Bridegroom, and also to hear His voice.

How great pleasure He takes in the preaching of truth when it is accompanied with purity of mind, He gives us clearly to understand by the words which are added, "For thy voice is sweet." Nevertheless, He at the same time insinuates that the voice cannot please Him, unless the face also is pleasing, since He immediately subjoins, "And thy face comely." What can be the comeliness of the interior face except purity? The comeliness of purity pleases Him in many without the sweet voice of preaching. But He can take no pleasure at all in the latter unaccompanied by the former. Truth will not reveal itself, nor will wisdom entrust itself to minds that are impure. How then shall they preach what they have not seen? For it is written, "We speak what we know and we testify what we have seen." And wilt thou be so presumptuous

as to testify what thou hast not seen, and to speak what thou dost not know? Do you ask me, my brethren, whom I mean by the impure of mind? I mean every preacher who looks for the applause of men, who does not "deliver the Gospel without charge," who preaches that he may eat, who "supposes gain to be godliness," who seeks not fruit for his hearers but gifts for himself. Such persons have certainly impure minds. But although they cannot see the truth because of their impurity, nevertheless they have the presumption to proclaim it. Why will you be so premature? why not wait for the light? why would you attempt to do in the dark that which is a work of light? "It is vain for you to rise before the light," as the Psalmist warns us. Now light is purity, light is that charity which "seeketh not her own." Only let this light precede to illumine thy way, and the foot of thy tongue shall advance in security. The truth, which is concealed from the "haughty eye," lies open to the simple. It is impossible that it should not allow itself to be seen by the pure of heart, and thus also proclaimed. "But to the sinner, God saith: Why dost thou declare My justices and take My covenants in thy mouth?" Many neglecting this purity undertake to preach the truth before they have seen it. The consequence is that either they fall into gross errors, talking at random and affirming what they know not; or else they forfeit all respect by giving their hearers occasion to say of them that while undertaking to teach others, they have not first taught themselves. From both these evils may your prayers obtain that we shall be always protected by the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.



## SERMON LXIII.

### ON THE MYSTICAL VINEYARD AND THE FOXES THAT INVADE IT.

*"Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines, for our vineyard  
hath flourished."*

"Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines, for our vineyard hath flourished." Evidently, the visit to the vineyard has not been waste of time, since the foxes have been there discovered destroying the vines. This is the literal sense. But what do these words mystically convey to us? For it is necessary in the first place to reject from our interpretation, as vain and unprofitable and altogether unworthy of so holy and venerable a Canticle, the vulgar and obvious ideas suggested by the letter. Unless indeed there be some so mentally obtuse and stolid as to esteem it a great thing to have learned from Sacred Scripture that they ought to take care of their earthly possessions, like the children of this world, and that they ought to guard and protect their vineyards against the incursions of ravaging beasts; lest otherwise they should lose the fruit thereof, namely, the wine "wherein is luxury," and get no return from the money and labour expended. A terrible loss, no doubt, and well deserving that we should peruse this holy Book with such attention and respect in order to be instructed how to defend ourselves against it! That the Bible, forsooth, should teach us how to preserve our vineyards from the foxes, and warn us that our coffers shall be emptied in vain by the expenses

incurred in the cultivation of the vines, unless we are diligent in guarding them ! You, at least, my brethren, are not so uninstructed, so devoid of all spiritual grace, as to entertain such crude and carnal sentiments. Let us therefore endeavour to find the mystical signification of our text. There we shall discover, in a sense satisfactory to our reason, and at the same time worthy of Holy Scripture, flourishing vineyards and destroying foxes, in catching and expelling which we shall be more honourably and more profitably employed than in defending our material possessions. For you will surely allow that souls have to be guarded more watchfully than grapes, and that far more vigilance is necessary to protect the former against the "spirits of wickedness," than to catch the cunning little foxes that spoil the vines.

I have now to explain to you what are the spiritual vines and the spiritual foxes. And whilst you listen to the remarks I shall have to make, and learn in what respects and against what enemies you ought to be on your guard, let it be your care, my dear children, to look each to his own vineyard. To the wise man his own life is a vineyard, his own mind is a vineyard, and a vineyard also is his own conscience. For he that is truly wise will allow nothing in himself to remain uncultivated, nothing unprofitable. Not so the fool. In him you shall find everything neglected, everything abandoned, everything untilled and uncared for. The fool has no vineyard. How can there be a vineyard there where you look in vain for any sign of a plantation, any sign of cultivation ? The whole life of a fool is overgrown with thorns and thistles. And does such a waste deserve to be called a vine-

yard? A vineyard it may have been once, but now it is so no longer, being reduced by neglect to a wilderness. For where now are the vines of the virtues? Where are the grapes of good works? Where the wine of spiritual gladness? "I passed through the field of the slothful man," says Solomon, "and by the vineyard of the foolish man, and behold it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down." Here, my brethren, you have the wise man mocking at the fool for that he has lost not only the goods of nature but also the gifts of grace, which perhaps he had received through the "laver of regeneration," and by his negligence has reduced that first vineyard, planted not by man but by the hand of God, to something unworthy to be called a vineyard. Besides, how can there be a vineyard where there is no life? But in my judgment the fool's existence would be more truly described as an enduring death than as a real life. How can life consist with a state of sterility? When a tree becomes withered and barren is it not judged to be dead? "And He killed their vineyards with hail," sings the Psalmist, insinuating that vines no longer live when they have been cursed with barrenness. In the same way the fool, though apparently alive, is really dead, because he lives unprofitably.

Therefore it is proper to the wise man alone to have, or rather to be, a vineyard, because he alone can be said to live. He is like "a fruitful tree in the house of the Lord," and consequently a living tree. For wisdom herself, by participation in which men are denominated wise, "is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her." How then does he not live who has



[laid hold on the tree of life? He lives indeed, but he lives by faith. For the wise man is a just man and "the just man liveth by faith." And conversely, if "the soul of the just man is the seat of wisdom," as she certainly is, the just man is a wise man. Such a one, therefore, whether you call him a wise man or a just man, shall never be found without his vineyard, because he shall never be found otherwise than living; and his life is his vineyard. And a good vineyard in truth is this vineyard of the just man. Rather I should have said, a good vineyard is the just man himself, whose virtue is as the vine, whose works as the branches, the testimony of whose conscience as the wine, and whose tongue is as the wine-press. "This is our glory," says the Apostle, "the testimony of our conscience." Do you not see, my brethren, how there is nothing unprofitable about a man of wisdom? His words, his works, his thoughts, and everything else that belongs to him, are they not all "God's husbandry, God's building," and the vineyard of the Lord of Sabaoth? What in it, therefore, can be lost to Him, Who will not allow so much as a leaf of it to fall to the ground?

Nevertheless, this spiritual vineyard is perpetually exposed to hostile incursions and surprises. For "where there are great riches, there are many also to eat them." The wise man, consequently, will be as careful to guard as to cultivate his vineyard, and will not suffer it to be devoured by the foxes. A most mischievous fox is the secret detractor, and another, just as bad, is the fair-spoken flatterer. Against both of these the wise man will be on his guard. He will endeavour, so far as it depends on him, to catch such rational foxes, but to catch them only by his benefits, by his services,

by his salutary admonitions, and by his prayers to God for their conversion. He will never cease to "heap coals of fire on the head" of the slanderer in this way, and also on the head of the flatterer, until, if it is possible, he has expelled from the heart of the one its envy and from the heart of the other its hypocrisy. Thus shall be fulfilled the command of the Bridegroom conveyed in the words, "catch us the little foxes which destroy the vines." Does it not seem to you, my brethren, that that fox has been caught, who, covered with shame and confusion, and blushing for his own evil behaviour, becomes thereby the witness of the embarrassment and sorrow he feels for having hated a man most deserving of his love, or for having loved only "in word and in tongue" one by whom he knew himself to be loved "in deed and in truth"? He has been caught, plainly, and caught for the Lord, according to the injunction which He has given, saying expressly, "Catch *us* the little foxes." Would to God that I could so catch "all them who are my *ve*rsaries without cause," that I might either gain them or restore them to Christ! Thus, "let them be confounded and ashamed that seek after my soul; let them be turned back and be confounded that devise evil against me," in such a way, namely, that I may be found obedient to the Bridegroom, not alone ✓ in catching the foxes, but also in catching them for Him! But let us go back now to the beginning, so that our exposition may proceed with an orderly sequence.

"Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines." This is a moral passage, my brethren. Now I have already shown that, according to the moral signification, these spiritual vineyards are nothing else but spiritual men, everything within whom is cultivated,

everything germinating, everything fructifying, everything bringing forth the fruit of salvation. Hence, as the kingdom of God is said to be within us, in the same sense we may say that the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is within us. For we read in the Gospel that the "kingdom of God shall be given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof." The fruits referred to are the same which St. Paul enumerates where he says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continence, chastity." These fruits give the measure of our progress. These are the fruits which the Bridegroom will accept, "for He hath care of us." "Hath God care of" material vines? No, it is not trees but men that are loved by the Man-God, and He reckons as His fruit our progress in virtue. The season for this fruit He diligently observes; He rejoices when it appears; and after it has come forth, He watches over it anxiously lest we should lose it. <sup>s</sup> I should rather say, lest He should Himself lose it. <sup>be</sup> He identifies Himself with us. Therefore, when He <sup>re</sup> evidently commands us to catch for Him the wily little foxes, which would otherwise pilfer the budding fruit, He says, "Catch *us* the little foxes that destroy the vines." And as if someone were objecting and saying, "Thy fear is premature, because the time for the fruit has not yet come," He seems to reply, "It is not so, 'for our vineyard hath flourished.' " After the flowers the fruit makes no delay in appearing. Nay, even whilst the flowers are still falling, it immediately bursts out, immediately begins to show itself.

This, my brethren, is a parable of the present time. Behold our novices. They have come hither only



lately ; only lately have they been converted. Of them we cannot say that "our vineyard hath flourished," because it is still in flower. As yet whatever you may observe manifesting itself in them is but a blossom. Their fruiting season has not arrived yet. That beginning of an improvement in their conduct is only a blossom ; a blossom too is that recently adopted form of a more regular life. They have assumed a well-disciplined exterior, and everything about their persons is edifying. Outwardly, I acknowledge, they are in all respects pleasing. So far as can be noticed, they are now less particular about the garments which cover their bodies, their words are fewer, their faces more cheerful, their looks more modest, their movements more grave. But inasmuch as all these virtuous manifestations have but lately begun to appear, by reason of their newness they must be reputed as blossoms, rather as the promise of fruit than as the fruit itself. So far as you are concerned, my little children, I have no fear of the wiles of the foxes, because it is not after flowers but after fruit that these animals are known to hunger. The danger for you comes from a different source. What I fear for the flowers is the blight, not the pilfering of the foxes but the blighting of the frost.\* It is the sharp north wind that makes me anxious about you, and the morning cold ; for it is they that are wont to kill the early blossoms and prevent the fruit from appearing. Hence for you, my children, the evil to be dreaded comes not from the foxes but from the north wind. "Who shall stand before the face of

\* See vol. i. p. 402. The same subject is also treated in the sixth sermon on Psalm xc.—(Translator.)

his cold ? ” If once this cold is allowed to invade a soul, whilst the spirit of that soul (as so often happens) is slumbering in a state of tepidity, and if further (which God forbid !) meeting with no resistance, it descends into the interior of the heart and the innermost recesses of the mind, and there freezes the affections, obstructs the paths of counsel, unsteadies the light of judgment, and binds fast the liberty of the spirit : immediately there is manifested in the mind a certain rigidity, such as that which usually appears in the bodies of fever patients ; the soul’s vigour relaxes, her energies languish, her horror of austerities increases, her fear of poverty grows more disquieting, she becomes contracted in herself in proportion as grace is withdrawn, a life of penance begins to look unbearably long, reason is lulled to sleep, her vital force is ebbing fast away, first fervour gets cooler and cooler, the weariness of torpor gradually prevails, fraternal charity is growing cold, pleasure entices, a false sense of security deceives, old habits of sin resume their sway. What more shall I say of this unhappy soul ? She shuts her eyes to the law, she forswears justice, she renounces the right, and abandons the fear of the Lord. Finally she gives herself up to impudence ; she takes that desperate, that shameful, that most disgraceful leap, that leap full of all ignominy and confusion, the leap from on high into the abyss, from the solid pavement to the dunghill, from the throne to the sewer, from the summit of heaven to the sink of earth—the leap from the cloister to the world, from paradise to hell. To trace the origin and source of this monstrous evil, to show by what means it may be avoided or by what virtue overcome, the present is not the proper time for such

an undertaking. These questions shall be dealt with in their own place. Let us now proceed with what we have on hand.

I must next direct my remarks to those amongst you who are more advanced and more firmly grounded in virtue, that is, to the vineyard which already "hath flourished," and which consequently has no longer anything to fear from the cold. Nevertheless, its fruit is not safe from the foxes. It will be necessary to explain more clearly what these spiritual foxes are, why they are called "little," and why it is expressly enjoined that they be caught, rather than driven away or killed. I shall also be obliged to introduce different species of these animals, in order the better to instruct and admonish my hearers ; not however in the present sermon, lest it should weary you by being unduly prolonged, and that we may preserve the freshness of our devotion in the grace and in the praise of the glory of the great Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.



## SERMON LXIV.

ON THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE MORE ADVANCED, AND  
ON THE MANNER OF CATCHING HERETICS, REPRESENTED BY FOXES.

*"Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines, for our vineyard hath flourished."*

Here I am, my brethren, to fulfil the promise I made you. "Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines, for our vineyard hath flourished." These foxes are temptations. Now it is necessary that temptations come, for who shall be crowned "unless he strive lawfully"? And how shall we strive if there be none to oppose us? Therefore, "when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation." For be assured that "all that will live piously in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Moreover, temptations vary according to the variety of the spiritual seasons. At the beginning of our spiritual life, when whatever of good appears in us is only like the tender blossom on a young vine, we are liable to open assaults from the violence of that pestilential frost which I dwelt upon in the preceding discourse, and warned the novices against. But the "contrary powers" will by no means venture to oppose themselves thus manifestly to such as have attained to a high degree of holiness. For persons of this class they are more accustomed to be concealed in ambush, like crafty little foxes, dressing up vices in the clothes of virtues. How many have I known, for instance, who

after entering on the "ways of life," after advancing to better things, after walking and progressing well and securely in the "paths of justice," have at last—oh, the pity of it!—been shamefully overreached by the cunning of these foxes, and compelled to lament when it was all too late the destruction in themselves of the fruits of virtue!

I behold a religious making rapid strides towards perfection. Suddenly he is met with a thought—rather let me say, with a little fox, which arrests his progress. "If only I were at home," he begins to say to himself, "to how many others, brethren and relatives, friends and acquaintances, might I not communicate the spiritual treasure which I here enjoy alone! They love me, and would readily yield to my exhortations. 'To what purpose is this waste?' I will go to them, therefore; I shall be able to save many of them without compromising my own soul. There is nothing to be feared from the change of place. For, after all, what difference can the place make, provided one is occupied in well-doing? Unless, indeed, that I shall doubtless be safer there where I shall spend my time more fruitfully." What need to say more? The wretched man quits his monastery, not as an exile returning to the home-land, but rather like a dog going back to his vomit. He goes and perishes miserably. He loses himself, without saving any of his friends. Here, my brethren, is one of the little foxes, the delusive hope which this man entertained of bringing his dear ones to God. You also, if you care to take the trouble, will be able to find or to recognise for yourselves and in yourselves, many other little foxes like unto this one.

Nevertheless, if you desire it, I will show you a

second. I will even point out a third and a fourth little fox, on condition, however, that you shall prove yourselves diligent in trying to catch those which from my descriptions you may discover in your own vineyards. Sometimes, then, when a monk is progressing favourably, he feels himself bedewed on a sudden with an unusually generous downpour of heavenly grace. The desire of preaching now enters his soul, not, mind you, to his parents and kindred, for he remembers the words of St. Paul, "Immediately I condescended not to flesh and blood"; but he would announce the Gospel more purely, more profitably, and more courageously to strangers and all, without any distinction. It seems to him the part of prudence to follow such an attraction. For he is afraid of incurring the curse of the Prophet, pronounced against him who should hide from the people the corn he has privately become possessed of.\* Besides, he fears lest he should be disobeying the command given in the Gospel if he does not "preach upon the house-tops what" he has heard "in the ear." It is a fox, my brother, and a fox more dangerous than the preceding, in proportion as his coming is more sly. But I will catch him for thee. First of all, there are the words of Moses, "Thou shalt not work with the firstling of an ox," which St. Paul interprets for us when he says, speaking of the apostolic office and those qualified to fill it, "Not a neophyte, lest, being puffed up with pride, he fall into the judgment of the devil." The same Apostle writes in another place, "Neither doth any man take the honour to himself, but he that is called by God as Aaron was." And again he asks,

\* The reference is apparently to Proverbs xi. 26, "He that hideth up corn shall be cursed among the people; but a blessing upon the head of them that sell."—(Translator.)



“ How shall they preach unless they be sent ? ” Now we know that it is not the business of a monk to instruct others but to weep over himself. With these and similar testimonies, gathered from Scripture, I can make for myself a net that shall catch this little fox, and prevent him from destroying my vineyard. For the passages I have just quoted make it plain and indubitable that the office of preaching publicly is neither befitting for a monk, nor expedient for a novice, nor permissible for one who has not been sent. How utterly devastated, then, must the vineyard of his conscience be, who allows himself to act against all three : fittingness, expediency, and authority ! Whenever, therefore, anything ✓ such is suggested to your minds, whether the suggestion comes from your own thought or is inspired by the spirit of malice, recognise it as a guileful little fox, that is to say, as evil masquerading under the appearance of good.

Fix your eyes now, my brethren, on another of the little foxes. How many in the full glow of spiritual fervour have exchanged their monasteries for the desert solitude, only to be thence vomited forth again in a state of tepidity, or if retained, retained without the discipline of the desert, not alone in laxity but in absolute wickedness ! Then, at last, from the ruined condition of the vineyards, that is, from the corruption of the life and conscience of such unfortunates, it became apparent that the fox had been busy. These persons fancied that, as they received so many heavenly favours whilst living the common life in the midst of their brethren, they would reap still more abundant spiritual fruit if they lived alone. The thought seemed good to them. But the event has proved that it was really

one of the little foxes that destroy the vineyard.\* And what else but a spoiling fox shall I call that abuse which so often and so gravely disturbs the peace of this very house? I speak of that singular and superstitious abstinence, practised by some amongst us, whereby they render all as disagreeable to themselves as themselves to all. Is not discord such and so general a devastation of the consciences of the persons responsible, and so far as depends on them, the destruction of the magnificent vineyard, which the Lord's own Right Hand hath planted here? I mean the unity which has bound you all to each other in the bonds of peace. "Woe to the man by whom scandal cometh." "Whosoever shall scandalise one of these little ones"—too fearful to recite are the words which follow. But how much more terrible is the sentence *he* deserves, who scandalises not a single believer, but so numerous and so holy a community as ours! Be he who he may, he shall bear a most heavy judgment. But of this elsewhere.

Let us here examine carefully the words spoken by the Bridegroom concerning those cunning little foxes which destroy the vineyard. They are called little, not because they are little in malice, but on account

\* The Saint is here condemning the change from the monastic life to the hermitical, not absolutely and in itself, but only when it is made imprudently and out of levity. He is thus in perfect accord with his great master, St. Benedict, who, in the first chapter of his holy Rule, defines the true hermit as one that "has exchanged the cloister for the desert, not in the first fervour of his conversion, but after having been long tried in a monastery, and there taught to fight against the devil by the many good examples and instructions of his brethren," declaring him who is thus disciplined to be "now prepared to fight against his own passions and evil thoughts with no other assistance but the grace of God." But experience had taught St. Bernard that very few are ever really qualified to engage their spiritual foe in single combat.—(Translator.)

of their subtlety and craft. For this species of animal is noted for its natural slyness, and is always very ready to do harm in secret. By reason of such characteristics the fox appears to me to typify admirably certain extremely subtle vices, which conceal themselves under the fair show of virtues. What these vices are I have already been some time explaining, and have presented you with a few examples to illustrate my teaching. It is their peculiarity that they can do us no hurt unless they succeed in imposing on us by a pious exterior and so leading us to mistake them for virtues. But in reality they are always either the vain thoughts of man's mind, or the inspirations of evil angels, those angels of Satan who transform themselves into angels of light, "preparing their arrows in the quiver"—that is, in secret—"to shoot in the dark the upright of heart." Hence it appears to me that the reason why they are described as little is this, that whereas all the other vices betray themselves by their grossness so that they are easily recognised, these because of their subtlety are very difficult to detect and consequently very difficult to guard against, except for such alone as are perfect and experienced and have the eyes of their hearts enlightened for distinguishing between good and evil, and especially for the discerning of spirits. For persons so privileged can say like St. Paul that they are not ignorant of Satan's devices and counsels. And consider if this be not the reason why the Bridegroom commands His Spouse not to exterminate, or to drive away, or to kill the little foxes, but rather to catch them : because, namely, these spiritual and crafty animals require to be observed and examined with all diligence and



caution, and so caught in their cunning, according to what is written, "I will catch the wise in their own craftiness." Therefore, whenever a deceit is discovered or a fraud detected, or a lie exposed, we may then say with perfect truth that the little fox, which was destroying the vines, has been caught. It is in the same sense we speak of a man being caught in his words. So you may read in the Gospel that "the Pharisees going, consulted among themselves how to catch Him (Jesus) in His speech."

It is in this way, then, that the Bridegroom would have us catch the little foxes that destroy the vines, namely, by detecting them, by exposing them, by confounding them. For it is the characteristic of such subtle vices that they lose their power for harming the moment they are discovered, so that for them to be exposed is to be vanquished. Who but a madman would knowingly and deliberately put his foot in a trap which he has detected? Therefore you have done all that is necessary with regard to these little foxes when you have caught them, that is, when you have unmasked and exposed them, because they are unable to live in the light. The same is not the case with the other vices, which come upon us without any disguise, openly wound us, make us their witting captives, overpower our resistance, in a word, employ against us not fraud but force. Hence in dealing with them what we need is not so much careful observation, since they attack us openly like savage beasts, but rather a firm defence. It is only in the instance of those little foxes, those mighty dissemblers, whose capacity for mischief depends on concealment, that nothing more remains to be done once they have been caught in their craftiness and

dragged forth into the light. For they live in dens. Here, then, is the reason why the Bridegroom commands that they be caught and calls them *little* foxes. Or perhaps He uses the word "little" to intimate that we ought to keep careful watch and take hold of our passions as soon as they appear and are still young and weak ; lest, if permitted to grow, their power for evil should also increase, as well as the difficulty of catching them.

But if we interpret the Bridegroom's words allegorically, taking the vines to mean churches and the foxes heresies, or rather heretics, then the sense will be that heretics are to be caught, not driven away. They are to be caught, I say, but with no other force than the force of arguments wherewith their errors are refuted.\* For themselves, let them, if it is possible,

\* "Capiantur, dico, non armis sed argumentis." Similarly St. Augustine (In Ps. lxxx.), "Vulpes insidiosos maximeque haereticos fraudulentos significant. . . . Istae vulpes significantur in Canticis Canticorum ubi dicitur, 'Capite nobis vulpes pusillas exterminantes vineas.' Capite nobis, convincite nobis. Capio enim eum quem de falsitate convinco." St. Bernard's way of dealing with heretics and unbelievers would be this : first of all, every effort should be made to lead them back to the truth. If, nevertheless, they continued obdurate, yet refrained from any attempt to propagate their errors, they were to be avoided, but left in peace. Should they refuse to abstain from proselytism, he would have them deprived of their liberty. It was in accordance with these principles that, in 1146, whilst he was preaching the Second Crusade, he took his stand between the Jews and the fanatical followers of the bloodthirsty Rodolph and prevented a wholesale massacre of an innocent people. We are fortunate in possessing a contemporary account of this event from the pen of a Jewish writer, Joshua Ben-Meir : "The Jews suffered anguish. They trembled and shuddered, finding no hope or refuge anywhere. Then they cried to God, 'O God, Adonai,' they said, 'look on us with pity.' . . . The Lord God was moved by the groans of His people ; He remembered His covenant and returned to His great mercies. He raised up against this cruel Belial (Rodolph) the wise Bernard of Clairvaux. This priest calmed the people and said, 'March towards Sion. Defend the tomb of our Christ. But touch ye not the Jews. Speak to them with mildness, for they are of the flesh and bones of the Messiah. If you molest them you

be reconciled to the Church, let them be brought back to the true faith. Such is the desire of Him "Who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Such also is the wish of the Bridegroom, as He signifies in this place where He does not simply say, "Catch the foxes," but "catch *us* the foxes." Therefore He wants these foxes to be won over to Himself and His Spouse, the Catholic Church, and expresses this desire by saying, "Catch *us* the foxes." Consequently, whenever an experienced and learned member of the Church undertakes to dispute with a heretic, he is bound to make it his aim, not merely to convict his opponent of error, but also to convert him to truth. For he should bear in mind the words of St. James, "He who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins." But should the heretic be unwilling to return, and, after being once and a second time admonished, remains still obdurate in his error, then according to the Apostle's injunction he must be avoided, as one entirely corrupted. Thenceforth it will be better, at least in my opinion, to drive away such a fox, or even to put him under restraint, than to permit him to go on destroying the vines.

will run the risk of touching the very apple of the Lord's eye. No, the disciple Rodolph has not preached according to the truth; for Truth Itself has said by the mouth of the Psalmist: 'slay them not, lest at any time my people forget.' Thus spoke this wise man, and his words were powerful, for he was loved and respected by all. They listened to him, and the fire of their anger was cooled; and they did not accomplish all the evil they had intended to do. The priest Bernard had not, however, received either money or ransom from the Jews. It was his heart that led him to love them, and suggested to him to speak good words for Israel." Cf. Ratisbonne's *Life*, p. 360  
 (Eng. Trans.).—(Translator.)



It must not, however, be supposed that *he* has accomplished nothing who has conquered and confounded the heretic, clearly and unmistakably distinguished truth from its counterfeit, exposed by plain and unanswerable arguments the wickedness of wicked doctrines, and "brought into captivity every understanding" "that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." For by doing so much he has really caught the fox, although the heretic has not been brought to salvation. And he has even caught the fox for the Bridegroom and the Bride, although not in the sense in which we have been speaking. For even though the heretic refuses to raise himself from the mire, the Church by his defeat has been confirmed in the faith. And surely the Bridegroom takes delight in the prosperity of His Spouse, "for the joy of the Lord is our strength." Besides, He makes it plain how He reckons our advantage as His own, by so graciously associating Himself with us in the command whereby He orders that the foxes be caught not for Him alone, but for Him and for us. "Catch us the little foxes," He says. Take notice, my brethren, how He deliberately uses the pronoun "us." What language could be more sociable and condescending? Does it not seem to you that He is speaking here as a father of a family who has nothing proper to himself, but regards all his possessions as common to his wife, and his children, and his household? Yet He Who speaks is God, although He speaks now not as God but as our Bridegroom.

"Catch us the little foxes." See how companionably He speaks Who has no companion. He might have said, "for Me," but He preferred to say, "for us," delighting to make us His associates. Oh, the sweetness! Oh,

the beauty ! Oh, the power of love ! And is the Highest of all become thus as one amongst all ? Who hath wrought this wonder ? It is love, my brethren—love, which knows nothing of dignity, abounds in condescension, is mighty in its emotions, resistless in its pleadings. What can be more powerful than love which triumphs over God Himself ? \* Yet at the same time what more gentle since it remains always love ? What, I ask, is the nature of that force so violent in the pursuit of victory, and so unresisting under violence ? “ He (the Son of God) emptied Himself ” in order to make us understand that it is through the influence of love alone that the Plenitude has been poured out, the Supreme levelled down, the Singular made an associate. With whom, O admirable Bridegroom, with whom dost Thou associate Thyself so familiarly ? “ Catch us the foxes,” Thou sayest. For whom with Thyself ? Is it for the Church of the gentiles ? Yea, for that Church which is a collection of sinful mortals. We know her and what she is. But Thou, Who art Thou, That art so devoted and so zealous a Lover of this Ethiopian Spouse ? Not surely another Moses, but a greater than Moses. For art Thou not He Who is declared “ beautiful above the sons of men ” ? But this is saying too little ; for Thou art also the Splendour of Eternal Life, and the Brightness and Figure of the Father’s Substance, and lastly art Thyself over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

\* “ Quid violentius ? Triumphat de Deo amor.” St. Augustine has the same thought thus expressed, “ O charitas, quam magnas vires habes ! De coelo Deum deposuisti.”—(Translator.)

## PREFACE TO SERMONS LXV. AND LXVI.

LETTER OF EBERWIN, PROVOST OF STEINFELD, TO ST. BERNARD, IN WHICH HE EXPLAINS THE FALSE DOCTRINES OF THE COLOGNE HERETICS AND BEGS THE HOLY ABBOT TO COMBAT THEM.

Eberwin, the humble Provost of Steinfeld, to his reverend Lord and Father, Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, wishing him comfort in the Lord and praying him to comfort the Church of Christ.

“ I will rejoice at thy words as one that hath found great spoil.” For in all thy words and in all thy writings thou dost “ publish the memory of the abundance of God’s sweetness,” and especially so in thy sermons on the Canticle of the mutual love of the Bridegroom and Bride, that is, of Christ and the Church ; so that, like the chief steward, we can truly say to the Bridegroom, “ Thou hast kept the good wine until now.” He has appointed thee His cup-bearer to dispense to us this most precious wine. Let it be ministered to us, therefore, without interruption. Do not be sparing of it, because thou canst never empty the water-pots. And let not thy weak state of health, holy Father, be alleged as a reason for discontinuing thy task, since success in the discharge of this duty depends much more upon piety than upon any exercise of bodily strength. Neither oughtest thou to excuse thyself on the plea of thy multiplied occupations. For I know of none so important as to deserve to take precedence of this work which vitally



concerns the common good. Thou hast now, most holy Father, to draw for us from the fifth water-pot. Of the first we have drunk as much as we needed, and thereby have been rendered wise and strong against the learning and power of the Scribes and Pharisees. The second fortifies us to meet the arguments and persecutions of pagans. The third is a defence against the subtle deceits of sectaries. The fourth protects us from false Christians. In the fifth we shall find security against the heretics whose appearance has been reserved for the last age of the world, and of whom "the spirit manifestly saith"—speaking by the mouth of St. Paul—"that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy and having their conscience seared, forbidding to marry, to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving." The sixth shall inebriate and strengthen the faithful against him who shall be revealed in this apostasy from the faith, "the man of sin" and "the son of perdition," "who opposeth and is lifted up above all that is called God or that is worshipped," "whose coming is according to the working of Satan, in all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and in all seductions of iniquity." After this, a seventh water-pot will not be necessary, when the sons of men "shall be inebriated with the plenty of God's house" and made "to drink of the torrent of His pleasure." O good Father, thou hast already given us in abundance out of the fourth water-pot everything that any of us can need, beginners for their correction, proficients for their edification, the perfect for their consummation; and so long as the world lasts, men shall find in thy

teaching a protection against the tepidity and depravity of false brethren. But it is now time to draw from the fifth water-pot, and to dispense the wine it contains as a defence against these modern heretics who are everywhere and in all the churches issuing forth from the bottomless pit as if the day of the Lord was at hand, and their prince and leader on the point of being dissolved. The verse of the epithalamium of Christ and His Church, which, as thou hast signified to me, thou art next to expound, viz., "Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines," applies very well to this mystery of iniquity and brings thee to the fifth water-pot. I beg of thee, then, holy Father, that thou wouldst distinguish the various doctrines of this heresy which have come under thy notice, and opposing to them the arguments and authorities of our faith, wouldst so refute and destroy them.

Here amongst ourselves in Cologne we have lately discovered heretics, some of whom have already done penance and been reconciled to the Church. But two of them, namely, he who is called the Bishop of the sect, with his associate, resisted us in a public assembly of the clergy and laity, the Lord Archbishop being present and many of the great nobles. They defended their heresy from the words of Christ and the Apostle. But seeing that they could not prevail, they asked to have a day appointed them when they would bring learned men of their own party, promising to make their submission in case these doctors should fail in their defence; otherwise they declared that they were ready to die rather than abjure their errors. After this, they received warnings during the space of three days. Then, as they still refused to renounce their

heresy, the people in an excess of zeal, dragged them away in spite of us, placed them in the fire and burned them. Now the most wonderful thing of all was that these heretics submitted to and endured the torment of fire not only with patience, but even with joy. On this point especially I should like, if I were present with thee, to hear what thou hast to say, how thou canst explain in the case of these sons of Satan such fortitude as is hardly to be found in the most perfect members of the Church of Christ.

The following are the heretical beliefs they profess. They claim, in the first place, that they alone constitute the true Church, because they alone walk in the footsteps of Christ, and are the only faithful imitators of the apostles ; for they seek not the things of the world (they say) and possess neither houses, nor lands, nor money ; nothing of which was owned by Christ, nor permitted His disciples to own. "Whereas you," they say to us, "add houses to houses and fields to fields, and strive after the wealth of this world ; so that even they who are accounted the most perfect among you, such as the Canons Regular and the members of monastic orders, possess all these things, if not as individuals, at least in common." Of themselves, they speak in this wise, "We are Christ's poor, having no fixed dwelling-place. Like the apostles and the martyrs, we suffer persecution, fleeing from city to city, and living as lambs in the midst of wolves. And yet our lives are holy and very austere. We practise fasting and abstinence and persevere night and day in working and praying, whilst we seek from our labours no other fruit than the bare necessities of life. All this we endure because we are not of the world. You, on the



contrary, love the world, and have peace with the world, because you are of the world. The pseudo-apostles, who corrupted the word of God, and sought the things that were their own, have caused your fathers and you to wander out of the safe path. We, like our fathers, being true-bred apostles, have ever remained and ever shall remain in the grace of Christ. It was in order to distinguish between us and you that He said, 'By their fruits you shall know them.' Our fruits are our fidelity in following in His footsteps." These sectaries do not allow to be used as food any kind of milk, or anything made from milk, or in general anything connected with procreation. They make such abstinence a matter of boasting against us. Their sacramental rites are performed with great secrecy. Yet they freely acknowledge to us that every day whilst seated at table, conformably to the example of the Lord and His apostles, they consecrate and change their food and drink into the Flesh and Blood of Christ by the words of the Lord's Prayer, that so they may nourish themselves as being His body and members. They say that we have no truth or reality in our sacraments, nothing but a mere shadow and human tradition. ✓ It is openly avowed that amongst them baptism is conferred and received not only with water, but also with the Holy Ghost and with fire. In support of this, appeal is made to the testimony of St. John Baptist, who, whilst baptising with water himself, said of Christ, "He shall baptise you in the Holy Ghost and fire"; and in another place, "I baptise with water, but there hath stood One in the midst of you Whom you know not"—as if implying that He was to baptise them with a baptism different from his own. This baptism,

according to them, ought to be given by the imposition of hands, which they endeavour to prove from the words of St. Luke. For this Evangelist, describing, in the Acts of the Apostles, the baptism of St. Paul, which was administered to him by Ananias at the command of Christ, makes no mention of water, but only of the imposition of hands. Similarly, wherever else they can discover any allusion to imposition of hands, either in the Acts or in the Pauline Epistles, they will have it to be understood of the baptism by the Holy Ghost and fire. They give the name of Elect to every person thus baptised amongst them, and affirm that such a one has power not only to baptise in the same manner others who are found worthy, but also of consecrating at his table the Body and Blood of Christ. The lowest class in the sect are called Hearers, whence they are raised by imposition of hands to the rank of Believers. The Believers are allowed to join in their prayers, and after a sufficient probation are admitted amongst the Elect. Our baptism they regard as nothing worth. They condemn marriage; but for what reason I have never been able to find out from them, either because they are afraid to make it known, or rather because they do not know what it is themselves.

There are other heretics also in this place, differing widely from those I have been speaking of; and it is the mutual wrangling and contention between the two sects that have revealed the doctrines and practices of both. The second class of heretics deny that the Body of Christ is made present on the altar, because the priests of the Church are none of them validly ordained. The apostolic dignity, they say, has been corrupted by mixing in worldly affairs; and Peter's successor, by

not fighting for God as Peter fought, has deprived himself of the powers to ordain, originally conferred upon Peter. Now what the Pope does not himself possess he cannot communicate ; and consequently the archbishops and bishops, who live as worldlings in the Church, are also without the power of validly ordaining priests. All such prelates, according to these sectaries, have received nothing more than the power of jurisdiction and preaching. And in this sense they understand the words of Christ where He says, " The Scribes and Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses ; all things, therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you observe and do." Thus they render valueless the priesthood of the Church. They reject all the sacraments, except baptism alone. And even this, in their judgment, should be administered to adults only ; because these, as they confess, are really baptised by Christ, whoever the visible minister may be. They admit no efficacy in the baptism given to infants, or to any others without faith, on account of what is said in the Gospel, " He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." All marriages are by them declared to be sinful, save that which is contracted between two virgins. This doctrine of theirs is grounded on the words wherewith the Lord replied to the Pharisees, " What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." For they argue that God joined the first human pair as virgins, and wants all other marriages to be modelled upon that. They find further support in the answer given to the same Pharisees when they raised an objection from the bill of divorce. Christ said to them, " From the beginning it was not so," and, " He that shall marry her that is put away



committeth adultery." They also appeal to the words of St. Paul, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled." They have no faith in the intercession of the saints. As for fasting and other mortifications endured to make satisfaction for sin, they teach that the just do not want them, and that they are unnecessary even for sinners, because "in whatsoever day the sinner shall lament his sin, it shall be forgiven him." All other observances in the Church, which have not been established by Christ or His immediate disciples, are condemned as superstitious. The existence of any purgatorial fire to be endured after death is not admitted. They teach, on the contrary, that all souls, as soon as they are separated from their bodies, pass at once either to everlasting pain or to everlasting repose, agreeably to the words of Solomon, "If the tree fall to the south or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there it shall be." And in this way they deny any efficacy to the prayers and sacrifices offered for the dead.

Against all these evils, so manifold and multiform, I beseech thee, holy Father, let thy zeal be aroused to renewed activity. Let the sharp point of thy arrow be aimed against these savage beasts. Do not tell us that the "tower of David," whither we have fled, is sufficiently "built with bulwarks"; that "a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armour of valiant men." For we are inexperienced and unskilled in the use of these arms; and we therefore desire that thou, holy Father, in thy zeal, wouldst fit them to our hands, so that we may become thereby more quick in discovering and more powerful in resisting so many monsters. I would also have thee know that, as we learn from some

of them who have been reconciled to the Church, these heretics are exceedingly numerous, are to be found in almost every part of the world, and have amongst them many of the clergy and members of religious orders. Those who were burned, declared to us in their defence, that their heresy has existed secretly from the time of the holy martyrs to the present day in Greece and certain other countries. These are the heretics who call themselves apostles, and have a pope of their own. There are others who refuse to recognise our Pope, without, however, setting up another in his place. These apostles of Satan have living with them certain females who—as they say—observe continence, either virgins, or widows, or their own wives, some of them in the class of the Elect, others in that of Believers. Herein also they claim to be following the example of the apostles, who “had power to lead women about.” Farewell in the Lord.

## SERMON LXV.

### ON THE DOCTRINES AND PRACTICES OF CONTEMPORARY HERETICS.

*“ Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines, for our vineyard  
hath flourished.”*

I have already preached two sermons to you, my brethren, on this one verse, and I am now about to begin the third, that is, if you do not think it will weary you too much to listen. For it seems to me that there is need of another discourse on the same text. As regards our own domestic vineyard, which you are, I have, I think, said enough in the preceding discussions, to protect it against the cunning wiles of the three species of foxes, by which I mean flatterers, detractors, and certain seducing spirits, well skilled and well practised in the art of counterfeiting good with evil. But I have not been equally zealous for the wider vineyard of the Lord. I refer to that vineyard which has covered the whole earth, and of which we ourselves are a portion, an exceedingly great vineyard, planted by the Hand of Christ, redeemed with His Blood, watered with His teaching, propagated by His grace, fertilised by His Spirit. Being more concerned for my private vineyard, I have been wanting to that which is universal. But I now feel impelled to espouse its cause on account of the multitude of its despoilers, the paucity of its protectors, and the difficulty of its defence. What makes the difficulty is the fact that the despoilers are concealed from us. The Church has



had her foxes from the very beginning, but until now they have always been speedily exposed and caught. The heretic of former times waged war against her openly—indeed it was this especially that made him a heretic, his desire to achieve a public triumph—the heretic, I say, formerly attacked the Church in the open and was vanquished. Thus this species of fox was easily taken. What matter if, when the truth had been vindicated, the heretic continued obstinate in the darkness of his proud conceits, and, fettered to powerlessness, was cast out to wither alone? \* Even so, the fox was judged to be caught, by the fact that the impious doctrine had been condemned and its impious author driven forth to live thenceforward as an example for others, since he could no longer bear any fruit for himself. For to such are given, to use the expression of the Prophet Osee, “a womb without children and dry breasts.” That is to say, error cannot bud forth anew once it has been publicly confounded, nor can falsity continue to propagate itself after it has been exposed.

But what means shall we employ in order to catch those most malevolent foxes which are better pleased to injure us by secret fraud than to conquer us by open violence, and which will not even show themselves but prefer to creep upon us unawares? Heretofore the common aim of all heretics has been to win human glory by the display of superior knowledge. But the heretic with us now, more malicious and more cunning than any that went before him, is also singular in this, that he can prosper on the ruin of others, without

\* There is allusion here to John xv. 6, “If any one abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch and shall wither.”  
—(Translator.)

seeking any further advantage for himself. The modern error, warned, as I believe, by the fate of its predecessors (which could not escape when exposed, but were caught immediately), is careful to work out the "mystery of iniquity" with a new kind of craft, and does it all the more freely the less it is suspected. Its propagators are said to have appointed secret meeting-places. "They have confirmed for themselves an evil word," as is written in the psalm. "Never betray the secret," they tell their followers, "even though it be necessary to swear and to perjure yourselves in order to preserve it." But otherwise they will refuse to take any oath under any circumstances, on account of what they read in the Gospel, "I say to you not to swear at all neither by heaven nor by the earth." "O foolish and slow of heart," filled plainly with the Pharisaical spirit, thus to "strain at a gnat and swallow a camel"! Are we then allowed to commit perjury, though forbidden to take oaths? Or will you say that the necessity of guarding your secrets and that alone makes it lawful both to swear and to swear falsely? Then show me the passage of Scripture which authorises such an exception, you who vainly make it your boast that you pass over not even one jot or tittle of the law. But it is manifest that whilst you superstitiously abstain from taking lawful oaths you have no scruple at all about the heinous crime of perjury.

O unspeakable perversity! What was intended simply as a caution, viz., "I say to you not to swear at all," these heretics observe pertinaciously and consider a command; and at the same time, according to their whim and as if it were something quite indifferent, they dispense themselves in that which has the sanction of

immutable law, namely the prohibition against perjury. ✓  
“No,” they will say to me, “it is not so; we only permit perjury when there is no other way to preserve our secret.” \* As if, forsooth, it were not “the glory of God to reveal the word.” Is it that they envy God His glory? I am more inclined to believe that is shame which seals their lips, shame for a secret which they know to be shameful. For they are accused of privately indulging in unmentionable crimes against morals. So it is said that the tails of foxes emit an evil smell.

However, I will say nothing concerning the practices which they refuse to acknowledge. But let them answer to those charges which they cannot deny. Do they justify their secrecy by the Gospel which warns us in truth not to “give that which is holy to dogs” or “to cast pearls before swine”? But if they admit this, they must consequently esteem as dogs and swine all (except themselves) who claim to belong to the Church,

\* This they doubtless justified by regarding it as a mental reservation; but it was something very different from the mental reservation which Catholic theology allows us to use in certain circumstances, even when we are under oath. Father Rickaby (*Moral Phil.*, p. 233) defines mental reservation as “an act of the mind limiting the spoken phrase so that it may not bear the full sense which at first hearing it seems to bear.” Reservation is *purely* mental when the restricting act of thought is in no way externated; it is said to be *broad* when the interior restriction is outwardly manifested by the peculiar circumstances or by the profession of the speaker, in such a way that a prudent listener will take his words as expressing only *communicable* knowledge. The purely mental reservation differs in nothing from a lie. The second kind is then only lawful when it is the sole means of preserving an important secret *from one who has no right to the knowledge*. To withhold information from those who have the right to demand it, and to do so by mental restriction, is really to be guilty of falsehood. Now, the Church, in her representatives, is certainly entitled to know the religious beliefs of all who profess to be her children. Hence these heretics were really perjuring themselves, by confirming their falsehoods with oaths.—(Translator.)



and this would be equivalent to avowing openly that they themselves are not Christians at all.\* For they think it a duty to withhold that secret of theirs, whatever it is, from everyone without exception who does not adhere to their own sect. Yet although they really entertain such convictions, they will refuse to answer, lest they should be found out. This is what they endeavour to avoid by every possible means, but they shall not succeed. Come, tell me, my good man, who art "more wise than it behoveth to be wise, and art at the same time a greater fool than words can express: Is the mystery which thou guardest of God or is it not? If it is of God, why dost thou not reveal it for His greater glory? For "it is the glory of God to reveal the word." If the mystery is not of God, why dost thou put thy trust in that which has no relation to God, unless because thou art a heretic? Therefore either let them reveal their secret unto the glory of God; or let them acknowledge that it is no mystery of God and thereby acknowledge themselves to be heretics; or finally let them confess that they are the declared enemies of God's glory, inasmuch as they are unwilling to publish what they know would be likely to advance its interests. For the oracle of Scripture stands firm, "It is the glory of kings to conceal the speech, and the glory of God to reveal the word." † Wilt thou not "reveal the word"?

\* That is, by dissociating themselves from all other Christians, they would forfeit the claim to universality or catholicity, which is one of the inseparable characteristics of the true Church. St. Augustine used the same argument against the Donatists.—(Translator.)

† "Gloria regum celare verbum, gloria Dei revelare sermonem." The Vulgate has "Gloria Dei est celare verbum, et gloria regum investigare sermonem" (It is the glory of God to conceal the word, and the glory of kings to search out the speech—Proverbs

Then thou refusest to glorify God. But perchance thou dost not recognise the authority of this inspired Book? ✓ So indeed it is. These sectarians who claim that they alone have zeal for Scripture, receive no more of it than the Gospel. Let them, therefore, explain how they fulfil what the Gospel enjoins, where it is written, "That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light; and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the house tops." Now you may no longer take refuge in silence. How long will you keep concealed that which God commands you to publish? How long will your gospel remain hidden? I am beginning to grow suspicious of it. It cannot certainly be the same as St. Paul's, for he declares that his gospel was not hidden. "And if our gospel is also hid," he adds, "it is hid in them that are lost." Take care lest in these words the Apostle is alluding to yourselves with whom the Gospel is found to be hid. If this be the case, you are evidently lost. But perhaps you do not receive even St. Paul? I have indeed been told this of some amongst you. For you do not agree amongst yourselves on every point, although you are all at one in dissenting from us.

However, unless I mistake, you all unanimously admit, as of equal authority with the Gospel itself, ✓ the words and writings and traditions of those who ✓ lived with the Saviour on earth. Now, I ask: did ✓ they keep their gospel hidden? Did they conceal in

xxv. 2). The Greek differs from both, "*Δόξα θεοῦ κρύπτει λόγον, δόξα δὲ βασιλείως τιμᾷ πράγματα.*" (The glory of God conceals the word, the glory of kings honours deeds). St. Bernard's reading is found in many of the Fathers, and agrees with Tobias xii. 7, "It is good to hide the secret of a king, but honourable to reveal and confess the works of God."—(Translator.)

silence the infirmities of God in the flesh, the horrors of His death, the ignominy of His cross? "Verily, their sound hath gone forth unto all the earth." Where is that imitation of the apostolic mode of life which you make your boast? The apostles proclaimed aloud their message; whilst you speak in whispers. They preached in public; you teach "in a corner." They "fly as clouds"; you conceal yourselves in dark and subterranean caverns. What do you exhibit in yourselves which gives you any kind of resemblance to the apostles? They indeed led women about with them, but they did not, as you do, keep women within enclosures. There is a great difference between these two things. And your practice is open to grave suspicion. As for the apostolic custom, who could suspect any evil of men capable by their sanctity of raising the dead? Do thou likewise, and I shall believe thee as safe as if thy companions were men. Otherwise thou ✓ actest imprudently in taking apostolic liberties without the safeguard of apostolic holiness. To be always in the occasion of sin and never to fall, is not that a greater miracle than to raise the dead? And if thou canst not do that which is less, who shall believe thee to be capable of the greater? Thou art placed daily and hourly in dangerous occasions, at meals, at rest, at work, in conversation. And are we to suppose that thou continuest always faithful? However, let us grant it to be really so. Still I cannot get rid of my suspicions; so that thou art a scandal to me. Remove from me the cause of the scandal, and thereby thou shalt prove thyself to be sincerely zealous for the Gospel. Does not the Gospel condemn him who scandalises any member of the Church? But thou art



scandalising the Church herself. Thou art the fox that destroys the vineyard. Help me, my brethren, to catch him. Or rather do you, ye blessed angels, catch him for us. He is extremely cunning. He is "covered with his iniquity and his impiety." He is so little and so subtle that human eyes are baffled in watching him. But shall he be able to escape your eyes? Therefore it is to you, as being His friends and companions, that the Bridegroom addresses the words, "Catch us the little foxes." Do, then, what is commanded you. Catch for us this many-faced little fox which we have been so long pursuing in vain. Teach us and admonish us how to detect his frauds. For thus we shall have caught him: as a false Catholic he can do us far more mischief than when he stands revealed as a true heretic. But it is not in the power of one man to read the heart of another unless he is assisted by the light of the Holy Ghost or interiorly instructed by angelic inspirations. What sign will you give us, O benevolent spirits, whereby this most impious of heresies, well-skilled to lie both by word and by deed, may be made manifest to the whole world?

The recent destruction of the vines tells us unmistakably that the fox has been busy there. But the wily beast has so cleverly covered his footprints by I know not what artful device, that human intelligence cannot easily discover at what point he entered or where he made his way out. The mischief done is manifest enough, but the author thereof cannot be detected, so cunningly does he conceal himself and his wickedness under an exterior of affected innocence. Examine one of these heretics concerning his faith and you will find him perfectly orthodox. Listen to his

conversation and you will never hear anything in the least worthy of censure. Yea, he even proves by his actions the sincerity of his words. You may see him bearing testimony to his faith by frequenting the churches, showing honour to the priests, offering his gifts, making his confession, and approaching the holy table. What greater proof of fidelity can you require? Then, as regards his life and morals, he overreaches no man, he circumvents no man, he does violence to no man. His face is pale and wan from rigorous fasting, and far from eating his bread idle, he earns his livelihood by the labour of his hands. Where now is the fox? We had him secured just a moment since, and lo! he has slipped from our grasp. How has he disappeared so suddenly? But let us give instant chase. Let us follow his footprints. By his fruits we shall know him. Certainly, the destruction of the vines proves him to be a real fox. For what do we behold? Wives forsaking their husbands and husbands abandoning their wives in order to join themselves to these sectaries! Clerics and priests, old and young, having deserted their churches and people, are often to be seen amongst them side by side with weavers, male and female! Is not this a dreadful destruction of the vines! Have we not here the work of the foxes?

But perhaps not all these people reveal their true character thus plainly by such disorders. And even where they do, it is almost impossible to convict them. How, then, are we to catch them? Let us return to their custom of living with females, because this is a practice which is common to them all. I say therefore to one of them—A word with thee, my good friend. Who is this lady and wherefore does she live with

thee? Is she thy wife? "No," he answers, "my vow hinders me from marrying." Is she thy daughter? "She is not." Who then is she, thy sister, perhaps? or thy niece? or at least some one related to thee by ties of consanguinity or affinity? "No, there is no relationship at all between us." But if that be the case, art thou not exposing thyself to danger? Besides, thou art certainly acting against obedience. Let me ✓ tell thee, if thou knowest it not, that the Church forbids the cohabitation of men and women who have bound themselves by vow to continency.\* Therefore send away thy companion, unless thou wishest to scandalise the Church. Otherwise, thy manifest guilt herein shall unquestionably render the other charges against thee, even though they cannot be proved, at least very credible.

But perchance he will reply, "Show me the place where the Gospel prohibits such cohabitation?" Hast thou appealed to the Gospel? To the Gospel thou shalt go. If thou wert obedient to the Gospel, thou certainly wouldst not give scandal. For the Gospel plainly forbids scandal-giving. But thou art giving scandal by not dismissing this female as the Church requires of thee. Hitherto thou wert only under suspicion. Henceforth thou shalt be considered an open despiser of the Gospel, and an enemy of the Church. What is your verdict, my brethren? If he is shown to be so obstinate that he will neither obey the Gospel nor submit to the authority of the Church, what further subterfuge remains to him? Does it not appear

\* "The Ecumenical Council forbids all, whether bishops, priests, deacons, or other clerics, to have under the same roof any woman save a mother, sister, aunt, or other whose relationship precludes all just ground of suspicion" (First Council of Nicaea (325), can. 3, dist. 37).—(Translator.)



manifest to you that the fraud has been exposed and the fox caught? If he refuses to put away his associate, he refuses to remove the scandal. If he refuses to remove the scandal which he has it in his power to remove, he stands convicted of offending against the Gospel. And what is left for the Church but to cut him off who refuses to cut off the cause of scandal? Otherwise she would become a participant in his disobedience. For she has been commanded by Christ in the Gospel not to spare her own eyes, her hands or her feet, if ever they should become a source of scandal to her, but to pluck them out or cut them off and cast them from her. "If he will not hear the Church," says the Lord, speaking of the scandal-giver, "let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican."

Have we been wasting our time in this discussion, my brethren? I do not believe so. For we have caught the fox by discovering his tricks. We have unmasked those false Catholics who lay concealed in the Church and were the real devastators of the vineyard. For whilst thou, the secret heretic, "didst take sweet meats together with me"—I mean the Body and the Blood of Christ—whilst "in the house of God we walked with consent," thou hadst an opportunity for persuading, yea, an opportunity for seducing me, according to the words of Wisdom, "The dissembler with his mouth deceiveth his friend." But now, obeying the wise injunction of St. Paul, I can easily "avoid a man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, knowing that he that is such a one is subverted"; and therefore I shall be on my guard lest he should become for me a subverter also. Hence it is no small advantage for the just that "the wicked

are caught in their own snares," according to the Wise Man's expression ; particularly when this happens to such wicked ones as rely more on their skill in setting snares than on open violence. For when the snare happens to fail them they are left resourceless, without the means either of attack or of defence. So it is with the heretics I am speaking of. They are a most contemptible class, without polish or education or the least degree of manly courage. For they are only foxes, and little ones at that. Even the false doctrines which they are accused of holding have nothing defensible about them. They are plausible rather than subtle ; and even plausible to none but poor ignorant women and rustics, such as are all the members of this sect, so far as I have been able to ascertain. Nor amongst all their heretical tenets, and they are many, do I remember to have found anything unfamiliar, new, or original, anything which was not preached long ago by the ancient heretics, and opposed and thoroughly refuted by the Catholic doctors. However, it is necessary for you to know exactly what these non-sensical errors are, so I intend to recite them. Some they have themselves unguardedly revealed in replying to questions put by Catholics. Others have been published in the accusations and recriminations which have attended their domestic dissensions. Others again have been made known by former members of the sect on their return to the Church. I do not undertake to disprove them all, for that is not necessary, but simply to explain what they are. And this shall occupy me in my next discourse unto the praise and glory of the name of the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXVI.

### ON THE HERETICAL DOCTRINES CONCERNING MARRIAGE, HOLY ORDERS, AND PURGATORY.

*“ Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines.”*

“ Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines.” Here I am again, my brethren, to resume the chase of these foxes which, as the Psalmist expresses it, turn out of their path to plunder the vineyard. It is not enough for them to abandon the right way unless they can also ruin the vines, adding prevarication to error. It is not enough for them to be heretics unless they are also hypocrites, so that their sin might be exceedingly great. These are they that come in the clothing of sheep in order to strip the ewes and to despoil the rams. And do you not think they have accomplished both these objects where the people are found to have been robbed of their faith and the priests of their people? But who or what are these robbers? They are sheep in their covering, foxes in their cunning, wolves in their conduct and in their cruelty. They are those who desire to appear virtuous without being so, and to be vicious without appearing so. They are wicked and wish to be regarded as good, lest they should remain alone in their wickedness. They are afraid of being reputed evil, lest they should not be evil enough. For manifest evil is always comparatively powerless for mischief. It is only the simulation of virtue that can ever seduce the virtuous. These, therefore, although wicked, endeavour to appear good, for the ruin of



those who are really good. They are unwilling to be known as evil lest their power for evil should thereby be restricted. The practice of the virtues is not in favour amongst them, but they employ a semblance of virtue as a varnish for vice. They even call their impious superstition by the honourable name of religion. According to their definition, innocence consists in abstaining from openly injuring anyone. Hence they are satisfied with the outward colour of innocence. They make vows of continency simply as a shelter for their turpitude. Marriage is regarded by them as the only means of offending against good morals, whereas in truth it is only marriage that could justify their own unlawful practices. As I have already remarked, they are boorish, ignorant clowns, and altogether beneath contempt. But for all that, I assure you, it is necessary to deal with them carefully. "For they grow much towards ungodliness," as the Apostle says, "and their speech spreadeth like a canker."

The Holy Spirit has not neglected to warn us against these sectaries. Long ago He gave a clear premonition of their coming, by the mouth of St. Paul, who says, speaking to Timothy, "Now the Spirit manifestly saith, that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy and having their conscience seared, forbidding to marry, to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving." Such, my brethren, are our modern heretics, of whom beyond a doubt these words have been spoken. For they certainly "forbid to marry" and enjoin abstinence "from the meats which God hath created," as we shall see afterwards. But consider

now if this burlesque of religion may not be more properly ascribed to devils than to men, as the Holy Spirit foretold of it. For if you ask its upholders who was the founder of their superstition they cannot tell you. Which of the other religious sects has not had for author its own human heresiarch? The Manicheans acknowledge Manes as their founder and lawgiver; the Sabellians recognise Sabellius; the Arians, Arius; the Eunomians, Eunomius; the Nestorians, Nestorius. Similarly, all the rest of these pestiferous heresies are known to have each its own earthly deviser, from whom it derives both its name and its origin. But by what name or eponym are these latter-day sectaries called? By none.\* For their heresy "is not from man nor did (they) receive it through man." God forbid that we should say it came to them "by the revelation of Jesus Christ"! No, they received it without any doubt, and, as the Holy Ghost predicted, through

\* Peter de Bruys, founder of the Manichean or Pantheistic sect of Petrobusians, may be regarded as the Luther of the twelfth century. And just as the Lutherans, his followers also divided almost immediately into a multitude of contending parties, differing from each other more or less, but retaining a strong family likeness, and unanimous in their hatred of the Catholic Church. Thus appeared the Henricians in Holland and Flanders, the Apostolicals in Perigueux, the Cathari in Italy, the Patarins in Germany, etc., etc. Amongst the more famous or rather infamous of the heresiarchs were the apostate monk, Henry, from whom the Henricians derived their name; Arnold of Brescia, whose disciples called themselves Arnoldists, and Tanchelin, the "divine man." The heretics of Cologne, with whom St. Bernard is here more particularly concerned, appear to have belonged to the sect founded by Tanchelin. As in the case of the other sects, its doctrinal absurdities simply served as a cloak for a hideous immorality. Speaking of the success which crowned the zeal and eloquence of the holy Abbot, Ratisbonne says, "St. Bernard stayed the outbreak of heresy in the twelfth century. What would have happened if there had been a St. Bernard in the sixteenth century? What if we had a St. Bernard now?"—(Translator.)

the inspiration and deceit of the devils, "speaking lies in hypocrisy and forbidding to marry."

Surely it is in hypocrisy and in the cunning of foxes that they declare marriage unlawful. For whilst they ✓ pretend to be actuated by the love of continence, the real purpose of their innovation is simply to encourage and to multiply sin. This is so manifest that I find it hard to conceive how any Christian could ever have been imposed upon. Either those who represent the sect are so brutishly dull that they cannot perceive how the prohibition of marriage gives free rein to every species of sensuality; or else they are so steeped in iniquity, so plunged in diabolical malevolence, that they connive at the consequences which they fully realise, and take pleasure in the loss of human souls. Banish from Christendom "marriage honourable in all and the bed undefiled," and have you not filled it thereby with all manner of uncleanness and corruption? Choose therefore one or other of these alternatives: either affirm that no kind of immorality, be it never so horrible, can be an obstacle to salvation; or limit the number of the predestinate to the few that have strength to remain continent. How rigorous are you in the latter! How liberal in the former! But the Saviour will not sanction either the one or the other. What? Shall moral turpitude be crowned in heaven? Nothing could be less worthy of the Divine Author of purity. Shall the whole ✓ human race be condemned save only the few who are continent? But Christ could not then be truly called the Saviour of mankind. Continence is a rare gift amongst men. Nor is it to be supposed that the Word emptied Himself of His plenitude for the sake of so small a harvest on earth. And how can it be said that we have



all received of that plenitude, if it has communicated itself to none but the continent? \* They—the heretics—have nothing to answer to this. But I think they shall find it equally impossible to defend the other alternative. For if heaven is the home of purity, and if virtue can have no fellowship with vice, any more than light with darkness, certainly there can be no room for the unclean in the company of the saved. To deny this would be to contradict the Apostle, who declares in unmistakable terms that “they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God.” By what way shall the crafty fox be able to escape now from his den? I think we have at last caught him in his cavern, in which he had made for himself two openings, one for entrance and the other for exit. Such is the custom of foxes. See then how both ways have been blocked to prevent his escape: † if he will admit into heaven none save the continent, the vast majority of men are excluded from salvation; if he opens paradise to the licentious with the pure, then purity perishes. But rather and more justly shall the

\* The arguments employed here are the same as those which later writers have made use of to prove that the number of the elect must be at least equal to the number of the reprobate. Thus Genir, “numerus non reprobatorum est saltem comparatibis, ne dici possit cum dedecore et injuria Divinae Majestatis et clementiae, majus esse imperium daemonum quam Christi, qui plane non fuderit Sanguinem suum quoad efficaciam, ut in tanta hominum paucitate, quam praeferat communis opinio, sua copiosa redemptio adimpleretur” (apud Hurter, vol. ii. p. 102). For the various opinions on this question, see Faber, *Creator and the Creature*, pp. 324-332.—(Translator.)

† Something very like this occurs in St. Augustine: “Vulpes solent habere tales foveas ut ex una parte intrent et ex alia parte exeant. Ad utrumque foramen captor vulpium retia posuit. . . . Videamus et nos si quosdam vulpeculas capere possumus: proponamus (retia) ad foramen utrumque, ut unde vulpes exire voluerit capiatur” (In Ps. lxxx.).—(Translator.)

fox himself perish, since he can get away neither by this way nor by that, being caught and confined for ever in the pit which he himself hath digged.

Some of the sectaries, however, dissenting from the rest, acknowledge the lawfulness of marriage, yet only between two virgins. But I fail to see on what valid grounds such a distinction can be established, except that these heretics seem to emulate each other in tearing to pieces the sacraments of the Church, every one according to his own particular fancy; just as vipers are said to rend with their venomous fangs the vitals of the mother that bears them. For with regard to what they are represented as saying about the first of all marriages, namely, that it was a marriage of virgins, how, I ask, can that be regarded as prejudicing the liberty of the matrimonial contract so as to render it unlawful unless the parties be virgins? But they throw out obscure hints of having found I know not what in the Gospel, which as they vainly pretend, lends support to their ravings. I suppose it is the words which the Saviour added after quoting this testimony from Genesis, "God created man to His own image and likeness, male and female He created them," namely, "what therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." "God," say these heretics, "joined together our first parents because they were both virgins, and thereafter it was not lawful for them to separate. But the marriage which other than virgins presume to contract has no divine sanction." But, I ask, who told you that the reason why God joined together Adam and Eve was their virginity? For the Scripture does not say so. "But were they not virgins?" Certainly they were. Yet

it is not the same thing to assert that they were virgins when married, and that they were married *because* they were virgins. Nay, you do not even find it expressly mentioned that the two were virgins, although of this there can be no doubt. The text, "male and female He created them" distinctly refers not to the integrity of their bodies but to the diversity of their sex. And that for wise reasons. For it is not the former but the latter that the matrimonial alliance essentially demands. Therefore, the Holy Ghost, when instituting marriage, prudently mentioned the distinction of sex, but made no allusion to virginity, in order to leave the crafty little foxes no opportunity for mere juggling with words. How gladly they would have profited by such an occasion! Although, as a matter of fact, it would not have helped their cause in the least. For even if the Holy Spirit had said, "virgins He created them," instead of "male and female He created them," what would you have gained thereby? Could you thence conclude immediately that marriage was permitted to none but virgins? Yet with what triumph you would have seized the purely verbal advantage! How you would have denounced second and third marriages! How you would have insultingly censured the Catholic Church for allowing the licentious to be united in  
✓ lawful wedlock, which she does all the more unhesitatingly, because she knows well that they will henceforth live in honour who would else have lived in sin. Perchance you would even reprehend the Lord Himself for commanding the Prophet Osee to marry a sinner. But the Spirit of God has not given you this occasion of heresy, and nevertheless, even without it, you have chosen to be heretics. For the very passage of Scripture



which you attempted to make the foundation of your error, you have now discovered to be rather in your way. It has turned out to be no help to you at all, but very much of a hindrance.

But hear now another text, which, if it does not correct you entirely, must at least utterly confound you, for it completely shatters and annihilates your heresy. "A woman," so we read, "is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband die, she is at liberty; let her marry to whom she will: only in the Lord." It is St. Paul that here grants the widow permission to marry "whom she will." And yet you forbid her, laying down the law that none but a virgin shall marry, and she only to a virgin. So that you do not allow even the virgin to marry "to whom she will." Why would you thus shorten the arm of God? Why would you limit the freedom of marriage which His generosity has left unrestricted? Why would you confine to the virgin a liberty allowed indiscriminately to the sex? Certainly St. Paul would never have made such a concession unless it were lawful. But I am saying too little when I represent him as only *conceding* marriage to widows. He positively *wills* that they should marry. "I *will* therefore," he says, "that the younger should marry." Nor can there be any doubt that he is speaking in this place of widows, since the context puts that beyond question. Therefore what he allows because it is lawful, he wills also because it is expedient. And does the heretic prohibit what is both lawful and expedient? Surely the only result such a prohibition can have will be to expose him for the heretic that he is.

It remains for us now, my brethren, to press the

foxes with the remaining part also of the Apostle's prediction. For, as he foretold of them, they "abstain from the meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving." In this again they prove themselves heretics, not simply because they abstain, but because their abstinence is the avowal of heretical doctrines. I also abstain sometimes ; but my abstinence is intended as a satisfaction for sin, not as the profession of an impious superstition. Surely we do not blame St. Paul for chastising his body and reducing it to servitude ? Thus I abstain from wine, because in wine there is luxury, as Holy Scripture tells me. However, I use a little when I am weak, according to the Apostle's advice. I abstain from flesh meat also, lest by unduly fostering the flesh, I should foster at the same time the vices of the flesh. Even dry bread I will study to eat in measure, because when the stomach is filled with food, one finds it hard to be attentive at prayer ; and besides I should be afraid of being reproached by the Prophet Ezechiel were I to eat my bread to satiety.\* Nay, I will accustom myself to be sparing even in the use of cold water, lest bodily repletion should excite the motions of concupiscence. But the heretic has very different motives for his abstinence. Thus milk he holds in horror, as well as all that is made from it, with everything else connected in any way with procreation. If only he denied himself such things, not because they are the fruit but because they are the stimulants of passion, how commendable would his abstinence be and how worthy of a Christian !

But what can he mean by this general exclusion of

\* "Behold this was the iniquity of Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance" (Ezechiel xvi. 49).—(Translator.)

every kind of food which has its source in concupiscence? The distinction of meats thus clearly expressed makes me suspicious. Yet if thou wilt explain that thou art only following the doctor's prescription, I shall not blame thee for taking care of thy flesh, "for no one ever hated his own flesh," provided however that thou dost keep within the limits of moderation. If thou sayest that thou art conforming to the rules of asceticism, that is, carrying out the recommendations of the spiritual physicians, I shall even commend the virtue thou dost exercise in subduing the flesh and bridling thy passions. But if, influenced by the Manichean fanaticism, thou proscribe the benefit of God, so that what He created and bestowed upon us "to be received with thanksgiving," thou, not only as an ingrate, but even as an impudent censurer, dost presume to pronounce unclean and to avoid as evil—in that case, far from praising thy abstinence, I shall rather abhor thy blasphemy: I shall rather look upon thee as unclean who dost attribute uncleanness to the creatures of God. "All things are clean to the clean," says St. Paul, that most excellent judge, and there is nothing which is unclean except to him who esteems it so. "To them that are defiled and to unbelievers," continues the Apostle, "nothing is clean; but both their mind and their conscience is defiled." Woe to you that repudiate with scorn the food which God has created, who regard as unclean and unworthy of being assimilated to your bodies the aliments which He has provided! For on account of such blasphemy the mystical body of Christ, which is the Church, has repudiated yourselves as defiled and polluted.

I am not unaware, my brethren, that these people



boast that they themselves and they alone constitute the mystical body of Christ. But indeed they ought to have no difficulty in persuading themselves of this, considering that they are also persuaded that they have the power of daily consecrating on their altars the Body and Blood of Christ \* to be their nourishment and to form them into His mystical body and members. For they proudly proclaim themselves to be the successors of the apostles and call themselves the apostolics, although they are able to show no proof of their apostolate. How long will they keep their light concealed under a bushel? "You are the light of the world," said the Lord to His apostles; and therefore He set them upon a candlestick in order that they might illumine the whole earth. It ought to be a subject of shame to the successors of the apostles that they are the light, not of the world, but only of a bushel.† For they are rather the darkness of the world. Let us then say to these apostles: You are the darkness of the world; and with that let us pass on to the consideration of their other doctrines.

They call themselves the Church. But they contradict thereby Him Who has said, "A city seated on a high mountain cannot be hid." I say to them: do you really believe that the stone which was "cut out of the mountain without hands" and which "became a great mountain and filled the whole earth," is enclosed

\* It was the claim of these heretics (cf. Eberwin's letter prefixed to Sermon LXV.) that every person, male and female, baptised in their sect by the imposition of hands, received thereby the power to consecrate the Body and Blood of Christ. The form they used was the *Pater Noster*. And it would seem, too, that they did not consider wheaten bread and wine of the grape to be the only valid matter.—(Translator.)

† "Pudeat successores apostolorum lucem non esse mundi ed modii."—(Translator.)

within your little hiding-holes ? However, we must not pause even here. They refuse to proclaim openly what they believe, content with their secret whispering. But Christ holds and shall ever hold His inheritance undiminished, and "the utmost parts of the earth for His possession." They only withdraw themselves from that great inheritance, who endeavour to wrest it from Christ.

But look at these slanderers, behold these dogs. They ridicule us because we administer baptism to infants, because we pray for the dead, because we solicit the intercession of the saints. They themselves are full of impatience to proscribe Christ amongst all classes of men, in both sexes, in infants and adults, in the living and in the dead. For He is interdicted to the child on account of his natural incapacity ; and to him who has reached the age of discretion, because of the difficulty of observing continence. Moreover, they would rob the dead of the suffrages of the living ; and at the same time they try to defraud the living of the assistance of the saints in glory. But God forbid that their designs should prosper. No, the Lord will not abandon His people, which rival in number the sands of the sea ; neither shall He Who has redeemed all men be satisfied with saving a handful of heretics. For "with Him is a plentiful—not a scanty—redemption." But what proportion can the fewness of these sectaries bear to the immensity of the ransom ? They rather deprive themselves of the benefit of redemption by their attempt to lessen its fruit. What matters it that the infant cannot speak for himself, since the voice of the Blood of his Brother—and such a Brother—crieth out to God from the earth in his behalf. His mother, the Church,

too, stands by and speaks for him. But is the infant altogether silent? Does he not seem to you, my brethren, to sigh for the "fountains of the Saviour," and to call aloud to God, and by his inarticulate cries to exclaim, "Lord, I suffer violence, answer Thou for me"! He implores the help of grace because he suffers violence from nature. The misery of the innocent one lifts up its voice, and the ignorance of the little one, and the helplessness of the abandoned one. Therefore, all these advocates plead the infant's cause, his Brother's Blood, his mother's faith, the helplessness of his misery, and the misery of his helplessness. And they plead with the Father. Now the Father, being a true father, can never contradict the name He bears.

Let no man object to me that the infant has not faith. For his mother, the Church, communicates to him her own, wrapping it up for him (so to speak) in the sacrament of regeneration, until he becomes capable of receiving it by the positive and explicit concurrence of his own intellect and will. Do you think that the faith of the Church is like the Prophet's "short covering which cannot cover two"? Nay, it is a most ample cloak. For surely her faith is not less than that of the Canaanite woman, which was sufficient, as we know, to cover both herself and her daughter. Hence she deserved to hear, "O woman, great is thy faith. Be it done to thee as thou wilt." Or shall it be said that the Church's faith is inferior to the faith of them who let down the paralytic through the roof and obtained for him the health both of soul and body? "And Jesus, seeing their faith," so we read, "said to the man sick of the palsy: Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee." And a little afterwards He



added, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk." Anyone who believes what is here recorded, can have no difficulty in convincing himself of the reasonableness of the confidence entertained by the Church, not only as regards the salvation of the infants baptised in her faith, but also concerning the martyr's crown for the little ones that were slain for the sake of Christ. This being so, no argument against the salvation of regenerated infants can be drawn from the words of the Apostle, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." For those infants are not without faith, who in testimony of their faith have received the grace of baptism. Neither does their cause suffer any prejudice from the Saviour's pronouncement, "But he that believeth not shall be condemned." For what is it to believe except to have faith? Accordingly, as the Apostle tells us, the woman "shall be saved through child-bearing; if she continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety"; the infant shall be saved by the regeneration of holy baptism; the adult, who cannot observe continence, shall be redeemed with the thirty-fold fruit of conjugal virtue; the dead who may have need and may be found worthy, shall obtain relief, through the ministry of the angels, from the prayers and sacrifices of the living; and the living, finally, shall never lack the assistance and consolation of the saints in bliss, who, out of an affection of tender charity, remain always near them, through and in God, everywhere present. "For to this end," says the Apostle, "Christ died and rose again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living." It may also be said, that to this end He was born as a little child, and passed through each of the different stages of human

existence between infancy and maturity, in order that His example might be wanting to none.

These heretics further maintain that there is no purgatorial fire to be feared after death, but that every soul, as soon as she has been separated from the body, immediately either ascends to heaven or descends into hell. Let them, therefore, demand of Him Who has declared that there is a certain sin, which "shall not be forgiven neither in this world nor in the world to come," let them ask Him, I say, why He spoke thus, since, as they believe, there can be no remission or purgation of sin in the next life.\* Now it is nothing wonderful that they who refuse to recognise the Church should slander the various orders of the Church, should reject her institutions, should despise her sacraments, should disobey her commands. "The successors of the apostles," they say, "archbishops, bishops, and priests, are all sinners, and are thus incapable of validly either administering or receiving the sacraments." They hold indeed that to be a real prelate and to be a sinner are two things absolutely incompatible. But this is evidently false. Caiphas was a true high-priest, and yet how great a sinner! For it was he who pronounced sentence of death against the Lord. If thou deniest that he was a high-priest thou dost contradict the testimony of St. John Evangelist, who informs us that he (Caiphas) actually prophesied in virtue of his office of

\* Similarly, St. Augustine, "*Neque de quibusdam veraciter diceretur, quod non eis remittatur, neque in hoc saeculo neque in futuro, nisi essent quibus etsi non in isto, tamen remittetur in futuro*" (*De Civ. Dei*, lxxi., c. xxiv.). As to the manner in which sins are forgiven in the next life, theologians tell us that the justified soul, immediately on parting from the body, elicits an intensely fervent act of charity, which wipes away the guilt of venal faults, leaving the debt of punishment due to them to be paid in full. Cf. St. Thomas de Malo, q. 7, a. 11.—(Translator.)

high-priest. Judas Iscariot was an apostle, having been chosen by Christ Himself, in spite of his avarice and sinfulness. Surely thou canst entertain no doubt of his apostolate, considering that it was the Lord Who elected him. "Have not I chosen you twelve," said He, "and one of you is a devil?" Here thou art told that one who was a devil has been called to the apostolic office. And dost thou still deny that it is possible for a sinner to be a bishop? "The Scribes and Pharisees have sitten on the chair of Moses," and all that refused to hearken to them as to their ecclesiastical superiors were accounted guilty of disobedience, even against the Lord, Who gave a command in the words, "Whatsoever they shall say to you, do and observe." It is clear, therefore, that although they were Scribes, although they were Pharisees, although they were the worst of sinners, nevertheless, because they had "sitten on the chair of Moses," to their authority also must be understood as applying these other words of Christ, "He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me."

Many other wicked doctrines also have been infused into the minds of "this foolish and senseless people" by the spirits of error "who speak lies in hypocrisy." But it is not possible to examine them all. For, in the first place, who knows them all? Besides, the task would be exceedingly laborious and altogether unnecessary. For, as regards the sectaries themselves, they cannot be convinced by arguments, because they have not the capacity to understand them; they cannot be corrected by authority, because they recognise none; and they cannot be won over by entreaty, because they are entirely corrupted. Experience has



✓ proved that they will rather die than abandon their errors. Of such as these "the end is destruction," and their final doom devouring flames. For what we read of Samson, how he set fire to the tails of the unreasoning foxes, prefigured the fate in store for these rational ones. Often the faithful, laying hands on some of them, have dragged them to the presence of the judges. When questioned concerning their beliefs, they denied, according to their custom, all those errors whereof they were suspected. But when subjected to the ordeal of water they were found to be liars.\* Then, as they could no longer dissemble the truth, being exposed by the water which refused to receive them, they took the bit between their teeth, as the saying is, and with most miserable daring professed rather than confessed their heresy, openly defending as piety their impious doctrines, and were even prepared to suffer death for the same. Nor were those who stood by less ready to inflict death. The multitude rushed upon them and gave the heretics new martyrs of their perfidy. I quite approve of their zeal, but I cannot commend their action. For misbelievers must not be compelled by force to accept the faith, but won to it by arguments. Yet it is no doubt better that they should be forcibly restrained, namely, by the power of him "who beareth not the sword in vain," than be allowed to imbue the minds of others with their false doctrines. For the prince is "God's minister,"

\* Certain authors have concluded from these words that St. Bernard believed in the efficacy of such ordeals. But, as Mabillon, after Horst, points out, the Saint is not here asserting anything of himself, but merely witnessing to the belief of the people. Besides he could not have been ignorant that these "tests" had been repeatedly condemned as superstitious by the Church.—(Translator.)

and "an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil."

Some of the faithful have been astonished to see these heretics going to their death, not only with patience, but apparently with joy. But their surprise makes it plain that they do not realise sufficiently how great is Satan's power as well over the minds and hearts as over the bodies of those who have once delivered themselves up to him. Is it not a stranger thing for a man to lay violent hands on himself than that he should willingly submit to the violence of others? And yet the devil can prevail on many men to do this. For we have often heard of persons who drowned or hanged themselves at his suggestion. It was doubtless the devil that persuaded Judas to put an end to his life. Yet to me it seems a greater and more astonishing manifestation of power that he could put it into the heart of the faithless Apostle to betray his Master, than that he was able to induce him afterwards to hang himself. There is consequently no comparison between the constancy of the martyrs and the obstinacy of these heretics. In the case of the former, their contempt of death was an effect of their piety; in the latter, it proceeded from their hardness of heart. Hence it may be that the Psalmist is alluding to this distinction and personating the martyrs when he says, "*Their heart is curdled like milk; but I have meditated on Thy law.*" For although the suffering was the same for all, there was a wide diversity in the disposition, the heretics hardening their hearts against the Lord, and the martyrs meditating on His love.\*

\* Compare with St. Augustine, "Fortitudinem gentilium mundana cupiditas facit, fortitudinem Christianorum Dei

Such being the case, there is no necessity, as I have already remarked, to waste many words on these most stupid and most obstinate of men. It is enough to have exposed them in order that they may be avoided. Wherefore, to catch the foxes, we must force them either to put away their female associates, or else to go out of the Church, which they are scandalising by their unbecoming manner of life. Yet it is much to be lamented that not only some civil magistrates, but some of the clergy also, yea, and I am told even some of the bishops, who ought rather to use their power against the heretics, accept their bribes and support them in their superstition for the sake of gain. But they will say to me, "How dost thou expect us to condemn men who can neither be brought to confess themselves heretics nor be convicted of heresy?" This, my brethren, is a frivolous excuse, yet it furnishes them with the occasion they desire. But let me say to them: By this test alone, even though all other means were lacking, you can easily discover the true character of these sectaries. Command the men and women to separate from each other, as I have before recommended. Oblige the latter to enter communities of their own sex and under the same vows as they have themselves taken; and let their companions likewise be compelled to live in monasteries of men, subject to obligations similar to their own. Thus you shall consult as well for the fidelity as for the good fame of all, because in their convents and in their

charitas facit" (*Contra Julian.*, l. i.). "Martyres non facit poena sed causa" (In Ps. lxxxiv.). "Laus martyrum non erit in poena sed in causa; non persecutionem pati, non teneri, non flagellari, non proscribi, non occidi laus est, sed habendo causam bonam ista pati, haec laus est. Laus enim est in causae bonitate, non in poena acerbitate" (In Ps. lxvii.).—(Translator.)



monasteries they shall have trustworthy guardians and witnesses of their virtue. If, however, they refuse to obey these injunctions, they deserve, and deserve richly, to be expelled from the Church, and thus prevented from further scandalising her children by such improper and unlawful cohabitation. Let so much suffice for discovering the wiles of these foxes, and for instructing and admonishing the true children of the beloved and glorious Spouse of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXVII.

### ON MYSTICAL ERUCTION AND ON GRACE, ANTECEDENT AND CONSEQUENT.

*“ My Beloved to me, and I to Him.”*

“ My Beloved to me, and I to Him.” For some time, my brethren, I have been occupied with the words of the Bridegroom. May He now grant me His help that I may be able to explain in a fitting manner this speech of His Spouse, unto His glory and our salvation. For what she says here is not so plain and easy that I am sufficient of myself to examine and discuss it worthily, without any need of His light to guide me. Her words, indeed, are as pregnant with meaning and as mysteriously profound as they are full of the sweetness of grace. To what shall I liken them? For the present, they may be compared to a certain kind of aliment excelling in three qualities: pleasing to the palate, nourishing as food, efficacious as medicine. Such, such, I say, is every sentence that falls from the lips of the Spouse. For by the sweetness of its sound it conciliates our affections; by its abounding wealth of meaning it nourishes and strengthens our minds; by its dark depth of mystery it bewilders our intellects in proportion as it exercises them, and thus in a wonderful way heals the swelling of the knowledge that “ puffeth up.” If anyone of those who seem to themselves to know something, should chance to apply himself earnestly to the study of such texts, when he perceived the power of his

genius failing and "every understanding being brought into captivity," would he not humble himself, and feel compelled to cry out in the words of the Psalmist, "Thy knowledge is become wonderful to me: it is high and I cannot reach to it"? And here, at the very commencement of her words, how much of sweetness is there not expressed! For consider in what manner she begins. "My Beloved to me," she says, "and I to Him." This may appear to you simple enough, because it sounds so sweetly. However, we shall see about that afterwards.

Now, therefore, beginning with love, she proceeds to discourse about her Beloved, thus indicating that, like the Apostle, she knows nothing except Him Whom she loves. It is sufficiently evident of Whom she is speaking, but to whom is not so clear. For it is not possible to suppose that He of Whom she speaks is the same to whom her words are addressed, since He is no longer with her. There can be no doubt about this, because she presently seems to call Him back, and, as it were, to cry after Him, "Return, my Beloved." Hence we are led to the conjecture that, having completed what He had to say to His Spouse, the Bridegroom, according to His custom, took His departure, whilst she remained behind, yet still speaking of Him Who is never absent from her affection. So indeed it is. She has kept Him on her lips, Who could not withdraw Himself from her heart, even when He withdrew from her His sensible presence. What issues from her lips, proceeds from her heart; "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Therefore she speaks of her Beloved, as one that is herself truly beloved, and truly deserving of love,



“because she loveth much.” But I desire to know *with* whom she is speaking, since I understand well enough *of* Whom. For my part, I am unable to conceive whom else she could be addressing (if we suppose her to be addressing any at all) except it be the young maidens who can never be absent from their mother’s side when the Bridegroom leaves her. But we may also suppose—and with greater probability, as I think—that she has uttered those words to herself and not to any other. This conjecture is rendered the more likely by the abrupt and disconnected character of her discourse, which is plainly too incoherent to convey her thought to a hearer, the object we have principally in view in conversing together. “My Beloved to me,” she says, “and I to Him.” Nothing more! The sentence is suspended. Or rather it is not suspended, but fails utterly. The hearer also is in a state of suspense. Instead of receiving instruction, he has only his interest excited.

What is this which she says, “My Beloved to me and I to Him”? We know not what she says because we cannot read her thoughts. O holy soul, tell us what thou meanest by the words, “My Beloved to me and I to Him”? What, I ask, is this giving and receiving, this interchange of gifts which is so sweetly and so lovingly taking place between you? He to thee and thou again to Him. But what? Is it the same thing which He bestows on thee that thou renderest back to Him, or is it something different? If it is to us thou art here addressing thyself, if thou speakest for our instruction, express more clearly what thou dost mean. “How long wilt thou hold our souls in suspense?” Or art thou, like the Prophet Isaias,

keeping thy secret to thyself? So it is, my brethren. It is her heart that has spoken, not her understanding, and consequently her speech is not for our understanding. Then wherefore? For no purpose at all, except that, being filled with marvellous delight and inflamed with most ardent love by the longed-for colloquy with her Bridegroom, since He left off speaking she has been unable either to keep silent altogether or to express what she feels within her. For it is not to manifest her emotions that she has spoken, but simply because she cannot remain silent. Out of the abundance of her heart her mouth has spoken, but not according to her heart's abundance. The emotions have their own proper language whereby they express themselves, even against our will. Thus fear, for example, has its peculiar tremulous expression, sorrow prefers a mournful medium, whilst love selects the sweetest words. Will anyone pretend that the groans of those in pain, the sighs and sobbings of those in sorrow, the sudden and involuntary cries of those who are struck or frightened, and the eructations of satiety—will anyone say that these manifestations are made by use and custom, or excited by reason, or ordered by deliberation, or fashioned by premeditation? Is it not certain that instead of obeying the will of the soul they rather burst forth spontaneously? Thus, when love, especially divine love, is so strong and ardent that it cannot any longer be contained within the soul, it pays no attention to the order, or the sequence, or the correctness of the words through which it pours itself out, or whether they are few or many, provided only that they are in nowise opposed to its own interests. Sometimes it dispenses with words altogether; sometimes

it makes use of no other means of expression save the mute language of sighs, in which it finds a sufficient vent. Hence it is that the Spouse, burning with an incredible ardour of divine love, in her anxiety to obtain some kind of outlet for the intense heat which consumes her, does not consider what she speaks or how she speaks. Under the constraining influence of charity, she belches forth rather than utters whatever rises to her lips. And is it any wonder that she should eructate who is so full and so inebriated with the wine of holy love ?

Examine, my brethren, every verse of this epithalamium, from the very first to that now under discussion, and see if you can discover amongst all the visitations and colloquies which have been recorded, anyone wherein the Bridegroom has given Himself to His Bride so unreservedly as here ; anyone wherein she has been allowed to hear from His lips, not alone so many but also such sweet words. She who has thus satisfied her desire with good things, as the Psalmist says, ought we to be surprised that she expresses her feelings rather by eructation than by speech ? And if she seems to you to utter words, believe them to be the belchings of satiety, unadorned and unpremeditated. For the Spouse " thinks it not robbery " to appropriate to herself the language of the Royal Prophet, where he says, " My heart hath eructated a good word," because she is filled with the same Spirit Who inspired him. " My Beloved to me, and I to Him." There is no apparent connection between these words : the sentence is incomplete. But what matter ? It is not the expression of thought, but the eructation of love. And why would you seek in such



a spontaneous outburst for the grammatical arrangement and sequence of words, or for the rules and ornaments of rhetoric? Do you yourselves lay down laws and regulations for your own eructations? No, for they defy your authority, and reject your control, and consult neither your convenience nor your pleasure. Of themselves they break forth from your interior, anticipating both your will and your knowledge, and are rather forced from you than freely emitted. Nevertheless, eructations possess an odour, pleasant or offensive, according to the various qualities of the vessels whence they proceed. For "a good man out of a good treasure bringeth forth good things," and an evil man out of an evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. A good vessel is the Spouse of my Lord, and good also is the odour she exhales.

I give thanks to Thee, Lord Jesus, for that Thou hast, in Thy condescension, permitted me to enjoy even so much as the sweetness of her fragrance; because "the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." To me, I confess, the eructation of Thy beloved Spouse yields a pleasant odour; and glad am I to be admitted to any participation, however small, of her plenitude. She "eructates" for me "the memory of the abundance of Thy sweetness"; and in a certain mysterious manner, I seem to scent, as it were, something ineffable of Thy gracious kindness and love in the words, "My Beloved to me and I to Him." Let her, as she deserves, "feast and rejoice in Thy sight and be delighted with gladness." But let her, like the Apostle, be so "transported in mind" that she may be "sober" for us. Let her, I say, "be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house,"

and "make her drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure." But when she has been filled and satisfied, let her not forget, I implore of Thee, to favour my poor soul with at least a slight scent of her eructation. Moses too has eructated to my advantage, and I can perceive a pleasant odour of the Creator's almighty power in his eructation, namely, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." The Prophet Isaias again has benefited me by his belching, and exhales the most sweet odour of redeeming mercy, where he thus breaks out, "He hath delivered His Soul unto death, and was reputed with the wicked; and He hath borne the sins of many, and hath prayed for the transgressors," that they might not perish. Where else can you find so rich a perfume of mercy? Equally excellent is the odour given out by the eructation of Jeremias, and of him who says, "My heart hath eructated a good word." For every one of these was full of the Holy Ghost, and, belching from satiety, "filled all things with good." But you desire to hear the eructation of Jeremias? I have not forgotten it. I was about to invite your attention to it. Here it is: "It is good to wait with silence for the salvation of God." These are his words, if I mistake not. Take them and inhale their perfume. Does not the delicious fragrance of remunerating justice which they diffuse surpass the sweetness of balsam? He tells me to be patient for justice sake and to await my reward in the future, not to accept it in the present life; because the reward of justice is not the prosperity of this world but the "salvation of the Lord." "If it make any delay," says another Prophet, "wait for it." And lest I should begin to murmur, I am reminded that "it is good

to wait with silence." Therefore, I will follow the Prophet's advice. With Micheas, "I will wait for God my Saviour."

But I am only a sinner and have yet a long way to go, because "salvation is far from sinners." However, I will not complain. I will try meantime to find my consolation in its odour. "The just shall rejoice in the Lord," enjoying the taste of that good which I am only suffered to smell. That which the just already contemplates, the same is the object of the sinner's hope, and it is by hope that he inhales the odour thereof. "For the expectation of the creature waiteth for the revelation of the sons of God." On the other hand, to contemplate is to "taste and see that the Lord is sweet." But perhaps it would be more true to say that hope belongs to the just man and fruition to the blessed, since it is written that "the expectation of the just is joy." As for the sinner, he has no expectation. Indeed he is a sinner for no other reason than because he is not only taken up with, but is also content with, the goods of time, and hopes for nothing hereafter, turning a deaf ear to the voice which calls out to him, "Expect Me, saith the Lord, in the day of My resurrection that is to come." Hence a just man was Simeon, because he had expectation, and already, in the Spirit, caught the fragrance of Christ, before it became his privilege to adore Him in the flesh. And not only just, but blessed also, since by the odour of expectation he was brought to the taste of contemplation. He has told us this himself where he says, "And my eyes have seen Thy Salvation." Abraham too was a just man, for he also hoped that he might see the day of the Lord; and he was not "confounded in his



expectation," because he "saw it and was glad." And the apostles were just, since to them it was said, "And you yourselves (be) like to men who wait for their Lord."

Why should not David's name be added to this list of just men? For it is he who has declared, "With expectation I have waited for the Lord." He came fourth in the preceding catalogue also, my catalogue of "eructators," and I had almost forgotten him. He it is who hath "opened his mouth and drawn in the Spirit," and being filled therewith, not only eructated of his fulness but even burst into song. O good Jesus, with what sweetness has he not enchanted my senses of smell and hearing, by his belching and his singing of that "oil of gladness" wherewith "God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee above Thy fellows," telling me how "myrrh and stacte and cassia perfume Thy garments, from the ivory houses," and how "the daughters of kings have delighted Thee in Thy glory"! Oh, how I wish that Thou wouldst grant me the privilege of meeting so great a prophet and so intimate a friend of Thine on the "day of solemnity and gladness," when he comes forth from Thy bridal-chamber, singing his own marriage-song to the music of the psaltery and the harp, "flowing with delights," sprinkled with and redolent of "all the powders of the perfumer"! On that day, or rather in that hour,—for whenever such a favour is granted it lasts no longer than an hour, and perhaps not even so long, but only for half an hour,\*

\* This assertion as to the brief duration of the purely contemplative act is found repeated often in the writings of the Saint. It is confirmed by the witness of St. Teresa, who says, "As it seems to me, the period of time, however long it may have been, during which the faculties of the soul are entranced,

agreeably to what is written, "There was silence in heaven, as it were for half an hour"—in that hour, I say, "my mouth shall be filled with gladness and my tongue with joy," because I shall recognise—I do not say in every psalm—but in every verse of every psalm, an eructation surpassing all aromatic spices in the sweetness of its fragrance. What can be more odoriferous than that eructation of St. John, "In the beginning was the Word," savouring to me of the eternity, the generation, and the Divinity of the Word? But how shall I speak of the belchings of St. Paul? With what a delicious perfume they embalmed the whole world! For he was "the good odour of Christ in every place." Even those "secret words" of his, although he does not utter them to my hearing, he yet proposes sufficiently to arouse my desires, in order that I may enjoy at least the fragrance of what I am not permitted to hear. And indeed, it seems to me that the mystery he thus hides from us somehow pleases us the more, in proportion as we are the less able to fathom it; and we long for it with greater

is very short. If half an hour, that would be a long time. I do not think that I have ever been so long." Yet she adds, "It is extremely difficult to know how long, because the senses are in suspense. But I think that at any time it cannot be very long before some one of the faculties recovers itself. . . . As the will is calm, it entrances them again: they are quiet for another moment and then they recover themselves once more. In this way some hours may be and are spent in prayer. . . . But the state of complete absorption, together with the utter rest of the imagination lasts only a short time" (*Life*, c. xviii.). Suarez (t. xiv. l. ii. c. x. n. 12) gives two reasons in explanation of the fact, viz., the mind's natural love of change and the severe strain implied in a prolonged and fixed attention to a purely spiritual object. St. Thomas (*Sum. Theol.*, II. ii. q. clxxx. a. 8) says, "Dicendum est quod nulla actio potest diu durare in sui summo. Summum autem contemplationis est ut attingat ad uniformitatem divinae contemplationis."—(Translator.)

eagerness because it is withheld. You may notice the Spouse acting towards us here in somewhat the same manner as the Apostle. For, like him, in this present verse she neither fully discloses her secret nor does she altogether pass it over in silence. She permits us to inhale its odour, but the taste thereof, either because of our unworthiness or because of our incapacity, she apparently thinks it right to withhold from us for the present.

“ My Beloved to me, and I to Him.” There can be no doubt, my brethren, that the mutual love of the Bridegroom and Bride burns as a fire in this passage. And in that reciprocity of affection we behold the supreme felicity of the one and the amazing condescension of the Other. For not between equals is the loving union or embrace here in question. But what is the gift which the Spouse boasts of having, by the privilege of singular love, received from her Bridegroom and bestowed upon Him in turn? That is a secret which no one can pretend to understand fully, except those who, by the perfect purity of their souls and bodies, have deserved to experience something similar in themselves. For it is a mystery of love. Hence it is not by discourse of reason we are to attain to it, but by conformity of will. But how few there are who can say with the Apostle, “ But we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord ” !

However, I will try to present what is said in our text in a somewhat more intelligible form ; yet without presuming to trench upon that secret which is the prerogative of the Spouse, and access to which is in



the meantime unlawful, particularly for sinners such as we are. I have consequently to put before you something which, because of its being familiar, shall be the better adapted to the ordinary capacity, and shall at the same time give coherence to the words of our text and "understanding to little ones." To me, then, it seems to be enough for our gross and unenlightened intelligence, if with the words "My Beloved to me" we understand the verb "attends." Thus the sentence will run, "My Beloved attends to me, and I to Him." It must not be supposed, however, that I am the only one or the first to whom this has occurred. Long before me the Psalmist gave expression to the same thought in the words, "With expectation I have waited for the Lord, and He hath attended to me." Here you have explicitly mentioned the attending of the Lord to His Prophet. And you have also the Prophet's attending to the Lord, evidently implied in what he says, "With expectation I have waited for the Lord." For he who expects attends. Indeed to attend is nothing else than to expect. There is no difference in the sense, therefore, between what the Psalmist says here and the utterance of the Spouse, and very little even in the words which they employ, except that the Prophet inverts the order of the Bride, by putting in the second place what she places first and conversely.

Of the two it seems to me that the Spouse has spoken the more correctly. She does not give the prominence to her merit, but begins with an acknowledgment of the divine beneficence, and confesses that she has been prevented by the grace of holy love. This is certainly very proper, because, as the Apostle says, "who hath

first given to Him and recompense shall be made him ? ”

St. John gives us his mind on this subject where he tells us in his Epistle, “ In this is charity ; not as though we had loved God, but because He hath first loved us.” But although the Psalmist makes no mention here of antecedent grace, he does not deny the grace which is consequent, neither is he silent concerning it. Yet, listen to a more manifest testimony of his, relating to the latter and taken from a different place, where he confesses, speaking to the Lord, “ And Thy mercy will follow me all the days of my life.” I will present you from the same Prophet with an equally clear and certain acknowledgment of prevenient grace : “ My God,” he says, “ His mercy shall prevent me.” And again he prays to God in the words, “ Let Thy mercies speedily prevent us, for we are become exceeding poor.” In a subsequent verse of this Canticle, the Spouse, unless I mistake, very beautifully repeats the words of our present text, but inverting the order of the parts and following the example of the Prophet. For she there says, “ I to my Beloved, and my Beloved to me.” Why this, my brethren ? The reason is that she there wants to prove herself to be more full of grace, since she has now given up everything to grace, assigning to it both the beginning and the end. For how could she be full of grace, if there was anything in her or belonging to her, which was not from grace ? There is no room for grace in a soul already occupied by merit.\* Therefore the confession that all her

\* There is question here of merit acquired by merely human industry and independently of supernatural grace and faith, of the merit to which St. Paul alludes in the words, “ Now to him that worketh the reward is not according to grace, but

good is from grace proves that the soul which so confesses has the plenitude of grace. For if there is anything in her of her own, be it much or be it little, grace, of necessity, shall be so far excluded. Whatever room you make in yourselves for merit, you withdraw from grace. As for me, I want none of that merit which is an obstacle to grace. I abhor and disavow whatever of mine I discover in myself, in order that I may be my own, unless perchance that is most truly mine which truly makes me my own. It is grace that justifies me freely and so delivers me from the servitude of sin. For "where the Spirit is there is liberty."

Oh, the Synagogue, that senseless Spouse, who, condemning the justice of God, that is to say, the grace of the Bridegroom, wished rather to establish her own justice, refusing "to be subject to the law of God"! For this has she been repudiated, and is now a Spouse no longer. Her place has been given to the Church, to whom it has been said, "'I have espoused thee to Me in faith, I have espoused thee to Me in justice and judgment, and in mercy and in commiserations.' Thou hast not chosen Me, but it is I Who have chosen thee. Nor have I chosen thee because of any merits which I discovered in thee, but My choice anticipated thy merits. Consequently 'I have espoused thee to Me in faith,' and not in 'the works of the law.' 'I have espoused thee to Me in justice,' but in the justice which

according to debt" (Rom. v. 4). Where such merit exists, there is no room for grace, since the recompense is in no sense gratuitous but "according to debt." Supernatural merit, on the contrary, so far from excluding grace, is the fruit and effect of grace, and gives a title to a supernatural reward. In the words of the Council of Orange (529), "*Debetur merces bonis operibus si fiant, sed gratia quae non debetur praecedit ut fiant*" (can. 18). Cf. Suarez, t. x. l. xii. c. 1; also Bellarmin, In Ps. xxxi.—(Translator.)



is from faith, not from the law. It remains then that thou shouldst judge a righteous judgment between Me and thee, the judgment in which I have espoused thee to Me, and which, as thou knowest, was in nowise due to thy merit, but solely to My good pleasure. Now this is the judgment, that thou shouldst not extol thy merits, that thou shouldst not make a display of the 'works of the law,' that thou shouldst not boast of having borne the 'burden of the day and the heat,' because, as thou must understand, it is rather in faith and in the justice which is from faith, and in mercy, and in commiseration I have espoused thee to Me."

She who is the true Spouse will understand aright all these things, and will duly acknowledge both graces, first, the grace which is given first and by which she is prevented, secondly, that which follows and completes. Hence she says here, "My Beloved to me, and I to Him," attributing to His grace the beginning. In a following passage grace is assigned the consummation, where we find, "I to my Beloved, and my Beloved to me." Let us now try to ascertain what she means by the words, "My Beloved to me." If we regard this expression as requiring to be completed by the addition of the verb "attend," as I have before suggested, and thus, as repeating what the Psalmist says, "With expectation I have waited for the Lord, and He hath attended to me," then it seems to me that the Spouse is here alluding to something ineffable, some exceedingly great prerogative. But a subject which deserves your best and fullest attention must not be proposed to ears and minds already wearied. If, therefore, you have no objection, let us defer to another time this discussion. But the delay shall not be long.

To-morrow I purpose to begin where I now leave off. Only do you pray that I may be preserved in the meantime from the inrush of distracting cares through the grace and mercy of the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXVIII.

ON THE MANNER IN WHICH THE BRIDEGROOM ATTENDS  
TO HIS SPOUSE AND SHE TO HIM.

*“ My Beloved to me, and I to Him.”*

Listen now, my brethren, to what has been held over since yesterday. Be attentive whilst I tell you of the joy which I have found. It is also your joy. Hear me therefore with gladness. I have discovered this joy in a single expression of the Bride's, and after refreshing myself with its fragrance, so to speak, I have kept it concealed until now, when it shall cause you all the more pleasure in proportion as it is the more seasonably proposed. The Spouse, then, has spoken, and she has declared that her Bridegroom attends to her. But who is this Spouse? And who is this Bridegroom? The Bridegroom, my brethren, is none other than our God. And the Spouse—dare I say it?—the Spouse is ourselves, together with the rest of the multitude of captives,\* all known to Him. Let us therefore rejoice. “ This is our glory,” the consciousness that we are the Spouse to whom God attends. Yet how infinitely great is the distance between Him and us! What are we, “ earth-born and the sons of men,” compared to God? In the words of the Prophet Isaias, “ All nations are before Him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to Him as nothing and vanity.” What, then, can such a Spouse mean by

\* That is to say, the faithful, whose sojourn on earth was typified by the Babylonian captivity.—(Translator.)



putting herself on an equality with One so far above her, when she says, "My Beloved to me, and I to Him"? Either she exalts herself extravagantly, or He loves her excessively. What a wonderful thing it is that she should thus claim His attention for herself, as her own exclusive property, as it were, in the words "My Beloved to me"! Nor is she satisfied with so much. She carries her glorying still further and dares to give herself to Him in return, to exchange herself for Him, so to speak, as a thing of equal value! "And I to Him," she adds. A presumptuous speech, surely, this "and I to Him." And not less presumptuous that other, "My Beloved to me." But both together are clearly more presumptuous than either of the two taken singly.

Oh, how great is the daring of a pure heart, of a good conscience, and of a "faith unfeigned"! "He attends to me," she says. Is it then true that the Divine Majesty, to Whom belongs the government and the administration of the wide world of creatures, gives His whole attention to her? Can it be a fact that the care of the universe is exchanged for the mere intercourse of love, rather say for the repose of love, in order to gratify the desires of the Spouse? Such in truth is the case. For this Spouse is the Church of the elect, whereof the Apostle says, "All things for the sake of the elect." And who can have any doubt "that the grace of God and His mercy is with His saints, and that He hath respect to His chosen"? I do not, however, deny His providence over His other creatures; but I say that the Spouse claims for herself all His special care and attention. "Doth God take care for oxen"? asks the Apostle. It is manifest that

we may say the same of horses, of camels, of elephants, and of all the other beasts of the earth ; yea, of all the fishes of the sea, and of all the birds of the air, and finally of everything in the world, those creatures only excepted to whom alone it has been said, " Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you." Does it not seem to you, my brethren, as if you heard the admonition, " Attend to Him because He attends to you " ? And take notice how the Apostle Peter, to whom belong the words quoted, observes here the same order as the Spouse. For he does not say, " Casting all your care upon Him *that He may have* care of you," but, " Casting all your care upon Him *because He hath* care of you." Thereby he clearly indicates not alone how dearly beloved is the Church of the saints, but also how she has been prevented by love.

It is therefore evident that what St. Paul interrogatively affirms of the oxen applies not to her. For surely the Lord must have care for her, seeing that He hath loved her and delivered Himself for her. Is she not that wandering sheep the care of which the Good Shepherd preferred even to the care of His heavenly flock ? Yea, abandoning these, He descended to earth for her sake ; He sought for her diligently ; and when at last she was found, He did not lead or drive, but He carried her back to the fold. Next, on account of her and in company with her, He made new feasts of joy in heaven, inviting all the choirs of angels to participate therein. What then ? After deigning to bear her back on His own shoulders, will He no longer have care for her ? Impossible ! Hence she does not hesitate to say, " The Lord is careful for me." Neither has she any fear lest she should be over-confident in affirming, " The

Lord will repay for me," and using the other similar expressions which seem to signify God's special solicitude for her. Therefore it is that she calls the Lord of Hosts her Beloved, and glories that He Who " judgeth all things with tranquillity " attends to her. And why should she not glory therein ? Has she not heard Him saying to her, " Can a mother forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb ? And if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee " ? Besides, it is written, " The eyes of the Lord are upon the just." But what is the Spouse except the whole assembly of the just ? What is she, I ask, but " the generation of them that seek the Lord, of them that seek the face " of the Bridegroom ? For it is not the case that He attends to her whilst she does not attend to Him. Therefore she makes explicit reference to the attention on both sides, saying, " My Beloved to me, and I to Him." As if she should say, " He attends to me, because He is kind and compassionate ; and I attend to Him because I am not ungrateful ; He renders to me ' grace for grace,' and I render back to Him thanks for grace ; He attends to my deliverance and I attend to His glory ; He attends to my salvation and I attend to His will ; He attends to me and to none other, because I am His only dove ; and I attend to Him and to none other, because I listen not to the voice of strangers, and I pay no heed to them that say to me, ' Lo, here is Christ,' or, ' Lo, He is there.' " So may the Church apply to herself the words, " My Beloved to me, and I to Him."

But what of each of ourselves, individually, my brethren ? Can we suppose that there is anyone amongst us to whom the same words may in some



sense apply? But why do I say "anyone amongst us," since it is my opinion that this question might be asked, and not unreasonably, with regard to every single member of the universal Church? However, the Bridegroom does not attend in the same manner to the individual Christian and to the multitude of believers. It was not for the sake of any particular soul, but on account of many, in order to collect many into one Church, to unite and form many into one single Spouse, that God did so much and suffered so much when He "wrought salvation in the midst of the earth." This is the Spouse that is most dear to Him, exclusively His as He is exclusively hers, giving her love to no other Bridegroom, yielding her place to no other Bride. What may she not presume with so solicitous a Lover? What may she not hope for from Him Who came down from heaven to seek her and called her to Himself from the ends of the earth? And not alone has He sought her, but He has also bought her; and the price that was paid for her was the Blood of the Purchaser. There is another consideration also which is wont to be made the ground of special confidence. It is that, looking forward into the future, she clearly recognises that the Lord has need of her. Do you ask, for what purpose? "That He may see the good of His chosen, that He may rejoice in the joy of His nation, that He may be praised with His inheritance." Nor must it be supposed that this is an object of but little moment. For I tell you that unless this is secured, no work of God shall continue perfect. Can it be denied that the end of all things depends upon the final state and consummation of the Church? Take this away, and then in vain

“ the expectation of the (inferior) creature waiteth for the revelation of the sons of God.” Take this away, and neither the patriarchs nor any of the prophets shall be consummated, because, as the Apostle assures us, God has so “ provided for us that they should not be perfected without us.” Take this away, and the glory of even the holy angels shall suffer diminution by reason of the imperfection of their number. Take away this, finally, and the city of God itself shall be defrauded of the joy of its integrity.

How then, I ask, shall God be able to accomplish His design and bring to pass the secret purpose of His will, the “ great mystery of godliness ” ? Or where shall you find for me the “ infants and sucklings ” out of whose mouths the Lord may perfect His praise ? In heaven there are no infants or sucklings. They belong only to the Church, to whose children it was said, “ I gave you milk to drink, not meat.” And it is these the Psalmist invites to perfect and complete, as it were, the praises of God, where he says, “ Praise the Lord, ye children.” Do you imagine that God can have the praise of His glory full and entire, before the advent of those who shall sing “ in the sight of the angels,” “ We have rejoiced for the days in which Thou hast humbled us, for the years in which we have seen evils ” ? Gladness of this kind heaven could not know except through the children of the Church. To rejoice with such a joy is impossible to creatures who have never lived an hour without rejoicing. Especially sweet is the joy which succeeds to sadness, the repose which follows labour, the haven after shipwreck. Security is pleasing to all, but to him more particularly who has long been a prey to alarm. Light gives

pleasure to everyone, but to none so much as to those who have escaped from the power of darkness. To have passed out of death into life doubles the joy of living. This is my portion at the celestial banquet, special to myself, and incommunicable to the blissful angels. Yet I dare to affirm it, that even the happiness of these heavenly spirits would be incomplete, as lacking the bliss which is peculiarly human, did they not (as they so graciously condescend to acknowledge) participate through their charity with me and through me in mine. Hence they certainly seem to owe to me something of the perfection of their blessedness, nor is that something a matter of little importance. We know that the angels rejoice over the conversion of a sinner. But if even my contrite tears are a source of delight to these citizens of heaven, how great must be their joy in my happiness ! Their only occupation is to praise God. Yet they know how imperfect their praise shall be, if there be none who can sing, " We have passed through fire and water, and Thou hast brought us out into a refreshment."

Happy, therefore, is the Church in her universality. Inadequate to the motives she possesses is all her glorying, looking not only to the benefits and prerogatives already granted her, but also to the favours which, by the divine promise, she shall hereafter receive. And why should she trouble herself about merits, seeing that she has a more solid and secure ground for glorying in the free purpose of God's good pleasure than any merits of her own could give her ? God cannot deny Himself, nor can He undo what He has already done ; and, according to the Prophet, He has already accomplished the things that are to be. Yes, He will



undoubtedly do as He has said. God will not be unfaithful to His promise. Thus, there is no longer any reason for you to ask me what those merits are whereon we may build our hopes of heaven, especially since you have heard through the Prophet Ezechiel the announcement, "It is not for your sakes that I will do this, but for My holy name's sake, saith the Lord." For our merit it suffices us to know that our own merit suffices us not.\* But just as it is sufficient for our merit not to presume on our merit, so it is sufficient for our judgment to be found entirely deficient in merit. Even regenerated infants are none of them without merits, for they have the merits of Christ. Yet one renders himself unworthy of a participation in the merits of Christ by not joining thereto merits of his own, if this is due not to incapacity but to negligence; which, however, is a danger rather for adults than for infants. Study, therefore, my brethren, to acquire merits. But when they have been acquired, be sure you regard them as the gifts of God.† Let the mercy of the Lord be the fruit you expect from them. And in this way

\* In his fifteenth sermon on Psalm xc. he has, "Hoc totum hominis meritum, si totam spem suam ponat in Eo Qui totum hominem salvum fecit."—(Translator.)

† There is hardly anything which the Fathers appear more anxious to impress upon us than the truth that our merits are really the gifts of God. Thus in his *Confessions* (l. ix. c. 13), St. Augustine writes, "Quisquis Tibi enumerat vera merita sua, quid Tibi enumerat nisi munera Tua?" And in his book, *De Grat. et Lib. arbit.*, c. 6, "Dona sua coronat Deus, non merita tua; si ergo Dei dona sunt bona merita tua, non Deus coronat merita tua tanquam merita tua, sed tanquam dona sua." Also in *De Eccl. Dogmat.*, c. 32, "Tanta est erga omnes homines bonitas Dei ut nostra velit esse merita quae sunt Ipsius dona." Similarly, St. Gregory the Great, "Praeveniente gratia et bona voluntate subsequente, hoc quod omnipotentis Dei donum est fit meritum nostrum" (Super Ezech., h. 9). See also note at page 26, vol. i.—(Translator.)

you shall avoid all danger of spiritual poverty, of ingratitude, and of presumption. The worst kind of poverty is poverty of merit, whilst presumption of spirit is but a deceitful show of wealth. Hence the Wise Man prays to the Lord, "Give me neither beggary nor riches." Happy the Church to which are wanting neither merits without presumption, nor presumption without merits! She has indeed grounds whereon to presume, but these grounds are not her own merits. She has merits also, but merits which make her worthy of reward, not such as would lead her to presume. Is not the very fact of her not presuming on anything of her own real merit and a title to reward? Therefore the less she presumes on her own merits the more safely does she presume on the merits of Christ. Nor is it possible that she should be confounded in her glorying, who has so many motives for glorying. For "the mercies of the Lord are many" and "the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever."

Why, my brethren, may not she glory in security since "mercy and truth have met each other" to testify to her glory? Therefore, whether she says, "My Beloved to me," or whether she says, "With expectation I have waited for the Lord," or, "The Lord is careful for me," or in fine whatever other expressions of this kind she makes use of, which appear to signify in the same way a certain special love and singular favour on the part of God for His Spouse; she believes that there is none of all these utterances which does not truly apply to herself.\* And well she may,

\* "Nihil horum a se alienum putabit." This seems to be an echo of Terence's line, "Homo sum, et nihil humanum a me alienum puto."—(Translator.)

considering that she has such solid reason for presuming in the Lord's free choice of her, particularly as she beholds no other Spouse, no rival Church for whose sake the divine pledges, which cannot fail, are to be fulfilled. Hence it is evident that the Church has no hesitation at all in appropriating to herself the prerogatives and graces of the promise. But even with regard to the individual soul, provided that she is holy and spiritual, the question may be reasonably asked, whether she also has not the right to presume in these matters, at least to a certain extent? It seems evident enough that no single soul, however far advanced in holiness she may be, can lay claim to all the privileges and promises appertaining to the universal Church, for the sake of which all things are done. It will consequently be no easy matter, as I think, if indeed it is not altogether impossible, to discover how such presumption, even within limits, can be lawful for any individual. Hence I judge it necessary to reserve this investigation for another discourse. For I am unwilling to enter upon so difficult a disputation, the issue whereof I cannot tell, until we have first prayed for light on this obscure question to Him "Who openeth and no man shutteth," the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.



## SERMON LXIX.

ON LAWFUL AND UNLAWFUL PRESUMPTION, ON THE  
ZEAL OF JUSTICE AND THE ZEAL OF CHARITY,  
AND ON THE LOVING FAMILIARITY BETWEEN GOD  
AND THE FAITHFUL SOUL.

*“ My Beloved to me, and I to Him.”*

“ My Beloved to me, and I to Him.” In the preceding discourse, my brethren, I regarded these words as belonging to the universal Church, on account of the promises which God has made to her, both of the life which now is and of that which is to come. To-day we have to examine the question as to whether they may not also be assigned to the particular soul. The reason for doubting is that the individual, as it seems, cannot justly appropriate what it is lawful for the community to lay claim to, and no one member of the Church has apparently the right to represent in any way the whole. If such be the case, then it becomes necessary to refer the words of our text so exclusively to the Church that they shall in no sense be applicable to individuals ; and not these words alone, but also all similar expressions which appear to contain great and special privileges, for example, “ With expectation I have waited for the Lord, and He hath attended to me,” and the other passages which I spoke of in my last sermon. But should anyone maintain that the member is entitled to a participation in the privileges of the body, I shall not contradict him. Yet it will be necessary to make distinctions. For not all the

children of the Spouse share in their mother's prerogatives. The Church of God has certainly her spiritual sons, who not only live faithfully but also "deal confidently in her," who converse with the Lord as with a friend, their own conscience bearing them witness that they are always seeking His glory. Who are these favoured souls? That is God's secret. But hear now from me what kind you yourselves ought to become if you desire to be numbered amongst the special friends of God. And I shall speak not as one who has already enjoyed, but only as one longing to enjoy, the experience of the things I am discussing. Give me a man who loves nothing except God and whatever is for God's sake deserving of love; a man for whom "to live is Christ" and has been for a long time; who, whether at work or repose, equally endeavours to "set the Lord always in his sight"; whose dominant desire, yea, rather, whose single desire, is to walk ever cautiously with the Lord his God, and whose grace is adequate to the accomplishment of this desire—give me, I say, such a soul, and I, at all events, will not pronounce her to be unworthy of the heavenly Bridegroom's attention, of the regard of the Divine Majesty, of the favour of the Supreme Lord, of the Sovereign Ruler's solicitous care. And should she, like St. Paul, "have a mind to glory" on account of these things, she certainly "shall not be foolish." "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" only. In this way, therefore, the individual member may appropriate to himself the same privileges which the whole body lays claim to. Nevertheless, there are not the same grounds for the presumption of one as for the presumption of all.

The Church, as a holy society, bases her confidence upon the reasons given above, that of the faithful soul rests on the two following considerations. First, her Bridegroom, in the absolute simplicity of His Divine Nature, has the power to regard many as if they were but one, and one again as if many. His attention is not multiplied according to the multiplicity of its objects, nor confined by solicitude for a few. It is neither divided by diversity, nor engrossed by singularity, nor disquieted by cares, nor perturbed or agitated by solicitude. For it is given to each without being restricted, and given to all without being distracted. The second motive of the soul's confidence is a certain consolation, the experience of which is exceedingly delightful but also exceedingly rare. So great is the condescension of the Word, so great is the benevolence of the Father towards a rightly affected, well-ordered soul—although such dispositions are themselves but the Father's gift and the Word's creation—that after preventing and preparing her with Their graces and blessings, They even deign to honour her with Their presence. Yea, not only do They come to her, but They condescend so far as to make Their abode with her. For it is not enough for Their love that They make Themselves known, unless They also give themselves to be enjoyed unreservedly. But what are we to understand by the Word's coming to the soul? He comes, no doubt, by instructing her in wisdom. And by the Father's coming? The soul may be assured that she has the Father for her Guest when she feels herself excited to such a love of wisdom as shall enable her to say with truth, "I have become a lover of her beauty." Love belongs to the Father; and, therefore,



the infusion of love is a proof of the Father's presence in the soul. What would be the effect of instruction without love? It could only inflate us. And what could love do without instruction? It would simply lead us astray. They certainly had been led astray of whom the Apostle testified, "I bear them witness that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." It is not becoming that the Bride of the Word and of the Wisdom of God should be herself without wisdom; whilst the Father would not endure her if He found her puffed up. For "the Father loveth the Son," "and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of" the Word He is prepared to cast down and destroy immediately, whether by the zeal which He infuses, or by that wherewith He chastises, of which the former proceeds from His mercy and the latter from His justice. Would to God that I were taught to renounce pride, but rather in the school of grace than in that of judgment! "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy fury," as of old Thou didst rebuke the angel who inflated himself in heaven; "nor chastise me in Thy wrath," as Thou didst chastise the first man in paradise. Both alike "meditated iniquity," both alike aimed at supereminence, the former ambitioning supereminence of power, the latter desiring supereminence of knowledge. Eve, in her folly, gave credit to the serpent who came to seduce her with the promise, "You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Already he had seduced himself, for he had persuaded himself that he should be "like the Most High." Now "if anyone think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

But both of these heights were levelled down. Man

however received the more merciful judgment, because his Judge was He Who "ordereth all things in measure, and number, and weight." For whereas the angel was punished and condemned in His fury (*furore*), man had experience only of His anger (*ira*), escaping His fury altogether, according to what we read in the Prophet Habacuc, where he says, speaking to the Lord, "When Thou art angry Thou wilt remember mercy." Therefore, even unto this day, the seed of Adam are children, not of fury, but only of wrath. Were I not generated a child of wrath I should not need to be regenerated. But had I been generated a child of fury, regeneration would not have been granted me, or, if granted, would not have profited me. Do you wish, my brethren, to behold a child of fury? If you "saw Satan like lightning falling from heaven," that is to say, cast headlong down by the force of the divine fury, then you would understand something of the fury of the Lord. He was not then "mindful of His mercy." For it is only when He is angry that He will "remember mercy," not when His wrath has been provoked to fury. Woe to the children of infidelity, even to such as belong to Adam's race, who, born children of wrath, have by their diabolical obstinacy and to their own destruction, converted anger into fury, and the rod of discipline into the bludgeon, into the sledge-hammer of vengeance. As the Apostle says, they are "treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath." Now, wrath which is treasured up and accumulated, what is it but fury? They have committed the sin of the devil, and shall be struck down by the same doom as the devil. Woe also, yet a milder woe, to certain of the sons of wrath, who, after being born children of wrath, have not

lived long enough to be reborn children of grace. For dying soon after their birth, they must now remain for ever children of wrath. I say children of wrath, not children of fury, because as it is most pious to believe, so also does our natural human sympathy tearfully anticipate that their sufferings are very light (*mitissimae*), as inflicted for no personal offence, but for a fault entirely inherited from others.\*

The devil therefore, was judged in fury, because his "iniquity was found unto hatred." Man's iniquity, on the contrary, was only found unto wrath, and hence he is chastised only in wrath. Thus every kind of self-exaltation has been brought low, as well the pride that inflates as the ambition which lifts up only in order to hurl down,—brought low by the Father, Who is zealous for the prerogatives of His Son. For both angel and man offered injury to the Son, the former by an usurpation of power against Him Who is the Power of God, the latter by presuming to seek for knowledge elsewhere than from Him Who is the Wisdom of God. "O Lord, who is like to Thee?" Surely

\* It is the teaching of many of the Fathers, including St. Augustine, that the souls of infants who die without baptism are punished eternally in the fire of hell, although much less severely than those condemned for personal sin. This view, however, has been for long losing favour, especially since the time of St. Thomas, who lent his authority to the more indulgent doctrine that the pain of loss (deprivation of the Beatific Vision) is the only penalty due to original sin. A second question is whether such purely negative reprobation is a cause of sadness to the soul. Bellarmin and some others answer in the affirmative; but the majority with St. Thomas hold the negative opinion. There are even many authors of great name, such as Lessius, Perrone, and Mazzella, who maintain that souls excluded from the Beatific Vision for original sin alone shall enjoy the same natural beatitude as would be the reward of our obedience to the natural law if we had not been elevated by grace to the supernatural order.—(Translator.)



none but He Who is the Brightness of Thy Glory and the Figure of Thy Substance : none surely but He Who is Thine own Image. He alone is in the Form of Thy Divinity. He alone "thought it not robbery to be equal to" Thee. How indeed could He be otherwise than equal to Thee, since Thou and He are but One ? He is seated, not at Thy Feet, but at Thy Right Hand. And how can any creature have the presumption to usurp the place of Thine Only-Begotten ? Let the invader be hurled down ! He has set his seat on high : let his "chair of pestilence" be overturned ! Again, who is he that "teacheth man knowledge" ? Is it not Thou, O "Key of David," Who openest to whom Thou pleasest, and shuttest against whom Thou pleasest ? And without the Key, how could anyone dare attempt to enter, rather say, to intrude into the divine treasury of wisdom and knowledge ? "He that entereth not by the door, the same is a thief and a robber." Peter therefore shall enter, because Peter has received the keys. Yet not alone shall he enter. For, if he so please, he may introduce me with him, as he may also exclude another, according to his pleasure, by the wisdom and authority bestowed upon him from above.

And what are these keys, my brethren ? They are the power of opening, and the power of shutting, and the power of discriminating between those who are to be admitted and those who are to be excluded. It is not in the serpent that the "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" are laid up, but in Christ. Therefore the serpent could not communicate the wisdom which he did not himself possess ; but it was truly communicated by Him by Whom it was truly possessed.

Neither was the serpent possessed of power, since he had not received it ; but Peter was a real holder of power, because he had really received it. It was given by Christ and given to Peter. Nor was the Apostle inflated with his knowledge or elated with his power. Why so ? Because for neither of these endowments did he “ exalt himself against the knowledge of God,” since he had sought to obtain neither of them without the knowledge of God, very different from him, who “ in His sight hath done deceitfully, that his iniquity might be found unto hatred.” How, I ask, could Peter have obtained anything without the knowledge of God, since he distinctly tells us that he is an apostle “ according to the foreknowledge of God the Father ” ? Thus much in connexion with that zeal which I have represented God as exercising against the two prevaricators, the angel and man ; for in both He found iniquity. And I have endeavoured to show how, in His wrath or in His fury, He has “ pulled down every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.”

But I must now return to the zeal of His mercy, that is, the zeal which He infuses into us rather than exercises Himself. For the zeal which He exercises is the zeal of His justice, as I have already explained ; and the examples I have cited of those transgressors on whom this zeal has been so terribly exercised, are doubtless sufficient to alarm us. Therefore will I fly from the face of the fury of the Lord whither I may find for myself a place of refuge : I will fly to that zeal of piety which burns so sweetly, yet so powerfully atones. Shall it be said that charity atones not ? Nay, but it does atone, and with power. I have even read of it

that it "covereth a multitude of sins." I ask further : has it not the power and the sufficiency to bring down and humble every kind of "haughtiness of the eye" and of the heart? Most assuredly it has. For "charity is not puffed up, is not ambitious." If therefore the Lord Jesus would vouchsafe to visit me, or rather to come into my heart, not in the zeal of His fury, nor yet in the zeal of His wrath, but in charity and in the spirit of sweetness, "jealous of me with the jealousy of God"—for what is so much God's as charity? although in truth it is rather God Himself than something that belongs to Him—if, I say, He would condescend to come into me, thus meek and loving, I should thereby understand that He has come not alone, but that His Father also is with Him. What indeed can be so like the Father as such condescension? Hence, He has been called not only the Father of the Word, but also the "Father of mercies," because, namely, it is His very nature "to have pity always and to spare." If ever, like the disciples journeying to Emmaus, I perceive that my understanding has been "opened" and enabled to comprehend the meaning of Holy Scripture; or if I feel the words of wisdom welling up, so to speak, from the bottom of my heart; or if I am conscious of an infusion of heavenly light, in which mysteries are made manifest; or finally, if the mighty breast of heaven seems to bend upon my soul and to pour down upon my mind a more than usually abundant rain of holy meditations, then, my brethren, I can have no doubt of the Bridegroom's presence within me. For such spiritual treasures all belong to the Word, and it is of His fullness that we receive them. But if at the same time I feel in my inmost soul a plentiful



outpouring of the grace of humble devotion, so that I not only know the truth, but love it also, and from this love conceive a kind of spontaneous hatred and contempt for vanity, lest I should be inflated with knowledge or lifted up by the frequency of divine visitations—I then realise that I am being treated with fatherly affection, and I cannot resist the persuasion that the Father Himself is at hand. And if thereafter, so far as it depends upon me, I persevere in corresponding faithfully to this grace of condescension by worthy sentiments and worthy actions, so that I may be able to affirm with St. Paul, “His grace in me hath not been void,”—I may now feel assured that the Father Who fosters me, and the Son Who instructs me, have not only come to me, but have even taken up Their abode with me.

How great a grace of holy familiarity between the Word and the soul must spring out of this divine indwelling! And from such familiarity how great a grace of confidence! There is no longer any reason that I can see why a soul thus privileged should not presume to say, “My Beloved to me.” For in her consciousness that she loves the Bridegroom, and loves Him ardently, she has convincing evidence that He loves her also and loves her with similar ardour. In like manner with regard to her devoted attention to Him, her solicitude and carefulness for His glory, her laborious and diligent service, her zeal, which keeps her constantly and eagerly on the alert, ever anxious to know “how she may please God”—she has no doubt at all that He, in His turn, is looking after her interests with the same watchful assiduity; because she remembers His promise, “With what measure you

mete, it shall be measured to you again." Nevertheless the Spouse in her prudence is careful to claim for her own part only the return of love, recognising that she has been prevented by the grace of her Bridegroom. Therefore it is that she puts in the first place the giving which belongs to Him, when she says, "My Beloved to me, and I to Him." Thus we see how from her own dispositions and sentiments towards God she comes to know what His feelings are for her. Such in truth is the case. It is God's love for the soul that excites the soul's love for Him; it is His antecedent attention to her that makes her attentive to Him; it is His solicitude for her that is the cause of her solicitude for Him. For once the soul is enabled to "behold the glory of the Lord with open face," by some, I know not what, affinity of nature, she is immediately and of necessity conformed thereto and "transformed into the same image." From what has been said, we may gather that, such as we make and present ourselves to God, such also will He exhibit Himself to us. This is what the Psalmist means where he says to the Lord, "With the holy Thou wilt be holy and with the innocent man Thou wilt be innocent." And why may we not say with equal truth, "With the loving Thou wilt be loving, with the reposeful Thou wilt be reposeful, with the attentive Thou wilt be attentive, and with the solicitous Thou wilt be solicitous." ? Indeed He has Himself declared, "I love them that love Me; and they that in the morning early watch for Me, shall find Me."

You observe, my brethren, how He gives us here an assurance that we possess His love when we offer Him ours. But not only this. He also tells us that He

watches with solicitude over our interests whenever He perceives us to be solicitous for His. Art thou vigilant in His service? Then He also is vigilant in thine. Rise up in the night to begin thy vigils, hasten as much as thou pleasest, even anticipating the matin hour: thou shalt not be beforehand with Him, thou shalt find Him already waiting for thee. In this emulation of charity thou wouldst be acting rashly wert thou to attribute to thyself either precedency or superiority. For He loves thee more than thou lovest Him, and His love for thee is older than thy love for Him. If the Spouse knows all this, yea rather because she knows all this, art thou surprised to hear her glorying that the infinite Majesty of God, neglecting, as it were, every other interest, attends exclusively to her, and that she in her turn disengages herself from all created objects in order to devote herself to Him with her whole heart's affection? I must now bring my discourse to an end. But before concluding, I want to speak one last word, astonishing indeed, yet strictly true, for the benefit of those amongst you who may be called spiritual persons. What I desire to say is this: The soul that sees God beholds Him so intent upon herself as if she were the sole object of His solicitude. Hence the confidence with which she affirms that her Beloved attends to her and she to Him; for she also can have regard to nothing except to Him and to herself. How good Thou art, O Lord, to the soul that seeks Thee! Thou runnest to meet her, Thou dost embrace her, Thou revealest Thyself to her as her own Bridegroom, Thou Who art her Lord, yea Who art over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.



## SERMON LXX.

### ON THE MYSTICAL LILIES AMONG WHICH THE BRIDEGROOM LOVES TO FEED.

*“ My Beloved to me and I to Him, Who feedeth among the lilies.”*

“ My Beloved to me, and I to Him Who feedeth among the lilies.” Surely now, my brethren, none can accuse the Spouse of pride or presumption for that she claims to have formed a love-alliance with One “ Who feedeth among the lilies.” Even were He represented as feeding among the stars, the very fact of His feeding at all brings Him down so low that I cannot understand how friendship or familiarity with such a One should be esteemed anything great. For in truth the word “ feeding ” suggests to our minds nothing but what is mean and ignoble. But now, when He is described as feeding “ among the lilies,” this additional humiliation removes and excludes from the words of the Spouse every suspicion of arrogance. What, I ask, are lilies ? According to Christ they are but the “ grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven.” Can this Bridegroom, then, Who thus feeds on grass as if He belonged to the flocks or to the herds—can He be so very great and exalted ? He does indeed belong to the flocks, for He is a Lamb ; and to the herds also, because He is a “ Fatted Calf.” But perhaps you have been observant enough to notice that what is mentioned here is not the food itself, but rather the place of feeding. For the Bridegroom is said to feed, not on, but “ among

the lilies." Be it so. Therefore He does not eat grass like an ox. Nevertheless, He walks through the grass and reclines upon the grass, just as one of the common throng, and what mark of greatness can there be in that? And what glory is it to the Spouse to have for her Beloved One Who has nothing to distinguish Him from the multitude of men? Even in this, the literal sense, we can see with how much modesty, prudence and circumspection, the Spouse speaks, "ordering her words with judgment," and concealing the glory of divine things under the humble veil of common language.

Notwithstanding what her words seem to imply, she is very far from ignorant that He Whom she represents as feeding amongst the lilies is the Same Who, as Shepherd, provides food for the flock, and that He Who abides amid the fields, is one with Him Who reigns beyond the stars. But she finds greater pleasure in speaking of what appears lowly in her Bridegroom, no doubt, as I have observed before, on account of her love for humility; but also, and more especially, because it was then He became her Beloved when He began to feed as one of the flock. And His beginning to feed was not only the time, but it was also the cause of His becoming her Beloved. For in His glory and sublimity He is her Lord, but her Beloved in His humility; He rules as King beyond the sky, but loves as a Bridegroom amongst the lilies. Even whilst throned above the firmament, He loved her still, for, being Love Itself, He can never and nowhere cease from loving. Yet until He came down to the lilies, until He was found feeding amongst the lilies, His affection was not reciprocated, He was not a Beloved.

What? Was He not loved by the patriarchs and prophets? Certainly He was. But not before they also had found Him in their prescience feeding among the lilies. For evidently they must have seen Him of Whom they had foresight in the spirit, unless we be so stupid as to suppose that they who see in the Spirit see nothing at all. But if they see nothing why are they called seers, a name given to the prophets in Holy Scripture? It was in consequence of this spiritual foresight that they desired to see Him also in the way in which they have not seen Him. For surely they could not have even entertained the desire to see Him in the flesh if they had not already foreseen Him in the Spirit. But I ask with St. Paul, "Were all prophets?" As if forsooth all had the desire to see Christ in the flesh or as if all had the faith. They indeed who foresaw Him in the Spirit were either prophets themselves, or believers in the words of the prophets, and their faith was their foresight. For I do not consider it an error to suppose that they who see by faith see in the Spirit as well as those who see by the prophetic faculty.

In this way, then, it was His coming down to the lilies and the humility which He showed in deigning to feed among the lilies as if He were but one of the flock, whereas He was the Shepherd of all,—it was these acts of condescension, I say, which caused Him to be beloved. For how could He have been loved until He had made Himself known? Very properly, therefore, does the Spouse, in making mention of her Beloved, refer also to that condescension to which she owes both her knowledge and her love of Him. As regards the feeding among the lilies, it is to be "spiritually



examined." To conceive of it in a material sense would be altogether absurd. It is also incumbent on me to explain, as well as I can, what are these spiritual lilies. And furthermore I shall have to show you what it is which the Beloved feeds on among the lilies, whether it be the lilies themselves, or some other herbs or flowers concealed amongst the lilies. The difficulty I find in grappling with these questions is to understand why He is represented rather as feeding like one of the flocks than as pasturing the flock like the Shepherd. For that He pastures His flock is evident enough, and quite in keeping with His dignity. But to feed like a sheep is a thing so unworthy, so suggestive of weakness, that it seems hardly possible, without irreverence, to ascribe such an action to the Majesty of God, even in a spiritual sense. Nor do I remember to have noticed any other verse of this Canticle, so far as we have gone, where the Beloved is described as feeding with the sheep; although I have a recollection, as doubtless you have also, of a passage wherein He appears as the Shepherd pasturing His flock. I allude to the place in which the Spouse desires to be shown where He feeds His flock and reposes in the noonday. But here, for the first time, she speaks of Him as feeding Himself, and does not ask, as on the former occasion, to have pointed out to her His place of pasturage. Rather she herself gives us this information, telling us that He "feedeth among the lilies." She knows therefore where He reveals Himself as one of the flock, but not where He appears as the Shepherd. For it is not so easy to attain to objects high in themselves and placed on high, as to such as are low and lying on the earth. The knowledge of where the Shepherd

abides is something sublime and sublimely situated, to which not even the Spouse has been yet given free access.

Therefore, my brethren, He Who is the Shepherd of the whole flock, emptied Himself even to the extent of feeding like one of His own sheep ; He was found among the lilies ; He was seen by the Church ; by appearing needy Himself, He won the heart of His needy Spouse ; and He became her Beloved because He resembled her in poverty. Yet not for this alone, but also on account of His " truth and meekness, and justice." His truth in fulfilling His promises, His meekness in pardoning her sins, His justice in condemning the proud demons together with their chief. Such, therefore, has He revealed Himself in order to win the love of the Spouse, truthful by His nature, meek towards men, and just in behalf of men. O Divine Bridegroom, truly deserving of love, and worthy to be embraced with our whole heart's affection ! What reason has the Church now for hesitating to entrust herself entirely and with all devotion to One so faithful to fulfil His engagements, so merciful to forgive, so righteous to defend ? Before mentioning His truth, His meekness, and His justice, the Psalmist said to Him, " With Thy comeliness and Thy beauty set out, proceed prosperously." Whence has He this comeliness and beauty ? From the lilies, I have no doubt. What is more beautiful than a lily ? Nothing surely. Neither can there be anything more comely than the Bridegroom. What, then, are these lilies to which He is indebted for the " loveliness of His beauty " ? " Proceed prosperously and reign," continues the Psalmist, " because of truth, and meekness, and justice." Here you behold the spiritual

lilies, lilies, I say, which have sprung up out of the earth, which glitter above the earth, which in their fragrance surpass the sweetness of aromatic spices. It is, therefore, among these lilies that the Bridegroom loves to feed, and it is certainly to them is due all His beauty and comeliness. Without the lilies, there was "neither beauty in Him nor comeliness," as the Prophet speaks, that is to say, considered according to the weakness of the flesh.

Truth, my brethren, is a beautiful lily, resplendent in its brightness, excelling in its odour. For it is the "brightness of eternal life," the splendour and the image of the Substance of God. Yes, it is indeed a lily, one which the earth produced after receiving the new benediction, and which it "prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to the revelation of the gentiles". So long as the earth lay under the primeval curse, it yielded only thorns and thistles. But now, at the blessing of the Lord, "truth is sprung out of the earth," as a most beautiful "flower of the field" and a "lily of the valleys." You can know this lily from its brightness, which, immediately after the first appearance of the flower, dazzled in the night the eyes of the shepherds, as we read in the Gospel, "And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them." And justly does the Evangelist say "the brightness of God," because it was not the glory of the angel that shone through the darkness, but the glory of the lily. The angel was present to the shepherds, whereas the light of the lily was visible from Bethlehem. You may recognise the lily also from its fragrance, whereby it made itself known even to those who lived far remote.



The Magi indeed beheld the star, but men of their gravity would never have followed such a guide, had they not been also attracted by the sweet odour of the new-born lily. Oh, truly a lily is truth, thus vivifying faith, with its perfume and with its splendour illuminating the mind! Turn your gaze now, my brethren, to the Person of Christ, Who says in the Gospel, "I am the truth." And consider how close is the analogy between the truth of God and the lily of the valleys. Perhaps you have not observed it before, but let me now call your attention to the fact that from the centre of this flower there springs a number of little golden rods or filaments, which are surrounded by the petals of dazzling white, beautifully and fittingly arranged in the form of a crown. You have here symbolised the gold of Christ's Divinity, crowned with the purity of His Human Nature, that is to say, you have Christ Himself "in the diadem wherewith His mother hath crowned Him." For in the diadem wherewith His Father hath crowned Him, He inhabiteth light inaccessible, and in that we cannot behold Him so long as we abide in the flesh. But of this later.

Meantime, His truth is for us a lily. But so too is His meekness. Yea, His meekness is an excellent lily, possessing the whiteness of innocence and the good odour of hope, "for there are remains for the peaceable man," as the Psalmist says. The man of meekness is a man of strong hope, and not less is he, even here below, a luminous model of social life. Why should I not give the name of lily to a virtue which is redolent of hope and shining with charity? Moreover, if "truth is sprung out of the earth," the same

must be said of meekness. Whoso would call this in question must also doubt the earthly origin of "the Lamb, the Ruler of the earth," the Lamb That was "led to the slaughter" and That "opened not His mouth." But it is not alone truth and meekness that are sprung out of the earth, for justice has proceeded from the same source, according to the Prophet Isaias, who says, "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just; let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Saviour, and let justice spring up together." Nor can you doubt that justice is a lily when you recall the words of Holy Scripture, "The just shall spring forth like the lily and shall flourish for ever before the Lord." Therefore this is not the lily "which to-day is and to-morrow shall be cast into the oven," since the lily of justice is to flourish for ever. And it "shall flourish before the Lord," with Whom "the just shall be in everlasting remembrance, he shall not fear the evil hearing," that evil hearing, namely, whereby the reprobate shall be commanded to go into the oven of eternal fire. Moreover, is there any soul on which the brightness of this lily does not shine, excepting indeed such as dislike it? For it is a sun, yet not that sun which is made "to rise upon the good and the bad." Its light is certainly never seen by those who shall say, "The light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us." They, however, have seen it, all to whom it has been said, "But unto you that fear My name, the sun of justice shall rise." Therefore, the brightness of this lily only shines for the just; its perfume is diffused even to the wicked, but not for their advantage. Thus, we have heard one of the just

declaring, " We are the good odour of Christ unto God in every place in them that are saved and in them that perish, to the one indeed an odour of death unto death, but to the others an odour of life unto life." Who, even though he be the most abandoned of criminals, does not approve the just man's judgment, however little he may love his way of life? But happy he who condemns not himself in that which he approves. For he is condemned by his own judgment whosoever does not love the justice which he approves. Hence such a one evidently is miserable rather than happy, as being self-condemned. For can there be anyone more miserable than the man to whom the odour of life is a herald not of life but of death? Nay, not the herald but the bearer of death.

The Beloved, no doubt, has many more lilies besides the three which we have happened upon in the Psalmist, namely, truth, meekness, and justice. But each of you can now, without difficulty, find out others like these for himself in the garden of so luxurious a Bridegroom. He abounds and superabounds with such lilies. Who is capable of enumerating them all? For, in truth, there are as many lilies as there are virtues. But what limit or measure can the virtues have in Him Who is " Lord of virtues " ? Now if the plenitude of virtues is in Christ, so too must be the plenitude of lilies. And perhaps this is the very reason why He has called Himself a lily, because, namely, He is entirely surrounded and covered all over with lilies, and everything that belongs to Him is a lily; such as His conception, His birth, His life, His speech, His miracles, His sacraments, His passion, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension. Which of these is not



lily-white and redolent of the lily's sweet odour? As regards His conception, so great was the brilliancy of the heavenly light which shone forth in this mystery from the abundance of the descending Spirit, that not even the holy virgin herself would have been able to endure it, had she not been overshadowed by the power of the Most High. His birth also borrowed lustre from His mother's unspotted virginity, His life from the whiteness of His innocence, His speech from the truth of His utterances, His miracles from the purity of His Heart, His sacraments from the mystery of piety which they embodied, His passion from the voluntariness of His sufferings, His death from His liberty to die or not to die, His resurrection from the fortitude of the martyrs, His ascension from the fulfilment of His promises. And how good an odour of faith from each of these lilies, perfuming even our own times and hearts, who have not witnessed their brightness! "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed." My portion in the lilies is the odour of life which proceeds from them. Using faith as a suitable instrument, I inhale that sweet perfume through my spiritual nostrils, and the more abundantly the more numerous the lilies; and thus I temper the bitterness of my banishment and at the same time am constantly renewing in my heart the love and the longing for the heavenly home-land.

Some of the companions of the Bridegroom have also their lilies, yet not in abundance. For all of them have received the Spirit in measure, and in measure His virtues and gifts. He alone has unlimited possession to Whom the Spirit entirely belongs. It is one thing to have lilies, but quite another to have nothing

except lilies. Show me, if you can, a single one amongst the sons of captivity who is so holy and innocent that he is able to cover all his land with flowers, and with such flowers. It is certain that "even the infant of one day is not without stain upon the earth." \* He is reputed a great man who can grow in his garden even three or four lilies amid the prolific crop of thorns and thistles which has long occupied the ground, as the fruit of the ancient malediction. But as for me, who am so poor, I shall count myself fortunate if ever I succeed in clearing of this most vile growth of sins and passions, and rendering fit for cultivation, even so much of my little plot as may suffice for the production of a single lily. Perhaps then He who feeds among the lilies, will not disdain to feed occasionally even with me.

But I have erred, my brethren, in speaking as if one lily would suffice. Out of the poverty of my heart my mouth has spoken. One is certainly not enough. Two at the very least are required. I mean the lily of continence and the lily of innocence, of which the one without the other shall not avail to save us. It will be useless for me to invite the Bridegroom to either of them alone, because He is said to feed not *on the lily* but *among the lilies*. I will therefore strive my best to produce several lilies, lest He should take offence at the poverty of one, since He will feed only among the

\* "Nec infans certe unius diei sine sorde est super terram." This seems to be a compendious translation of Job xiv. 4, 5, as read in the Greek, "τίς γὰρ καθαρὸς ἔσται ἀπὸ ῥύπου; ἀλλ' οὐθεὶς, ἐάν καὶ μία ἡμέρα ὁ βίος αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς." The Vulgate Version is entirely different, "quis potest mundum facere de immundo conceptum semine? Nonne Tu qui solus es? Breves dies hominis sunt." St. Augustine has a reading (*Confess.*, l. i. c. 7) identical in sense with that of St. Bernard. —(Translator.)

lilies, and so should "depart in anger from His servant." Accordingly, I will first of all apply myself to the cultivation of the lily of innocence. If to this I shall be able to add continence of life, I shall regard myself as quite rich in the possession of lilies. But I am a very king, if only to these two I can manage to unite the third lily of patience. Absolutely speaking, innocence and continence would be sufficient. Nevertheless, since they may fail in temptation, for the "life of man upon earth is a warfare," patience also is clearly necessary, for this is the protector of the other two. I have no doubt that if the Divine Lover of lilies comes and finds us adorned with all three, He will not now refuse to feed amongst us and to eat with us the pasch. For in the two first, namely, continence and innocence, He shall discover an abundance of sweetness, and in the third a great security. But in what sense He, Who is the Feeder of all, may be said to feed among the lilies, I shall endeavour to explain on another occasion. What I have said in the present discourse has made it clear, I hope, not only that the Bridegroom is found among the lilies, but also that He is never found away from the lilies; since everything that appertains to Him is a lily, and He is Himself the "Lily of the Valleys," the Spouse of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.



## SERMON LXXI.

ON THE COLOUR AND ODOUR OF THE SPIRITUAL LILIES,  
AND ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE UNITY  
OF NATURE IN THE FATHER AND THE SON, AND  
THE UNITY OF WILL IN CREATOR AND CREATURE.

*“ My Beloved to me, and I to Him, Who feedeth among the lilies.”*

The present discourse begins, my brethren, at the point where we left off in the last. The Bridegroom, as I was saying, is a lily, yet not a “lily among thorns.” For He has no thorns “Who did no sin.” But He has pronounced His Spouse to be a “lily among thorns”; and if even she should affirm that she has no thorns, “she deceiveth herself, and the truth is not in her.” He also declares Himself to be a flower and a lily, but nowhere tells us that He is a “lily among thorns.” On the contrary, He says, “I am the Flower of the field, and the Lily of the valleys.” There is here no mention of thorns; because of all men He is the only one who is not obliged to exclaim with the Psalmist, “I am turned in my anguish whilst the thorn is fastened.” He therefore can never be without lilies Who must ever be without sin; for He is all white and always “beautiful above the sons of men.” Do thou, then, who hearest or readest what I am now saying make it thy care to grow lilies in the garden of thy soul if thou dost wish to have Him for thy Guest, Who abides only among the lilies. Let thy actions, thy aims, and thy desires proclaim themselves lilies by their spiritual whiteness and perfume. For morals,

like material things, have their own colours and odours. And colour and odour are just as distinct from each other in spiritual as in material objects. Conscience is the faculty which judges of moral colours, moral odours are distinguished by fame. "You have made our savour to stink before Pharaoh and his servants," said the "officers of the children of Israel" to Moses and Aaron, speaking of public opinion. Actions derive their colours from a twofold source, namely, the intention of the heart and the judgment of the conscience. Vices are coloured black, virtues white; but in order to determine which is which recourse must be had to the conscience. The word of the Lord concerning the single eye and the evil eye stands firm, because it draws a clear line of demarcation between the morally white and the morally black, and separates the light from the darkness.\* Therefore, whatever proceeds from a pure heart and a good conscience is to be accounted white and virtuous. If, further, it succeeds in coming into good report, it even deserves now to be called a lily, as lacking neither the colour nor the odour of a lily. For although fair fame can add nothing to the intrinsic value of virtue, it certainly enhances its brightness and beauty.

But if the intention of the mind be blemished, the same blemish shall be found in all that comes forth from it. For the branch cannot be healthy when the root is rotten. And therefore we ought not to regard as a lily whatsoever springs from a root so vitiated and inherits its corruption, whether it be action, or speech,

\* "The light of thy body is thy eye; if thy eye be single thy whole body shall be lightsome. But if thy eye be evil thy whole body shall be darksome" (Matt. vi. 22-3).—(Translator.)

or prayer, no matter how favourably opinion may judge of it. The lily's perfume is there indeed, but not the lily's colour. For how can that be called a lily which is discoloured with the stain of an impure intention? Fame has certainly no power to transform into virtue what is declared to be vice by the verdict of conscience. Virtue indeed can be content with the whiteness of a pure intention, even though the odour of fame should be lacking. But the perfume of good report will never be able to supply for the defect of colour in the intention. Nevertheless, the man of virtue will always make it his study, so far as depends on him, to "provide good things not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of men," so that he may be in truth a lily.

But God's forgiveness is also a whiteness of the soul. Hence He says Himself, by His Prophet Isaias, "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool." There is yet another spiritual whiteness, that, namely, which shines in the soul of the man, who shows mercy with cheerfulness. For if you observe him whom the Psalmist describes as an "acceptable man that sheweth mercy and lendeth," does it not seem to you that the very joyousness of his heart has impressed what I may call the splendour of piety on the features of his face, yea, and on the work of his hands? Just as, on the contrary, when one renders a service with sadness and, as it were, by compulsion, there appears both on his action and on his countenance, not a bright, but a black colour. And therefore the Apostle tells us that "God loveth a cheerful giver." Perhaps He also loves the man who gives with sadness?



Certainly not, for the Lord, who "had respect to Abel" on account of the brightness of his good will, turned away His eyes from Cain, because "his countenance had fallen," as the effect, no doubt, of gloominess, and jealousy. Consider here, my brethren, how repulsive must be the colour of melancholy and sadness, since God is thus obliged to avert from it His Face. How the brightness of a cheerful heart enhances the value of a benefit is thus beautifully and elegantly expressed by the poet :—

"The kindly look in worth outweighs  
Whatever gift the hand conveys." \*

Nor is it only the "cheerful giver" whom "God loveth," He also loveth him "that giveth with simplicity." For simplicity is another species of spiritual whiteness. This can be proved from its contrary, because duplicity is a blemish. Indeed it would be more correct to call it a black stain. For in reality what difference is there between duplicity and deceit? Now of the deceitful man the Psalmist says, "In His sight he hath done deceitfully, that his iniquity may be found unto hatred." And therefore, as the same Prophet declares, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile." The Lord Himself, in a few words, comprehends very beautifully the two stains of deceit and sadness, when He says, "Be not as the hypocrites, sad." The Bridegroom, consequently, as being the "Virtue of God" finds His delight in the virtues; and as being the "Lily of the valleys," loves to feed among

\* "Super omnia vultus  
Accessere boni."

Ovid, *Meta*, viii. 677-8.

the lilies ; and as being the " Brightness of eternal life," seeks His pleasure in bright souls.

Perhaps, therefore, when the Spouse speaks of her Beloved as feeding among the lilies, she only wishes to inform us how greatly He is pleased with the whiteness and the fragrance of the virtues. Of old, it is true, He used to " feed among the lilies," even corporally, whilst He reclined at table and took corporal food with Mary and Martha (who were undoubtedly lilies) and at the same time refreshed His Spirit with the devotion and the virtues of these saintly women. Had some prophet come into the room at such a time, or an angel, or any spiritually-minded person, provided he could recognise the Majesty of Him Who was being entertained there, would he not be stupefied at the sight of so much condescension on the part of God, and so much familiarity between Him and the two sisters, holy indeed in soul and body, but still of the earth and of the weaker sex ? And would he not have reason to testify and to say, " I have seen the Bridegroom, not only dwelling, but actually feeding among the lilies " ? In this way, therefore, the Beloved has been found feeding among the lilies in both senses, I mean, according to the flesh and according to the spirit. It seems to me that He also fed the lilies in return, but spiritually. Surely He could not have been fed by them unless they at the same time were being fed by Him. Oh, how He consoled their timidity ! How He rejoiced their humility ! How He enriched and enlivened their devotion ! This makes it plain to you that for Him to be fed is to feed. But consider now if the converse be not equally true, namely, that for Him to feed is to be fed. " God that feedeth me

from my youth until this day," says the holy Patriarch Jacob. Kind Father of the family, Who has solicitous care for the members of His household, especially in the evil days, feeding them in their hunger, providing them with the "bread of life and understanding," and so nourishing them unto immortal vigour! But I have no doubt that in feeding them He also feeds Himself. For the food which He most "gladly eateth" is our progress in virtue. Hence the Prophet declares, "The joy of the Lord is our strength."

It is thus, my brethren, that the Bridegroom feeds Himself by feeding us, and feeds us by feeding Himself; because, namely, whilst He replenishes our souls with spiritual gladness, He at the same time finds pleasure for Himself in our advancement towards perfection. My penitence is His food, my salvation is His food, yea, I myself am His food.\* In the words of the Psalmist, does He not "eat ashes like bread"? But I am ashes, because I am a sinner, and therefore am I eaten by Him. I am masticated when I am reprovèd; I am swallowed when I am instructed; I am undergoing decomposition in the stomach when I begin to change my life; I am digested when I am transformed into His image; I am assimilated when I am conformed to His will. "Wonder not at this," my brethren. The Bridegroom both feeds us and is fed by us in order to unite us the more closely to Himself. Without such reciprocity of relation we should not be perfectly one with Him. For were I to feed on Him whilst He did not feed on me, He, just as now, would appear to be in me, yet I should not truly be in Him. On the other

\* In the third of the "orationes post Missam" in the Cistercian Missal and Breviary occurs the sentence "Cibus meus Christus et ego Ejus."—(Translator.)



hand, if He were to feed on me without my feeding on Him, I could not be said to have Him in myself, although He would still contain me. Thus in neither of these two cases would there be perfect union between us. Therefore, let Him feed on me, so that I may be in Him ; and, conversely, let me feed on Him, so that He may be in me. In this way we shall be fully and firmly united to each other, He abiding in me and I in Him.

Do you wish me, my brethren, to illustrate what I have been saying by an example ? Then lift up your eyes to an instance of unity far more sublime, yet similar to this, the unity of the Word with His Father. Now if the Bridegroom were in the Father in such a manner that the Father would not be likewise in Him, or if the Father were in the Bridegroom in such a manner that the Bridegroom would not be likewise in Him,—I make bold to say it, Their union would come short of perfection, if indeed it deserved to be called union at all. As it is, however, the Word is in the Father, and the Father in the Word. Therefore, the union between Them is in all respects perfect, and the Father and the Word are truly and entirely one. In this way, then, the soul for whom “ it is good to adhere to her God,” must not consider herself perfectly united to Him, until she has perceived that He abides in her and she in Him. Not that she can say, even then, that she is one with God in the same sense in which the Father and the Word are one ; although the Apostle assures us that “ he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” Thus we have Scriptural authority for the union of spirit between God and the soul, but not for any unity of nature. I speak not of myself, who am

only a sinner, but no creature whatever, whether of earth or of heaven, unless one who has taken leave of his senses, will dare to usurp the words of the Only-Begotten and presume to say, "I and the Father are one." On the other hand, dust and ashes though I be, nevertheless, relying on the testimony of Scripture, I should feel not the slightest hesitation in claiming to be one spirit with God, if only I were convinced by indubitable evidence that I adhered to Him, like one of those who abide in charity, and consequently abide in God and have God abiding in them ; because they feed on God and God feeds on them. It is to this kind of union the Apostle refers, as I think, when he says, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." What then ? The Word says, "I am in the Father and the Father is in Me," also, "I and the Father are one," that is, one Nature. Man's claim is less : "I am in God and God is in me, and we are one spirit."

But \* surely the Father and the Son have not to feed on Each Other in order to comprehend Each Other and thus coalesce in a unity of nature ; just as Creator and creature assimilate each other by a species of mutual "manducation," and are thereby rendered one, not indeed in nature, but one in spirit. Far be such a thought from us, my brethren ! For the mutual circuminsession of Father and Son is very different from the mutual indwelling of God and His creature ;

\* According to Horst and Mabillon there are several redundant passages in what follows, which the latter explains by saying that the Saint retouched this part of the sermon after its first publication, and that in later editions the original and the corrected sentences were given as distinct. It may be said, however, that in discussing so abstruse a question a preacher would naturally repeat himself, presenting the same thought in different ways in order to make his meaning the better understood.—(Translator.)

as also the unity which results in the one case is infinitely more perfect than that realised in the other.

This distinction of unions is indicated to us by the diversity of gender in *unus*, the masculine, and *unum*, the neuter. For the Father and the Word are not so one that they can be called *unus*, nor are God and man so one as that we may speak of them as *unum*. "Give occasion to a wise man and wisdom shall be added to him"; and so you, if you be wise, will take this occasion to increase in wisdom. For you may prudently observe that in the first comparison the neuter *unum* signifies a unity of substance or nature, whilst in the second the masculine form *unus*, still expresses unity, but only a unity of spirit, entirely different from the other. That is to say, God and man, although "one spirit," have nevertheless their own distinct natures and essences, whereas the Father and the Son, as you know, are in nature absolutely identified. You see, then, my brethren, that the relation between Creator and creature does not even deserve the name of unity when compared with the unique and sovereign unity between the Divine Persons. For how can you have unity there, where there is plurality of natures, distinction of substances? Nevertheless, the soul that is "joined to the Lord" is called and is truly "one spirit" with Him. Distinction of substances is no obstacle to unity of this kind, which results, not from a confusion of natures, but rather from a conformity of wills. It is in the same sense that many hearts are said to be one heart, and many souls one soul, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, "The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul." Therefore we have unity of spirit where we have conformity of wills.



But what shall I say of that substantial or essential unity of one Divine Person with Another, which does not arise from the coalescence of distinct elements, but has subsisted from all eternity? It is evidently not the effect of any kind of mutual manducation, like the spiritual oneness of God with the soul, because it is not an effect at all. It simply *is*. It is neither a unity of aggregation, nor a unity of composition, nor any other species of unity which cannot be called simply and absolutely one. And not alone have the Father and Son the same Existence, the same Nature, and the same Will, but it is equally true that in Them Existence, Nature, and Will are one and the same thing. For as regards the Divine Persons, there is no distinction whatever between existence and nature, or between will or volition and existence and nature. Therefore we may not say that the unity whereby the Father and the Word are one, results from a confusion of natures, or existences, or wills, because there is no such plurality of elements. Indeed we must not represent it as a product at all, for it simply and eternally *is*. It is not a result in the Nature of God, but belongs to that Nature essentially. The Father and the Son abide Each in the Other in an ineffable, yea, in an incomprehensible manner, as reciprocally Contained and Container. Nevertheless, They contain without dividing, just as, conversely, They are contained without division.\* Accordingly the Church sings in her Office,

“The Father holds the Word entire

As whole the Son contains His Sire.” †

\* “Sane ita capabiles ut non partibiles, ita capaces ut non participes.”

† “In Patre totus Filius,  
Et totus in verbo Pater.”

Hymn for Lauds in Canonical Office.—(Translator.)

The Father is in the Son, in Whom He is always well pleased. The Son is in the Father, from Whom He can never be separated, as He can never cease to be generated. Moreover, it is by charity that God is in man and man in God, according to the testimony of St. John, who says, "He that abideth in charity, abideth in God and God in him." This union is a union of conformity, uniting God and man in one spirit, or rather making them one spirit. But do you not recognise the distinction between it and the substantial unity of the Divine Persons? Surely unity of essence cannot be the same thing as unity or conformity of wills. I have already called your attention to the manner in which this diversity of unity is signified by the grammatical distinction between *unus* and *unum*, how the unity of Father with Son cannot be expressed by the masculine form, *unus*, nor the unity of God and the soul by the neuter, *unum*. The Father and the Word are not so one that They can be called *unus*, because the Father and the Son are not one but two really distinct Persons. Yet They can be called and truly are *unum*, inasmuch as They have not Each His own but one common Nature or Substance. The case is quite contrary as between God and the soul. For their union is not a unity of nature but of will. Therefore they may not be described as one thing (*unum*), although they can be said with truth to be one spirit (*unus*), that is to say, if they are really bound to each other by the bonds of love. But such a unity is produced, as observed before, by conformity of wills, not by any confusion of essences.

From what I have said you understand, I think, not only the distinction but also the inequality of these

unities, one of which is the unity of a single simple Essence, the other the aggregative unity of many distinct essences. What indeed can be more unequal than the unity of one and the unity of many? The different forms of the numeral, *unus* and *unum*, as I have said more than once, enable us to mark this diversity; because whilst *unum* expresses the identity of Essence in the Father and the Son, *unus* designates a unity, not of nature, but of will and affection, between God and His creature. Nevertheless, the Father and the Son may also be called *unus* consistently with truth, provided the numeral is used with a substantive. For instance, we may say that the Persons are one (*unus*) God, one Lord, and so with every other attribute which is absolute and common to all Three, not relative and proper to One. The reason of this is, because They have not Each His own Divinity, or Each His own Majesty, any more than They have Each His own Nature or Essence. For all such things are not distinct or divided, but one and the same in Them, I should rather have said one and the same *with* Them. What is that unity, my brethren, according to which many hearts, as we read, become one heart, and many souls one soul? To my mind it appears even unworthy of the name of unity, as compared with this, which, instead of combining distinct entities, singularly seals the indistinction of one. Singular therefore and sovereign is the unity of the Divine Persons, since it is not constituted by any combination of distinct elements, but has subsisted from everlasting. It has not been formed by the mutual spiritual feeding on Each Other of Father and Son, because it never had a beginning. It is something self-subsisting. Much less



is it to be considered a conjunction of different essences or a harmony of different wills, since there is no such plurality of essences or wills. The Divine Persons, as already remarked, have but one Essence and but one Will. And surely there can be no question of harmony, or conjunction, or composition, or of any other kind of unity presupposing a distinction of parts, where you have only a single object. For conformity of wills at least two wills are required. Similarly, there must be at least two distinct essences for an essential conjunction or coalition. Therefore we must look for neither of these modes of unity in the Father and the Son, because They have one and the same Essence, one and the same Will. Both Essence and Will are one in Them, or rather—to repeat myself—Essence and Will are not only one thing *in* the Persons, but they are also one thing *with* the Persons. Consequently the Father and the Son are really and absolutely one, abiding Each in the Other as incomprehensibly as unchangeably. Nevertheless, if anyone thinks proper to maintain that there is a conformity between the Father and the Son, I will not contradict him, provided he means by this conformity, not a union of distinct wills, but the unity of a single Will.

[But as regards God and the soul, since they subsist and are distinguished with their own proper wills and essences, we must hold that their mutual indwelling is entirely different from the divine circuminsession, and results not from a commingling of natures but from a concord of wills. The unity between them, therefore, is nothing more than the union of wills, the union of charity. It is a blissful unity to experience in oneself, yet unworthy to be called unity, if compared to the unity

of the Divine Persons. The Psalmist knew by experience what this unity was when he exclaimed, "It is good for me to adhere to my God." Yea, very good, provided I adhere to Him perfectly. But where is the man that perfectly adheres to his God, unless it is he who, abiding in God as being loved by God, at the same time draws God into himself by loving Him in return? When, therefore, God and man are completely united to each other, as they are in truth by being incorporated in each other, so to speak, by a perfect, intimate, and mutual love, then I shall have no hesitation in affirming that God abides in man and man in God. Man, however, has abode in God from everlasting, because from everlasting he has been loved by God,—if yet he be one of those who can say with the Apostle, "He hath loved and graced us in His beloved Son before the foundation of the world"; whilst God only begins to abide in man at the moment when He begins to be loved by man. If such is the case, it follows necessarily that man may abide in God even when God does not abide in man. But God does not abide in any man who does not abide in Him. For if a man is not loved of God with the love of election, he may indeed love God for a time, but certainly he cannot abide in love.\* On the other hand, it is possible for one to be loved of God without as yet loving Him in return.

\* "*Manere in dilectione non potest.*" These words must not be taken to mean that the want of perseverance in grace and charity is due to any other cause than the free-will of man, but only that the divine prescience cannot be deceived. God foresees with infallible certainty the state in which each human soul leaves the body. But as it is impossible that what is thus foreknown should not come to pass, so is it impossible for him to continue in charity who in the divine prescience is foredoomed to be lost. See note at p. 249, vol. i.—(Translator.)

Otherwise how can it be true what the Evangelist says, "He hath first loved us"? But when he who has been prevented by love begins at last to reciprocate that love, then, I say, man abides in God and God in man. But as for him who never loves God, it is manifest that he is never loved by God. Consequently, he never abides in God nor God in him. I have spoken all this with the purpose of demonstrating the difference between the unity whereby the Father and the Word are one in Nature, and that which makes God and the soul that is joined to Him one spirit. For if this distinction is not borne in mind, we shall be in danger of regarding the prerogative of the adoptive son as equal to that of the Only-Begotten; because, just as we read of the Word that He is in the Father and the Father in Him, so likewise is it written of the man who abides in charity, that "he abideth in God and God in him."

Having said all I wanted to say on this subject, I must now return to Him "Who feedeth among the lilies," because it was this feeding that occasioned the digression which has led me so far out of my course. As to whether or not the digression was necessary, it is for you, my brethren, to decide. I have already proposed for your consideration two expositions of this passage. I have interpreted the feeding among the lilies to mean either that the Beloved, as being the "Virtue of God," and the "Splendour of His glory," finds His delight in the virtues of the innocent: or that in His mystical body, which is the Church, He receives sinners to pardon, to incorporate whom in Himself "He was made sin" although "He made no sin"; so "that the body of sin might be destroyed,"



in which by their sins they were once "planted together," and that from sinners they might be rendered righteous, "being justified freely by His grace."

I shall now submit to your judgment yet another interpretation, which has suggested itself to my mind. It explains the text satisfactorily, I think, and shall also serve to bring this discourse to a conclusion. The Word of God is Truth, He is also the Bridegroom. You are aware of this. Now attend to what follows. When this Word is heard but not heeded, He remains empty and hungry, as it were, and becomes very sad and querulous, for that He has been uttered to no profit or advantage. On the other hand, let compliance be yielded, and now does He not seem to you to have grown, in a certain sense, large and corpulent, as if He had fed Himself full on the fruits of obedience and the produce of justice, because hearing has been followed by action? Hence we hear Him in the Apocalypse saying to us, "Behold I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear My voice and open to Me the door, I will come unto him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." This interpretation is also supported, as it seems, by the words of the Lord, where He says through His Prophet Isaias, speaking of the Eternal Word, "My Word, Which shall go forth from My Mouth, shall not return to Me void, but It shall do whatsoever I please, and shall prosper in the things for which I sent It." Mark the expression, "It shall not return to Me void." As if He should say, "My Word shall not return to Me hungry, but, prospering in all things, He shall be filled with the virtuous actions of those who will obey Him from love." Even in ordinary human speech, our words are

then said to be fulfilled (*impletus*) when they have been united to action. As if it were intended to imply that so long as they remain unwedded to deeds, they are empty and lean, and, in a sense, suffering from hunger.

But listen to the Divine Word Himself telling us with what kind of food He is nourished. "My meat," He says, "is to do the will of Him That sent Me." Here, my brethren, you have the word of the Word plainly indicating that good works are His food, if yet He can find them among the lilies, that is to say, among the virtues. For He Who only "feedeth among the lilies" of the virtues, will not so much as touch any food He may discover apart from them, no matter how good it appears. Thus, for instance, He will not accept an alms-deed from the hand of the robber or the usurer, no, nor even from the hand of the hypocrite, who causes the trumpet to sound before him, whenever he gives an alms, "that he may be honoured by men." Neither will He ever hear the prayer of them "who love to pray in the corners of the streets that they may be seen by men." For the prayer of the transgressor "shall be an abomination" to Him. Vainly also dost "thou offer thy gift at the altar" if "thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee." The Lord had no regard for the offerings of Cain. Why? Because he walked not blamelessly with his brother. According to the testimony of the holy Prophet Isaias, He abominates the Sabbath, and the new moons, and the sacrifices of the Jews. He even protests openly that His "soul hateth" them; and He asks, "When you came before Me, who required these things at your hands?" In my

opinion their hands did not smell of the lilies, and therefore He "Who feedeth among the lilies," and not among the thorns, refused to accept any gifts from them. Why should I not say that their hands were rather bristling with thorns than covered with lilies, the hands of them to whom the same Prophet addressed the reproach, "Your hands are full of blood"? The hands of Esau were hairy (*pilosae*) as we read, and so hairy that they appeared thorny (*spinosa*). Hence he was not admitted to minister before the Holy One.

I am afraid that even amongst ourselves, my brethren, there are some whose gifts the Bridegroom does not accept, because they are not redolent of the lilies. For if "in the day of your fast your own will is found," such a fast cannot be acceptable to the Bridegroom, such a fast can give Him no pleasure, inasmuch as it savours not of the lily of obedience, but rather of the vice of self-love. And I believe that this remark will apply not alone to our fasting, but equally to our silence, to our watching, to our prayer, to our lecture, to our manual labour, in short, to all our monastic observances, if our own will be found in them, instead of obedience to the will of our superior. These exercises although good in themselves, yet, as the fruit of self-will, seem to me altogether unworthy of being reckoned among the lilies, that is to say, among the virtues. And he that performs them thus shall hear from the Prophet, as the Jews of old, "Is this such a service as I have chosen? saith the Lord"; and this also, "In the day of thy good works thine own will was found." How great an evil, then, must self-will be, seeing that it makes your good works not good for you! It is therefore necessary that these good works



should be likewise lilies, because He " Who feedeth among the lilies " will taste nothing that has been defiled with self-will. For He is Wisdom that " reacheth everywhere by reason of her purity, and no defiled thing cometh into her." Therefore the Bridegroom loves to feed among the lilies, that is, among hearts that are clean and pure. But how long will He feed ? " Till the day break and the shadows retire." We have now come to a dense and shady wood, dark with the depth of its mystery. Let us wait for the clear daylight before we attempt to enter. For whilst I have been discoursing at greater length than usual, lo ! the day has declined, and against our will we are compelled to leave the lilies. For myself, I am not conscious of the least fatigue after speaking so long, because the fragrance of the flowers has prevented any feeling of lassitude. Only a little more remains of the verse I am at present treating. Yet this little is pregnant with profundity of meaning, as indeed is the case with every part of this Canticle. But He Who alone can reveal mysteries, will answer to us, as I hope, when we begin to knock, and will not close the mouths of those that invoke His aid ; for to open the mouths which are shut is more the custom of the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXXII.

### ON THE SPIRITUAL LIGHTS AND SHADOWS, DAYS AND NIGHTS.

*“ My Beloved to me, and I to Him Who feedeth among the lilies, till the day break and the shadows retire.”*

“ My Beloved to me, and I to Him Who feedeth among the lilies, till the day break and the shadows retire.” Only the two last clauses of this text remain to be discussed. But at the very outset I find myself confronted with a difficulty regarding them. With which of the foregoing are they to be connected? For they can make sense in two different relations. I may either treat the relative clause, “ Who feedeth among the lilies,” as a parenthesis, and read, “ My Beloved to Me, and I to Him, till the day break and the shadows retire ” ; or I may consider the temporal clauses as depending on the relative, so that the sentence will run, “ My Beloved to me, and I to Him, Who feedeth among the lilies till the day break and the shadows retire.” Taken in either way, the words yield an intelligible and an appropriate meaning. There is this difference, however : in the first connexion, the word “ till ” has to be understood in an inclusive sense ; in the second, in an exclusive. For even though the Bridegroom should cease to feed among the lilies when the day breaks, surely He will not likewise cease to attend to His Bride nor His Bride to Him. God forbid. Throughout eternity they will continue to regard each other only with greater delight, because with greater intensity

and with greater intensity because with greater perfection of liberty. Therefore, according to the first way of construing, the word "till" must here be taken in the same signification in which St. Matthew employs it, where he says that "he (Joseph) knew her (Mary) not, till she brought forth her first-born Son"—which, as is clear, cannot be understood in an exclusive sense. We find the same word used with the same meaning in one of the psalms, "Our eyes are unto the Lord our God, until He have mercy on us." Surely the Psalmist does not intend to imply that we shall turn our eyes away from the Lord as soon as He begins to show mercy. The Saviour Himself also makes use of a similar expression in the same inclusive sense, when He says to His apostles, "Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." For He does not mean that He will thereafter be no longer with them. Thus, I say, the word "till" has to be taken if we choose to connect it immediately with the first part of the verse, "My Beloved to me, and I to Him." But it must be understood exclusively if we would rather refer it to the relative clause, "Who feedeth among the lilies." Yet even in this case it may well appear no easy task to explain how the Beloved will cease to feed among the lilies when the day breaks. For if the day here in question is the day of the general resurrection, does it not seem as if He would then take all the greater delight in feeding among the lilies, for the reason that He would find them in much greater abundance? These remarks are enough on the subject of the literal sequence.

Observe now, my brethren, that after the resurrection, although His whole kingdom shall then shine



with lilies, and although the Bridegroom Himself will dwell and take His delight among them, nevertheless it cannot be said with truth that He will any longer feed among them, as He was wont to do in the aforetime. For where then shall you find the sinners whom Christ may incorporate and assimilate to Himself, grinding and masticating them with the teeth of sharp discipline (if I may be allowed the expression), that is to say, by affliction of the flesh and compunction of heart? Neither will He, Who is the Word of God and the Bridegroom of souls, seek nourishment for Himself there in the acts and the works of obedience, where nothing shall be found but universal repose, uninterrupted love and contemplation. His food indeed is to do the will of His Father. But this is true only of the present life, not also of the future. Wherefore should He do what has already been accomplished? Now it is certain that the will of God shall then have been accomplished and made perfect. For then it shall be the joy of all the saints to "prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God." And surely after perfection has been reached, nothing more can remain to be done. Thenceforward the will of God shall be a source of enjoyment, not a duty to be fulfilled; a delight to be experienced, not a task to be accomplished; a fountain of life, not a rule of conduct. Is not this the will which, taught by Christ Himself, we ask with most earnest entreaty should "be done on earth as it is in heaven," where even now its fruits give enjoyment and its fulfilment no fatigue? Therefore the Word and Bridegroom can there find no works to feed on, where all work must necessarily cease, and where wisdom is more abundantly

communicated to all. For it is written, "He that is less in action shall receive wisdom."

But now let us see if what I have been saying, namely, that the Bridegroom will no longer feed among the lilies after the general resurrection, can also be maintained consistently with the view of those according to whom to feed among the lilies means to take delight in the beauty of the virtues. I have referred to this interpretation amongst others in the preceding sermon. Are we therefore to suppose that then there shall be no virtues at all? Or that the Bridegroom will take no pleasure in them? It would be the height of absurdity to entertain either belief. But consider whether His future mode of delighting in the virtues may not be different from His present. That He will truly delight in them cannot be doubted; but perhaps it will be in some way more analogous to drinking than to eating. Certainly in this life and in this body, no human virtue can be found so thoroughly defecated, none so sweet and pure, as to be fit for the Bridegroom to drink. But He "Who will have all men to be saved," overlooks many imperfections, and the virtue which He cannot as yet swallow down with ease, so to speak, and as it were by the act of drinking, He grinds and chews with method and labour, if even thus He may obtain from it some little relish. A time will come when that virtue shall be perfectly purified, when it shall not require to be pressed between the teeth and laboriously masticated, when it shall not give Him Who partakes of it the trouble of grinding it, but shall rather delight without wearying Him; because He shall drink it as liquid, not eat it like solid food. Indeed He Himself tells us this

in the Gospel, when He says, "I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it with you new in the kingdom of My Father." Observe how He makes no mention of eating in that kingdom. The Psalmist also refers to His drinking, comparing Him to "a mighty man that hath been surfeited with wine." But neither does he say anything about His eating. The Spouse, therefore, conscious of this mystery, after discovering and proclaiming that her Beloved feeds among the lilies, appoints, or rather acknowledges and announces as already appointed, the limit of the period during which He will vouchsafe so to feed, in the words, "until the day break and the shadows retire." That is to say, she is well aware that thereafter her Beloved will delight in the virtues rather by drinking than by eating them. This is likewise the custom with men who are wont to take drink after solid food. Therefore the Bridegroom, Who feeds on our virtues as on edibles in the present life, will drink of them in the life to come, and with the greater delight, because with greater security. He will then be able to swallow down with facility what He cannot take now without first dissolving it by a process of diligent and toilsome manducation.

We have next to apply our minds to a consideration of the day and the shadows mentioned by the Spouse. What is that day? What are these shadows? Why is the day said to "aspire"? \* By what power are the

\* "*Donec aspireset dies et inclinentur umbræ.*" The Douay Version has, "Till the day break and the shadows retire." But such a rendering makes this whole sermon unintelligible. I have consequently taken the liberty to translate "aspiret" and "inclinentur" in a manner more in harmony with St. Bernard's context.—(Translator.)



shadows made to incline? For she says, with deliberate explicitness, "Till the day aspire and the shadows be inclined." And not alone explicitly, but singularly also, because, unless I am deceived, this is the only place where you will find the day represented as aspiring. To aspire is to breathe towards. Now winds are said to breathe, but never days. Man also breathes, and so do all the irrational animals; indeed it is by the uninterrupted alternation of inhaling and exhaling the air that they preserve their lives. And how does this motion of the air in respiration differ from wind? The Holy Spirit likewise breathes; and the very name of spirit is derived from the act of breathing (*spiritus*, *spirans*). But in what sense can a day be said to breathe, since it is neither a wind, nor an animal, nor a spirit? And yet the Spouse speaks of it not only as breathing, but—which is more significant—as breathing towards something, that is, aspiring. Not less unusual is the expression, "Till the shadows be inclined." For at the rise of this corporeal and visible sun above us, the shadows are annihilated rather than inclined. Consequently we have to seek for the objects referred to here outside the material universe. And if we succeed in discovering a spiritual day and spiritual shadows, then perhaps the aspiring of the former and the inclining of the latter shall become more clearly intelligible. Now if there be anyone who regards as something corporeal that day whereof the Psalmist sings, "Better is one day in Thy courts above thousands," I know not what such a person would call incorporeal. There is also a day of evil import, that, namely, which was cursed by the Prophets, Job and Jeremias. But God forbid that

we should believe it to be one of the days " which the Lord hath made " ! It must therefore be a spiritual day.

To come now to the shadow, who doubts that it was a spiritual shadow which overshadowed Mary at the moment when she conceived the Saviour ? And who doubts that it is of a spiritual shadow the Prophet Jeremias is speaking where he says, " A Spirit before our face (is) Christ the Lord, under His shadow we shall live among the gentiles " ? But in my opinion the Spouse in this place designates by the name of shadows the " opposing powers," who are not only shadows but even darkness, nay, " the princes of this darkness," as they are called by the Apostle ; and with these wicked angels are included those of our own race who adhere to them, the sons, not of the day, nor of the light, but of the night and the darkness. For, as is evident, these shadows shall not entirely vanish away immediately that the day aspires or breaks, just as we see the corporeal shadows not only departing but utterly annihilated before the face of the rising corporeal sun. But if the spiritual shadows shall not be reduced in the same way to nothingness, they shall certainly be brought to a condition more miserable than nothingness. They shall continue in existence, but as " inclined," that is to say, as broken and beaten. " He will incline himself and fall, when he shall have power over the poor," says the Royal Prophet, speaking no doubt of the prince of darkness. Therefore their nature shall not be destroyed, but they shall lose their capacity for evil ; their substance shall remain, but their power shall pass away with the power of darkness. They shall be " taken away lest they should see the glory

of God." They shall be preserved from annihilation, but only to burn for ever in the fires of hell. Surely these spiritual shadows shall then be inclined, when the mighty shall be put down from their seats and made a footstool for the just. And these things, my brethren, "must shortly come to pass." We are now in "the last hour"; "the night is passed and the day is at hand." And when the day shall "aspire," the night must expire. That night is the devil; that night is the "angel of Satan" who "transformeth himself into an angel of light"; that night is Antichrist, "whom the Lord Jesus shall kill with the Spirit of His Mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." As for the day, what can that be but the Lord Himself? Yes, He is manifestly the Day, bright and "aspiring," Who by the Spirit of His Mouth shall put the shadows to flight, and shall destroy the diabolical spectres "with the brightness of His coming." But some of you may prefer to take the word "incline" more simply, and to suppose that the inclination of the shadows means their annihilation. According to this view, lest it should be thought that we are not taking account of every interpretation—according to this view, I say, the shadows should be considered as designating the figures and mysteries of Holy Scripture, also the specious utterances, and the verbal quibbling, and the involved arguments of the sophists, because by all these things, as by shadows, the light of truth is at present prevented from shining fully upon our souls. For now "we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect shall come, that which is in part shall be done away."

I should now have said enough on the verse under



discussion, had the Spouse represented the day as "breathing" and not as "breathing towards," that is, as "aspiring." But on account of such addition, small though it be, I think it necessary to offer some further remarks, which may help to explain her selection of the word "aspiring." For I confess that it has long been my conviction, that, in the text of Sacred Scripture, so holy and precious, not a single jot or tittle is without its special significance. With regard to the expression "aspiring," we use it whenever we want to signify a particularly ardent desire of someone for something. For example, we say that such a person aspires to such an honour or to such a dignity. In this place, therefore, the word is employed to indicate the marvellous abundance and vehemence of the Spirit reserved for that future day,\* when not alone our minds but our bodies too, though in a different manner, shall be spiritualised; and when such of us as may be found worthy, "shall be filled with the plenty of God's house," and allowed to "drink of the torrent of His pleasure."

Here is another interpretation. Already the "day of sanctification hath shone" for the holy angels, breathing and wafting to them, by the constant flux of a perpetual motion, the mellifluous secrets of the Eternal Godhead. For, as the Psalmist says, "The stream of the river maketh the city of God joyful." He refers to that city which in another place he thus addresses, "The dwelling in thee is, as it were, of all rejoicing." But when the same "day of sanctification"

\* The holy Preacher is here assigning *two* reasons why the day of the general resurrection may be called an aspiring day, namely, that it is a day for our desires or aspirations, and that the Spirit will then breathe upon us in an especial way.—(Translator.)

shall also breathe upon us who dwell here below and shall expand its bosom, so to speak, in order to admit the children of earth, may it not then be described not only as breathing but even as breathing with labour, that is to say, as gasping or aspiring? Or again, to begin at a higher point and with a wider scope, we may consider that the inspiring day was made for us when, having "formed man of the slime of the earth," the Creator "breathed (*inspiravit*) into his face the breath of life." But alas! the devil, as an envious night, invaded with a simulated brightness that first day of inspiration and innocence; and promising a more resplendent light of knowledge, dimmed on a sudden the light of God with the darkness of evil counsel, and overcast the very dawn of our existence with the black cloud of woful prevarication. Alas for our first parents! "They have not known nor understood; they walked in darkness," says the Psalmist, "and put darkness for light and light for darkness," adds the Prophet Isaias. For the woman ate of the fruit, which the serpent offered her but which God hath forbidden her; she also gave it to her husband. Then a new day, as it were, began to dawn upon them, and immediately "the eyes of them both were opened." Thus was formed the conspiring day, bringing to a close the inspiring day, and introducing in its place the expiring day. For the serpent's craft and the woman's persuasiveness and her husband's weakness met and conspired together "against the Lord and against His Christ." Hence They, viz., the Father and the Son, said to Each Other, "Behold Adam is become as one of Us," because to the injury of Them Both he had consented to the sinners that flattered him. It is in

this conspiring day, my brethren, that we have all been born. For we all bear branded upon our souls the impress of that primeval conspiracy. Eve is still living in our flesh ; and by means of the concupiscence inherited from her, the serpent, with tireless solicitude, endeavours to make us participants in his own rebellion. It is because of this that holy men have cursed the conspiring day (as I have already mentioned), praying that it would be short and be quickly changed into darkness ; because it is a day of contention and contradiction, during which " the flesh lusteth (unceasingly) against the spirit," and the " law of our members " is found " contradicting the law of our minds " with a constant and unwearying opposition. Thus the conspiring day has become an expiring day. From that time forward it could be asked, " Who is the man that shall live and not see death ? " Others may think that this universality of death is exclusively an effect of anger. But to me it seems to be also and equally ascribable to mercy, lest otherwise the elect, for whose sake all things are done, should be unable to endure the bitterness of long-continued contradiction. For they also are led captive under the law of sin, which reigns in their members ; although they abhor the dishonourable servitude and the depressing strife, and submit to them most unwillingly.

Let us, then, my brethren, make haste to the day of respiration and reanimation, after that ancient and evil day of conspiracy and expiration, because " the days of man are short." Let the respring day receive us, before the suspiring night swallows us up, and involves us in the eternal gloom of the " exterior darkness." Do you ask me in what this respiration



consists? I answer that we begin to respire in a spiritual sense when the spirit in its turn begins to lust against the flesh. To fight against the flesh is to respire. You are respiring when "by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh." You have respired when you "have crucified your flesh with the vices and concupiscences." "I chastise my body," says the Apostle, "and bring it into subjection; lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." These, my brethren, are the words of one who was respiring, rather of one who had respired long before. "Go, and do thou in like manner," I say to each one of you, that you may prove yourselves to have respired, and that you may know that the inspiring day has again begun to shine upon you. Nor shall the night of death be able to conquer this returning day, because it shall shine even amidst the darkness "and the darkness (shall) not comprehend it." And so far am I from thinking that the "light of life" shall be extinguished with life itself, that I believe to none more truly than to the dead who have died in this light, may be applied the words of the Psalmist, "And night shall be my light in my pleasures." Why should not the soul be able to see more distinctly when she has put aside the cloud or rather the filth of the flesh which now obstructs her vision? Certainly, once her material bonds are broken, she shall be "free amongst the dead" and seeing amongst the blind. Of old, as we read, when every eye was darkened "in all the land of Egypt," the people who had by faith the vision of God, that is to say, the people of Israel, were alone able to distinguish objects clearly in the midst of the gloom, for "wheresoever the children of

Israel dwelt there was light." In the same way, amidst the dense shades of death and amongst the sons of darkness, the just shall shine with greater glory and shall see with keener sight, because they shall have passed out of the shadow of the body. On the other hand, they who have not respired before death, who have not sought the light of the inspiring day, on whom the Sun of Justice hath never arisen, they shall pass from darkness into denser darkness. Hence, they who in this life abide in darkness shall abide in deeper darkness in the life to come ; and they who live here in light shall hereafter live in greater light.

Of this intensification both of light and darkness in the world to come we may understand, and not unreasonably, the words of the Lord, where He says, " To every one that hath shall be given and he shall abound ; and from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken from him." So it is. Those who see shall obtain after death an increase of light, whereas those who do not see shall even lose the little light they may seem to possess. For in proportion as the vision of the former grows more and more clear, the blindness of the latter becomes darker and darker, until those are received into the aspiring day and these swallowed up in the suspiring night. Thus the last end for both shall be either the extreme of brightness or the extreme of darkness. When this consummation has been reached no more light shall remain to be taken from the one class, who shall be altogether empty ; nor can any more be added to the other class, who shall be completely full ; except indeed that the latter shall still have hope to receive in some way or other even more than a plenitude, according to the

promise made to them. For the Lord has said, "Good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together and running over, shall they give into your bosom." Is it not evident to you that a measure which runs over must be more than full? But you will feel no surprise to hear of a measure being more than full, if you remember what is said in Exodus, "The Lord shall reign for ever and beyond" (*in aeternum et ultra*). Such therefore shall be the superabundance of the aspiring day. It shall add to the measure, full and abounding, of the inspiring day, "working for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory," so that the excess of glory superadded shall overflow to our bodies. This appears to be the reason why that day is called not a breathing (*spirans*) day, but rather an aspiring day, the Holy Ghost wishing to signify by the addition of the prefix *ad* (*ad-spirans*=*aspirans*) what "aspiration" superadds to "spiration" or "inspiration." For those whom the inspiring day interiorly enlightens, are exteriorly adorned by the aspiring day, and vested with the "robe of glory" \*

I have now, I hope, said enough to explain what is meant by the expression "till the day aspire." And if you wish to know, this aspiring day is nothing else but He Whom "we look for, the Saviour, Who will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the Body

\* In this sermon the Saint distinguishes five mystical days, viz., dies inspirans, dies conspirans, dies expirans, dies respirans, dies aspirans. The first symbolises man in the state of innocence in which he was created; the second, man rebelling against his Creator; the third, man in his fallen state; the fourth, man as restored to grace; the fifth, man as glorified in soul and body. To these spiritual days are added the "nox suspirans" of those who, missing the "dies respirans" and the "dies aspirans" shall live eternally in the night of sighs and darkness.—(Translator.)



of His glory." He is also the inspiring day, according to the operation whereby He causes us to respire in the light which He infuses ; so that we may become in Him a respiring day, whilst our "inward man is renewed from day to day," "renewed in the Spirit of his mind" "to the image of Him Who created him," becoming thus day of His day, and light of His light. Already, my brethren, two of the good days have dawned for us, I mean the day of inspiration, which represents the life infused into us by God at the beginning, and the day of respiration, which signifies the restoration of the spiritual life of the soul by grace and holiness ; whilst the third day still remains, namely the aspiring day, which shall break upon us in the glory of the general resurrection. In this way, therefore, we shall most certainly see fulfilled in the body sometime what has been already accomplished in the Head. I speak of that "great mystery of godliness," and the prediction of the Prophet, "He will revive us after two days ; on the third He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight. We shall know, and we shall follow on, that we may know the Lord" the same "on Whom the angels desire to look," the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things God, blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXXIII.

ON THE FORM IN WHICH CHRIST WILL COME TO THE JUDGMENT, AND ACCORDING TO WHICH, ALTHOUGH MADE "A LITTLE LESS," HE IS STILL SUPERIOR TO THE ANGELS.

*"Return : be like, my Beloved, to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel."*

"Return : be like, my Beloved, to a roe, or to a young hart." What is this? It is only now He departed and dost thou beg Him to return? What unexpected event can have happened in so short a time? Has the Spouse forgotten something? Aye, she has forgotten everything which is not her Bridegroom, forgotten even herself. For though not devoid of reason, she seems to be acting now like one who has lost the use of reason. Even womanly propriety appears to be forgotten in her words, however modest may be her thoughts and feelings. This is all due to the vehemence of her love. For love is a power that conquers and renders captive to itself every sense of shame, every restriction of modesty, every counsel of reason, and induces a total disregard and neglect of all the rules of fittingness and decorum. Therefore you here behold the Spouse calling on her Beloved to come back almost as soon as He has begun to retire. And she prays Him to make haste, yea, to run like one of the beasts of the forest remarkable for their fleetness of foot, namely, "like a roe or a young hart." Such,

my brethren, is the literal sense, the portion of the Jews.

But as for me, following the counsel of the Lord, I will search for the treasures of spirit and life hidden in the profound depths of these inspired utterances. This is my inheritance, because I am a believer in Christ. Why should I not endeavour to find the wholesome and savoury food of the spirit beneath the unprofitable and unpalatable letter, as the grain amongst the chaff, the meat in the shell, or the marrow in the bone? I will have nothing to do with this letter which when tasted savours of the flesh, and when swallowed brings death. Nevertheless, that which lies concealed in it is of the Holy Ghost, for "by the Spirit (it) speaketh mysteries," as the Apostle bears witness. But Israel is content to hold the veil of the mysteries, instead of the mysteries themselves, which are hidden beneath. Wherefore? For no other reason than that the "veil is still upon his own heart." Hence to him belongs the sound of the word, but the signification thereof is mine. And so whilst the Scripture in the letter ministers death to the Jew, it becomes for me a source of life in the spirit. For "it is the spirit that quickeneth," that is, by giving understanding. Is not understanding life? "Give me understanding that I may live," cries out the Psalmist, speaking to the Lord. Understanding does not remain outside in the letter; it does not stick fast in the surface; it is not satisfied to grope its way by the touch of exterior objects, like a blind man. Rather it explores the profound deeps, whence it is accustomed to extract and to bring up with insatiable avidity the most precious spoils of sacred truth. Hence it can say with the Psalmist, "I will rejoice at Thy



words, as one that hath found great spoil." It is thus, my brethren, that the "kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." But that elder brother who came in from the fields, and who represented the people of the old and earthly dispensation, the people "taught to love the threshing," groaning in misery—yet with hardened forehead—under the heavy yoke of the law, and bearing "the burden of the day and the heat"—that elder brother, I say, because he has not understanding, still stands outside and refuses to enter the banqueting-chamber even at his Father's invitation, thereby defrauding himself, to the present hour, of a participation in the music, and the singing, and the fatted calf. Oh, what folly to be unwilling to learn from the experience "how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" These remarks will suffice to point out the difference between the portion of the Church and the portion of the Synagogue; so that the prudence of the one may be rendered more evident by contrast with blindness of the other, and the happiness of the one from the miserable infatuation of the other.

Let us now weigh attentively the words of the Spouse; and let us endeavour also to express the sentiments of holy love in such a manner that nothing in this inspired discourse shall have the least appearance of being either unreasonable, or indecorous, or inexpedient. Call to mind, therefore, that hour when the Lord Jesus was about to "pass out of this world to the Father." Try to conceive also what were then the feelings of that domestic Church of His, the newly-wed Bride, when she saw herself on the point of being abandoned by her only hope and left as a desolate

widow on the earth—I am speaking of the Apostles, who had left all things to follow Him, and who continued with Him in His temptations. Think of these things, my brethren, and I believe it will no longer appear to you strange or incongruous that a Spouse so devoted and so deserted should show as much solitude for her Bridegroom's return as grief for His departure. Therefore, in her love and her helplessness she found a twofold motive for urging Him at the least to hasten His return, since He could not be persuaded to remain with her and not to "ascend to where He was before." For by desiring and praying Him to make Himself like to the beasts of the forest, and to those beasts in particular which are most remarkable for agility, by this she manifests the eager longing of her soul which reckons no swiftness swift enough. And does she not daily repeat the same request when she says in the Lord's Prayer. "Thy kingdom come"?

It seems to me, however, that besides fleetness of foot the Spouse also intends to signify weakness, which is expressed by the sex of the roe and by the age of the hart. In my opinion, therefore, although she desires Him to come with power, she yet does not wish that He should appear at the judgment in the form of God, but rather in that form in which He was not only born for us, but was born for us as a little Child, and born of the weaker female sex alone. But wherefore does she ask Him to appear in this form? Because she hopes that His own weakness, and the weakness of the source whence His Human Nature is sprung, shall remind Him to have compassion in the day of His wrath, and even in the judgment itself to

exalt mercy over judgment. For if He "will mark iniquities who shall stand it," even of the elect? The very stars are not pure in His sight, and in His angels He found wickedness. Listen to what one of the saints and the elect says to God, "Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin," so speaks the Psalmist, "for this shall every one that is holy pray to Thee in a seasonable time." Hence it is evident that the saints themselves have need to pray for the pardon of their sins and that it is through the divine mercy they are saved, since they place no reliance on their own justice. "For all have sinned and do need the glory—that is to say, the mercy—of God." In order, therefore, that "when He is angry He may remember mercy," the Spouse beseeches Him to appear at the judgment in the habit of mercy, in that habit to which the Apostle is alluding where he says, "And in habit found as a man." \*

And it is very necessary for us, my brethren, that He should thus appear. For if, even with the mellowing influence of His Humanity, so great shall be the rigour of justice at the judgment, so awful the severity of the Judge, so overwhelming His Majesty, so completely transformed the face of physical nature, that the Prophet Malachy asks, "Who shall be able to

\* This is also the interpretation of St. Gregory the Great, who writes, "A nobis tunc Dilectus corporaliter abiit quando in coelis post resurrectionem ascendit; tunc autem revertetur quando in fine mundi, resuscitatis omnibus hominum corporibus, in iudicio manifestabitur. Hanc manifestationem hic petunt animae sanctae. Tunc Christus vere similis capreae et hinnulo cervorum apparebit super montes Bethel, quia in eadem humanitatis forma ad iudicium veniet, quam ab Ecclesia—quae per capream designatur—sumpsit quando in hoc mundo ex patrum progenie, quasi hinnulus cervorum humilis natus fuit."—(Translator.)



think of the day of His coming? ”—if such is to be His advent even in the form of man, what would it be, think you, were that “ Consuming Fire ”—I mean the Almighty God—to come in the infinite greatness and strength and purity of His Divinity, for the purpose of manifesting His power “ against a leaf that is carried away with the wind,” and of “ pursuing a dry straw ” ! He will come now in human form, and yet who shall be able to look upon Him ? In the words of the Prophet, “ Who shall stand to see Him ? ” How much less could any man endure the unapproachable splendour of His brightness, the inaccessible loftiness of His Majesty, and the incomprehensible greatness of His glory, if He exhibited to our gaze the Divine Nature unclouded by the Human ! As it is, however, “ when His wrath shall be kindled in a short time,” how sweet and benign, for the sake of the sons of grace, will He exhibit Himself in His Manhood, giving security to their faith, strength to their hope, and increase to their confidence ! For “ the grace of God and His mercy is with His saints, and He hath respect to His chosen.” And Christ Himself tells us that God the Father “ hath given Him power to do judgment,—not because He is His own Son but—because He is the Son of man.” O “ Father of mercies ” in deed and in truth ! He will have men to be judged by a Man, so that amidst such panic and confusion of evils, their community of nature with the Judge may be for the elect a source of confidence ! Holy David announced this of old in prayer and prophecy, saying, “ Give to the King Thy judgment, O God, and to the King’s Son Thy justice.” Nor is this contradicted but rather confirmed by the promise made at the Ascension through the angels, who thus

addressed the apostles, " This Jesus Who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven," that is to say, in the same bodily form and substance.

From what has been said it follows clearly that the Spouse is made the confidant of the divine purpose and is perfectly well acquainted with this mystery of heaven's will. Therefore, using the figure of weak and inoffensive animals, she proclaims in the form of a prayer and in the spirit of prophecy, that her Bridegroom will come to the judgment in His weaker, or rather say in His inferior Nature, because weak It no longer is. For He Who rules the heavens and the earth in the might of His strength and Who will come " girded with power " against the wicked, will show Himself to His elect sweet and mild and, as it were, stripped of His terrors. Here it may be added too, that in order to distinguish the just from the reprobate, the Judge shall have need not only of the hart's power of leaping, but also of the eyes of the roe. Otherwise He shall not be able to see and to discriminate on whom He is to leap and whom to skip over in that countless multitude and in the midst of such confusion ; and there would be danger that the good should be trampled under foot along with the wicked, when He will " break (the nations) in the day of His wrath." For as regards the impious, it is necessary that the prediction of David, or rather the word of the Lord spoken by David, should be fulfilled, " I shall beat them as small as the dust before the wind ; I shall bring them to nought like the dirt in the streets." Another similar prophecy, spoken by the mouth of another prophet, shall likewise be seen in its

accomplishment on that day, viz., "I have trampled on them in My indignation, and have trodden them down in My wrath."

However, if anyone thinks that the leaping and skipping should be so understood that our Divine Hart is to skip over the sinners and to leap on the just, I make no objection, so long as it is granted me that the leaping and skipping are designed to distinguish the elect from the reprobate. Nay, if my memory serves me right, I proposed this very interpretation myself in a previous sermon, for we met these words, "like a roe or a young hart," on a former occasion also, where they occur in an earlier verse of this Canticle, and I then discussed them fully. But in that preceding passage the Young Hart was said to leap upon or to skip over souls, according to the dispensation of grace, which in this life is granted to some and denied to others, by the just yet mysterious judgment of God; whereas here there is question of the ultimate and various retribution according to the variety of merits or demerits. And perhaps this exposition may derive some support from the words with which our present text concludes, and which, in truth, I had well-nigh forgotten. For the Spouse tells her Bridegroom, "Be like, my Beloved, to a roe or a young hart, viz., leap like a roe or a young hart, upon the mountains of Bethel." "Bethel" means "the house of God," and surely there can be no evil mountains in the house of God. Wherefore the Young Hart will not trample but rather rejoice these mountains of Bethel by His leaping upon them, so that the Scripture may be fulfilled, wherein we read, "The mountains and the hills shall sing praise before God." The Gospel, indeed, makes mention of



mountains which faith, likened to the mustard seed, shall remove. But they are not the mountains of Bethel ; because faith cultivates instead of removing all the mountains of Bethel.

But if we choose to regard the mountains of Bethel as designating the powers and principalities, with all the other orders of blessed spirits and heavenly virtues, so that of them may be understood what the Psalmist says, "The foundations thereof, that is, of the city of God, are in the holy mountains" : in this case, not contemptible surely or of little worth is that Young Hart to be considered Who appears to stand above such excellent mountains ; "being made so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they." We read in the psalms, it is true, that He is "made a little less than the angels." But what of that ? He does not cease to be "better" by becoming "a little less." Nor are we to suppose that the statements of the Prophet and the Apostle are contradictory of each other, since the two spoke by the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit. For if He was made "a little less than the angels," not by necessity but through condescension, that, instead of detracting from, only adds to His perfection. Now the Psalmist does not say that He *is* less than the angels, but *is made* less, thus defending His Majesty whilst extolling His grace. For His Divine Nature excludes anything like inferiority, although the cause for which He acted excused the condescension. He was made less "because it was His own will." Yes, my brethren, it was His own will and our necessity that "made Him a little less than the angels." To be made less in this manner is but an exercise of mercy.

And how can there be any loss or waste here since piety gains whatever may appear to be taken from Majesty ? Nor has the Apostle passed over in silence this " great mystery of godliness " ; for he says, " But we see Jesus Who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour."

These remarks, my brethren, have been suggested to me by the name and the image of the hart, because I wished to show you how, after the example of the Spouse, we may apply them to the Bridegroom without the least prejudice to His Majesty. But why do I say " without prejudice to His Majesty," when the comparison has not left even His weakness without honour ? He is a Hart ; He is a Little One ; and He is also declared to resemble the roe, as having been " made of a woman." Nevertheless He is said to abide " on the mountains of Bethel," and to be " made higher than the heavens." Notice how the Apostle does not speak of Him as *being* or *existing higher* than the heavens, but says, " *made higher* than the heavens," and that deliberately, lest it should be thought that the Bridegroom was proclaimed higher than the heavens only in His Divine Nature, according to Which He said, " I am Who am." And even where He is preferred to the angels, He is described not as *being* better or *naturally* better, but as *having been made better* than they. Such considerations clearly prove that not only in right of what He is from eternity, but also by reason of what He has been made in time, He claims for Himself all pre-eminence, pre-eminence over every principality and every power, pre-eminence over all creatures, as being " the First-born of every creature." Thus " the

foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." These are the words of St. Paul. But it seems to me that he might have said with equal truth that the same divine foolishness and the same divine weakness were wiser than the wisdom and stronger than the strength of the angels. In this way, then, the words of our present text can be considered as belonging to the universal Church.

But now, as regards each particular soul—for the individual soul is also the Spouse of God, provided she loves Him with tenderness, with prudence, and with constancy: every spiritual person can ascertain for himself what has been his own experience in this matter. As for me, my brethren, I shall feel no shame in telling you all openly what it has been given me to enjoy of such graces. For although it may appear of little value and contemptible when described, even so I shall not be concerned; because he who is spiritual will not despise me for that, and he who is not spiritual shall not be able to understand me at all. However, I will reserve the recital for another discourse. And perchance there are some who may be edified by the heavenly inspirations which your prayers shall obtain for me in the interval from Him Who is the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.



## SERMON LXXIV.

ON THE MANNER IN WHICH THE BRIDEGROOM COMES  
AND GOES, AND ON THE NECESSITY OF UNITING  
GRACE AND TRUTH.

*“Return : be like, my Beloved, to a roe or a young hart on the  
mountains of Bethel.”*

“Return, my Beloved,” cries the Spouse. It is evident that He Whom she thus recalls is not now present, yet has been with her, and that but a short time ago. For she is calling Him back, as it seems, whilst He is still in the act of retiring. That He is so soon solicited to return is a proof both of the greatness of her love and of the attraction of His amiability. But who are these fervent votaries of charity? Who are these tireless devotees of love, of whom the one is pursued and the other driven forward by the ungovernable force of affection? For my part, I must fulfil the promise which I made you in my last discourse, and which I have not forgotten, that is, to interpret this passage of the Word and the individual soul. Yet to accomplish such a task in anything like a worthy manner is, I acknowledge, quite beyond my power, unless I am assisted by the Word Himself. In truth an exposition of this verse would come more fittingly from one better versed and more experienced than I can claim to be in the ways of mystical and holy love. Nevertheless, I must discharge my duty and endeavour to satisfy your desires. I see the danger before me, yet I do not turn aside, because you, my brethren,

compel me to go forward. You compel me, I say, to walk "in great matters and in wonderful things above me." Alas for me! I tremble lest I should hear myself addressed in the words of reproach, "Why dost thou declare the delights of My love, and take My secrets in thy mouth?" Yet listen to me as to a man who is afraid to speak, but may not keep silence. Perchance my fears may serve as an excuse for the rashness of my undertaking, and still more the fruit of edification to you, if indeed there should be any. And these tears which flow from my eyes—haply to these also God will have regard.

"Return, my Beloved," entreats the Spouse. Very well. He was going away: He is recalled. Who shall explain to me this mystery of divine mutability? Who shall enable me to comprehend rightly what is meant by the retiring and returning of the Word? Shall we suppose that the Bridegroom is here acting with fickle inconstancy? He Whose immensity fills all space, whence can He be said to come, or whither to go or to return? Besides He is a Spirit, and what manner of locomotion is a pure spirit capable of? \* Finally, how can He Who is God admit of any kind of motion, since God is absolutely and essentially immutable?

However, "he that can understand, let him understand" these things. But let us, my brethren, proceeding with simplicity and caution in this exposition of a sacred and mystical utterance, accommodate ourselves to the usage of Holy Scripture, which, in our human words, "speaketh wisdom hidden in a mystery"; which commends the Divinity to our love by investing Him with human affections; and which, from the

\* Cf. vol. i. p. 33.—(Translator.)

familiar images of earthly objects, as from chalices of vile material, gives our human minds to drink things rare and precious, even the mysterious and invisible things of God. Let us, I say, follow the precedent of the chaste Scriptural narrative, and let us say that the Word of God, as the Divine Bridegroom of the soul, visits her and departs from her according to His good pleasure. Only we must remember that in all this there is question, not of any change or motion in the Word, but merely in the feelings of the soul herself. For example, whenever she experiences the consolations of grace, she acknowledges the presence of her Bridegroom. When she is deprived of such consolation, she complains of His absence, and begs Him to come back to her, saying with the Psalmist, "My heart hath said to Thee: my face hath sought Thee: Thy Face, O Lord, will I still seek." Why indeed should she not seek Him? Surely, after having been separated from so sweet a Bridegroom, she is incapable—I will not say of desiring, but even—of thinking of anything else. Therefore she cannot but seek Him when He is absent from her, and recall Him when He is going away. The Word, consequently, is recalled; He is recalled by the desire of the soul, yet only of that soul which He has once permitted to taste of His sweetness. Is not her desire a cry of the soul? Yea, and a strong cry. "The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor," as the Psalmist sings. Hence, when the Bridegroom withdraws, the soul, by her continuous desire of Him, keeps up one uninterrupted cry, as it were, one uninterrupted "Return, my Beloved," until He comes back to console her.

And now, my brethren, give me the soul that is



wont to be visited often by her Divine Bridegroom, the soul that has daring from familiarity, a relish for spiritual delights from her experience of the same, and a sufficiency of leisure from her contempt of the world—show me such a soul and I will unhesitatingly assign to her both the voice and the name of the Spouse. Neither should I suppose it impossible to regard the words now under consideration as spoken by her. Indeed, it is a soul of this kind that is introduced here as speaker. For the fact of her recalling the Bridegroom proves beyond a doubt that she has already merited to enjoy His presence, although not to her heart's content. Otherwise, instead of asking Him to return, she would simply have asked Him to come. But the word she makes use of—*revertere*—signifies to come back or to return. And perhaps the reason of His retiring was in order that He might be more fervently recalled and clasped more strongly. For we read how once of old “He made as if He would go farther,” not that He really desired to leave the disciples, but because He wanted to hear them say to Him, “Stay with us, Lord, because it is towards evening.” On another occasion also He came walking upon the sea, whilst the apostles were plying the oars and “labouring in rowing”; and He made as if He would pass them by, although He had no such intention, but only wished to try their faith and to excite them to pray. For, as the Evangelist goes on to say, “They thought it was an apparition and they cried out; for they all saw Him and were troubled.” Therefore the same kind of pious simulation, or rather call it the same kind of salutary dispensation, which the Word in the flesh then visibly practised, the Word in the Spirit never ceases to exercise with unwearied

diligence, yet in a spiritual way, in regard to the soul that is devoted to Him. When passing her by, He desires that she would lay hold of Him ; and when going away, He wishes to be called back. For He is by no means an irrevocable Word. He goes away and He comes back according to His pleasure, visiting the soul " in the early morning and suddenly proving " her. His departure is always part of His special providence over her, whilst His return is ever due to the influence of His love. Both His goings and His comings are regulated by divine prudence. But the special motive of each is known only to Himself.

You now understand, my brethren, how these vicissitudes of the Word's retiring and returning are accomplished in the soul, according to what is written, " I go away, and I come unto you," also, " A little while and you shall not see Me, and again a little while and you shall see Me." O little while and little while ! Oh, the long, long length of that little while ! Sweet Lord, dost Thou call that a little while, the time in which we do not see Thee ? Far be it from me to gainsay the word of my Lord, but to my mind it certainly seems a long while, yea a very long while. Nevertheless it may truly be described either as little or as long : it is little for our merits ; it is long for our desires. You have all this in the Prophet Habacuc, where he says, " If (He) make any delay, wait for (Him) for He shall surely come and He shall not be slack." How shall He not be slack if He makes a delay, unless the meaning intended is that the haste which is sufficient for merit is not enough for desire ? Now the loving soul is borne on by her feelings ; she is drawn forward by her desires ; she has no regard to merit ; she closes her eyes to her

Bridegroom's Majesty and opens them wide to the delights of His love, "setting them in her Saviour and dealing confidently in Him." For without the least fear or embarrassment she recalls the Word, and asks with confidence to be again allowed to enjoy the sweetness of His society ; and using her wonted liberty she addresses Him not as her Lord, but as her Beloved. "Return, my Beloved," she cries. Then she goes on, "Be like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel." But of this hereafter.

Now, my brethren, I will ask you to "bear with some little of my folly." I want to explain to you, according to promise, what has been my own experience in this matter. "It is not expedient indeed," but I will expose myself only for the sake of benefiting you. If what I shall have to say proves helpful to your progress, I shall console myself for my folly ; if not, I shall freely acknowledge my imprudence. I confess, therefore, that even to me—"I speak as it were in foolishness"—the Bridegroom has condescended to pay a visit, and indeed not once but many times. But although He has often come into my soul, I have never been able to ascertain the exact moment of His entrance. I have been conscious of His presence within me ; I could afterwards recall that He had been present ; sometimes I have even had a presentiment of His coming ; yet I have never perceived Him either in the act of entering or in the act of retiring. Whence He comes to my soul, and whither He withdraws Himself on leaving me, and by what way He comes in, and by what goes out,—as to all these questions, I am still in ignorance, according to what we read in the Gospel, "Thou knowest not whence He cometh and



whither He goeth." Nor is this surprising, since He is the Same to Whom the Psalmist says, "And Thy footsteps shall not be known." Certainly He does not enter through the eyes, for He has no colour; nor through the ears, since He makes no sound; nor through the organ of smell, because His mingling is with the mind, not with the atmosphere—He is the Author of the air, not its odour. Neither does He gain admission through the avenue of the mouth, because He is not anything which can be eaten or drunk. The sense of touch is equally powerless to attain to Him, since He is altogether intangible. By what way then, does He enter? Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that He does not enter at all, inasmuch as He is not any one of those things which exist outside us? But neither can He be said to come from within me, because He is good, and "I know there dwelleth not in me that which is good." I have ascended to what is highest in me, and behold! I have found the Word to be higher still. Influenced by a pious curiosity, I have descended to explore the lowest depths of my being, only to find that He was still deeper down. If I looked to my exterior, I perceived Him beyond what is outermost. And if I turned my gaze inward, I saw Him more interior than what is inmost. Then I realised the truth of what I had read, namely, that "in Him we live and move and be." But blessed is the soul in which He is also, which lives for Him and is moved by Him.

But then you will ask me how can I even tell that He is present, since "His ways are unsearchable"? I answer that "the Word of God is living and effectual"; and as soon as He enters, He arouses my slumbering soul,

moves, softens, and wounds my heart, which before was so hard and stony, so wicked and corrupt. He also begins "to root up and to pull down, to build and to plant," to irrigate what was dry, to illuminate what was dark, to open what was shut, to heat what was cold, to "make the crooked straight and the rough ways plain," so that "my soul may bless the Lord, and all that is within me may bless His holy name." Whenever, therefore, the Divine Bridegroom visits my interior, as He often does, He gives no sign to indicate His entrance, whether by voice, by vision, or by the sound of His footsteps. For it is not to any movements on His part, nor to any activity of my own senses that I am indebted for the knowledge that He has come into my soul. I have been made conscious of His presence from the feelings of my heart, as mentioned already. The expulsion of vices and the repression of carnal affections have revealed to me the might of His virtue. His scrutiny and reproof of my secret sins have filled me with admiration for the profundity of His wisdom. I have experienced His goodness and gentleness in whatever little improvement there has appeared in my life. He has shown me to some extent the "loveliness of His beauty" in the "renewal and reformation of the spirit of my mind," that is to say, of my interior man. And from the contemplation of all these perfections I have been overwhelmed with awe at the "multitude of His greatness."

Furthermore, the departure of the Bridegroom has the same effect on such pious dispositions as the removal of the fire from beneath the boiling pot. Immediately all my fervour and devotion begins to relax, to languish, and to cool. It is by this change I come to know

that He has withdrawn from me. Thereupon, my soul cannot but be a prey to sadness until He returns. And this shall be a sign to me that He has come back, when I feel my heart once more beginning to burn within me. After having so much experience of the goodness of the Word, is it any wonder, my brethren, if even I appropriated the words of the Spouse, calling on Him to return whenever He retires? For although there is no equality, there is at least some similarity between the desires which animate her and me. So long as I live, it shall be my custom to recall the Word by the word of recalling, which is "Return" (*revertere*). And as often as He escapes from me, so often will I call Him back. I will not cease to cry after Him, as He goes, with the fervent desire of my heart, calling on him to return and to "restore unto me the joy of His salvation," to restore unto me Himself. I confess to you, my children, that in the meantime I can take no pleasure in anything else, since I have not Him Who is my only delight. And I beg of Him not to return to me empty, but "full of grace and truth," according to His custom, and as He has done yesterday and the day before. Herein, as it seems to me, the comparison of the roe and the young hart may be clearly exhibited, because truth has the eyes of the roe, and grace the hart's vivacity.

Both these things are necessary for me : truth, from which I cannot conceal myself ; and grace, from which I am unwilling to hide. No divine visitation can be perfect if it brings either of them without the other. For truth, unaccompanied by grace, is capable of depressing the soul with its severity ; whilst grace,



dissociated from truth, has a tendency to relax by unduly elating her. The former is bitter unless it be seasoned with the latter, and the latter, if not restrained by the former, grows light and extravagant and not seldom over-bold. For how many has it been of no advantage to have received grace, because they did not receive with it the steady ballast of truth ! The consequence was that they began to take more complacency than was expedient in the grace bestowed upon them, whilst they lost the wholesome fear of the eyes of truth ; and, paying no further attention to the roe's mature gravity, gave themselves up unreservedly to the giddiness and sprightliness of the young hart. Hence it came to pass that they were deprived altogether of the grace in which they wished to rejoice solely. To such as these it may be said, even though it be too late, " Go then and learn what this meaneth, ' Serve ye the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto Him with trembling.' " Thus, a certain holy soul in her " abundance said, ' I shall never be moved.' " But suddenly she perceived that the Word had turned away His Face from her, and then she became not only moved, but even " troubled." \* And so she was taught by affliction that the gift of devotion suffices her not, unless it be accompanied by the counterpoise of truth. Therefore, my brethren, the fulness of grace does not consist of grace alone, nor does it consist of truth alone. For what does it avail us to know what we ought to do, if we are not also given the good will to act according to our knowledge ? Or of what advantage is it to have the good will, if the power of

\* Cf. *Imitation of Christ*, Bk. II. ch. 9 ; also, vol. i. p. 212.—  
(Translator.)

accomplishment be lacking? \* How many have I known whom the knowledge of the truth rendered sadder than ever, and that for the reason that it was no longer in their power to plead ignorance as an excuse for their sins! For they were now as men who knew, yet refused to accomplish what truth demanded of them.

From what I have said it ought to be evident that grace without truth is insufficient, as also truth without grace. But this is saying too little. Not only is it not enough to possess one of these gifts without the other, but it is even inexpedient. What proof have I of this? "To him, therefore, who knoweth to do good and doth it not, to him it is sin." So speaks St. James. And Christ tells us in the Gospel that "the servant who knew the will of his Lord and did not according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes." These testimonies demonstrate the inexpediency of truth without grace. But what of grace without truth? We read in St. John, "And after the morsel, Satan entered into him." The Evangelist is speaking of Judas, who although he had received the gift of grace, did not walk in truth with the Master of truth, or rather with the Master Who is Truth, and thus made room in

\* "Quid prodest scire quid te oporteat facere si non detur et velle facere? Quid si velis quidem sed minime possis?" The Saint of course does not mean to insinuate that to will to do good is of no avail unless followed by external accomplishment, which of itself, as is commonly supposed, can contribute nothing to the morality of the interior act. He is simply distinguishing between a desire or inefficacious will (sometimes called a velleity) and a firm determination. In relation to the former, which is a mere complacency or hypothetical will, v.g., I should like to save my soul if it could be done without inconvenience, the latter may be rightly called accomplishment. It is in the same sense the Apostle says, in the person of a sinner, "To will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good I find not. For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do" (Rom. vii. 19, 20).—(Translator.)

himself for the devil. Listen now to the Psalmist, "He fed them with the fat of wheat, and filled them with honey out of the rock." Who are these so fed and filled? We are told in the preceding verse, "The enemies of the Lord have lied to Him." Therefore those whom He fed with fat and with honey, they lied to Him, because the gift of truth was not united in them with the gift of grace. Of the same persons we find in another place, "The children that are strangers have lied to me, strange children have faded away, and have halted from their paths." How indeed could they have helped halting since they were content to possess the one foot of grace without adding thereto the second of truth? Therefore it is written of the "enemies of the Lord" who "have lied to Him" that "their time (of punishment) shall be for ever"; just as the time of their leader, who "stood not in truth" but was a liar from the beginning, so that he deserved to hear it said to him, "Thou hast lost thy wisdom in thy beauty." For my part, I want no such beauty as would deprive me of wisdom.

Dost thou ask me, my brother, what is that beauty, so evil and so pernicious? It is thine own. But perchance thou art still without understanding? Then I will speak more plainly. It is the beauty which thou makest private and proper to thyself. I do not find fault with the gift of beauty but with thy abuse of it. Thou mayst perhaps have noticed how the devil is said to have lost his wisdom not simply in beauty, but in *his own* beauty. Now, unless I mistake, the beauty of an angel and of a soul is the same. For apart from wisdom, what is one or the other but a thing without shape or form? It was wisdom consequently that



gave to Satan form and beauty. But he lost that wisdom when he made it his own. Hence it is the same thing to say "Thou hast lost thy wisdom in thy beauty" and "thou hast lost thy wisdom in thy wisdom." The cause of the loss was propriety. Because he was wise for himself, because he did not give glory to God, because he did not return thanks for favours bestowed, because he walked not according to truth in the grace he received, but neglecting the purpose for which it was given, used it for the satisfaction of his own will,—here is the reason why he was deprived of his wisdom. I should rather say, here is the cause which directly and of itself brought about the loss of his wisdom. For to possess wisdom in such manner is the same thing as to lose it. "If Abraham were justified by works," writes St. Paul, "he hath whereof to glory, but not before God." But I say that I can have nothing whereof to glory outside of God. I have lost whatever I do not possess before God. What can be so lost as that which is separated from Him? What is death but the privation of life? And so the only real loss consists in a separation from God. "Woe to you," exclaims the Prophet Isaias, "that are wise in your own eyes, and prudent in your own conceits." Of the same it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; and the prudence of the prudent I will reject." They have lost true wisdom, because their own wisdom deprived them of it. How could they have retained anything since they themselves were lost? Or shall it be said that *they* are not lost whom God ignores?

Now those foolish virgins mentioned in the Gospel, whose foolishness, as I think, had no other cause

than their boasting of wisdom, by which wisdom is lost—those, I say, shall hear from God the sentence of reprobation, “I know you not.” They also, who use the grace of miracles as a means to their own glorification, they shall have addressed to them the words, “I never knew you.” From this it is clear and manifest that grace profits nothing, but is rather a source of danger, if the purity of truth be not found in the intention. It is from the Bridegroom that both these gifts must be sought. For St. John Baptist declares that “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” If ever, therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ (Who is the Word of God and the Bridegroom of souls) shall knock at my door, bringing with Him either truth without grace or grace without truth, I shall know that He comes not as a Bridegroom but as a Judge. God forbid that this should ever happen me! Let Him “enter not into judgment” with His servant. Let Him come in with peace, let Him come in with cheerfulness and gladness; but let His coming be also attended with gravity and sobriety, to the end that by fixing upon me the severe glance of truth He may repress my frowardness and chasten my joy. Let Him enter my soul as a bounding hart and at the same time as a watchful roe, so that He may, by dissembling, skip over my faults, and out of compassion have regard to the pains which I suffer. Let Him come into me as if descending from “the mountains of Bethel,” all radiant and blissful; or as proceeding from the Father, in sweetness and mildness. For thus He will not disdain to be called and to become the Bridegroom of the soul that seeks Him, although He is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXXV.

ON THE TIME, PLACE, AND MANNER IN WHICH THE  
BRIDEGROOM SHOULD BE SOUGHT.

*"In my bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth : I  
sought Him and found Him not.  
"I will rise and will go about the city."*

"In my bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth." The Bridegroom evidently has not returned at the desire and solicitation of her who recalled Him. Wherefore? In order that her desire may increase, that she may give proof of her love, that she may be the longer occupied in the exercise of charity. The delay consequently is no evidence of anger on the part of the Beloved, is in fact nothing more than pious dissimulation. It only remains, therefore, to seek Him, if perchance He may be found when sought, Who when called has deferred to come. For He assures us Himself that "everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth." Now the words employed by the Spouse to recall Him were as follows, "Return ; be like, my Beloved, to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of Bethel." On account of the reasons just given, He has not come back at her invitation. This only makes her, who loves Him so ardently, the more desirous of His presence, and with all eagerness she begins at once to seek Him out, She seeks for Him first in her bed, but fails to find Him there. Then she "rises," she "goes about the city," she passes along "the streets and the broad ways." But nowhere does He show Himself, nowhere can she find Him. She



inquires concerning Him of everyone she happens to meet, without obtaining any certain information. Nor is it only once she has made this search, and suffered this disappointment, nor during a single night, because she says, "During the nights (*per noctes*) I sought Him." How great must be the longing, how ardent the love under the influence of which she thus rises in the night, goes out fearlessly into the public thoroughfares, runs around the city, openly interrogates all whom she meets concerning her Beloved, and from her purpose of following His footsteps can be dissuaded by no argument, impeded by no obstacle, held back by no desire for seasonable repose, prevented by no feelings of womanly modesty, restrained by no fear of the "terror of the night"! And nevertheless, in spite of all this she is still defrauded of her hope. Wherefore? What is the meaning of so cruel and so oft-repeated a disappointment, which is the nurse of weariness, the inspirer of suspicion, the torch of impatience, the mother of despair, the step-mother of love (*noverca amoris*)? If the Bridegroom is still dissembling, His dissimulation has become exceedingly trying.

I allow that up to this, whilst there was only question of calling or recalling Him, dissimulation could be practised with piety and profit. But now, when He is sought and sought with so much trouble, what object can be gained by dissembling longer? If this Canticle were concerned with an earthly bride and bridegroom and with the earthly love which unites them, as indeed seems to be suggested by the mimicry of the literal sense, and if such things as are here described were to happen between them, that would be their own affair, and I should not feel called upon to cast about for an

explanation or apology. But if I have the duty to make answer and satisfaction, according to the best of my poor ability, to the minds and affections of those who are seeking the Lord, in that case it will be necessary to extract from the Holy Scripture, in which they "think to have life everlasting," something spiritual and therefore vivifying, in order that "the poor may eat and be filled, and that their hearts may rejoice." And what is so much the life of our hearts as my Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom one said who lived by Him, "When Christ shall appear, Who is your Life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory"? Let Him therefore come amongst us, so that to us as to the Jews it may be truly said, "There hath stood One in the midst of you Whom you know not." And yet I do not understand how the Bridegroom, Who is a Spirit, can fail to be recognised by spiritual persons, provided they have made such progress in the spirit as to be able to say with the Prophet, "A Spirit before our face (is) Christ the Lord"; and with the Apostle, "And if we have known Christ according to the flesh: but now we know Him so no longer." Is not He the Beloved Whom the Spouse has been seeking? He is indeed the Bridegroom, a loving and amiable Bridegroom. He, I say, is the Bridegroom indeed, just as His "Flesh is meat indeed" and His "Blood is drink indeed." Everything that appertains to Him is in deed and in truth, since He is Himself the Living Truth.

But what means it, my brethren, that this Bridegroom cannot be found when sought, even when sought with so much zeal and assiduity, now in the bed, now about the city, now "in the streets and the broad ways"? For He Himself has said, "Seek and you shall find,"

and, "He that seeketh findeth." The Prophet Jeremias also says, "The Lord is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him." And holy Isaias, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found." "How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled?" Nor can it be said that she who is here represented as seeking Him, is one of those to whom He addressed the words, "You shall seek Me and shall not find Me." But listen. Three causes now occur to me which are wont to render our seeking futile. These are: unsuitableness in the time of seeking, unsuitableness in the manner of seeking, and unsuitableness in the place of seeking. For if every time were equally suitable for seeking, why does the Prophet speak the words already quoted, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found." Most certainly there shall come a time when He can be found no longer. Therefore we are counselled to call upon Him whilst yet He is near, because the hour is approaching when He shall no more be near. Who is there that will not seek Him then? As He says by His Prophet, "Every knee shall be bowed to Me." Nevertheless, He shall not be found by the impious, because the avenging angels will assuredly drive them away and prevent them from beholding the glory of God. The foolish virgins likewise shall call upon Him in vain; for the door shall then have been shut and He will not go out to them. Let these consequently take as applying to themselves the words, "You shall seek Me and shall not find Me."

But "behold now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation." Now, my brethren, is the time for seeking and for invoking, when, as ordinarily happens, He Whom we seek is felt to be present even before we call upon Him. For this is what He



has promised by His Prophet, "Before they call, I will hear; as they are yet speaking, I will say: Lo, here I am." \* This kindness and graciousness, which belongs to the present time, was not unknown to him who sings in the psalm, "The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor: Thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart." But if it is by good works the Lord is to be sought, "therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good to all men," the more especially, because the Bridegroom plainly announces that "the night cometh when no man can work." Or dost thou hope to be given in the life to come another time for seeking God and for doing what is good, besides that which He has appointed for thee wherein to show thee mercy? The present life, therefore, is "the day of salvation," because in this "God is our King before ages, He hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth."

And thou, my brother, dost thou expect to find in the midst of hell the salvation which has been wrought in the midst of the earth? How canst thou imagine that any time shall be given amidst the "everlasting burnings" for impetrating pardon, when the season of mercy shall have then gone by?† Having died in thy sins, for thee "there is now left no sacrifice for sins." The Son of God is not to be crucified a second time. "He died once," He "dieth now no more." The

\* "Antequam invocetis Me, dicam: Ecce adsum" (Is. lxxv. 24). The Vulgate has: "Eritque antequam clament, Ego exaudiam; adhuc illis loquentibus, Ego audiam." Different from both is the Septuagint: "καὶ ἔσται πρὶν ἢ κεκράξαι αὐτοὺς, Ἐγὼ ὑπακούσομαι ἔτι λαλούντων αὐτῶν, ἐρῶ, τί ἐστι;" St. Bernard's reading is found also in the Preface to the Holy Rule of St. Benedict.—(Translator.)

† The Saint is here apostrophising Origen. See note at p. 117 —(Translator.)

Blood Which was poured out upon the earth, has not penetrated as far as the infernal regions. "All the sinners of the earth shall drink" thereof; but neither the demons themselves, nor reprobate men condemned to their society, are allowed to use It in any way to extinguish the flames which torment them. The Saviour's Soul, not his Blood, descended once to hell. That was the portion of those who were confined there, that one visitation, made by the presence of His Soul whilst His Body was hanging lifeless above the earth. By the Blood the dry land was irrigated, by the Blood the earth was overrun and inundated, by the same Blood Which has made "peace both as to the things on earth, and the things that are in heaven." But It made no peace as to the things that are in hell: excepting that His Soul made one visit to that place, as I have said, and accomplished there a partial redemption.\* For He was unwilling that the work of charity

\* According to Horst, the Saint is here affirming that when Christ, after His death on the cross, "descended into hell," He delivered thence some of the damned, which certainly appears to have been the opinion of many of the Fathers, such as SS. Cyprian, Gregory, Naziazen, Augustine, and Clement of Alexandria; and in support of it they appealed to the words of St. Peter (1st Epist. iii. 19), "He (Christ) preached to those spirits who were in prison," also Acts ii. 24, "Whom God raised up, having loosed the sorrows of hell." It may be held consistently with the doctrine of eternal punishment, since it does not deny the ordinary law, but only asserts a dispensation by special privilege from the same. Thus the ordinary human law which punishes homicide with death does not exclude exceptions according to the pleasure of the sovereign. Mabillon, however, proves conclusively that St. Bernard is speaking of the deliverance of the just souls from limbo. Limbo, according to the holy Preacher, is a part of hell; he calls it an "infernal prison" in Sermon I. *in die Pascha*. And in Sermon IV *in fest. Omnium Sanct.*, he tells us that for the just who died before Christ "God provided a place of rest and refreshment in the midst of hell," where although covered with darkness, they were free from pain. Cf. Suarez, vol. xix., pp. 734-40.—(Translator.)

should be suspended even for that short time. But never more shall He go down thither. Therefore, "now is the acceptable time," the time proper for seeking Him in which beyond question "He that seeketh findeth"; if yet he seeks in the right manner and in the right place. I have now explained sufficiently one of the reasons on account of which the Bridegroom cannot be found by those who seek Him, because, namely, they do not seek Him at an opportune time. But as the Spouse *does* call upon and seek Him at a seasonable hour, this cannot be the reason that prevents *her* from finding Him. Neither does she seek Him with tepidity, with negligence, or with indifference; but evidently as she ought, with ardent affection and indefatigable zeal.

It only remains to enquire concerning the last of my three reasons, lest perchance the Spouse is not seeking in the place where she ought. "In my little bed (*lectulo*) by night," she says, "I sought Him Whom my soul loveth." But perhaps it was not in a *little* bed but in a *large* bed she should have looked for Him for Whom, in truth, the universe is not wide enough. I do not, however, object to the little bed, because I remember that He made Himself a Little One. As a Little One He was born for us. Yet listen to Isaiah: "Rejoice and praise, O thou habitation of Sion, for great is He That is in the midst of thee, the Holy One of Israel." The same Lord, Who is great in Sion, is found amongst us to be weak and little, having to lie down because of His weakness, and because of His littleness to lie in a little bed. Was not the sepulchre a little bed? Was not the manger a little bed? And the Virgin's womb, was not it also a little bed? But no little bed



is the Bosom of the great Father. It is undoubtedly a great bed, whereof the Father says to His Son, "From the womb before the day-star I begot Thee": although perhaps it is not proper to compare that Bosom to any kind of bed, since it is rather the throne of an Emperor than a couch of repose. For the Son abiding in the Father, governs the universe with the Father. We have it on the infallible authority of our faith that He reclines not, but sits at the Father's Right Hand. And He tells us Himself by His Prophet that heaven is His throne, not His bed, in order to teach us that in His own home beyond the stars, the supports of infirmity are nowhere in evidence, but only the emblems of power.

Justly, therefore, does the Spouse, in referring to the little bed, speak of it as her own; because, as is manifest, whatever of weakness and littleness is found with God must be attributed not to His Divine but to the Human Nature Which He has in common with us. For the infirmities to which He submitted for our sakes, such as, to be born, to be suckled, to die, to be buried, belong to the Humanity Which He borrowed from us. Mine is the mortality of the Infant, mine the helplessness of the Child, mine also the death upon the cross, and mine the sleep of the tomb. But now "the former things have passed away" and behold all things are made new. "In my little bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth." What is this? Hast thou been seeking in thine for Him who has already returned to His own bed? Didst thou not "see the Son of man ascend up where He was before"? He has now exchanged for heaven the tomb and the stable, and wilt thou still seek Him in thy little bed? "He is

risen, He is not here." Why dost thou seek in the couch of infirmity for One Who is hale ? Or for One so great in a little bed ? Or in a stable for One in glory ? " He hath entered into the powers of the Lord," " He is clothed with beauty, the Lord is clothed with strength." And behold He Who lay beneath the sepulchral slab now " sitteth above the cherubim." Henceforward He will no more recline, but will sit ; and art thou getting ready a couch for Him as for one about to lie down ? But perhaps it would be more true to say of Him that He sits to judge us and stands to assist us.

For whom, then, ye holy women, are you thus keeping watch ? For whom, I ask, have you bought the sweet spices and confectioned the ointments ? If you did but know how great He is, and how " free amongst the dead " Whom you have come forth to anoint, you perhaps would have asked rather to be anointed by Him. Is not this He of Whom the Psalmist says, " God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows " ? Blessed shall you be if on your return you are able to boast and to say, " And of His fulness we (also) have received." And so has it been in truth. For they who came to anoint Him returned by Him anointed. How could they help being anointed with the tidings so gladdening of His fresh and fragrant resurrection ? " How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, of them that bring glad tidings of good things ! " By commission of the angel they " do the work of an evangelist." They become the apostles of the apostles themselves (*apostolae apostolorum*) whilst they hasten " to announce in the morning the mercy of the Lord," saying,

“ we will run to the odour of Thy ointments.” From that time and thenceforward it has been in vain for the Spouse to seek the Bridegroom in her little bed. “ And if (the Church has) known Christ according to the flesh, but now (she knows) Him so no longer.” Thus, St. Peter and St. John came together after the the holy women to seek Him in the sepulchre, but they found Him not. Do you not suppose, my brethren, that each of them could then truly and appropriately say with the Spouse, “ In my little bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth ” ? For the holy Flesh when about to ascend to the Father—although It proceeded not from the Father,—first by the glory of the resurrection put off all that was infirm in It, girded Itself with power, and clothed Itself with light as with a garment. That is to say, It was adorned with such splendours and beauty as would make It worthy to be presented to the Eyes of the heavenly Father.

But instead of saying, “ Him Whom I love,” the Spouse says very beautifully, “ Him Whom my soul loveth.” For to the soul alone belongs truly and properly the love wherewith one loves any spiritual object, such, for instance, as God, an angel, the human soul. The same remark applies to the love of justice, of truth, of piety, of wisdom, and of the other virtues. On the other hand, when a person loves, or rather desires (*appetit*) something according to the flesh, for example, food, or clothes, or dominion, or any such earthly and material good, this affection must be held to spring not from the spirit but from the flesh. So much concerning the very unusual yet equally proper expression of the Spouse, “ I sought Him Whom my



soul loveth," whereby she insinuates that her Bridegroom is a Spirit and is loved by her according to the spirit, not according to the flesh.

Justly, too, does she say that she sought Him during the nights. For if, as St. Paul tells us, "they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that are drunk, are drunk in the night"; if this be so, it may also be said without absurdity, as I think, that they who are ignorant are ignorant in the night, and consequently that they who seek, seek in the night. For who would seek for what he has plainly before his eyes? Now the day makes manifest what the night conceals, so that what you sought in the night you discover in the day. It is therefore night so long as the Bridegroom is sought; because if it were day He would certainly reveal Himself and there would be no necessity to seek Him. These remarks would suffice to elucidate this point only for the fact that the Spouse speaks of nights in the plural, which perhaps is significant of something requiring to be further investigated. For her words are, not "during the *night*," but "during the *nights* I sought Him."

The reason of this, my brethren, appears to be the following, unless some of yourselves can discover a more plausible explanation. The world in which we live has its own nights, and they are many. But why do I say that the world has its nights, since it is rather itself almost completely a night, and is totally and eternally buried in darkness? One night is the perfidy of the Jews, a second is the ignorance of the Gentiles, heretical depravity is a third night, and a fourth the carnal and animal conversation of many Catholics. Surely it must be then night when one "perceiveth

not those things that are of the Spirit of God." As for heretics and schismatics, there are amongst these as many different nights as there are distinct sects. Vainly shall you seek in these nights for the Sun of Justice or the Light of truth, that is to say, for the heavenly Bridegroom ; for " what fellowship hath light with darkness ? " But some one may tell me that the Spouse is not so stupid and blind as to seek for light amid darkness, as to seek her Bridegroom among those who have neither the knowledge nor the love of Him. As if, foresooth, she had declared that she is still seeking Him by night, and not that she *has been* seeking. She says not " I seek " but " I *sought* by night Him Whom my soul loveth." And the sense is the same as if she had said with the Apostle, " when I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child." She erringly sought the truth where it was not, and so failed to find it, according to what is written in the psalm, " I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost." And she mentions that at the time of seeking she was still in her little bed, as being still but a little one herself both in strength and understanding.

If it be preferred, however, to construe the text in this manner, " Lying or reposing in my little bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth," the sense will be, not that she searched her bed to find Him there, but that whilst she herself was reclining in her little bed—that is to say, was but a little one—she sought her Bridegroom. According to this interpretation her words may be paraphrased thus, " when I was still weak and helpless and altogether incapable of following the Bridegroom whithersoever He went, of following Him up the steep and lofty heights to where He sits in

glory, I fell in with many, who, knowing my desire, used to say to me, 'Lo here is Christ, lo He is there,' whereas He was neither here nor there. I fell in with such, I say, yet 'not unto folly to me'; because the more nearly I approached and the more carefully I examined, the more speedily and thoroughly was I convinced that the truth was not to be found amongst them. For though I sought I could not find; and thus I perceived that they were only as nights trying to personate the day.

"Then I said. 'I will rise and will go about the city. In the streets and in the broad ways I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth.'" Observe, my brethren, that she is even still reclining, since she says, "I will rise." This has a beautiful significance. Why should she not rise now after hearing of the resurrection of her Beloved? But, O happy Bride, "If thou be risen with Christ," it is necessary that thou shouldst relish "the things that are above," not the things that are upon the earth; it is necessary that thou shouldst seek Christ above, where He sitteth at the Right Hand of the Father. But thou sayest, "I will go about the city." Wherefore? "The wicked," so speaks the Psalmist, "walk round about." Leave to the Jews this circumambulation, of whom their own Prophet predicted that "they shall suffer hunger like dogs and shall go round about the city." And if thou shouldst "enter into the city" according to another of their prophets, "behold them that are consumed with famine." Now this could not have occurred if in the city were found the Bread of Life. But He has arisen out of the heart of the earth, and has not even remained on its surface. He has mounted "up where He was before."



For "He That descended," says the Apostle, "is the Same also That ascended," "the Living Bread That came down from heaven," and at the same time the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed forever. Amen.

## SERMON LXXVI.

ON THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN HEAVEN, AND ON THE QUALITIES REQUISITE IN A FAITHFUL PASTOR OF SOULS.

*“ In the streets and the broadways I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth. I sought Him and I found Him not. The watchmen who kept the city found me.”*

“ In the streets and the broad ways I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth.” The Spouse, my brethren, still thinks as a child. As it seems to me, she had anticipated that, after issuing from the tomb, her Bridegroom would immediately appear in public to instruct the people as before, to cure the sick, and to manifest His glory in Israel ; if perchance those who said they would receive Him on condition that He descended from the cross, might be willing to receive Him now when He had risen from the sepulchre. But He had already accomplished the work which the Father had given Him to do, as she ought to have inferred from the words spoken whilst He hung upon the cross—I allude to what He said when just about to expire, “ It is consummated.” There was no longer any reason why He should trust Himself to the crowds, who perhaps would not even thus believe in Him. Besides, He was in haste to go to His Father, Who would say to Him, “ Sit Thou at My Right Hand until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool.” For when He was “ lifted up from the earth ” to the glory of heaven, He would then “ draw all things ” to Himself more powerfully and more divinely. Yet the Spouse, impatient to enjoy Him, but ignorant of the mystery, supposes that He is to be sought “ in the streets and the broad ways.”

Consequently she is once more disappointed, and compelled to say, "I sought Him and I found Him not," so "that the word might be fulfilled which He said," "A little while and you shall not see Me, because I go to the Father."

We may imagine her saying to herself something like this, "How then shall they believe in Him Whom they have not seen?" As if forsooth faith were from seeing and not from hearing. What great thing is it to believe what one has seen? "But if we hope for that which we see not, we wait for it with patience," and patience merits a reward. For it is written: "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed." Therefore, in order to leave room for the virtue and the merit of faith, the Bridegroom has withdrawn from us His visible presence. Besides the hour had now come when He should return to His own place. Do you ask me, my brethren, what place is that? It is the Right Hand of the Father. For "being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Let this therefore be the place of the Only-Begotten, where He may rest secure, as beyond the reach of all that could injure Him. Let Him sit not below but beside the Father, so "that all men may honour the Son as they honour the Father." In this shall appear the indistinction of their Majesty if the Son is confessed to be neither inferior nor posterior but in all respects equal to the Father. But the Spouse can at present think of none of these things. Inebriated with an excess of divine love, she runs hither and thither, seeking with her eyes Him Who is no longer perceptible to sight but only to faith. For she believes that Christ ought not to have entered into



His glory without first manifesting to the world the glory of His resurrection, so that the impious might be confounded, the faithful filled with joy, the disciples magnified, the people converted, and He Himself finally honoured by all, when the visible fact of His resurrection had demonstrated to every man the truth of His prediction. Thou art mistaken, O Spouse of Christ. These things must indeed come to pass, but in their proper season.

Consider now in the meantime whether it be not more becoming and more consonant with the divine justice not to "give that which is holy to dogs" nor to "cast pearls before swine," but rather, according to the expression of the Holy Scripture, to take away the impious one that he "may not see the glory of the Lord"; to preserve its merit to faith which, as we know, appears then to best advantage when we believe what we see not; and to treasure up for the good in the same faith that which is concealed from the wicked, so that "he that is filthy may be filthy still and he that is just may be justified still," and may not "slumber through heaviness." Yea, let the heavens and the heaven of heavens pine away and be confounded in their expectation rather than that the Father Almighty should be any longer defrauded of the desire of His Heart, rather than that the Only-Begotten Son's entrance into His glory should be further delayed, even for the space of a moment, which in truth would be something supremely unworthy. Whatever of glory mortals could give Him, surely, O Spouse, thou canst not esteem it so great as to be able to hold Him back, even for a short time, from the glory which His Father has prepared for Him from all eternity? Moreover it would be quite

unbecoming that the fulfilment of the Son's petition should be longer deferred. Dost thou ask me to what petition I allude? To that which is expressed in the words, "Father, glorify Thy Son." Nevertheless, as it seems to me, He uttered this rather as a prophecy than as a prayer. That is freely solicited which it is in power of the petitioner to take. Consequently, in making this petition, the Son is not consulting for any necessity of His own, but for our instruction and utility; since, with respect to whatever He receives from the Father, He is not only the Recipient but the Donor also with the Father.

To this it is necessary to add the observation that not alone does the Father glorify the Son, but the Son also glorifies the Father. It is necessary, I say, lest anyone should suppose the Son to be less than the Father, for the reason that He is glorified by the Father. That He in turn glorifies His Father is manifest from His own words, "Father, glorify Thy Son that Thy Son may glorify Thee." However, it may still be supposed that the Son is inferior to the Father in this respect, that He appears to be devoid of glory until He has received of the Father the glory which He gives back to Him again. But listen to the Son Himself where He tells us that the case is not so, "Glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had before the world was, with Thee." The glory of the Son, therefore, being from eternity, is not posterior to the glory of the Father, and hence They, the Father and the Son, equally glorify Each the Other. But if such be the case, in what has the Father the precedence? Glories that are co-eternal must surely be co-equal also. Yea, they must be not only co-equal but one and the

same, just as the Father and the Son are in Nature one and the same. Therefore it seems to me that when the Son said in another place, "Father, glorify Thy name," He asked for nothing else than that He should Himself be glorified, in Whom and by Whom the Father's name would be most certainly glorified. And He received the answer, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." This response from the Father was in itself no slight glorification of the Son. But, as we read in the Gospel, He was more abundantly and more singularly glorified on the bank of the Jordan by the testimony of the Baptist, by the descent of the heavenly Dove, and by the voice of the Father, saying, "This is My beloved Son." On the mountain also, in the presence of three of His disciples, He was most magnificently glorified, by the same paternal voice speaking once more from heaven, by the strange and admirable transfiguration of His Body, and by the attestation of the two Prophets who appeared conversing with Him.

It remained for Him, therefore, to be glorified once again, according to the promise of the Father. That was to be plenitude of glory, to which nothing further could be added. But where was He to receive this final benediction? Not certainly "in the streets and the broad ways," as the Spouse seems to have expected, unless indeed there is question of those streets whereof the Prophet said "Thy streets, O Jerusalem, shall be paved with pure gold and in all thy streets alleluia shall be sung."\* For in these streets, it is true, the Son

\* "*Plateae tuae, Jerusalem, sternerentur auro mundo et per omnes vicos tuos alleluia cantabitur*" (Tob. xiii. 22). The Vulgate reading is somewhat different, "*Ex lapide candido et mundo omnes plateae ejus sternerentur et per vicos ejus alleluia cantabitur.*"—(Translator.)



has received from His Father a glory to which nothing comparable can be found, even amongst the citizens of heaven. For "to which of the angels said He (the Father) at any time : Sit on my Right Hand until I make thy enemies thy footstool ? " And not only amongst the choir of angels, but amongst the other and superior orders of blessed spirits also, has there been found none worthy to participate in this superexcellent glory. Not one of all those celestial creatures has ever been privileged to hear addressed to himself the words of incommunicable glory, " Sit on My Right Hand," not one has been given to experience in himself the efficacy of these words. All, no doubt, whether thrones, or dominations, or principalities, or powers, desire to gaze upon the glory of the Only-Begotten ; but to raise themselves to an equality of glory they do not presume. Therefore to my Lord alone has the Lord given the invitation and the right to sit on the Right Hand of His glory as being co-equal with Himself in glory, consubstantial in Essence, identical in Nature by Sonship, one in Majesty, co-eternal in duration. There, there shall He be found by such as seek Him ; and they shall see His glory, not a glory like the glory of creatures, but truly " the glory as it were of the Only Begotten of the Father."

What then art thou doing, O Spouse of Christ ? Dost thou think that thou canst follow Him thither ? Hast thou the boldness and hast thou the power to intrude thyself into a sanctuary so secret, into a mystery so sacred, that thou mayst contemplate the Son in the Father and the Father in the Son ? Surely no. Where He is thou canst not come now, but thou shalt come hereafter. Meanwhile, however, desist not from following

and seeking Him. Do not allow that inaccessible brightness, that unapproachable sublimity, to turn thee from thy quest or to deprive thee of the hope of finding. "If thou canst believe," says the Saviour "all things are possible to him that believeth." And the Apostle tells thee, "The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart." Only believe and thou hast already found. For to believe is to have found. The faithful know that Christ dwelleth by faith in their hearts. What can be nearer? Seek Him therefore with security, seek Him with devotion. "The Lord is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him." Seek Him by thy desires, follow Him by Thy actions, find Him by thy faith. What is there that faith cannot find? It attains to the inaccessible, it discovers the unknowable, it comprehends the immeasurable, it reaches forward to what is ultimate, it even includes eternity itself within the ample space of its own mystical bosom. I make bold to say it: the Blessed and Everlasting Trinity, though beyond my understanding, is accessible to my faith; and I hold by faith what escapes my intelligence.

But some one may say to me, "How shall the Spouse believe without a preacher, since faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of preaching?" God will provide for this. And behold they are already at hand from whom the newly betrothed Spouse, soon to become the Bride of the heavenly Bridegroom, shall receive information and instruction concerning all things necessary, the knowledge of the faith, and the form and pattern of piety and religion. For listen to what she adds, "The watchmen who kept the city found me." Who, my brethren, are these watchmen? They are doubtless

the same whom the Saviour in the Gospel pronounces blessed if, when He comes, He shall find them watching. And what good watchmen they are who keep guard over us whilst we slumber, as being obliged to render an account of our soul's welfare ! What good keepers, who with vigilant minds spend their nights in prayer, who prudently find out the enemy's ambuscades, forestall the schemes of the malignant, discover their wiles, expose their snares, break their nets, and foil their cunning machinations ! "These are lovers of their brethren and of the people (of Christ); these are they that pray much for the people and for all the holy city." These are they who, all solicitous for the sheep of the Lord committed to their charge, "give their hearts to resort early to the Lord That made them, and pray in the sight of the Most High." They continue praying as they watch, for they are conscious of their own insufficiency to guard the city, and that "unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it."

Furthermore, since the Lord Himself has given the command, "Watch ye and pray that you enter not into temptation," it clearly follows that without this twofold observance on the part of the faithful and this twofold exercise of zeal on the part of their keepers, there can be no security for the city, no security for the Spouse, no security for the flock. Do you wish me to explain the difference between these three, the city, the Spouse, and the flock ? In reality they are one and the same. That which is called a city, on account of the multitude of souls which it embraces, is called a Spouse because of the tender love of which it is the object, and a flock by reason of the gentleness which characterises its



members. Would you like to have proof that the Spouse and the city signify the same? Then listen to the Evangelist, "And I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." The identity of the Spouse and the flock shall also appear manifest to you if you recollect the first vicarious shepherd—I mean St. Peter—and how earnestly he was charged to watch over lovingly and to feed the flock at the time when the sheep were first entrusted to his care. Now Christ in His wisdom would never have been at such pains in this matter had He not realised from the testimony of His own Heart and conscience that He was truly a Bridegroom no less than a Shepherd. Attend to this, ye friends of the Bridegroom, if yet you be in truth His friends. But it is not enough for the shepherds or keepers of His flock to be only the friends of the Bridegroom: they who are honoured with the privilege of such intimate familiarity with the Bridegroom ought to be inflamed with the most ardent love for Him. Not without special significance did the Lord, when appointing Peter chief pastor of the sheep, say to him three times, "Peter lovest thou Me?" It seems to me that by the repeated question Jesus wished to signify the same as if He had said, "Unless thy conscience bears thee witness that thou lovest Me and that thou lovest Me strongly and perfectly, that is to say, more than thy possessions, more than thy friends, more even than thyself, so as by this threefold preference to satisfy My threefold interrogation—unless such be the case, thou oughtest not by any means to undertake this responsibility or to have anything to do with those sheep of Mine for

whose salvation My Blood has been shed." Awful words these, my brethren, and well calculated to strike terror into the hearts of even the most insensible of tyrants.

Attend to yourselves, therefore, all you who have been called to the labour of the ministry, attend to yourselves, I say, and to the precious charge entrusted to your care. It is a city: be vigilant therefore to defend it from enemies without and to preserve its peace within. It is a Spouse: see to her adornment. It is also a flock: take care to provide it with suitable pasture. And perhaps it would not be entirely fanciful to suppose that this threefold solicitude also corresponds to the Lord's threefold question. Moreover, the defence of the city, if it is to be adequate, must also be threefold, namely, against the power of tyrants, against the wiles of heretics, and against the temptations of the demons. The adornment of the Spouse likewise embraces three elements, which are good works, good morals and regular institutions. As for the flock, it is commonly fed in the pastures of Holy Scripture, as in the Lord's inheritance. Yet in these pastures there are distinctions to be observed. For they contain the precepts which are imposed on stubborn and carnal souls as a law of life and discipline. They also contain the delicate viands (*olera*) of dispensations which are provided out of compassion for the weak and the pusillanimous. And lastly, they comprise the strong and solid food of the counsels which, produced from the heart of wisdom, is set before healthy souls and such as have their faculties sufficiently disciplined for discriminating between good and evil. As for the little ones, these, like lambkins, require to be fed with the milk

of gentle exhortation rather than with the meat of the strong. In addition to all this, faithful and zealous pastors will never cease to improve the condition of their flocks by means of good and encouraging examples, presented rather in their own lives than in the lives of others. For examples of virtue, if taken from the lives of others instead of being exhibited in their own, would only put themselves to shame and would not have the same influence with the people. For instance, were I, who seem to hold the office of pastor in this community, to set before you as a model the meekness of Moses, the patience of Job, the clemency of Samuel, the sanctity of David, and other such illustrious examples of virtue, whilst at the same time showing myself harsh and impatient and unfeeling and the very opposite of holy, my words, as I fear, would come forth with little unction and would be received by you with but little relish. However, I leave this to the care of the Divine Goodness that He may supply that in which I am wanting to you, and may put right that which I put wrong. But the good pastor will also see to it that, agreeably to the injunction of Christ in the Gospel, he be found to have salt in himself. For he knows well that a sermon seasoned with this mystical salt is as salutary to the soul as it is pleasant to the ear and the mind. I have now said all that is at present necessary regarding the defence of the city, the adornment of the Spouse, and the pasturing of the flock.

Yet I desire to repeat some of the things I have been saying in language still more explicit, for the benefit of those who, whilst gaping after honours and dignities with excessive avidity, thoughtlessly undertake the



gravest responsibilities and expose their salvation to danger. I want them to realise their position and to ask each of them, in the words of the Lord, "Friend, whereto art thou come?" As regards the mere defence of the city, that, unless I mistake, shall be sufficiently provided for if the keeper be a man of fortitude, of spirituality, and of fidelity,—of fortitude that he may repel the assaults of the enemy, of spirituality that he may be able to discover their wiles, and of fidelity that he may not seek the things that are his own. But with respect to the amendment and purification of morals, which appertains to the adornment of the Spouse, is it not manifest to all how absolutely necessary is a censorship of discipline exercised with the most constant diligence? For this reason, everyone appointed to the government of souls ought to be inflamed with the same zeal as that which consumed that most jealous guardian of the Spouse of the Lord, who exclaimed, "I am jealous of you with the jealousy of God. For I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Again, how shall a shepherd who is without learning lead forth the flock of the Lord safely into the pastures of the divine Scriptures? On the other hand, if the pastor be learned yet not also virtuous, there is reason to fear that the flock shall be less benefited by the abundance of his doctrine than injured by the barrenness of his life. It is consequently a perilous thing to assume the office of pastor of souls without the essential qualifications of knowledge and virtue. But behold, I am warned to break off here, though much against my will, and when the discourse is still far from its conclusion, I am summoned away to a different occupation, which is

altogether unworthy to have the preference over this.\* I am straitened on every side; and I know not which grieves me the more, to be torn from my present employment or to be dragged to that which awaits me—unless that both together are more grievous than either taken singly. O servitude! O slavery! “I do not that which I will, but what I hate that I do.” Note, however, the point where we leave off, so that as soon as I am at liberty to return, I may resume thence, in the name of the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

\* Sermons III. and XXIV. were similarly interrupted, the former by the announcement of visitors, the latter by a summons from the ecclesiastical authorities. The interruption of the present discourse may have been the signal for the community repast.—(Translator.)

## SERMON LXXVII.

ON UNWORTHY PASTORS, AND ON THE WATCHMEN BY  
WHOM THE SPOUSE IS FOUND AND GUARDED.

*"The watchmen who kept the city found me."*

We are now, my brethren, at liberty to go on with the interrupted discourse. And first I would remind you that the qualities which I described for you yesterday as belonging to ecclesiastical rulers are not such as we actually see in our spiritual guides, but such as we should like to see.\* There is indeed a very

\* In the preface to his Life of St. Malachy, after asserting that the prevailing spiritual indigence either betokened the presence of Antichrist or heralded his coming, the holy Abbot continues: "I pass over the common crowd. I say nothing about the vile throng of the children of this world. I only want you to turn your eyes to the pillars of the Church. Amongst those who seem to have been 'given for a light of the Gentiles' can you discover a single one that does not yield less light than smoke from his lofty eminence? 'If, then, the light that is in thee be darkness, the darkness itself how great shall it be?' Unless indeed (which I refuse to believe) you regard *them* as shining who 'suppose gain to be godliness,' who in the inheritance of the Lord seek not the things that are the Lord's but the things that are their own. Why do I say, the things that are their own? *He* would now be considered a perfect man and a saint who should content himself with seeking his own and keeping his own, if only he could keep his hands off what belongs to his neighbour. Yet let him who has attained to this remember that the same degree of sanctity is required even from pagans. Are not soldiers commanded to be content with their pay as a condition of their salvation? Truly then it is a great thing for a doctor of the Church to have the virtue of a soldier! . . . Oh, what degeneracy! Is *he* to be reputed the greatest in merit, who falling from the highest degree of sanctity just manages to stand in the lowest and so saves himself from being swallowed up in the abyss? Yet how hard to find even such perfection in the clergy! Where shall you find a cleric who is satisfied with what is necessary and does not ask for superfluities? Nevertheless the Apostle



great difference between the two, the ideal and the actual. For not all those whom you may now behold standing close to the Spouse on her right and left, and who seem, as the saying is, to cleave to her side, are really the friends of the Bridegroom. Very few indeed shall He be able to find "of all them that are dear to Him" who seek not the things that are their own. They love gifts; and having made themselves thus the slaves of mammon, they cannot at the same

has laid down the law for his successors in the words, 'Having food and wherewith to be clothed, with these we are content.' Where is such virtue now? You may read of it in books, but you will not find it elsewhere. And yet it is written, 'The law of his God is in his heart,' not in his books. But even this is not perfection—to be satisfied with what is sufficient, because the perfect man is willing to be in want of necessaries. However, it is only waste of words to talk of such things to the present generation. Would to God we set limits to even our superfluities! Would to God there were some bounds to our avarice! Do you think you will be able to find one possessed of this degree of virtue,—one who seeks superfluities in measure? It will be no easy task. But see what we have gained. We set out to discover a perfect man who could deliver many, and lo! we have scarcely succeeded in finding one who is able to save himself. *He is the perfect man to-day, who is not singularly wicked.*" Similar trenchant passages occur in the works *De Consideratione*, *De Moribus et Officio Episcoporum*, and *De Conversione ad Clericos*. No doubt these pictures are somewhat overdrawn: great preachers are given to rhetorical exaggeration. Nevertheless there is abundant evidence that the standard of morals amongst clergy and people was lamentably low during the first half of the twelfth century. The widespread corruption was the result of many causes, chief amongst these being the divided state of Christendom and the facility with which candidates were admitted to Holy Orders. On this latter abuse St. Bernard says, "It appears that the Church has been widely extended, and with it the most sacred order of the clergy. The number of the brethren has been multiplied to infinity. But, O my God, although 'Thou hast multiplied the people, Thou hast not increased the joy.' Merit seems to diminish as numbers grow. Men rush indiscriminately into Holy Orders, and undertake lightly and irreverently that spiritual ministry which is fearful even to angels." The Saint, however, had the consolation of seeing his zeal rewarded by a happy revival of fervour.—(Translator.)

time love Christ. Observe how they go, all glittering with ornaments and "surrounded with variety," like a bride coming out of her bridal chamber. Were you suddenly to see one of them moving in the distance, would you not take him to be the Spouse herself rather than one of her keepers? Whence, think you, have they obtained that overflowing abundance of wealth, those splendid garments, that luxury which characterises their tables, that accumulation of vessels of silver and gold? Whence, but from the goods of the Spouse? Therefore it is that she has been left poor and needy and naked, the picture of misery, pallid, unregarded, neglected. Hence we may see that the concern of the Spouse's present-day keepers is not to adorn but to despise her, not to guard but to make away with her, not to defend but to betray her, not to instruct but to ruin her, not to feed the flock but to slaughter and devour it. It is of such the Lord says in the psalms that they "devour My people as they eat bread"; and, "They have devoured Jacob and laid waste his place"; and by the Prophet Osee, "They shall eat the sins of my people"—which may be paraphrased thus: content with exacting a fine for every sin, they are little solicitous for the conversion of the sinner. Can you show me even one amongst all our spiritual rulers who is not more intent on emptying the purses of his people than on purifying their souls of their vices? Where shall you find the prelate who endeavours by his prayers to appease the divine anger, who preaches "the acceptable year of the Lord"? But these I have mentioned are only their lighter faults: the graver are reserved for a more terrible judgment.

However, there is nothing to be gained by dwelling

on their shortcomings, whether heavy or light, because my words cannot reach their ears. And even though what I say were committed to writing, they would probably disdain to read it ; or if perchance they did peruse my remarks, they would wax indignant with me, whereas they should in reason be rather incensed against themselves. Let us therefore waste no more time on them who are not the finders but the betrayers of the Spouse. Let us rather turn our attention to those by whom the Spouse acknowledges that she has been found, whose office and ministry without whose zeal these others have inherited, those whom all desire to succeed and but few to imitate. Would to God our modern prelates exhibited the same alacrity in the discharge of their functions as they did when canvassing for their episcopal chairs ! Then doubtless they would keep anxious watch and would exercise great solicitude in guarding that Spouse who was found by their predecessors and entrusted to their care. Nay, they would exercise vigilance out of regard for their own interests, and would never suffer it to be said of them, " My friends and My neighbours have drawn near and stood against Me." Good reason, no doubt, had the Bridegroom for making this complaint, and of none of His " friends and neighbours " could it be more justly made than of the pastors of our own time. It is not enough for these watchmen to neglect the care of their flocks, unless they can also succeed in destroying them. Sunk and buried as they are in the profound sleep of forgetfulness of duty, no thunder-clapping herald of divine vengeance is loud enough to awaken them even to a sense of fear for their own safety. And thus it comes to pass that



having no mercy on themselves, they show their people no mercy, so that both shepherd and flock perish miserably together in a common ruin.

But who are those watchmen of the city by whom the Spouse has been found, as she herself confesses? They are the apostles, my brethren, and men of apostolic lives. Verily these are the watchmen who keep the city, that is to say, who keep the Church which is the Spouse whom they have found; and they keep it the more vigilantly at this present time when they behold it exposed to more serious danger from a domestic and internal enemy, as it is written, "A man's enemies are they of his own household." For surely they have not abandoned and deprived of their protection her for whose sake they "resisted unto blood," but rather they continue to defend and guard her by day and by night, that is, in life and after death. And if the death of His saints is precious in the sight of the Lord, as the Psalmist testifies, I make no doubt that their protection of the Church is all the more powerful after death in proportion as "their principality is (more) exceedingly strengthened."

Perhaps some one will here object and say to me, "Thou speakest of these matters with the same confidence as if thou hadst beheld them with thine own eyes, yet they are altogether beyond the range of mortal vision." To this I answer, by telling thee that if thou regardest as trustworthy the testimony of thine eyes, "the testimony of God is greater." Now, here is the testimony of God, "Upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen, all the day and all the night they shall never hold their peace." But thou mayst reply that these words refer to the angels.

I will not contradict, since, as we read, "they are all ministering spirits." But who shall prevent me from supposing that the same words are equally applicable to the beatified souls of men, which are not now inferior in power to the angels themselves, and at the same time perhaps feel more affection and compassion for us in proportion as they are more united to us by community of nature? Add to this the fact that they have endured the same sufferings and miseries to which they behold us still subjected. And how is it possible that the recollection of having passed through similar tribulations does not excite in those holy souls a more special pity and solicitude in our regard? Is not theirs the voice which we hear in the psalm, saying, "We have passed through fire and water and Thou hast brought us out into a refreshment"? What? They have got safely across, and will they abandon us in the midst of the flames and the billows, without so much as deigning to reach out a helping hand to their perishing children? No, my brethren, the case is not so. It is well with thee, O holy mother Church, it is well with thee in the place of thy banishment, since both heaven and earth stand ready to succour thee. They that guard thee "neither slumber nor sleep." Thy keepers are the holy angels, thy watchmen are the spirits and souls of the just. Nor are they in error who suppose that thou hast been found by both these orders of blessed spirits, angelic and human, and art likewise guarded by both. Each of the two orders has its own special motive for solicitude concerning thee. The saints are solicitous, because without thee they cannot reach their consummation; the angels are solicitous, because it is only through thee that they

shall have restored to them the integrity of their number. For who is not aware that the fall of Satan and his confederates has left a great gap in the ranks of the heavenly host? Consequently both the angels and the saints are dependent on thee for the consummation, the former of their number, the latter of their desire. Recognise thine own voice, therefore, in the psalm, "The just wait for me until Thou reward me."

And it is a matter worthy of note, my brethren, that it is not the Spouse who is represented as finding the watchmen, but rather the watchmen as finding the Spouse. It appears to me that they were specially charged with this duty. For "how could they preach unless they were sent?" Hence we have the command of the Lord where He says in the Gospel, "Go: Behold I send you," and, "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature." So indeed it was. The Bride sought her Bridegroom, and the Bridegroom did not conceal Himself from her. For, in fact, it was He Who aroused in her the very desire to seek Him and gave her a heart well disposed to obey His precepts and the law of life and discipline, provided she had some one to instruct her in the faith and to teach her the way of prudence. And He sent to meet her those whose office it was to plant and to water, that is to say, who were to foster her and to confirm her in all certitude of truth, to give her knowledge and assurance concerning her Beloved. For it is truth which she seeks and which her soul sincerely loves. | And indeed is there any love of the soul faithful and true except that whereby truth itself is loved? | I am endowed with the faculty of reason; I am capable of



knowing the truth ; but God grant that I may cease to exist if ever I have the misfortune to lose the love of truth ! | This love is the fruit, whereas the other gifts are the branches and I am myself the root. I have no security from the axe,\* if I am found to be without this fruit. | For there can be no doubt that the love of the truth is the one endowment of human nature which most clearly manifests the glory of that divine image whereby man is distinguished and exalted amongst all the other mortal creatures. | It is by reason of this that my soul ventures to raise herself to the sweet and pure embraces of Him Who is the subsisting Truth, and to rest in the love of Him with all delight and confidence : provided only that she has found such favour in the eyes of so great a Bridegroom that He esteems her worthy of being elevated to so glorious a privilege, or rather that He “ presents her to Himself not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” Yet, on the other hand, how fearful a thing must we not suppose it to be and deserving of how awful a punishment to hold in one’s possession so great a gift of God without making proper use of it ! But of this elsewhere.

Nevertheless the Spouse did not find Him Whom she sought, but was herself found by some whom she was not seeking. Here is a lesson for those who have no fear of entering upon the ways of life without the assistance of a guide to direct them, who in the spiritual art desire to be their own disciples and their own

\* “ Non sum securus a securi.” A characteristically Bernardine pun. There is allusion to Matt. iii. 10, “ For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree, therefore, that doth not yield fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire.”—(Translator.)

masters. Nor are they satisfied with this. They must also gather together a multitude of followers and make themselves blind leaders of the blind. How many has not such ambition drawn away from the right path and caused to fall into most dangerous errors ! For they were ignorant of the deceits and devices of Satan ; and so it came to pass that having begun in the spirit they ended in the flesh, and after being shamefully deceived fell into scandalous disorders. Let those therefore, who are inclined to be thus presumptuous, learn how to walk with caution ; let them receive a lesson from the example of the Spouse who could by no means attain to Him Whom she desired until she was met by the watchmen and submitted to be instructed by them in the knowledge of her Beloved, and this that she might learn the fear of the Lord. He that refuses to follow his spiritual director commits himself to the guidance of the seducer. And he that sends his flock to pasture unguarded is more a shepherd to the wolves than to the sheep.

Let us turn now, my brethren, to the Spouse and see in what sense she proclaims that she has been found. For to me this seems a very strange expression to use. It suggests the idea that the Church has come from but one single place ; whereas she has been drawn, according to the testimony of Christ, from the east and from the west and from all the ends of the earth. But neither has she been at any time assembled in any one place where she might have been found by the apostles or by the angels, and by them led or directed to Him Whom her soul loveth. Perhaps she had been found before she was collected ? No, that could not be, because she did not exist at all until she was collected.

Wherefore, had she said that she was collected, or assembled, or—to employ an expression still more appropriate to the Church—called together, by the preachers of the Gospel, I should have simply passed on, seeing no reason for delay. For these preachers were the “coadjutors of God,” Whom they had even heard saying to them, “He that gathereth not with Me, scattereth.” Nor should I feel surprised if some one were to speak of the Church as having been founded or built by the preachers, since they in truth co-operated in this work with Him Who declares in the Gospel, “And upon this rock I will build my Church,” and “It fell not because it was founded on a rock.” But the Spouse makes use of none of these very suitable expressions, preferring to say, in language less intelligible, that she has been found. This causes me to hesitate and excites in my mind the suspicion that there is something here concealed which requires to be more diligently investigated.

It was my intention, I confess, to make no pause at this place, and to save myself the trouble of an enquiry to which I recognise that my powers are inadequate. But now, remembering how often in dealing with other passages, equally obscure and difficult, I have been assisted beyond all hope when you lifted up your hearts to intercede for me with God, I feel ashamed of such diffidence; and condemning my cowardice, I am willing, yet without presumption, to proceed to the task which before I would have timidly avoided. The Holy Spirit, I make no doubt, will not be wanting with His customary help. But in any case, I have an assurance in the good will of my present hearers that whatever I may find to say shall not be unproductive



of some fruit. However, the discussion in question must be reserved for another occasion, as this sermon has to be concluded here. May it be granted you not only to retain the memory of what has been said to-day, but also to cherish it with affection and to carry it out in practice—may this, I pray, be granted you by the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXXVIII.

ON THE ETERNAL PREDESTINATION OF THE SPOUSE,  
AND ON THE MANNER IN WHICH SHE HAS BEEN  
PREPARED AND PREVENTED BY GRACE AND  
FOUND BY THE PREACHERS OF THE GOSPEL.

*"The Watchmen who kept the city found me."*

This word of finding, my brethren, if I remember aright, has given us pause ; for hearing the Spouse declare that she has been found by the preachers of the Gospel, we have hesitated in doubt as to her meaning. The reason of this hesitation and uncertainty I have already indicated to you in the preceding discourse, when we judged that there was something hidden here which required to be examined into. But we were then approaching the end of the sermon, and the discussion of the matter in question could not be completed in the little time that remained. So it was held over. And what now remains but that I should discharge my debt to you ? Well, then. In the working out of the "great mystery,"—I refer to that which the Doctor of nations interpreted to mean the chaste and holy marriage of Christ with His Church, which is indeed the work of our salvation—in this, I say, there are three factors co-operating with each other, namely, God, the angels, and men. As regards God, why should He not busy and concern Himself with the nuptials of His own beloved Son ? So indeed He does, and with His whole mind and heart. And He alone would be sufficient for the

work, without the assistance of angels or men, whereas they without Him could accomplish nothing at all. Consequently if He has made them His associates in carrying out His design to redeem the human race, it was not because He wanted any support for Himself, but only because He wished to afford us an opportunity of meriting. For He has decreed that man must find his merit in labour, as it is written, "The labourer is worthy of his hire"; and again, "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour," whether he be one who plants in faith, or one who waters what another has already planted. And further, by employing the ministry of the angels in the work of saving men, He has caused the former to be loved by the latter. But men are in turn objects of love to the angels. This may be inferred from one fact especially, because, namely, it is from the human race, as these celestial spirits well know, that the losses which their city sustained in the primeval rebellion have to be made good. It is surely only becoming that the kingdom of charity should be governed by no other laws than the holy and mutual loves of those who are destined to reign everlastingly together, by their pure affections for each other and for God.

But although the three agents co-operate with each other, each works in a manner consonant with his nature and dignity, and so there is a wide difference in their respective modes of operation. Thus God accomplishes all His designs with no greater effort than it costs Him to will them, without any agitation, without any motion, without any dependence on place or on time, on instruments or on persons. For He is the Lord of the Sabbath who "judgeth all things with



tranquillity"; and He is also wisdom that "disposeth all things sweetly." The angels, likewise, work without agitation, yet not without motion both in space and in time. But human activity is always attended with agitation of mind and with bodily and spiritual movements. For man has received a command to work out his salvation "with fear and trembling," and to "eat his bread in the sweat of his brow."

Having discussed these preliminary questions, let us now, my brethren, consider together that in this most magnificent work of our salvation there are three things which have to be attributed exclusively to the divine authorship, and with regard to which God has anticipated all His auxiliaries and co-operators. The three things I speak of are predestination, creation, and inspiration. Of these, predestination did not begin, I do not say with the beginning of the Church, or even with the beginning of the world, but at no point of time at all, because it was before all time. Creation began with time. Inspiration takes place in time, when and where it pleases God. It admits of no doubt that, according to predestination, there never has been a time when the Church of the elect was not with God. Should the unbeliever marvel at this, let him hear something which is still more wonderful, namely, that the same Church of the elect has never been otherwise than pleasing and beloved. What is to prevent me from boldly proclaiming the great secret which has been revealed to me out of the Heart of God by that faithful publisher of heavenly counsels, I mean the Apostle St. Paul? For it is he who, amongst many other mysteries, has not hesitated to manifest this also of the riches of the divine goodness, where he says, "He hath blessed us with spiritual

blessings in heavenly places in Christ. As He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity." And he adds, "Who hath predestined us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ, unto Himself; according to the purpose of His will, unto the praise of the glory of His grace, in which He hath graced us in His beloved Son." Nor can there be any doubt that these words are spoken in the name of all the elect, by whom the Church is constituted.\* But which even of the blessed angels could have found this Church in the fathomless depths of eternity and before she was brought forth into the light as a part of this creation, except he to whom God, Who is the only true Eternity, condescended to reveal her?

But even after she has appeared at the Creator's bidding amongst the other visible forms and figures of the created universe, she was not immediately discovered by any human person or by any of the angels, because as yet she could not be recognised, being overshadowed by the image of the earthly man and covered with the mist of death. For it is certain that none of the children of Adam has ever entered this life without this shroud of universal confusion, He alone being excepted Who alone "walked without blemish." I speak of

\* "*Nec dubium quin voce omnium electorum ista dicantur : ipsi Ecclesia sunt.*" The Saint, it is hardly necessary to observe, is not here giving expression to the doctrine proposed later on by John Huss and condemned by the Council of Constance (1414-18), namely, that the Church of Christ consists exclusively of the just and predestinate. In many places of his writings, especially in Sermons LXV and LXVI on the Canticle, he plainly teaches that the Church embraces good and bad, the reprobate as well as the predestinate. Consequently he is speaking here, not of only election or predestination to glory, but also of election to the grace of faith.—(Translator.)

Emmanuel,\* Who nevertheless for us and from us assumed to Himself the likeness, though not the reality, of our malediction and our sin. For so we read of Him that He appeared "in the likeness of sinful flesh, and of sin hath condemned sin in the flesh." Of the rest, all have come into the world under the same cloud, the elect as well as the reprobate. There is no distinction in this matter. All have sinned, and all carry about with them the evidence of their shame. For this reason, then, the Church, even after she had been brought into existence and took her place amongst other created things, could not yet be found or recognised by any creature, because she still lay concealed in a wonderful manner both within the bosom of a blessed predestination and amidst the mass of miserable damnation.†

\* "Sine quo profecto generalis velamine confusionis nemo filiorum hominum intravit hanc vitam, Illo sane excepto, 'Qui ingreditur sine macula.' Emmanuel Hic est." This language no more denies Our Lady's Immaculate Conception than the words "I am Who am" deny the existence of creatures, "None is good but God," the goodness of creatures, "Thou only art holy," the holiness of creatures. It merely affirms that Christ was sinless in an unparalleled way, of necessity and *de jure*, not, like His Mother, by privilege. She needed to be dispensed from the law of inherited sin, to which otherwise she would have been subject; but He Who was by nature immaculate, required no such dispensation. Cf. Suarez, disp. 3, s. 2. It is worth observing that in a sermon included with St. Bernard's but now recognised to be the work of Ogerius, a Cistercian Abbot, contemporary or nearly so with the Saint, the following passage occurs: "Amongst the children of men, there is found none, great or small, so eminently holy and so highly privileged as to be conceived without sin, except the Mother of the Immaculate 'Who did no sin'; but took away the sins of the world. When there is question of her, I will have no mention of sin." Now it may be fairly supposed that Ogerius would not depart from the doctrine of him who was the light and glory of his Order. See also note, p. 253, vol. i. —(Translator.)

† "Massam miserae damnationis," a phrase borrowed from St. Augustine.—(Translator.)



But she, who had been concealed from everlasting by predestinating Wisdom, who at the beginning of time had been likewise kept hidden by creating Power, was at last, in due season, made manifest by the visitation of grace, according to the operation to which a while ago I gave the name of inspiration. I have entitled it so, because it is really something infused into the human spirit from the Spirit of the Bridegroom, as a preparation for the Gospel of peace, that is to say, to prepare a way for the Lord and for the Gospel of His glory into the hearts of all those who have been predestined to eternal life. In vain would the watchmen have laboured in preaching if this grace of inspiration had not gone before. But when they beheld how the "word runneth swiftly," when they saw the gentile nations being converted to the Lord with the utmost facility, and all tribes and tongues coalescing in the unity of faith, and the ends of the earth brought together by the influence of the same Catholic mother, then, I say, they understood concerning the riches of divine grace which were concealed from the beginning of the world, treasured up in the bosom of eternal predestination ; and they rejoiced at having found her whom God before all ages had chosen for His Spouse.

From these observations it appears evident, as I think, that the Spouse had a special reason for saying that she was found by the preachers, because, namely, she desired to acknowledge that by them she has been collected, but not elected ; discovered, but not converted. For the conversion of every soul must be attributed to Him alone to Whom alone all men without exception are under the necessity of addressing that petition of the psalm, "Convert us, O God our Saviour." But it may be

doubted whether there would be the same propriety in speaking of souls as having been *found* by God as in attributing to Him their conversion. Indeed I am certain that there would not. Souls are not found by God but prevented (*non invenire. . . . sed praevenire*) and anticipation excludes discovery. For how could anything be discovered by Him to whom nothing is ever unknown? "The Lord knoweth who are His," as the Apostle tells us. But what are His own words? "I know," He says, "whom I have chosen from the beginning."\* Manifestly, then, there would have been no reason in the Spouse's proclaiming that she was found by the same Bridegroom Who from eternity had foreknown her, and loved her, and Who had created her at the beginning. But I would say with confidence that she had been prepared by Him in order to be found by others. For "he that saw it hath given testimony" and we know that "his testimony is true." And this is his testimony, "And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." These are the words of one of the watchmen who keep the city. But attend now to the Bridegroom Himself by whom the Bride was prepared. He says to the watchmen, using another image, and as it were pointing her out to them with His finger, "Lift up your eyes and see the countries, for they are white already to harvest," that is to say, prepared for the harvest. It is from this time that the Father of the family begins to invite labourers into His fields, when He beholds how everything has now been so well prepared that without very much effort on

\* The words "from the beginning" are found neither in the Greek nor in the Latin Vulgate.—(Translator.)

their part they may be able to rejoice over their success and to boast with St. Paul, "For we are God's coadjutors." For what is it that they shall have to do? Only to seek out the Spouse and, when she has been found, to tell her about her Beloved. For being the friends of the Bridegroom, they will seek not their own glory but His. And they will not need to labour much to obtain for Him the glory of finding her, because she is already at hand, is already seeking Him with all the eagerness of love. So well has her will been prepared by the Lord.

Indeed, before the watchmen have spoken a word to her, she of her own accord questions them concerning her Beloved. Having been herself prevented by divine grace, she now in turn prevents her preachers, interrogating them and asking, "Have you seen Him Whom my soul loveth?" Rightly, therefore, does she proclaim that she has been found by the watchmen who keep the city," because she is well aware that she has been foreknown and anticipated by the Lord of the city, and that it was their part, not to form her, but to find her after she had been already formed by Him. Thus Cornelius was found by St. Peter and St. Paul by Ananias, because both had been prevented and prepared by the Lord. How could anyone have been better prepared than was Saul, who had even already cried out with suppliant heart and voice, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?" Nor less prepared was Cornelius, who by his almsgivings and prayers—to which, however, he was moved by the preventing grace of God—merited to receive the gift of faith. St. Nathanael also was found by St. Philip. But the Lord had already seen him when he was under the



fig-tree. And what else was this vision of the Lord but a preparation of the heart? Again, St. Andrew is credited with having found his own brother, Simon; nevertheless he also was anticipated by the foresight and the foreknowledge of the Lord, Who immediately changed Simon's name to Cephas, as if to signify the firmness of his faith.

Moreover, we read of the Virgin Mary that "she was found with Child of the Holy Ghost." It seems to me, my brethren, that in this respect there is some resemblance between the Mother of the Lord and His Bride. For unless the latter had been found likewise with the fruit of the Holy Ghost, she would by no means have so familiarly questioned the watchmen who found her concerning Him Whose Spirit He is. As it was, however, she did not wait for them to make known the object of their coming. She was the first to speak, and indeed out of the abundance of her heart, saying to them, "Have you seen Him Whom my soul loveth?" For she knew how blessed were the eyes that had gazed upon Him, and therefore, looking with wondering eyes on those who had seen Him, she seems to ask, "Are you they to whom it has been given to see Him Whom so many kings and prophets have desired to see and have not seen? Are you they who have been found worthy to behold Wisdom in the flesh, Truth in the body, God in man? Many say to me, 'lo! He is here' and 'lo! He is there'; but I judge it to be safer to put my trust in you who 'did eat and drink with Him after He arose again from the dead.'" These, my brethren, are the remarks which have occurred to me in connection with the Spouse's questioning of the watchmen. If anything has been omitted which ought to be said, it shall be supplied in

another sermon. But that the Spouse has been prevented by the Holy Ghost, although recognised and found by those who keep the city, is now, I hope, sufficiently clear, especially from this fact, because, namely, it is she who has been chosen by God before the beginning of the world and prepared for His own beloved Son to be His everlasting delight during unending ages, "that she may be holy and unspotted in His sight," "springing as the lily" and "flourishing for ever before the Lord," the Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXXIX.

ON THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SPOUSE PASSED BEYOND  
THE WATCHMEN, AND ON THE FINAL RECONCILIATION  
OF CHRIST WITH THE SYNAGOGUE.

*“ Have you seen Him Whom my soul loveth ? When I had a little passed beyond\* them I found Him Whom my soul loveth. I held Him and will not let Him go till I bring Him into my mother’s house and into the chamber of her that bore me.”*

“ Have you seen Him Whom my soul loveth ? ” O love, so precipitate, so violent, so ardent, so impetuous, suffering the mind to entertain no thought but of thyself, spurning everything, despising everything which is not thyself, content with thyself alone ! Thou disturbest all order, disregardest all usage, ignorest all measure. Thou dost triumph over in thyself and reduce to captivity whatever appears to belong to fittingness, to reason, to decorum, to prudence or counsel. Thus every thought which this Spouse thinks and every word which she utters savours of thee and sounds of thee and of nothing but thee, so completely hast thou monopolised both her heart and her tongue. She says to the watchmen, “ Have you seen Him Whom my soul loveth ? ” As if she expected them to know what she is thinking of. Dost thou enquire concerning Him Whom thy soul loveth ? And has He no other name except this ? But who art thou thyself and who is He ? Such questions, my brethren, I should be

\* “ Paululum quum pertransissem eos.” The Douay Version has “ When I had a little passed by them.” The substitution of “ beyond ” for “ by ” has been made in order to suit St. Bernard’s context.—(Translator.)



inclined to ask on account of the strangeness of language and the remarkable disregard for the proprieties of speech which appear to distinguish this part of Holy Scripture from every other. Therefore it seems to me that in examining this nuptial song we ought to attend more to the affection than to the verbal expression. And the reason is, because holy love, which is manifestly the sole, exclusive theme of the entire composition, can be measured "not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." It is love that is speaking everywhere. And should any of you desire to attain to an understanding of the things which he reads, let him love. For it is useless for him who loves not, to attempt to read or to listen to this Canticle of love, because the "ignited word" can obtain no lodgment in a heart that is cold and frozen. Just as he who knows not Greek cannot understand one speaking Greek, just as one who knows not Latin cannot understand one speaking Latin, and so on with all other tongues: in the same way to him who knows not love the language of love is barbarous and becomes as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." But these, I mean the watchmen who keep the city, having themselves also received from the Spirit the gift of love, are able to comprehend what the same Spirit speaketh; and as the language of holy love is perfectly familiar to them, they can answer immediately in the same tongue, that is, by loving affections and offices of piety.

Accordingly, she obtains from them in brief so much information concerning Him Whom she loves that she proceeds to tell us, "When I had a little passed beyond them I found Him Whom my soul loveth." Well does she say "a little," because they replied to

her question with an "abbreviated word," by delivering to her the symbol of the faith. The words which follow are equally well-chosen. It was necessary indeed that the Spouse should pass (*transire*) to them from whom she was to learn the truth. But it was no less necessary that she should pass *beyond* them (*pertransire*). For had she not passed beyond even these watchmen, she would never have found Him Whom she was seeking. And let it not be supposed that they left her in ignorance of this. For they preached not themselves but the Lord Jesus, Who without doubt is above them and beyond them. Therefore also He says, "Pass over to Me all ye that desire Me." Neither was it sufficient for her to pass simply, but she is also instructed to pass *over* or *beyond*; because He in Whose steps she was walking, had Himself passed beyond. For not only had He passed from death to life, but He had passed beyond to glory. How, then, could it have been otherwise than necessary for her too to pass beyond? For unless she did so, she could not have overtaken her Beloved Whose footprints she had not faithfully followed whithersoever He had gone.

To express my meaning more plainly, if my Lord Jesus had arisen from the dead, but had not ascended to heaven, it could not be said of Him that He had passed *beyond*, but only that He had passed from death to life; and thus for the Spouse also in seeking Him it would have been necessary merely to pass, without passing beyond. But now that He has not alone passed from death to life by rising from the tomb, but has also passed beyond by ascending into heaven, there was good reason for her to announce that she, on her side, has not been content to pass to

the watchmen, but has passed beyond them, inasmuch as she has followed her Bridegroom to heaven by her faith and devotion. We may say consequently that to believe in the resurrection is to pass, but to believe in the ascension is to pass beyond. And perhaps before she was found by the watchmen, the Spouse had already a knowledge of the resurrection but not of the ascension, as I remember to have remarked on a previous occasion when discussing the former mystery.\* Therefore, having been instructed by them in that which was still wanting to her, in the truth, namely, that He Who had arisen from the dead had also ascended into heaven, she likewise ascended, that is to say, she passed beyond the watchmen and so found her Beloved. How, indeed, could she have failed to find Him, seeing that, whither He has ascended in body, she has attained in mind? "When I had a little passed beyond them." Rightly also does she say "beyond *them*," that is, the watchmen or the preachers of the Gospel. For these, as well as His other mystical "members which are upon the earth," our divine Head has passed beyond and transcended by two of His mysteries, namely, by His resurrection, and I have before explained, and also by His ascension. For "Christ is the first-fruits of them that sleep." But if He has passed beyond, so too has our faith, which follows Him whithersoever He goes. If He ascends into heaven, it is there; if He descends into hell, it is present; if He takes His wings in the morning early and dwells in the uttermost parts of the sea, still our faith can say to Him, in the words of the psalm, "Even there also shall Thy Hand lead me and

\* See his first sermon for Easter on the text, "The Lion of the tribe of Juda hath conquered."—(Translator.)



Thy Right Hand shall hold me." For has not the infinitely good and powerful Father of the Bridegroom "raised us up together" with Him "and hath made us to sit" with Him at His own Right Hand "in the heavenly places"? Thus far I have been occupied in explaining the words of the Church, "When I had a little passed beyond them," and showing how she has even passed beyond herself, since she dwells by faith where she has not yet arrived in fact. I have also, as I hope, made plain to you the reason why she chose to say "when I had passed beyond" rather than "when I had passed." And now let us likewise pass on to the discussion of what remains of our text.

"I held Him and I will not let Him go till I bring Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that bore me." So it is, my brethren. From that time and thenceforward there has been no failure of the Christian family, nor of faith from the earth, nor of charity in the Church. "The floods came and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, because it was founded upon a rock," "and the rock was Christ." And so neither the verbiage of philosophers, nor the sophistry of heretics, nor the sword of persecutors, has ever been able, and never shall be able, to separate her (the Church) "from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus." So strongly does she hold on to Him Whom her soul loveth, so good does she find it to adhere to her God. To charity may be applied the words of the Prophet Isaias, "It is good for soldering." For where shall we find a firmer bond of union than this solder, which can neither be worn away by water nor broken by tempests, nor severed by the sword? "Many waters cannot quench

charity," as we read further on in this Canticle. "I held Him and I will not let Him go," says the Spouse. And the holy Prophet Jacob said to Him before her, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." The Spouse accordingly is unwilling to let her Bridegroom go, and perhaps is more unwilling than was the Patriarch, because he consented to let Him go after receiving a blessing, but not so the Spouse. "It is not Thy blessing I want," she seems to say, "but Thyself. 'For what have I in heaven? And besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?' I will not let Thee go, no, not even if Thou shouldst bless me."

"I held Him and I will not let Him go," so speaks the Spouse. But perhaps He is as desirous to be held as she is to hold Him, since He has declared, "My delights are to be with the children of men," and has moreover promised ever to abide with us, where He says, "Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." What can be stronger than this bond which is constituted by one and the same most ardent desire of two wills? "I held Him," she says. But at the same time she is herself held in turn by Him Whom she holds, and to Whom she elsewhere addresses the words, "Thou hast held me by my right hand." How is it possible for her to fall now, whilst she holds Him and is held by Him? She holds Him by the strength of her faith; she also holds Him by the tenderness of her devotion. But not for long would she continue to hold Him, if she ceased to be held by Him. And she is held by the power of the Lord and by His mercy. "I held Him and will not let Him go till I bring Him into my mother's house and into the chamber of her that bore me." Boundless,

my brethren, is the charity of the Church which begrudges not a participation in her delights even to her jealous rival, the Synagogue. Can anything be kinder than the readiness which she here manifests to communicate Him Whom her soul loveth even to her enemy? However, it should not surprise us, since "salvation is of the Jews." Thither whence He came let the Saviour return in order that a "remnant" of Israel may be saved. Let not the branches be ungrateful to the root, nor the children to their mother. The branches ought not to begrudge the root a share of the sap they have derived from it; nor should the children envy their mother a participation in the milk they have drawn from her breasts. Let the Church, therefore, keep a firm hold of the salvation which the Synagogue has lost; let her hold fast to it "until the fulness of the gentiles shall come in, and so all Israel shall be saved." At the same time, let her be willing that the universal salvation should be universally participated in, since it can be so communicated to all that each shall have thereby nothing the less. But as a matter of fact, she does do this, aye, and more than this. Do you ask me, my brethren, what does she more? I will tell you. She desires for her rival both the name and the grace of a Spouse. That certainly is something more than mere salvation.

Such charity, my brethren, would be incredible did not the words of the Spouse prove it to be a fact. For if you have observed, she expressed her intention to bring Him Whom she holds not only into her mother's house, but into her mother's chamber also, which signifies a high prerogative. It would be sufficient for salvation that the Bridegroom should enter the house: "This



day is salvation come to this house," said Jesus to Zacheus. But His entrance into the privacy of the chamber means the communication of special grace. How should there not be salvation for the household when the Saviour comes into the home? But the soul that deserves to receive Him into her chamber has Him all to herself and enjoys Him in secret. Salvation comes to the house, but for the chamber are reserved the delights of holy love. "Till I bring Him into my mother's house," she says. Of what house is she speaking except that whereof the Bridegroom Himself declared to the Jews, "Behold your house shall be left to you desolate"? And He did what He threatened to do, as we have it again on His own testimony, spoken by the mouth of His Prophet Jeremias, "I have forsaken My house, I have left My inheritance." But now the Spouse promises to bring Him back and to restore to the house of her mother the salvation she has lost. And should you consider this a slight favour, attend to the grace which she promises in addition, "And I will bring Him into the chamber of her that bore me." Now, if He enters this chamber it can only be as a Bridegroom. Oh, how great is the power of love! The Saviour in anger had forsaken His home and His inheritance, and now, appeased by the love of the daughter, He so far relents that He goes back to the mother not alone as a Saviour, but even as a Bridegroom. "Blessed art thou of the Lord, O daughter," because thou hast appeased His indignation and restored to Him His inheritance. And blessed art thou of thy mother, since it is by thee that the wrath of heaven has been averted from her, grace recovered for her, and the Bridegroom brought back

to say to her, "I am thy salvation." And lest this should not be enough, thou hast even induced Him to add and to say to her, "I will espouse thee to Me in faith, I will espouse thee to Me in judgment and in justice, and I will espouse thee to Me in mercy and in commiserations." But remember that she who thus reconciles the Bridegroom to her mother is the Spouse. How then can she consent to yield her Bridegroom, and such a Bridegroom as hers, to another, not to speak of her desiring to do so? Such is not the case, however. She does indeed, like a good daughter, desire Him for her mother, yet only by communication, not as renouncing her own rights. One Bridegroom is sufficient for the two, although it would be more correct to say that they shall now no longer be two, but one Spouse in Him. "For He is our peace Who hath made both one," so that there might be one Bride and one Bridegroom, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXXX.\*

ON THE IMAGE OF GOD, AND THE SOUL WHICH IS MADE  
ACCORDING TO THE IMAGE ; AND ON THE ERRORS  
OF GILBERT DE LA PORREE.

- " In my bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth : I sought Him and found Him not.*  
*" I will rise and will go about the city : in the streets and the broad ways I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth : I sought Him and I found Him not.*  
*" The watchmen who kept the city found me : Have you seen Him Whom my soul loveth ?*  
*" When I had a little passed beyond them, I found Him Whom my soul loveth : I held Him and I will not let Him go, till I bring Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that bore me."*

Some of you, my brethren, as it appears, are feeling disappointed because, for several days past, I have given myself up so exclusively to the delight of studying, with wonder and admiration, the mystical meanings of this speech of the Spouse, that my sermons have been seasoned with few moral applications, if any at all.

\* This sermon was preached in the year 1148, after the Saint's return from the Council of Rheims, in which his zeal and exertions brought about the condemnation of certain doctrines defended by the celebrated Gilbert de la Porree. Gilbert was a holy bishop, and his errors arose out of an attempt to apply to the Blessed Trinity the Aristotelian dialectics. The most serious of them was his denial that the Divinity, considered formally, is God. He had the humility to submit to the decision of the Council (presided over by Pope Eugene III.) and was sent back in peace to his diocese. Of this and the following sermons Mabillon writes, " The depth and sublimity of his (St. Bernard's) theological learning is revealed to us especially in two of his discourses on the Canticle, namely, the eightieth and the eighty-first, where he treats of the image of God in the Word and in the soul, and of the divine simplicity so finely and so profoundly that no one has ever surpassed him, before his time or since."—(Translator.)



That certainly is not in accordance with my usual practice. But I want your permission now to go over again what has been treated already. I will not proceed until all has been rehearsed. I pray you, then, to tell me, if you remember, at what verse I began to defraud you of these moral reflections, so that we may commence again from there. It shall be my care to make good whatever loss you may have suffered, or rather I should say that this shall be the care of the Lord to Whom we look for everything. Whence, therefore, am I to begin with the rehearsal? Unless I am mistaken, the starting-point should be the verse, "In my bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth," because there and thenceforward my sole concern has been to remove the thick veil of allegory, and to place clearly before you the sense of this secret and delightful intercourse between Christ and His Church. Let us therefore go back to seek for moral interpretations; and do not be afraid that the work shall prove wearisome to me, provided it be profitable to you. The most convenient plan will be to endeavour to apply to the Word and the individual soul what I have already said concerning Christ and the Church.

But here I may be met with the objection, "Why dost thou join these two together? What is there in common between the Word of God and the soul of man?" I answer, "Much in every way." For, in the first place, there is a close natural affinity between them, since the Word is the Image of God and the soul is made according to this Image. And secondly, their likeness to each other bears witness to that affinity, since the soul has been made not only according to the Image but also to the likeness of the Image.

Do you ask in what consists their likeness to each other? But let me speak first about the Image. The Word is Truth, the Word is Wisdom, the Word is Justice. And under each of these respects He is an Image. An Image of what? An Image of Justice, an Image of Wisdom, an Image of Truth. For the Word as an Image is Justice of Justice, and Wisdom of Wisdom, and Truth of Truth; in the same manner as He is the Light of Light and God of God. But the soul is none of these things, because she is not the Image. Nevertheless she is capable of them, and is desirous of them too; and perhaps it is with respect to this capacity and this desire that she is said to be made according to the Image. She is a noble creature whose greatness is revealed in the fact that she possesses in herself such a capacity for participating in the perfections of the Word; and in her yearning for the same, she gives proof of her righteousness. We read in Ecclesiastes that "God made man right"; and that He made him great also is clear, as I have said, from his capacity for greatness. For it is necessary that what has been made according to the Image should bear some resemblance to the Image, and that its participation in the name of the Image should not be in vain; just as the Image Itself has not received the name of Image as a bare and empty title. Consequently of Him Who is the Image, that is, of the Word, we read that being "in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Here we have insinuated to us the righteousness of the Word, in that He is affirmed to be in the form of God, and His Majesty in that He is affirmed to be equal with God; in order to make it appear that, just

as the Image is conformed in both these perfections to Him of Whom He is the Image, so is there on the other hand a corresponding conformity between the Image and the soul which is made according to the Image. For it is of the Same of Whom the Word is the Image that we hear David singing in the psalms, at one time, "Great is our Lord and great is His power," at another, "The Lord our God is righteous and there is no iniquity in Him." From this great and righteous Lord, the Word, His Image, has that He also is great and righteous, and from the Image the soul which is made according to the Image.

But I say: since we have assigned greatness and righteousness both to the Image and to the soul which is made according to the Image, does the Image therefore possess nothing more than that which is made according to the Image? Yes, my brethren, and infinitely more. For the soul has received these perfections in measure, but the Image according to equality with the Giver. And is not this something more? But there is a further difference to which I would invite your attention. The soul owes her greatness and her righteousness to creation and condescension, whereas it is by generation they belong to the Word. Now there can be no doubt that it is a more magnificent thing to be great and righteous in the latter way than in the former. Neither shall it be gainsaid that the soul in the following respect too is surpassed by the Word, in that, namely, whilst she possesses the perfections in question merely as gifts bestowed by God, He has them by God and also of God. That is to say, He has them from the very Substance of the Father. For the Image of God is



consubstantial with God, and everything which God seems to communicate to this same Image of Himself is essential and substantial, not accidental in Both. There is still another point deserving of your attention, as to which the Image immeasurably transcends that which is made according to the Image. Greatness and righteousness, as everybody knows, differ from each other in their proper natures. Nevertheless, they are one in the Image. What is more, they are one *with* the Image. For to the Image, not alone is it the same thing to be great as to be righteous, but it is also the same thing to be both great and righteous as simply to be. Such, however, is not the case with the soul. Greatness and righteousness in her are both distinct from her substance, and distinct from each other. For if, as I have already pointed out, the soul is great in that she is capable of things divine and eternal, and is righteous in that she is desirous of things divine and eternal, it follows that a soul which neither seeks nor relishes "the things above but the things that are upon the earth" can no longer be called righteous but rather curved, although she does not cease thereby to be great, since she still retains her natural capacity for eternal glory. Indeed it is not possible that she should at any time be without this capacity, even though it is destined never to be realised. Thus is fulfilled the word of the Prophet David, "Surely man continueth as an image";\* yet only in part, so as to make manifest the pre-eminence of the Word Who is the perfect Image. For how could the Word fall from being either great or righteous, since these attributes belong to Him

\* "Verumtamen in imagine pertransit homo" (Ps. xxxviii. 7), in the Douay Version, "Surely man passeth as an image." The change has been made to suit the context.—(Translator.)

in such a manner that He is rather identified with them than possessed of them? And it may be said that for this reason also "man continueth as an image" in part, lest if he lost completely the qualities of an image, viz., both greatness and righteousness, he should also lose the hope of salvation. By ceasing to be great, he would cease to be capable of eternal glory, because, as I have said, the soul's greatness consists in this capacity. But how could anyone hope for what he is incapable of receiving?

Consequently, "man continueth as an image" in the greatness which he retains even after he has lost his righteousness, halting, as it were, in one leg, and become as "children that are strangers." For it is of such, as I think, that the Psalmist says, "The children that are strangers have lied to me, strange children have faded away, and have halted from their paths." Very appropriately are they described as "children that are strangers." For they are still children because of the greatness which they have preserved; and they are strangers inasmuch as they have lost their righteousness. Nor would the Psalmist have said of them that they "have halted," but rather that they have fallen, or used some other similar expression, if men had put off all resemblance to an image. As the case is, however, "man continueth as an image" according to the greatness which he still possesses; whilst as regards righteousness he halts, so to speak, having been deposed and cast down from the dignity of an image, agreeably to what we read in Holy Scripture, "Surely man continueth as an image: yea and he is disquieted in vain." In vain, truly, because, as the Psalmist goes on to say, "He storeth up; and he

knoweth not for whom he shall gather these things." Wherefore, my brethren, does he not know for whom he storeth, unless because, by stooping down to vile and earthly things, he treasureth up only earth for himself? Certainly as to those treasures which he lays up to himself on earth, "he knoweth not for whom he shall gather" them, whether for the moth that consumes, or for the thief that breaks through and steals, or for the enemy that plunders, or for the fire that devours. And therefore to the man who thus miserably bends and inclines himself to those things which are upon the earth we may apply the mournful words of the psalm, "I am become miserable and am bowed down even to the end: I walked sorrowful all the day long." For such a one experiences in himself the truth of that saying of the Wise Man, "God made man right, and he hath entangled himself with an infinity of cares." And immediately he heard addressed to him the words of mockery, "Bow down that we may go over" thee.

But what has led us hither? It was, I think, my endeavour to show that greatness and righteousness (by which two perfections I affirmed every image of God to be constituted) are neither one and the same *in* the soul, nor one and the same *with* the soul, whilst maintaining on the contrary the equally orthodox position that the same two are identified *in* the Word and *with* the Word. And with regard to righteousness, what I have said is sufficient to make it evident that it is something distinct both from the soul and from the greatness of the soul, since the soul continues in existence after she has ceased to be righteous, and continues also to be great. But how am I to establish



the distinction between the soul herself and her greatness? For the same argument which I employed to prove the soul distinct from her righteousness is not available here, since the soul cannot lose her greatness as she can lose her righteousness. Nevertheless I maintain that the soul is not her greatness,\* and my reason is this, because although the soul is never found without her greatness, that greatness may be found apart from the soul. Would you like to know where? In the angels. For the greatness of the angels is derived from the same source as the greatness of the soul, namely, from their capacity for things divine and eternal. But if the fact that the soul can exist without being righteous is sufficient to demonstrate her distinction from righteousness, it must equally follow that she is distinct from her greatness, from the fact that she cannot vindicate this greatness as something proper to herself. Since therefore righteousness does not belong universally to souls, and greatness does not belong exclusively to souls, it is manifestly and equally impossible for one or the other to be identified with the soul. Here is another argument. No form can be identical with that of which it is the form. Now her

\* This greatness of the soul, namely, her capacity for eternal glory, belongs to what theologians call the "obediential power" (*potentia obedientialis*) of creatures, by which is meant their capacity to be made, according to the divine good pleasure, the instruments or the recipients of supernatural effects. On the question of its distinction from the being of its subject, Suarez appears to differ from St. Bernard. "This potency," he says (Disp. 43, s. 4) is nothing superadded to the natures of things, or really distinct from them." But it is evident from the arguments he uses that what he denies it to be is an adventitious supernatural quality, not a natural inseparable accident or condition. The capacity for heavenly bliss survives, therefore, in the reprobate, because they are still subject to God's dominion, although by His free decree it shall never be actualised.—Cf. Hickey, *Sum. Phil. Schol.*, v. 1, n. 320.—(Translator.)

greatness is a form of the soul. Nor does the fact that it is inseparable from the soul prevent it from being a form of the same. For all essential differences are similarly inseparable, and not only all specific and strictly so-called properties, but also certain qualities common to many species, as well as innumerable other forms. The soul, consequently, is not her greatness any more than is the crow her blackness, or the snow its whiteness, or man his risibility or his rationality. And yet you will never find either a crow without blackness, or snow without whiteness, or a man who is devoid of risibility or rationality. It is just the same with the soul with regard to her greatness. Although inseparable, they are quite distinct from each other. How in truth could they be otherwise than mutually distinct, since the one is a substance and a subject in which the other inheres as a quality or an accident? It is only the supreme and uncreated Nature, Which is one God in three Persons, That vindicates for Itself such a pure and incommunicable simplicity of essence as excludes not alone all kinds of difference of thing from thing, but likewise all distinctions relating to place and time. For, abiding in Itself, that Divine Nature *is* whatever It *has*,\* and is what It is eternally and unchangeably.

\* In his work *De Consideratione*, l. v. c. vi. we find this truth more fully expressed: "'When I had a little passed beyond them I found Him Whom my soul loveth.' Who is He? I know not how to answer better than to say that He is Who is. This is the name He desired should be given to Himself, this is the name He revealed to us, when at His command Moses said to the people, 'He Who is hath sent me to you.' It is a most appropriate name. None other would be so suitable to the Eternity Which is God. Shouldst thou call Him good, shouldst thou call Him great, shouldst thou call Him blessed, shouldst thou call Him wise, shouldst thou give Him any other name whatever, thou summest all up when thou sayest that He *is*. For to Him to *be* is to be all perfect. Though thou shouldst

Things which are manifold elsewhere are reduced in It to unity, and things in their own natures distinct in It become identical, so that the multitude of Its perfections does not impair Its unity nor their variety prejudice Its simplicity. It contains in Itself all places and in their proper places disposes the whole universe of creatures, yet occupies no place Itself. It is unaffected by the succession of time which pursues its course outside and beneath It. It has no future to look forward to, no past to look back upon, no present to experience.

Let us keep far away, my dearest brethren, let us keep far away from those modern teachers, rather heretics than mere dialecticians, who most impiously maintain that neither the greatness by which God is great, nor the goodness by which He is good, nor the wisdom by which He is wise, nor the justice by which He is just, nor lastly the Divinity by which He is God, is Itself God. God is God, they say, by reason of His Divinity, yet His Divinity is not God. Perchance they think it would be degrading the Divinity to regard It as God, since It is so great that It makes God to be God. But if It be not God, what then is It? Either It is God, or It is something which is distinct from God, or It is nothing at all. Thou, the heretic, dost not concede that It is God. And I suppose thou wilt not assert that It is nothing, since thou confessest It to be so indispensably necessary to God that without It, not only would He not be God, but it is It alone which makes Him to be God. But if thou declarest the Divinity

assign Him a thousand such attributes, thou wouldst not have passed outside His simple existence. If thou expressest them, thou dost add nothing thereto, nor dost thou subtract anything therefrom if thou expressest them not."—(Translator.)



to be something which is distinct from God, this Something must be either greater than God, or less than God, or equal to God. But how can that be less than God which alone makes God to be God? It remains then to say that It is either greater than God or equal to Him. If It be greater than God, then we must admit that not God but the Divinity of God is the Supreme Good. And if It be equal to God, the consequence is that we have two Supreme Goods instead of one. Both these conclusions are equally opposed to Catholic truth. And as regards the greatness of God, His goodness, His justice, and His wisdom, I hold exactly the same as I do concerning His Divinity, namely, that all such perfections are one in God and one with God. For He is good by nothing distinct from that by which He is great, and He is just and wise by nothing distinct from that by which He is great and good, and He is all these at once by nothing distinct from that by which He is God, and He is God by nothing distinct from Himself.

But the heretic will say to me, "What? Dost thou deny that God is God by His Divinity?" Surely not. But I maintain that the same Divinity by Which He is God is Itself God, and I am obliged to do so lest I should be found asserting the existence of something more excellent than God. I also affirm that God is great by His greatness, but that this greatness is nothing distinct from Himself, because otherwise I should have to admit something greater than God. And I say that he is good by reason of His goodness, which however, I hold to be really identical with Himself, lest by allowing a distinction I should seem to myself to have discovered something better than God. Similarly with

regard to the other divine perfections. Willingly, and securely, and without stumbling do I walk in the footsteps of him who has said, "God is great only by that greatness which is what He is, otherwise that greatness shall be greater than God." These, my brethren, are the words of St. Augustine,\* that mighty hammer of heretics. If then anything at all can be rightly predicated of God, it will be more correct and more proper to say: God is Greatness, God is Goodness, God is Justice, God is Wisdom, than: God is great, God is good, God is just, God is wise.†

With good reason, therefore, did Pope Eugenius and the other bishops, at the council recently held by his Holiness at Rheims, condemn as perverse and open to suspicion of heresy, the explanation which Gilbert, Bishop of Poitiers, gives in his book to the most orthodox and Catholic words of Boethius

\* *De Trinitate*, l. v. c. 10, n. 11.

† These two modes of predication with regard to God are thus contrasted by Hurter, *Theol. Dogm.*, vol. ii. p. 29: "Predication by abstract substantives expresses the absolute perfection of the divine simplicity; whereas that by concrete adjectives, such as good, just, wise, always imports some composition, as signifying a quality superadded and inherent. For he who is good *is possessed* of goodness: but he who is said to possess goodness seems to be distinct from goodness, is not goodness itself, and therefore, in order to be good, must be informed by goodness; but information presupposes composition. Again, the former mode of predication expresses the infinity of the divine perfections, for what goodness can be wanting to One who is goodness itself? It expresses original (underived) perfection, for goodness is not good by anything distinct from itself. Lastly, it expresses perfection not as a quality inhering in the substance, but as identical with the substance or essence." But he adds, "Since such substantival predicates signify abstract perfection, lest it be thought that God has only an abstract and ideal existence, viz., in the minds of men, it is well to combine the concrete with the abstract, and to speak of Him, not only as goodness, wisdom, justice, etc., but also as good, wise, and just, because this latter manner of expression indicates His objective existence."—(Translator.)

concerning the Holy Trinity. The commentary runs thus, "The Father is Truth, that is to say, the Father is true; the Son is Truth, that is to say, the Son is true; The Holy Ghost is Truth, that is to say, the Holy Ghost is true; and these three are not three Truths but one Truth, that is to say, They are one True." O most obscure and perverse exposition! How much better and truer had it been to speak thus contrariwise. "The Father is true, that is to say, the Father is Truth; the Son is true, that is to say, the Son is Truth; the Holy Ghost is true, that is to say, the Holy Ghost is Truth; and these Three are one True, that is to say, They are one Truth." In this way indeed would Gilbert have spoken had he condescended to imitate St. Fulgentius, who says,\* "The one Truth of the one God, or rather the one Truth which *is* the one God, does not suffer the creature to share in the service and worship which belongs to the Creator." A faithful instructor this, who spoke most truly of Truth, and entertained pious and Catholic sentiments respecting the pure and perfect simplicity of the Divine Substance, in Which nothing can be found that is not Itself, nor is Itself anything distinct from God. But there are several other passages in that same Commentary of Bishop Gilbert's, wherein he seems to depart even more manifestly from the orthodox faith. I shall just mention one by way of example. Boethius writes, "When we hear the words, 'God, God, God,' the reference is to the Divine Substance," to which our Commentator subjoins, "He means not any substance which itself is God, but the Substance by which God is." Heaven forbid that the Catholic Church should ever admit such a doctrine,

\* *De Fide orth.*, can. 3.



should ever admit either a substance or anything else by which God is and which is not itself God !

However, I am not now speaking against Gilbert himself, because in the aforesaid Council of Rheims he had the humility to submit to the verdict of the bishops, and with his own mouth condemned both these and all other blameworthy opinions found expressed in his writings. But I speak against those who, in defiance of the apostolic interdict, promulgated in the same Council, are said to be still reading and transcribing his book, obstinately persisting in the error which its author has abjured, and more willing to imitate the example of his transgression than that of his repentance. And not only on their account, but for your sakes also, my brethren, I have thought it worth while to make this digression, taking occasion from the distinction which I was pointing out between the Image and the soul made according to the Image ; so that if any of you should have ever happened to drink a draught of these stolen waters (to whose sweetness the Book of Proverbs bears testimony) he may now, after receiving the antidote, vomit forth the poison. Then, having purged his mind of everything unwholesome, let him come to hear what, according to my promise, remains still to be said concerning the likeness of the soul to the Word and to " draw (purer) water with joy (not out of mine, but) out of the fountains of the Saviour," the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXXXI.

### ON THE SOUL'S LIKENESS TO THE WORD IN THE THREE ATTRIBUTES OF SIMPLICITY, IMMORTALITY AND LIBERTY.

- " In my bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth : I sought Him and found Him not.*  
*" I will rise and will go about the city : in the streets and the broad ways I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth : I sought Him and I found Him not.*  
*" The Watchmen who kept the city found me : Have you seen Him Whom my soul loveth ?*  
*" When I had a little passed beyond them, I found Him Whom my soul loveth : I held Him and I will not let Him go, till I bring Him into my mother's house and into the chamber of her that bore me."*

In the preceding discourse, my brethren, I enquired into the nature of the affinity between the Word Divine and the soul. And indeed such an enquiry was very necessary. For what can there be in common between such Majesty and such poverty that the loftiness of the One and the lowliness of the other should be represented as mutually embracing, as if they were equals, after the manner and with the affection of a bridegroom and his bride? If we can say this with truth, it is for us a source of joy and confidence exceeding great. On the other hand, to affirm it without truth is to be guilty of presumption deserving of the severest chastisement. For this reason, then, I thought it incumbent on me to examine into the various points of relationship between the Word and the soul. Many of them have now been ascertained, but some others remain still to be investigated. For who is so dull as not to be able to perceive how close must be the relation of conformity between the Image and that

which is made according to the Image? In yesterday's sermon, if you remember, I gave the former of these names to the Word and the latter to the soul. And in the same discourse I pointed out to you not only the relationship which comes from the soul's having been made according to the Image, but also that due to her being made to the likeness of the Image. I have not yet however explained in what this likeness essentially consists. Well, then, let us apply ourselves now to the task; so that the more perfectly the soul understands the nobility of her origin, the more ashamed she may be to lead a degenerate life, and that she may zealously study to reform whatever she may find in herself corrupted by sin. Thus, by the grace of God, regulating her life in a manner worthy of her parentage, she may at last approach with confidence to the embraces of the Word.

Let her take notice, therefore, that it is to this prerogative of her likeness to the Word she owes the essential simplicity of her substance in virtue of which it is the same thing for her to live as to exist, although for her it is not the same to live virtuously or to live happily as to exist. For between her and the Word there is only similitude, not equality. There is a degree of affinity yet it is only a degree. For it is not the same glory nor an equal excellence to possess an existence which is identical with life, and to possess an existence which is not only identical with life, but even with a happy life. If, then, the latter perfection belongs to the Word, because of His sublimity, and the former to the soul because of her resemblance to Him, and without prejudice to His pre-eminence, the affinity of their natures becomes manifest; and manifest too the



prerogative of the soul. To make my meaning plainer, I shall put it in this way : For God alone it is the same thing to be and to be happy ; and this is the first and purest simplicity. " The second is like unto this," namely, when for anything it is the same to be and to live ; and such is the case with the rational soul. From this, which is a lower degree of perfection, an ascent can be made not alone to a virtuous life, but even to a blissful life. Nevertheless, not even when the soul has attained thither, shall it then be the same thing for her to be and to be happy ; so that she may exult in her resemblance to God, yet in such a manner as always to have in her inequality sufficient reason for all her bones to cry out with the Psalmist, " Lord, who is like to Thee ? " Still that perfection, viz., identity of life and existence, is a good degree for the soul, from which and from which only she is able to ascend to a blissful life.

There are, my brethren, two classes of living beings, namely, those which are endowed with both life and feeling, and those which possess life alone. Sentient things are more perfect than insentient, but superior to both is that life itself in virtue of which things live and feel. For life and that which lives do not stand on the same grade of perfection, much less life and beings which are inanimate. The soul indeed is a living thing, but she does not receive her life from any form or principle distinct from herself. And thus, to speak properly, she is not so much a living being as life itself. Hence it is that when infused into the body she animates it, so that, from the presence of life, the body becomes, not indeed life, but living. From this it is evident that not even for a living body is it the same thing to be and to live, inasmuch as it can be

without possessing life. For a greater reason still, those things which are devoid of life cannot attain to that perfection. No, nor can it be reached even by everything which is called and is life, and by reason of this fact alone. For there is the soul of the brute, and there is the soul of the plant, the former endowed with feeling, the latter insensate. But for neither of these souls is it the same thing to be as to live, since, as many philosophers maintain, both existed in the elements before they began to animate, the former the body of the brute, the latter the body of the plant. From this it follows that such souls cease to live as soon as they cease to vivify, yet they do not also cease to be. They are disengaged and dissolved, because not only are they compounded with the matter of their bodies, but they are also composite in their own natures. For each of these irrational souls is not one simple entity, but results from the union of different constituents. Consequently, they are not annihilated at the death of the plant or the animal, but are resolved into their elements, and each of the constituent parts returns to its principle, the elements of air, for example, going back to air, the elements of fire going back to fire, and the rest in like manner.\* For such souls, therefore, it cannot

\* This is the doctrine of Empedocles, born at Agrigentum about the year 500. B.C. He maintained that all things, human souls not excepted, are produced by the various intermingling of the primitive elements. Of course every materialistic philosophy must ultimately rest on such an assumption, and endeavour to explain all life in terms of matter and motion, as the resultant of special atomic combinations. The scholastics, whilst insisting on the essential difference between the lowest form of vital force and all non-vital energies, teach that the human soul alone is created, the inferior souls being "educated out of the potentiality of matter," where they may be said to exist before they begin to live as informing principles, and into which they are again absorbed at the death of the plant or the animal. Cf. Hugon, *Phil. Natur.*, pp. 63-64.—(Translator.)

be the same thing to be and to live, since they sometimes are even whilst they live not.

Furthermore, none of those things whose being is not identical with life can ever advance or attain to a virtuous or to a happy life, for the reason that they are even incapable of rising to this lower degree. The human soul only, which is known to stand upon this eminence, has been created thereon, as life from Life, as simple from the Simple, as immortal from the Immortal, so that she is not far below that supreme degree, that, namely, where being is identical with blessedness of life, in which He alone stands "Who is the Blessed and the only Mighty, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords." The rational soul, accordingly, has received at her creation, if not the actuality, at any rate the possibility of happiness; and she therefore approaches as near as is possible to the highest degree, which, however, she can never attain to. For, as I have already remarked, not even then, when she is actually happy, will it be the same thing for her to be and to be happy. I acknowledge her likeness to the Divinity, but I deny her equality. For instance, God is Life, and the soul is life: here we have similarity, yet also disparity.

The soul resembles God in that, like Him, she is life, in that, like Him, she lives by her own essence, and in that, like Him, she not only has life in herself, but communicates it also externally. She differs from Him, on the other hand, by as much as the creature differs from the Creator. She differs from Him in that whereas He is self-sufficing, she would have no life at all unless vivified by Him, just as she would have no being at all unless created by Him. When I say she would have no life unless vivified by God, I am speaking, not of her



natural, but of her supernatural life. For all human souls, even such as have no supernatural life, are in their natural life necessarily immortal. But what manner of life is that which it would be better to end by dying than to continue? It is rather death than life, and a death the more awful because it is due not to nature but to sin. "The death of the wicked is very evil," says the Psalmist. Thus, therefore, the soul that "liveth according to the flesh is dead" even while she lives, because it were better for her not to live at all than so to live. And from this kind of living death there shall be no resurrection for her except through the Word of life, or rather through the Word who is Life Itself, living and vivifying.

But otherwise the rational soul is truly immortal, and in this respect also has affinity, yet not equality, with the Word. For the Creator's immortality so far transcends the creature's that the Apostle says of God, "Who only hath immortality." By these words, as I think, he meant to convey to us that God alone is immutable in His Nature, Who has Himself declared by His Prophet Malachy, "I am the Lord and I change not." For true and complete immortality excludes as well change as termination of life, since all change is an image of death. Indeed, everything which undergoes change, whilst it passes from one state of being to another, must necessarily die, in a certain sense, with regard to what it is, so that it may begin to be what it is not. But how can you have immortality there where you have as many deaths as changes? And, in the words of the Apostle, "The creature was made subject to (this) vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him That made it subject in hope." Nevertheless the soul

possesses a true if imperfect immortality, because as she is the principle of life to herself, she can as little fall from life as she can fall from herself. At the same time, since it is evident that she changes in her thoughts and affections, let her glory in her resemblance to the divine immortality, in such a way as not to forget that she is wanting in an important part of perfect immortality : let her acknowledge that immortality absolute and adequate belongs to Him alone "with whom there is no change nor shadow of alteration." Yet what has been said in the present discourse has enabled us to understand how exalted is the dignity of the human soul, which appears to approximate to the Word of God by a twofold affinity of nature, namely, by simplicity of essence and immortality of life.

Yet another point of relationship now occurs to me which I must by no means pass over ; because no less than those already mentioned, and perhaps even in a greater degree, it renders the soul glorious in herself and like to the Word. I refer to the faculty of free-will, which shines in the soul with a beauty all divine, as a gem set in gold. It is through this faculty that the mind possesses the power of judging\* and the liberty of choosing between good and evil, between life and death, between light and darkness. And if

\* St. Bernard understands free will (*liberum arbitrium*) as including the faculty of reason with that of willing. This is clear from his book *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio*, c. 11, where he writes, "Talis ergo consensus ob voluntatis inamissibilem libertatem, et rationis quod secum semper et ubique portat inclinabile iudicium, non incongrue dicetur, ut arbitror, liberum arbitrium."

Similarly St. Laurence Justinian, "*Liberum arbitrium est facultas rationis et voluntatis.*" And Gerson, "*Libertas arbitrii est facultas rationis et voluntatis ad utrumque oppositorum.*" —(Translator.)

there be any other objects which, in the same manner, appear to stand in mutual opposition as regards the state of the soul, between these also this vigilant arbiter (which may be called the soul's eye) judges and determines, as free in electing as it is peremptory in deciding. Hence it is called the faculty of free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) because, namely, it freely chooses between opposites according to the pleasure of the will. It is in virtue of the same faculty that man is capable of merit and demerit. For every act you perform, provided it was in your power to omit it, is justly reputed to you as merit or as demerit. And as praise is justly due not only to him "who could have transgressed and hath not transgressed, and could do evil things and hath not done them," but to him also who could have omitted to do good and yet hath done it: similarly, demerit is not wanting either to him who could have omitted to do evil and yet hath done it, or to him who could have done good, yet hath not done it. But where there is no liberty, there can be neither merit nor demerit. Wherefore the brute beasts, which lack the light of reason, are incapable of meriting or demeriting, because being without the power of deliberation, they are likewise without liberty. They are governed by their senses, driven on by their impulses, carried away by their appetites. For they possess neither judgment whereby to direct and rule themselves, nor even the faculty of reason, which is the instrument of judgment. Hence it is that judgment is not exercised upon them, because they do not exercise judgment themselves. With what reason indeed could they be required to give a reason for their action since from them the gift of reason has been withheld?



Man is the only mortal who can resist the coercive power of nature, and consequently he alone is free amongst all earthly creatures. Nevertheless, even he becomes subject to coercion when he becomes guilty of sin. But this coercion is not from nature but from his own will, so that not even thus is he deprived of his native liberty : because whatever is voluntary the same is free.\* And in truth it is owing to sin that "the corruptible body weigheth down the soul," not by the weight of its mass, but by the force of concupiscence. For the fact that the soul is incapable now of rising of herself from sin, although she was able to fall of herself, is due to the will, which, weakened and prostrated by the depraved and vicious love of a corrupted body, cannot at the same time admit the love of justice. And so, I know not in what wicked yet wonderful way, the will when deteriorated by sin, imposes a constraint on itself : so that on the one hand, such constraint, since it is voluntary, cannot avail to excuse the will ; and, on the other hand, the will, "being drawn away and allured," is unable to resist the constraint. This constraint, I repeat, is in some sense voluntary. It is a pleasant kind of violence which blandishes whilst it coerces and coerces by blandishing. Therefore the human will, when once it has consented to evil, cannot now by its own power either emancipate itself, or in any way excuse itself by reason. Hence that querulous cry of one groaning, as it were, under the burden of this necessity, "Lord, I suffer violence, answer Thou for me." But immediately recognising that he was unjustly complaining

\*This, although true with regard to particular volitions of the present life, is not true universally. The love of the blessed for God and the desire of happiness are perfectly voluntary, yet not free.

of the Lord, inasmuch as the responsibility lay exclusively with his own will, listen to what he adds, "What shall I say or what shall He answer for me, whereas I myself have done it?" \* He was oppressed by the yoke, but by no other yoke than that of a voluntary servitude. And while this servitude rendered him unhappy, its voluntariness rendered him inexcusable. For just as it was the will which, when it was free, made itself the slave of sin, by consenting to sin: so is it the will also which now by voluntarily serving keeps itself in bondage to sin.

But some of you may reply to this, "Consider what thou art saying. Dost thou call that voluntary which is now at any rate a manifest necessity? It is true, no doubt, that in the beginning the will enslaved itself voluntarily; but it is not by itself that it is now kept in bondage, it is rather held captive against its will." I am glad that thou dost grant me this much at least, that it is held captive. But bear clearly in mind that it is the *will* which thou acknowledgest to be thus held. Dost thou then speak of the *will* as acting *unwillingly*? No, the will cannot be held against its will,† since the act of the will is always voluntary, never involuntary. But if it is held voluntarily, it is held by itself. What

\* "Cum ipse fecerim." The Vulgate has "fecerit"—"whereas He Himself hath done it" (Is. xxxviii. 15).—(Translator.)

† The same is the teaching of St. Thomas: "With regard to its own proper act of volition," he says, "the will cannot suffer violence, and the reason is, because the act of the will is nothing else than a certain inclination proceeding from the internal cognitive principle; just as the natural appetite is nothing other than a certain inclination proceeding from an internal non-cognitive power. But violence or coercion comes from without. Therefore it is contrary to the nature of volition that it be forced or constrained" (*Sum. Theol.*, I., I., q. vi. a. iv.—(Translator.)

therefore shall it say or what shall it answer to the Lord, since it itself hath done it? And what has it done? It has made itself a slave. Hence it is said in the Gospel, "Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin." Consequently, the will made itself a slave when it committed sin, and it committed sin when it resolved to obey sin. But it regains its freedom as soon as it ceases from sinning. However, it continues to sin so long as it continues to hold itself freely in the same servitude to sin. For the will cannot be held captive involuntarily for the simple reason that it is the will. Therefore, since it voluntarily continues in thralldom, not only has it once made itself a slave, but it is constantly doing this. Justly then may it cry out in the words of Ezechias, "What shall I say or what shall He answer for me whereas I myself have done it?" And it would be well, my brethren, if this were often recalled to mind.

"For all that," it may be answered to me, "thou shalt never make me give up my belief in a necessity which I suffer, which I experience in myself, against which I constantly struggle." But where, let me ask, dost thou feel this necessity? Is it not in thy will? Consequently, not only dost thou will, but thou dost will with great energy, what thou willest even from necessity. For surely thou must will that strongly which, however much thou strivest, thou art unable not to will. Now, where there is will, there also is liberty. Yet I am speaking only of natural liberty, not of that spiritual liberty "wherewith," as the Apostle says, "Christ hath made us free." For with regard to this latter liberty the same Apostle tells us that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."



Thus, my brethren, in a certain evil yet marvellous way, the soul is held captive under this voluntary and sinfully free necessity, at one and the same time bond and free. She is a bond-slave by reason of her servitude ; she is free on account of the voluntariness of this servitude. And what is stranger still and still more pitiful, she is guilty because of her freedom, and she is a bond-slave because of her guilt ; consequently she is a bond-slave because of her freedom. " Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the " dishonour of this shameful servitude ? I am unhappy, yet I am free. I am free because I am a man ; I am unhappy because I am a slave. I am free because of my resemblance to God ; I am unhappy because of my opposition to God. " O Keeper of men," exclaims holy Job, " why dost Thou set me opposite to Thee ? " For Thou hast set me opposite to Thee in so far as this, that Thou hast not prevented me from setting myself opposite to Thee. Otherwise it is I that have so set myself, and therefore " I am become burdensome to myself." And this indeed most justly, so that Thy enemy should become my enemy as well, and that he who opposes Thee should oppose me also. But it is I myself who am set opposite both to Thee and to me ; and I find in my members that which is equally at variance with my mind and with Thy law. Oh, who will deliver me out of my own hands ! For if " I do not that good which I will," it is by myself alone I am hindered ; and if, on the other hand, " the evil which I hate, that I do," it is by compulsion from none other than myself. And would to God this hindrance and this compulsion were either so violent as to be involuntary, because

then perhaps I might have an excuse for yielding ; or else were so voluntary as not to be violent, for thus I certainly should have it in my power to correct myself. Now however there is no escape for me, since the voluntariness of sinning renders me inexcusable, as I have before observed, and its necessity renders me incorrigible. Who will " deliver me out of the hand of the sinner, and out of the the hand of the transgressor of the law and of the unjust ? "

But some of you may wish to ask me of whom do I speak. I am speaking of myself. *I* am that sinner, that outlaw, that impious one. I am a sinner because I have sinned. I am an outlaw because by my will I persist in acting against the law. For my own will is that " law in my members fighting against " the divine law. And since the law of the Lord is the " law of my mind," according to what is written, " The law of God is in his heart," by consequence, to myself also my own will is found in opposition, " which is the greatest iniquity." For to whom shall I not be evil if I am evil to myself ? As is said in Ecclesiastes, " He that is evil to himself, to whom will he be good ? " I confess that I am not good, because I have nothing good abiding in me. Nevertheless I will console myself, since St. Paul himself has made the same acknowledgment, saying, " I know that there dwelleth not in me that which is good." Yet he specifies what he means by the words " in me," adding, by way of explanation, " that is to say, in my flesh," to which he denies any good on account of the opposing law therein abiding. For he has another law in his mind, and a better one. Surely the law of God is a good law. But if he be evil because of the evil law, how can it be denied that he is good

on account of the good law? Perhaps, however, it will be said that the evil law which exists in his flesh is his own, and therefore he is evil by reason of this evil law; but that the good law, being less his own, does not similarly make him good. This is not true. For the law of his God is in his mind, and it is in his mind in such a manner as to be also the law of his mind. I have the testimony of the Apostle for this, who says, "I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind." Shall it be said that what belongs to his flesh is his own, but that what belongs to his mind is not his own? In my opinion, the latter is even more his own than the former. And why should I not think so, since the same inspired teacher declares so? For whereas with his mind he serves the law of God and with his flesh the law of sin, he clearly insinuates which of these, viz., the law of God or the law of sin, he acknowledges to be the more his own, when he reposes the evil law in his flesh so foreign to him that he can say, "Now then it is no more *I* that do it but sin that dwelleth in me." And perhaps it was for this reason the law which he found in his members was expressly called *another* law, because, namely, he regarded it as something alien and adventitious. Therefore I will venture to go even farther and to say, surely without rashness, that St. Paul is no longer evil on account of the evil law which he has in his flesh, but is rather good by reason of the good law which dwelleth in his mind. How can *he* be otherwise than good himself who "consents to the law of God because it is good"? He also indeed confesses that he serves the "law of sin," yet he does so not with his mind but only with his flesh. Now since he serves the



law of God with his mind, and the "law of sin" with his flesh, I leave it for you to decide, my brethren, as to which should be the more particularly imputed to St. Paul. As for myself, I have been easily convinced that that which belonged to his mind was more truly his own than what appertained to his flesh. Nor is this conviction confined to me, since, as I have remarked, it was also entertained by the Apostle himself, who says, "If then I do that which I will not. . . . it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

So much must suffice on this subject of liberty. In the little book which I composed on Grace and Free Will you will perhaps find the questions concerning the Image and the likeness treated somewhat differently, yet without any real contradiction of what I have been saying now. You have read that work, and you have heard this sermon. I submit both to your judgment: choose that which you find the more pleasing. And if you have found anything else which gives you more satisfaction than either, I rejoice at it, and shall rejoice. But however this may be, remember what I have now said concerning the soul's three characteristics of simplicity, immortality, and liberty, which formed the three principal points of to-day's discourse. And I think that this much at the least is now clearly evident to you, namely, that the soul, by reason of her natural and ennobling likeness to the Word, which shines out so conspicuously in the characteristics referred to, has a very close affinity to Him who is the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXXXII.

ON THE MANNER IN WHICH SIN SPOILS THE LIKENESS OF THE SOUL TO GOD BY COMBINING THE CONTRARY QUALITIES WITH HER SIMPLICITY, IMMORTALITY AND LIBERTY.

- "In my bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth : I sought Him and found Him not.*  
*"I will rise, and will go about the city : in the streets and the broad ways I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth : I sought Him and I found Him not.*  
*"The watchmen who kept the city found me : Have you seen Him Whom my soul loveth ?*  
*"When I had a little passed beyond them, I found Him Whom my soul loveth : I held Him and I will not let Him go, till I bring Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that bore me."*

What think you, my brethren ? May we now return to the point whence we digressed and resume the order of our exposition ? For the digression was made for the purpose of demonstrating the affinity between the Word and the soul, and this has already been rendered sufficiently plain. We might indeed go back now, as it seems to me, did I not feel conscious that there still remains some little obscurity in regard to what has been said. I desire to defraud you of nothing. I should not like to pass over anything at all which I think might profit you. How then could I dare to withhold from you any part of that which has been given me for you especially ? I know a person who once, whilst delivering a discourse, with a diffident although not with a faithless soul, wished to keep back and to reserve for himself some of the thoughts wherewith the

Holy Spirit was inspiring him, in order to have matter for another sermon on the same subject : but lo ! he heard a voice saying to him, " so long as thou withholdest this thou shalt receive nothing else."\* What would have been the case had he kept back what was given him, not from any desire to make provision for his own poverty, but through envy of his brethren's progress in virtue ? Would he not be deprived, and justly deprived, like the unprofitable servant, of even that which he seemed to have ? May God continue always in the future (as He has always done in the past) to keep such a misfortune far from your servant ! So may He, who is the ever-flowing Fountain of salutary wisdom, condescend henceforth to abound unto me without failing, according as I without envy have communicated to you and poured out for your benefit whatever He has so far deigned to impart to me ! If I were to keep back what I owe to you, from whom could I any longer hope to receive anything ? From no one surely, not even from the bounty of God.

Well, then, as I was saying, there is a difficulty arising out of my last two discourses, which I am afraid will prove a stumbling block to some of you, unless it is explained away. And indeed, if I am not mistaken, there are some here present whose minds are already perplexed concerning this very point whereof I am about to speak. With regard to that threefold likeness to the Word which I have assigned to the soul, or rather to which I have called your attention as naturally implanted in the soul, do you remember my saying also that it inheres inseparably in the soul ? Yet this

\* The Saint is here referring to himself, after the manner of St. Paul (2 Cor. xii. 2).—(Translator.)



appears to conflict with certain passages of Holy Scripture, for example, with these words of the Psalmist, "man when he was in honour did not understand: he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them"; and with these also, "They changed their glory into the likeness of a calf that eateth grass"; and with what the same Prophet says, speaking in the person of the Lord, "Thou thoughtest unjustly that I shall be like to thee"; as well as with all those other testimonies which seem to agree in declaring that man's likeness to God has been lost by sin. How are we to solve the difficulty, my brethren? Shall we say that the three attributes, which I have mentioned as constituting the likeness in question, are not found in God at all, and that therefore we have to seek for others to serve as a foundation for that likeness? Or shall we say, that although these attributes are really possessed by God, they do not likewise belong to the soul, and thus again cannot constitute a likeness between them? Or finally that, granting the existence both in God and in the soul of simplicity, immortality and liberty, yet the soul may also be without such characteristics, and therefore they are not inseparable from her? God forbid that we should speak so! Not only do these attributes exist both in the Word and in the soul, but they also exist inseparably in either. And so there is nothing in what I have said which I have reason to repent of, for it is all grounded on absolute and unquestionable truth. With regard to what Holy Scripture says about the soul's having been made unlike to God, I observe that it does not assert the putting off of the old similitude but only the putting on of a new

dissimilitude. The soul, as is evident, has not stripped herself of her original form but simply covered it over with an adventitious. The latter has been added to, not substituted for the former. And although that which is superinduced has been able to obscure the natural form, it has not been able to destroy it completely. Hence St. Paul says, " Their foolish heart was darkened " (obscuratum), and Jeremias, " How is the gold become obscured, and the finest colour changed ? " The Prophet laments that the gold has lost its brightness, yet acknowledges that it still preserves the nature of gold; he grieves to see the finest colour dimmed, but does not complain that it has been utterly destroyed. For the soul still retains her attribute of simplicity quite unimpaired in its essentials, although it is no longer visible, being overlaid with the vice of duplicity which exhibits itself in human deceit, simulation, and hypocrisy.

How incongruous, my brethren, is such a combination of simplicity and duplicity ! How unbecoming to raise so bad a superstructure upon a foundation so excellent ! It was with duplicity of this kind that the serpent covered himself of old, when, in order to deceive our first parents, he offered himself as a counselor and feigned to be their friend. It was to the same the two dwellers in paradise had recourse when, having been seduced by the tempter, they endeavoured to conceal their now shameful nakedness amidst the shadow of the trees, and with garments of fig-leaves and words of excuse. How universally thenceforth and all down through the centuries has the poison of hypocrisy, inherited from them, infected their posterity ! Can you show me one amongst the children of Adam

who, I do not say is willing, but can even endure, to be known for what he is? Nevertheless along with this hereditary duplicity, her natural simplicity persists in every soul, so that the union of opposite properties makes the confusion worse confounded. The soul's immortality likewise endures, but dimmed and darkened by the invading dense cloud of temporal death. For although she is not herself deprived of the gift of perennial life, she yet has not sufficient power to vindicate the same gift for her body. And not only that, but she has not even preserved her own spiritual life. "The soul that sinneth the same shall die," as the Prophet Ezechiel speaks. Does it not seem to you, my brethren, that the immortality, such as it is, which remains with her, is rendered very obscure and miserable by the invasion of this twofold death? Moreover, her desire for the things of earth, which are all only capable of destroying her, increases her darkness to such an extent that in the soul thus living nothing appears visible on any side save the pallid countenance, so to speak, and the lugubrious image of death. Wherefore, then, does not she that is immortal, seek after those things which are likewise immortal and eternal, so that she may show herself to be what she really is, and may live according as she has been made? But no, she longs for and relishes only what is contrary to her nature; and thus, by her unworthy conversation conforming herself to mortal creatures, she darkens the lustre of her immortality with the pitchy hue, as it were, of death-bearing conduct. For surely it is to be expected that an immortal being, by loving things mortal, should become like unto these and unlike herself. "He that toucheth pitch," says the Wise Man, "shall be



defiled with it." The soul that takes delight in what is mortal puts on the semblance of mortality. Yet by assuming the likeness of death she does not put off but merely discolours the robe of her immortality.

Consider the case of Eve, how her immortal soul, through an inordinate affection for mortal objects, caused the glory of her immortality to be overlaid and obscured by the duskiness of a supervening liability to death. For since she was immortal, why did she not rather despise all that was mortal and transitory, and content herself with things like herself, things immortal and eternal? But, as we read, "The woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold." It appertains not to thee, O woman, neither that goodness, nor that fairness, nor that delightfulness. Or if it does appertain to thee according to thy material part, it appertains not to thee alone, but is equally the property of all the beasts of the earth. That which is thine, which properly belongs to thee, comes from another source and has another nature; for it is from eternity and is itself eternal. Wherefore wouldst thou impress upon thy soul another form, especially an alien form, nay, what is more a deformity than a form? For the pleasure which the soul feels in acquiring temporal goods is accompanied with the fear of losing them; and this fear is a kind of colour, because it stains and so disguises the liberty of her will, and makes it look unlike itself. How much more worthy of her origin would it have been to desire nothing which could become a cause of uneasiness to her, that so she might defend her inborn freedom against this servile fear, and preserve it in all its natural strength and beauty! But

alas ! it has not been so. The finest colour has lost its brilliancy. And so thou, poor Eve, fleest away and concealest thyself ; thou hearest the voice of God and dost hide thyself. Why is this unless because thou art now afraid of Him Whom erstwhile Thou didst love, and because the form of the slave has superseded that of the free-born child ?

But that voluntary necessity also and that “ contradicting law ” imposed on the bodily members (whereof I treated in my last discourse) militate against the same liberty, and by means of his own will reduce to servitude, whilst alluring him, man, a creature naturally free, “ filling his face with shame ” ; so that even in spite of himself he has to serve with his flesh the “ law of sin.” Therefore, because he neglected to defend the nobility of his nature by probity of life, it has come to pass by the just judgment of his Creator, not indeed that he is deprived of his native liberty, but that he is “ clothed over with his confusion as with a double cloak.” Very appropriate is this image of a double cloak. For man wears now a double mantle, so to speak, because whilst his freedom still remains on account of his will, his slavish manner of life is a proof of his servitude. And such is the case, as you may notice, not alone with the soul’s liberty, but also with her simplicity and with her immortality. In fact, if you examine the matter closely, it will appear to you that there is nothing at all in her which is not similarly covered with this double cloak of likeness and unlikeness to God. Have you not there a double cloak where duplicity exists, not as a natural quality, but as something superadded to a native simplicity, fastened and sewed on to it, as it were, with

the needle of sin ; and where in the same manner death is combined with immortality, and necessity with freedom ? For simplicity of essence is not excluded by duplicity of heart, nor immortality of nature by either the voluntary death of sin or the involuntary death of the body, nor liberty of will by the constraint of a willing servitude. Accordingly, accidental evil supervening on the good of nature is not substituted for, but rather coexists with that good : it does not destroy but dishonours it ; it confounds without expelling it. Hence it is that the soul is made unlike to God, aye, and made unlike to herself also ; hence she “ is compared to senseless beasts and is become like to them ” ; hence it is said of her that she “ hath changed her glory into the likeness of a calf that eateth grass ” ; hence men, like foxes, have formed for themselves cunning refuges of craft and duplicity, and because they have lowered themselves to the level of foxes, “ they shall be the portions of foxes ” ; hence, according to the words of Solomon, “ The death of man and of beast is one.” Why should he not resemble them in his death, if he has resembled them in his mode of life ? In the manner of the beast he bends down to the earth, therefore he shall leave the earth also in the manner of the beast. And listen to something more. What wonder is it that man’s end should be found similar to the brute’s, since there has been the same similarity in their beginnings ? For that intemperate heat of passion and that excess of violent pain which attend our origin and our entrance into this world, whence come they except from our likeness to the beast ? And thus, in his conception and in his birth, in his life and in his death, man “ is compared to senseless beasts and is become like them.”



What shall I say, my brethren, of the fact that man, a free creature, instead of ruling as a lord the inferior appetite which was made subject to him, prefers to obey it and to follow it like a slave? Does he not herein also make himself the equal and the associate of the irrational animals which have not been endowed with liberty, but fashioned for servitude without the power of resisting their appetites and passions? Is it not with reason that God is ashamed to be represented or reputed like a creature so degraded? Therefore He says, "Thou thoughtest, O wicked one, that I shall be like to thee," \* and He adds, "But I will reprove thee and set (thee) before thy face." It is not possible for a soul that sees herself to regard herself as like to God, at least this is not possible for a wicked and sinful soul such as mine. And it is to souls of this kind that the above reproof is addressed. For God does not say, "Thou thoughtest, O soul," or, "Thou thoughtest O man," but "Thou thoughtest, O wicked one, that I shall be like to thee." But if the wicked one be set before his own face, and be shown the dead and corrupted countenance of his interior man, so that he cannot shut his eyes or refuse attention to the impurities of his conscience, but has to gaze upon the soil of his sins even in spite of himself, and to contemplate the foulness of his evil habits, then, I believe, he will no longer be able to think God like himself, but, humbled by the great dissimilarity which he beholds, he will cry out

\* "Existimasti inique quod ero tui similis" (Ps. xlix. 21). St. Bernard takes the word "inique" to be the vocative of the adjective, whilst the Douay Translators render it as an adverb: "Thou thoughtest unjustly, etc.," which is certainly more in accord with the Greek: ὑπέλαβες ἀνομίαν ὅτι κ.τ.λ. —(Translator).

with the Psalmist, "Lord, who is like to Thee?" I have spoken this with reference to the voluntary and superadded dissimilitude of the soul to her Creator. For the natural and original likeness still remains, and by its presence only renders the unlikeness more displeasing. Oh, how great a good is the former! How great an evil the latter! And they are greatly good and greatly evil even when separately considered. But when viewed together, their conjunction has the effect of rendering more apparent both the goodness of the one and the badness of the other.

When, therefore, the soul perceives within her single self qualities so widely differing from each other, placed, as she finds herself, between hope and despair, has she not reason to cry out, "Lord, who is like to Thee?" She is drawn towards despair by the consciousness of so much evil, but encouraged to hope by the possession of so great a good. Hence it is, my brethren, that the more she is disgusted with herself on account of the evil which she discovers within her, by so much the more ardently does she endeavour to conform herself to the good, viz., to the likeness to God, which she also beholds within her, and the more eagerly does she desire to become again such as she was originally made, "simple and upright, and fearing God, and avoiding evil." Why should she not be able to abandon the evil which she has been able to embrace? And why should she not be able to embrace the good which she has been able to abandon? Nevertheless it has to be admitted that it is on the grace of God she must depend for the power both to avoid evil and to do good, not on nature or on human industry. For, as we read, it is by wisdom alone, and not by natural force or by

our own efforts, that malice can be resisted. However there is not wanting to her a reason for presuming that this grace or wisdom shall be given her, because "her turning is towards" the Word. That noble affinity which connects her with the Divine Word (which I have now been three days discussing) and that likeness which endures as a witness to the relationship between them are not without influence to conciliate His favour. He graciously admits to the society of His Spirit one who so closely resembles Him in nature. Indeed, it is the law of nature that like should seek its like. And hear how He even calls after her, "Return, return, O Sulamites: return that We may behold thee." He will look with complacency upon her now when she is made like to Him, whereas when she was unlike He took no notice of her at all. And not only will He look upon her, but He will also allow her to look upon Him. "We know," says the Evangelist, "that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; because we shall see Him as He is." In my opinion, therefore, it is a difficulty rather than an impossibility that is implied in the Prophet's question, "Who is like to God"? Or perhaps you would prefer to hear it called a cry of admiration. For admirable and astounding that likeness assuredly is which brings with it the vision of God, yea, which is itself the vision of God. But I am speaking of the likeness and the vision which are one and the same with charity. For that likeness is charity and charity too is that vision. Who does not stand amazed, at beholding the charity of God despised and yet recalling the soul that has spurned it? Well, therefore, did that "wicked one," whom I referred to a while ago, deserve the reproach addressed



to him ~~for~~ claiming a likeness to God, although he could not love either himself or God. For so we read : " He that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul." But let him remove from his soul the iniquity which forms in her a partial unlikeness to the Word, and then there shall be unity of spirit, there shall be mutual vision, there shall be mutual love. For as the Apostle says, " When that which is perfect shall come, that which is in part shall be done away." The Word and the soul shall love each other with a pure and perfect love, they shall know each other fully, they shall behold each other clearly, they shall be united to each other firmly, they shall live together inseparably, they shall be like each other absolutely. Then the soul shall know even as she is known ; then she shall love even as she is loved ; and over His Bride shall rejoice the Bridegroom, knowing and known, loving and beloved, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

# St Bernard's Sermons on The Canticle of Canticles

## SERMON LXXXIII.

ON THE RIGHT OF EVERY SOUL TO ASPIRE TO THE  
NUPTIALS OF THE WORD, AND IN WHAT THIS  
SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE CONSISTS.

- " In my bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth : I sought Him and I found Him not.*  
*" I will rise and will go about the city : in the streets and the broad ways I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth : I sought Him and I found Him not.*  
*" The Watchmen who kept the city found me : Have you seen Him Whom my soul loveth ?*  
*" When I had a little passed beyond them, I found Him Whom my soul loveth : I held Him and I will not let Him go, till I bring Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that bore me."*

We have now, my brethren, on three successive days devoted the regular time which we have appointed for these discourses to the task of demonstrating the affinity between the Word and the soul. Now it may be asked, what is the use of all this labour? Let me tell you. We have learned from this discussion that every human soul, no matter how burdened with sins, no matter how entangled in vices, no matter how enslaved to the enticements of pleasure, though she be held captive in exile, imprisoned in the flesh, clinging to the mire, sunk in the slime, yoked to the body, tortured with cares, distraught with solitudes, terrified with fears, afflicted with sorrows, deceived and seduced by errors, worried with anxieties, disquieted with suspicions; though she be, lastly, a stranger in the land of her enemies, and, in the words of the Prophet Baruch, " defiled with the dead " and " counted with them that go down into hell " ; yes, I say, though the soul should

be in such a state of despair and damnation, yet we have learned from the preceding discourses how she can still discover in herself something which is not only capable of establishing her in the hope of pardon and in the confidence of mercy, but also of animating her with courage to aspire even to the nuptials of the Word, to enter boldly into an alliance of friendship with God, and to begin fearlessly to draw the sweet yoke of love with Him Who is Lord of the angels. For what may she not safely presume in the case of One with Whose image she beholds herself adorned, and by Whose likeness she perceives herself ennobled? What, I ask, has she to fear from His Majesty, since she possesses in that relationship to Him in which she was created a sufficient motive for confidence? Only let her strive henceforth to prove and preserve the nobility of her nature by innocence of life: or rather let her study to enhance and decorate with the appropriate colours, so to speak, of worthy actions and affections that heavenly beauty which is her birthright.

What, then, is the reason why she is so little industrious in a matter which concerns her highest interests? Industry, my brethren, is a very important endowment of our nature. But if it fails to perform its functions, are not the rest of our natural gifts and faculties thrown into a state of disorder, and the whole covered over, as it were, with the rust of decadence? Now this redounds to the dishonour of the Creator. For God, the Author of our nature, has willed that the seal of her divine origin should be always preserved in the soul, unto this purpose, namely, in order that she might always have within herself a memorial of the Word,



which would constantly be reminding her either to continue faithful to Him, or to return, if she should ever be so unfortunate as to abandon Him. It is not by moving from one place to another, or by moving with visible steps, but by moving in the manner in which motion is possible to a spiritual substance, namely, with her affections, or rather with her vices, that she descends, so to speak, beneath herself, when by the wickedness of her life and conversation she becomes degenerate and makes herself unlike herself. But although this unlikeness vitiates, it does not destroy her nature. And according as it renders her natural nobility more conspicuous by the contrast with itself, in the same measure, by its conjunction, does it dishonour that nobility. Again, the return of the soul is her conversion to the Word by Whom she is to be reformed and to Whom she is to be conformed. In what respect, do you ask? In charity. Hence the Apostle exhorts us, saying, "Be ye therefore followers of God as most dear children; and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us."

It is by this conformity of charity, my brethren, that the soul is wedded to the Word, when, namely, loving even as she is loved, she exhibits herself in her will conformed to Him to Whom she is already conformed in her nature. Therefore, if she loves Him perfectly she has become His Bride.\* What can be

\* It will be observed that St. Bernard's spiritual marriage seems to have very little in common with the spiritual marriage described by St. Teresa in the last book of her *Interior Castle*, under the name of the "Seventh Mansion." Here there is no mention at all of what the holy Carmelite regards as inseparable concomitants of this culminating grace, interior locutions, uninterrupted recollection, transformation of the faculties, permanent vision of the Deity, etc. It may be remarked, however, that St. Bernard is not giving us here a history of his own

more sweet than such a conformity? What can be more desirable than this charity by which, O happy soul, not content any longer with human teachers, thou art enabled of thyself to draw nigh with confidence to the Word, to cleave to Him steadfastly, to interrogate Him familiarly, and to consult Him in all thy doubts, as audacious in thy desires as thou art capacious in thy understanding? <sup>1</sup>This is in truth the alliance of a holy and spiritual marriage. But it is saying too little to call it an alliance: it is rather an embrace. Surely we have then a spiritual embrace when the same likes and the same dislikes make one spirit out of two? Nor is there any occasion to fear lest the inequality of the persons should cause some defect in the harmony of wills, since love knows nothing of reverence. Love means an exercise of affection, not an exhibition of honour. Honour is given by him who is awe-stricken, who is astounded, who is terrified, who is filled with admiration. But none of these emotions has any place in the lover. Love is all-sufficient for itself. Whithersoever love comes, it subjugates and renders captive to itself all the other affections. Consequently the soul that loves, simply loves and knows nothing else except to love. The Word is indeed One Who deserves to be honoured, Who deserves to be admired and wondered at; yet He is better pleased to be loved. For He is the Bridegroom and the soul is His Bride. And between a bridegroom and his bride what other relation or connection would you look for

soul, but practical instructions as to how we are to dispose ourselves for the reception of the divine favours. He does not tell the soul what God will do for her, but only what she must do for God. And after all, is there any higher perfection possible to man than the perfect conformity of his will with his Creator's? —(Translator.)

except the bond of a mutual love? Such is the strength of this bond that it overcomes even the most intimate union which nature forms, I mean the union between parent and child. So much is evident from the words of the Saviour, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife." You perceive, my brethren, how love, as it is found between a bridegroom and bride, is not only more powerful than the other human affections, but it is even more powerful than itself.

It must also be remembered that this Bridegroom is not only loving, but is Love Itself. May it be likewise said of Him that He is Honour? You are at liberty to think so, if you choose, but there is no authority for this to be found in Holy Scripture. I have read therein that "God is Charity," but never that He is Honour or Dignity. Not that God does not demand honour, for He has said, "If I be a Father, where is My honour?" But it is as a Father that He speaks thus. Were He to speak in His character as Bridegroom, I believe He would use different language and would say, "If I be a Bridegroom where is My love?" For He has asked the same question concerning the reverence due to Him in His capacity as Lord, "If I be a Master, where is My fear?" God therefore requires to be honoured as a Father, and to be feared as a Lord, but to be loved as a Bridegroom. Now in these various affections what is that which appears to excel and to hold the pre-eminence? Doubtless it is love. For without love "fear hath pain" and honour finds no favour. Fear is slavish until it has been emancipated by love. And the honour which proceeds not from love better deserves to be called flattery than honour. To God alone are



due honour and glory ; but God will refuse to accept both the one and the other unless they are sweetened with the honey of love. Love is sufficient of itself, it pleases of itself, and for its own sake. It counts as merit to itself and is its own reward. Besides itself, love requires no motive and seeks no fruit. Its fruit is its enjoyment of itself. I love because I love, and I love for the sake of loving. A great thing, my brethren, is love, if yet it returns to its Principle, if it is restored to its Origin, if it finds its way back again to its Fountain-Head, so that it may be thus enabled to continue flowing with an unfailing current. Amongst all the emotions, sentiments, and feelings of the soul, love stands distinguished in this respect, that in the case of it alone has the creature the power to correspond and to make a return to the Creator in kind, though not in equality. For instance, if God were to manifest anger against me, surely I should not answer Him with a like exhibition of anger. No indeed, but I should rather fear and tremble and supplicate mercy. Similarly, if He were to reprove me, I, instead of reproving Him in turn, should prefer to justify Him. Neither shall I presume to judge Him when I am judged by Him, but I shall rather humble myself and adore His justice. He Who saves me does not require that I should reciprocate the favour by saving Him. Nor does He Who delivers all stand Himself in need of being delivered by any. If He chooses to act as a Master I must conduct myself as a servant ; if He commands I am bound to obey, without having any right to exact from Him a return of service or obedience. But consider now how different is the case with love. For when God loves me He desires nothing else than to

be loved by me : He loves me in order that I may love Him, because He knows well that all who love Him find in this very love their joy and their happiness.

Truly a great thing is love.\* But it has degrees of greatness. In the highest of these degrees stands the love of the Spouse. The children also love, but they have an eye to the inheritance, the thought of losing which makes them suspicious of everything, causes them to regard with more fear than affection Him from Whom they hope to receive it. For my part, my brethren, I look with suspicion on that love which appears to be supported by the hope of any other reward than a return of love. Such love is weak, and languishes, or even expires, if its hope happens to be withdrawn from it. It is an impure love, since it covets something foreign to its own nature. The love that is pure is never mercenary. Pure love derives none of its strength from hope, and yet suffers nothing from diffidence. This is the love proper to the Spouse, and she that is a Spouse is made a Spouse solely by this. Love is the sole dowry and the sole hope of the Spouse. This is all-sufficing for her. With this alone the Bridegroom is content. He requires nothing else, and she possesses nothing else. It is such love as this that makes Him her Bridegroom as it makes her His Bride. It belongs exclusively to the Bridegroom and the Bride, and none else, not even the children, can share in it. To the children the Father says, "Where is My honour?" not, "Where is My love?" For the Bridegroom reserves to the Bride her prerogative. Moreover,

\* "*Magna res amor.*" The finest passage of the *Imitation of Christ* (Bk. III. ch. v.) opens with the words "*Magna res est amor.*"—(Translator.)

children are commanded to honour their father and their mother, but nothing is said to them about love; not because parents are not to be loved by their children, but because many children feel more inclined to treat their parents with respect than with love. True, "the honour of the King loveth judgment," as the Psalmist says; but the love of the Bridegroom, or rather the Bridegroom Who is Love, requires of His Spouse nothing more than a return of love and loyalty. Let her then who is so beloved by Him, be careful to reciprocate His love. How, indeed, can she help loving since she is a Spouse, and the Spouse of Love? Or how is it possible that Love should not be loved?

Rightly, therefore, does the Spouse, renouncing all other feelings, abandon herself entirely to love alone, since in the interchange of love she has to correspond to a Bridegroom Who is Love Itself. For even when her whole being has been dissolved and poured out in love to Him, what after all is her love compared with the never-failing outflow from Love's own Fountain? Love surely does not abound in an equal degree in her who loves and in Him Who is Love, in the soul of man and in the Word of God, in the Bride and in the Bridegroom, in the creature and in the Creator, any more than the water equally abounds in him who thirsts for it and in the well which is its source. What then? Shall her hope of the heavenly nuptials, and her yearning desire, and her ardent love, and her confident expectation, be all disappointed and perish wholly, because she cannot in running keep up with a giant, or contend with honey in sweetness, or equal the meekness of a lamb, or rival the purity of a lily, or emulate the



brightness of the sun, or compete in love with Him Who is Charity? Certainly not. For although the Spouse, as a creature, is less than her Creator, and hence loves also less, yet if she loves with her whole being, her love is perfect and wanting in nothing. Wherefore, as I have told you already, it is love of this kind that constitutes the spiritual marriage of the soul with the Word.\* For she cannot love in this perfect way without being perfectly loved in return, so that by the consent of the two parties the marriage is ratified and completed. But perhaps some may have a doubt as to whether the soul is anticipated and surpassed by the Word in loving. That, however, is quite certain: He loved her long before she began to love Him, and He loves her far more than she loves Him. Happy the Spouse who has deserved to be prevented with the blessing of such exceeding sweetness!

\* St. John of the Cross likewise makes the spiritual marriage to consist essentially in that perfection of charity which manifests itself in a complete conformity of the human will with the divine. He says, "The spiritual marriage of the soul and the Son of God now remains to be accomplished. This is, beyond all comparison, a far higher state than that of espousals; because it is a complete transformation of the soul into the Beloved; and because each of them surrenders to the other the entire possession of themselves in the perfect union of love, wherein the soul becomes divine, and by participation, God, so far as it is possible in this life. I believe that no soul ever attains to this state without being confirmed in grace in it, for the faith of both is confirmed. . . . Hence it follows that this is the very highest state possible in this life. As by natural marriage there are two in one flesh, so also in the spiritual marriage between God and the soul, there are two natures in one spirit and love, as we learn from St. Paul, who makes use of the same metaphor, saying, 'He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit.' So when the light of a star, or of a burning candle, is united to that of the sun, the light is not that of the star, nor of the candle, but of the sun itself, which absorbs all other light in its own" (*Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza xxii. 119, 120, Lewis's Translation).—(Translator.)

Happy the Spouse to whom it has been given to experience an embrace of such surpassing delight! This spiritual embrace is nothing else than a chaste and holy love, a love sweet and pleasant, a love perfectly serene and perfectly pure, a love that is mutual, intimate, and strong, a love that joins two, not in one flesh, but in one spirit, that makes two to be no longer two but one undivided spirit, according to the testimony of St. Paul, where he says, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." And now, concerning these questions, let us rather listen to her whom the unction of grace and frequent experience have quickly qualified to be our instructress in all the ways of love divine. But perhaps we had better hold over this point and deal with it in a special sermon. For we should only spoil what is excellent matter by attempting to compress it within the few moments now available at the conclusion of to-day's discourse. And so with your permission I will make an end here where the sequence of thought does not warrant it, so that we may re-assemble to-morrow in good time and with eager minds to consider the pure delights which the holy and happy soul deserves to experience with the Word and from the Word, her heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXXXIV.

### ON SEEKING GOD.

*"In my bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth."*

"In my bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth." It is a great good, my brethren, this will to seek God. In my opinion it deserves to be esteemed second to none of all the goods of the soul. It is the first grace which the soul receives, and it is also the last advance she makes in her progress towards perfection. It follows after no virtue, neither does it yield place to any. What virtue can it be supposed to follow, since it is preceded by none? Or to what virtue can it give place, since it is itself the crown and consummation of all? For how can any virtue be ascribed to the man who has not the will to seek God? And as to him who does seek God, what term shall be appointed for his seeking? "Seek His Face evermore," says the Psalmist, by which he implies, as it seems to me, that even after God has been found He shall not cease to be sought. For it is not by bodily locomotion that we have to seek God, but by fervent desire. Now this desire, so far from being extinguished by the happy attainment of its Object, is on the contrary greatly intensified. How is it possible that the consummation of joy should be the exclusion of desire? It would be more true to say that the former is to the latter as oil to flame, because desire is in truth a flame. So it is, my brethren. The



joy is made perfect, yet there is no end to the desire,\* and by consequence no end to the seeking. But conceive (if you can) of this eager seeking as implying no absence of what is sought, and of this ardent desire as being accompanied by no solicitude. For absence is incompatible with possession and solicitude with security of tenure.

I will now explain the purpose of these preliminary remarks. It is in order that every individual amongst you who is seeking God may understand that he has been anticipated by Him, and that he was sought before he became a seeker. For unless this truth is borne in mind, what is a great good may be changed into a great evil. Great evils are wont in this way to grow out of great blessings when, namely, having been made rich with the goods of the Lord, we use these gifts as if they were not gifts, and we do not give glory to God. And thus it is that they who appear to us to be the greatest, on account of the favours they have received, are sometimes reputed the least by God, because of their ingratitude. "But I spare you" unduly. The terms I have employed, "greatest" and "least," are not energetic enough and fail to give adequate expression to my thought. I have

\* According to philosophers desire is incompatible with consummation. Thus St. Augustine says, "*Desiderium quid sit nisi rerum absentium concupiscentia?*" "*Desiderium est appetitus boni futuri nondum adepti.*" This is true of finite goods, not of the infinite. For in Ecclesiastes xxiv. 29, He Who is the Wisdom of the Father says of Himself, "They that eat Me shall yet hunger, and they that drink Me shall yet thirst." Nor is this contradicted by what we read in John vi. 35, "He that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst," because in the latter place there is question of the hunger and thirst of *unsatisfied* desire. Even as regards finite goods the joy of fruition does not exclude the desire of its continuance.—(Translator.)

confused the distinction I intended to draw. But I will now make it clear by telling you that instead of "greatest" and "least" I ought to have said "most excellent" and "most vile." For really and without any doubt, the more excellent a man is, the more vile does he become, if he attributes to himself that which makes him excellent; because there can be nothing more vile than such usurpation. But if any one should say in reply, "Far be it from me to be guilty of such ingratitude! I acknowledge that 'by the grace of God I am what I am'"; and if at the same time he is endeavouring to obtain for himself a little glory on account of the grace he has received, what is he, my brethren, but "a thief and a robber"? Let him that is such a one attend to the words of Christ, "Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant." What indeed can be greater wickedness than that of the servant who appropriates the glory of his Lord?

"In my bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth." Thus, my brethren, the soul seeks the Word, yet only because the Word has been beforehand in seeking her. For after she has once wandered away or been cast forth from the presence of the Bridegroom, "her eye shall not return to see good things," unless she is sought out and recalled by Him. Verily, this human soul of ours is nothing more than a "spirit that goeth and returneth not," if ever she is abandoned to herself. Listen to a soul that has fled afar and lost her way, hear how she laments and observe what she petitions for: "I have gone astray," she says, "like a sheep that is lost; seek Thy servant." Dost thou desire, O soul, to return to God? But if it is in the

power of thine own will to accomplish this conversion, wherefore dost thou ask for assistance? Why wouldst thou seek for strength elsewhere, if what thou hast in thyself sufficed for thy necessities? It is plain that she has the good desire yet is wanting in the power to bring it to consummation. She is a "spirit that goeth and returneth not," although she would be still farther off if the desire also were wanting to her. But I would not pronounce any soul to be altogether abandoned and left to herself, so long as she sincerely desires to return and prays to be sought after. For whence has this desire come to her? Unless I am mistaken, she owes it to the fact that the Word has already been visiting and seeking her. And His seeking has not been in vain, since it has wrought in her the good will without which no return would be possible. But it is not enough to have been sought once, so great is the languor of the soul and so great the difficulty of the return. For of what avail is it to have the mere desire, which is utterly helpless without the power of accomplishment? This is the teaching of St. Paul, who tells us, "To will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good I find not." What, then, does that soul seek which I introduced just now as speaking in the psalm? Nothing else, manifestly, except to be sought. Nor would she be seeking this unless she had been sought already. I will add, she would not be seeking this unless she had been already sufficiently sought. Such is the favour she solicits when she says, "Seek thy servant," praying that He Who gave her the desire to return would also grant her the strength to bring her good desire to consummation.

Nevertheless, it seems to me that our present text



cannot be well understood of a soul of this kind, which has not yet received the second grace ; I mean the soul which has the desire yet lacks the moral power to return to Him Whom she loveth. For how is it possible to apply to such a soul the words which follow, and to say of her that she rises and goes about the city, and seeks her Beloved in the streets and the broad ways, considering that she is herself in need of being sought by Him ? Let *them* do this who have the capacity. But let them bear in mind that they also were sought by the Word before they began to seek Him, just as they were loved by the Word before they began to love Him. As for ourselves, my dearest brethren, we have only to pray that these mercies of the Lord may “ speedily prevent us, for we are become exceeding poor.” But I say not this of all of you. I am well aware that very many of you are walking in the love wherewith Christ hath loved us, and seeking Him with simplicity of heart. Nevertheless there are some amongst us who, I grieve to say, have as yet given no sign of such salutary prevention, and consequently no sign of their being in the way of salvation. They are men who love themselves instead of the Lord, who “ seek the things that are their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ’s.”

“ I sought Him Whom my soul loveth.” To this, O Spouse, hast thou been brought by the benignity of Him Who has prevented thee, Who has been beforehand in seeking thee and beforehand in loving thee. Certainly thou wouldst never have sought Him hadst thou not first been sought by Him, just as thou wouldst never have loved Him had He not first loved thee. Therefore thou hast been prevented, not with one blessing only, but with two, prevented in loving and prevented in

seeking. Love is the cause of the seeking ; the seeking is at once the fruit and the evidence of love. The fact that thou art loved should banish any suspicion that it is for judgment thou art sought; whilst the fact that thou art sought should prevent thee from complaining that thou hast been loved in vain. Both manifestations of kindness and sweetness combine to animate thy courage, to dispel thy fears, to bring about thy return, and to arouse thy affection. Hence this zeal, hence this ardour in seeking Him Whom thy soul loveth, because there is no doubt that thou wert not able to seek Him at all until He began to seek thee, and now when thou art sought by Him thou art not able not to seek Him.

But do not forget from whence thou hast been brought hither. However, let me now, like St. Paul, transfer to myself what I am going to say. This will be the wiser course. Art thou then, O my soul, that faithless Spouse, who deserting her first Husband, with Whom she had lived so happily, violated her plighted troth and went after other lovers ? And now after keeping company with them so long as thou hast found it pleasant, perhaps until they repudiated thee with scorn, art thou now, I ask, so impudent, so brazen, as to wish to return to Him Whom in thy arrogance thou didst despise ? What ? Dost thou want to come forth into the light, thou for whom it would be more proper to hide thyself in darkness ? And dost thou run to be caressed by thy Bridegroom from Whom thou hast deserved nothing but hard stripes ? It will be strange if thou findest not that, instead of a Husband, thou hast offended a Judge. Happy the man who hears his soul making answer thus to these reproaches : " I have no fears because I love. And in this I have a proof that I am also loved ; for certainly

unless I were beloved I should not have the power to love. Now she that is beloved has no reason to be afraid. But as for souls that do not love, they indeed have good cause to fear. How can they be otherwise than always uneasy, always on the look-out for danger? I do love, and I find it as impossible to doubt that I am loved in return as to doubt the reality of my own love. Nor can I feel afraid of the presence of Him of Whose love for me I have had experimental proof. Shall I tell you in what? In this, that unworthy as I was He not only sought me, but He even touched my heart with His grace, and thereby gave me an infallible indication that He was seeking me. Why should I not respond to Him in His seeking as I respond to Him in His love? Shall He be angry with me now for seeking Him in return, He Who showed no indignation against me even when I treated him with scorn? No, certainly not. He Who sought me when I despised Him will not despise me now when I seek Him. The Spirit of the Word is kind, and kind is the communication He makes to me, telling me and convincing me of the Word's desire and affection, which cannot be concealed from Him, 'for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God, and is the confidant of the thoughts which He thinks 'of peace and not of affliction.' Wherefore, then, should I not feel encouraged to seek Him after having experience of His clemency and proof of His pardon?"

My brethren, to have these truths urged upon one is to be sought by the Bridegroom, to be convinced of them is to be found. But "all men receive not this word." What are we to do with our little ones? I speak of those amongst us who are still but as children in the spiritual life, yet not without sense, because they have



attained to the beginning of wisdom, "being subject one to another in the fear of Christ." By what means, I ask, shall I be able to prove to them that the case is with the Spouse as I have represented it to be, since they have not as yet discovered in their own experience anything like what I have described? But I will refer them to a witness whose testimony they are bound to accept. Let them read in the Holy Book that which, because they cannot see it in the heart of another, they perhaps hesitate to believe. It is written in the Prophet Jeremias, "If a man put away his wife and she go from him and marry another man, shall he return to her any more? Shall not that woman be polluted and defiled? But thou hast gone after many lovers: nevertheless return to Me, saith the Lord, and I will receive Thee." These my brethren, are the words of God Himself, and it is not lawful for us to doubt them. Believe therefore what it has not yet been given you to experience, so that by the merit of your faith you may attain sooner or later to the fruit of enjoyment. I think I have now explained sufficiently what it is to be sought by the Word, and how such seeking is a necessity, not for the Word, but for the soul, although this knowledge can be acquired more fully and more pleasantly from experience than from any merely verbal instruction. It remains for me, then, to show you in the next discourse how souls athirst for God ought to seek Him by Whom they are sought. Or rather we have to learn this from that Spouse who is represented to us here as seeking Him Whom her soul loveth, the Bridegroom of the soul, Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXXXV.

### ON THE SEVEN REASONS ON ACCOUNT OF WHICH THE SOUL SEEKS THE WORD.

*"In my bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth."*

"In my bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth." Why does she seek Him, my brethren? I have told you already, and there is no necessity to repeat. Yet for the sake of some of you who were not present on the previous occasion when this question was under discussion, I will now again touch upon it briefly. And perchance what I have to say will not be without interest even for those who listened to my last sermon. For the subject could not be exhaustively treated in a single discourse. The soul therefore seeks the Word in order to "be at agreement" with Him by submitting to His correction, in order to be enlightened by His illumination, in order to be advanced to virtue by the assistance of His power, in order to acquire wisdom under His discipline and instruction, in order to be made beautiful by conformity to His perfection, in order to become a mother by being united with Him in spiritual wedlock, in order, lastly, to feel the delight which is found in His caresses. For all and each of these reasons the soul seeks the Word. I have no doubt that there are very many other motives besides, but these are all that at present occur to me. Anyone that cares to take the trouble can easily extend the list by self-examination. For since our infidelities are many, many also, aye, countless are the necessities of our souls, and of our

anxieties there is no number. But although our misery is so great, greater still and more unmeasured is the Word's abounding wealth. For He is that Wisdom Which no malice overcometh and Which conquers evil with good. And let me give you the reason of the reasons I have mentioned. To begin with that which is first, consider in what manner the soul seeks the Word to "be at agreement" with Him. In the Gospel we read these words of the Word, "Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest perhaps the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer." What wiser counsel could be offered? And in giving it the Word, if I mistake not, represents Himself as an adversary, for the reason that He stands opposed to our carnal desires, whilst He says of us, "These always err in heart." Thou, therefore, my brother, who hearest these words, if terrified, thou art beginning to have the wish to "fly from the wrath to come," I believe thou wilt be anxious to know how thou mayst "be at agreement with thy Adversary," and so escape that wrath which He here appears to threaten thee with in such awful language. But thou canst not "be at agreement" with Him unless thou art at variance with thyself, unless thou art an adversary to thyself, unless with earnest and vigilant striving thou wagest against thyself an unceasing war, unless, finally, thou renouncest thy inveterate evil habits and thy natural affections. This, no doubt, is a difficult thing to do. To attempt it, relying on thine own strength exclusively, would be the same as to endeavour with one of thy fingers to stop the course of a torrent. It would be like trying to turn back again the waters of Jordan.



What then art thou to do? Seek out the Word in order that thou mayst be reconciled to Him by means of the grace wherewith He will supply thee. Have recourse to Him Who is now thy Adversary, in order to be made such by Him that He will no longer be thy Adversary, but will caress instead of menacing, and will demonstrate the infusion of grace to be a more powerful corrective than the threatening of wrath.

Such, I take it, is the first necessity on account of which the soul begins to seek the Word. But if thou art yet ignorant as to the will of Him with Whom art now "at agreement" in thine own will, shall it not be said of thee also that thou hast "a zeal of God but not according to knowledge"? And lest thou shouldst regard this as of little moment, remember the words of the Apostle, "If any man know not, he shall not be known." Dost thou desire to hear what I would counsel thee to do in the present necessity also? I would recommend thee to act in precisely the same way as in the preceding. If thou wilt follow my advice thou wilt this time also have recourse to the Word that He may instruct thee in His ways. Otherwise, in willing the good without knowing what is good, thou shalt be exposed to the danger of straying from thy course and "wandering where there is no passing and out of the way." For the Word is Light. Hence the Psalmist sings, "The declaration of Thy words giveth light, and giveth understanding to little ones." Blessed art thou if it is possible for thee also to say sincerely with the same Prophet, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths." No slight progress has that soul made whose will has been so won to grace and whose intellect so enlightened by heavenly wisdom

that she has now both the knowledge and the desire of the good. With the power to will what is good the soul has received the gift of life, with the power to know what is good, she has obtained the faculty of vision. For she was dead by willing what was evil, and she was blind through not knowing what was good.

She is now living, she has now restored to her the sense of sight, she is now established in good, but all by the power and operation of the Word. She stands upon the two feet, as it were, of knowledge and love, and is held erect by the Hand of the Word. She stands, yes, but let her believe that it is to herself are addressed the words of warning, "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." Dost thou imagine that thou art able to stand by thine own strength, whereas thou wert not able to rise by thine own strength? To me this appears impossible. And dost thou ask the reason? "By the Word of the Lord," says the Psalmist, "the heavens were established." And shall a thing of earth, thinkest thou, be established without the same Word's assistance? Why, therefore, if earth has the power to stand of itself, does a man of earth pray thus to the Lord, "Strengthen Thou me in Thy words"? He had even learned by experience how impossible it was for him to stand without the divine help. For it is the same voice that we hear in the psalm saying, "Being pushed I was overturned that I might fall; but the Lord hath supported me." Dost thou ask who it was that pushed him? There were more than one. Man is pushed by the devil, he is pushed by the world, he is pushed also by man. But who is this man that pushes? Each one of us, my brethren, is pushed by himself. "Wonder not at this."

So powerful a pusher of himself and overthrower of himself is man, that if one would only keep his hands off himself, he should have but very little to fear from the push which others could give him. Hence St. Peter asks, "And who is he that can hurt you, if you be zealous of good?" The hand wherewith thou pushest thyself is the consent of thy will. If, therefore, whenever the devil suggests evil to thee, or the world attempts to urge thee to what is unlawful, thou dost withhold thy consent, refusing to "yield thy members to serve iniquity," not suffering "sin to reign in thy mortal body," thou hast shown thyself to be "zealous of good," and malice consequently has no power to harm thee. And see if so far from harming, it does not rather help thee. For it is written, "Do that which is good and thou shalt have praise from the same." "They have been confounded who sought thy soul," whilst thou with the Psalmist art able to sing, "If they shall have no dominion over me, then shall I be without spot." Thou hast certainly given signal proof that thou art "zealous of good" if, in accordance with the Wise Man's counsel, thou "hast pity on thine own soul," if "with all watchfulness thou keepest thy heart," if in obedience to the injunction of St. Paul thou dost "keep thyself chaste." Otherwise, although thou shouldst gain the whole world, whilst yet thou sufferest the loss of thine own soul, I certainly shall not account thee to be zealous of good, since the Saviour Himself does not so account thee.

There are, then, three powers conspiring for the overthrow of him who stands. Of these, the devil pushes by envy and malice, the world by the wind of vain-



glory, and man by the dead weight of his own corruption. The devil has only the power to push thee : he cannot cast thee down if thou deniest him thy help by refusing to consent to him. Hence we read in Holy Scripture, " Resist the devil and he will fly from you." It is he who, through envy of their happy state, pushed our first parents when they were standing in paradise. Nevertheless he would not have succeeded in making them fall, had they not consented to his suggestion. It is he again who, by his pride, was cast headlong down from heaven, pushed by none save himself—which should make us understand that we are ourselves in much greater danger of falling in the same way, pressed down as we are by the weight of our own very substance. The world also pushes us, because it is wholly " seated in wickedness." All men are pushed by it, but none are overthrown except its friends, that is to say, those who consent to it. I have no desire for the friendship of the world lest it should occasion my fall, because " whosoever will be a friend of this world becometh an enemy of God." And there can be no fall more desperate than this. From what has been said it clearly follows that the most dangerous push of all is that which a man receives from himself. For whereas he can be made to fall by his own impulse without being pushed by any other, he cannot be made to fall by the impulse of others unless he also pushes himself.\* To which of these opposing powers must we offer the greatest resistance ? Surely to that which is

\* That is to say, the world and the devil can do no more than entice us to evil, and even for this they are dependent on the co-operation of our passions, but man has the power not alone of tempting himself, but also of yielding consent to temptation.—(Translator.)

all the more dangerous in proportion as it is the more interior, which is able to cast us down by itself alone, and without which the rest can do nothing. It is not without good reason that the Wise Man prefers "him that ruleth his spirit" to "him that taketh cities." This, my brethren, contains a very important lesson for us. It teaches us that we have need of virtue, and not of any natural virtue, but only of that wherewith we must be "endued from on high." Such virtue, if it is perfect, gives the soul an easy victory over herself, and arms her with invincible might against all her enemies. For it is an energy of mind which knows not how to yield to any force in defence of the reason.\* Or, if you prefer, it is a vigour of soul which acts unconquerably with and in behalf of the reason. Or, finally, it is a spiritual power which, so far as depends upon it, governs and directs all things in accordance with reason.†

"Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord?" Anyone who makes an endeavour to attain to the summit of this spiritual mountain, that is to say, who strives to reach the perfection of virtue, shall be able to realise how difficult is the ascent thither, and how

\* The proper function of the virtues is to prevent passion from clouding the light of reason and to fortify the will against the force of concupiscence, which is ever trying to draw it away from the guidance of judgment. He that lives in complete accordance with right reason is a perfect man; and virtue owes its very name to the fact that it enables us to attain to this perfection, "virtus" being a derivative of "vir"—"appellata est a viro virtus," Cicero, *Tusc. quest.* l. ii. How the various moral virtues conspire for the defence of reason, none has more beautifully described than St. Bernard himself, in *De Consideratione*, l. i. c. viii.—(Translator.)

† Similarly St. Thomas (after St. Augustine), "virtue is a good quality or habit of mind by which we live according to reason, which no one makes an ill use of, and which God produces in us without our co-operation" (*I. ii. q. 55, a. 4.*)—(Translator.)

hopeless to attempt it without the assistance of the Word. Happy the soul that makes herself such an object of wonder and delight to the watching angels that she can hear them saying of her, "Who is she that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her Beloved?" But in vain would be her efforts to rise if she leaned not on Him. By leaning on Him she is also enabled to vanquish herself; and thus made mistress of herself, she can bring all her feelings and passions under the rule of right reason. Like a skilful charioteer she shall drive the fourfold chariot of the mind, by which I mean the four emotions of anger, fear, desire, and love.\* And she shall reduce to captivity and render subservient to virtue, under the direction of judgment, every carnal affection and every bodily sense. How should not all things be possible to her since her Beloved on Whom she leans is almighty? What unbounded confidence is expressed in the words of St. Paul, "I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me"! There is nothing which renders more glorious the omnipotence of the Word than the fact that He makes omnipotent all who put their trust in Him. For, so it is written, "all things are possible to him that believeth," and surely he is omnipotent to whom all things are possible. The soul, consequently, if she does not presume on her own strength, and deserves thereby to be strengthened by the Word, shall be able to govern herself, in such a way that "no iniquity shall have dominion" over her. Thus, I say, whilst she leans on her Beloved and is "endued with strength from on high," no force, no fraud, no enticement shall have the power

\* See note at p. 95, vol. i.—(Translator.)



either to cast her down from a standing position or to overthrow her authority.

Dost thou wish, my brother, to be secured against the danger of being pushed by thyself? If so, "let not the foot of pride come near" thee, and the hand of him that pushes shall have no power to move thee. For "*there* (viz., in pride) the workers of iniquity are fallen." *There* the devil and his angels were thrown down, who, although they were not pushed from outside, were nevertheless "cast out and could not stand." Lucifer "stood not in the truth," because he leaned not on the Word, but trusted in his own unaided strength. And perhaps the reason why he desired to sit down was that he felt no longer able to stand. For he said, "I will *sit* in the mountain of the covenant." But God decreed it otherwise, and he neither stood nor sat but fell, according to the testimony of the Lord where He tells us, "I saw Satan like lightning fall from heaven." Therefore let not him who stands rely upon himself, but rather lean on the Word, unless he wishes to fall. The Word Himself has declared, "Without Me you can do nothing." And so it is. We can neither rise to what is good nor stand in what is good, without His assistance. Do thou, therefore, who standest, give glory to the Word, and say, "He set my feet upon a rock and directed my steps." He by Whose Hand thou hast been lifted up, must now hold thee erect by His power. So much in support of the proposition which I laid down, namely, that we have need to lean upon the Word in order to attain to virtue.

We have next to enquire into the truth of another statement of mine, to wit, that it is only by the Word we can be reformed unto wisdom. Now the Word is

Virtue, and He is also Wisdom. Let the soul therefore borrow virtue from Virtue and wisdom from Wisdom. But let her attribute both these gifts to the one same Word exclusively. Should she act otherwise, and arrogate to herself either her wisdom or her virtue, or the two together, as if she had not received them from the Word, let her also deny that the stream comes from the fountain, the grape from the vine, and the daylight from the sun. A "faithful saying" is that which we read, "if any of you want wisdom let him ask of God, Who giveth to all men abundantly and upbraideth not : and it shall be given him." St. James speaks here only of wisdom. But I venture to affirm that what he says of wisdom applies equally to virtue. For virtue is closely related to wisdom. Like wisdom it is a gift of God, and like wisdom also it is to be reputed one of the best and perfect gifts which "come down from the Father of lights." And if anyone were to hold that virtue is in all respects and absolutely identical with wisdom, I should not gainsay him, provided there was question of virtue and wisdom as existing in the Word. For although they are the same in the Word, by reason of the unique and absolute simplicity of the Divine Nature, they are not reflected in the soul in the same manner ; but, as if they were distinct one from the other, they give themselves to be participated by her variously, according to her manifold and various necessities. In this way, it is one thing for the soul to be guided by virtue, and quite another to be governed by wisdom ; it is one thing to rule herself with power, and another to taste the delights of spiritual sweetness. It is true, no doubt, that power belongs to wisdom as well as to virtue, and that sweetness belongs to virtue

as well as to wisdom. Nevertheless, if we would assign its own proper effect to each of these two, namely, virtue and wisdom, we shall say that the presence of the former is indicated by vigour of soul, whilst the latter manifests itself by placidity of mind together with a certain spiritual sweetness. I believe this is the sweetness to which the Apostle alludes where, after many exhortations appertaining to virtue, he adds what belongs to wisdom, "In sweetness, in the Holy Ghost." Therefore to stand, to resist, to repel force with force, which are reckoned amongst the functions of virtue, are honourable actions indeed, but very laborious. There is a vast difference between defending one's honour with labour and possessing it in peace. It is not consequently the same thing to act in accordance with the rules of virtue and to feel a delight in the practice of virtue. Wisdom enjoys that which virtue toilsomely produces; and whatever wisdom ordains, determines, and regulates, virtue executes.

"Write wisdom in the time of leisure," \* counsels the Wise Man. Therefore wisdom's time of leisure is not a time of idleness. Quite the contrary: the more at leisure she is, the more busily is she occupied with her own peculiar interests. Virtue, on the other hand, appears to best advantage when it is seen in exercise, and its splendour is proportioned to its activity. And I do not think I should be far wrong were I to define wisdom as the love of virtue. But where love is, labour cannot be, but only enjoyment.† And perhaps the

\* "Sapientiam scribe in otio" (Eccles. xxxviii. 25). The Vulgate has, "Sapientia scribæ in tempore vacuitatis," which is rendered by the Douay Translators, "The wisdom of a scribe cometh by his time of leisure."—(Translator.)

† "Ubi autem amor est labor non est sed sapor." Cf. St. Augustine, "In eo quod amatur, aut non laboratur, aut et labor amatur" (*De bon. vid.*, c. 20).—(Translator.)



word "sapientia" (wisdom) is derived from the word "sapor" (flavour) because wisdom, as if it were a kind of condiment, lends a pleasing flavour to the virtue to which it is added and which of itself, without such seasoning, would be dry, so to speak, and insipid. Neither would he seem to me deserving of censure who should define wisdom to be a relish for what is good. But we have lost this spiritual relish almost from the very first appearance of our race. At the moment when the carnal appetite prevailed and the old serpent with his poison corrupted the palate of the heart, the soul began to lose her natural love of good and to experience an inclination to evil. Hence it is written, "The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth," namely, on account of the folly of the first woman. And so the folly (*insipientia*) of the woman deprived us of the relish (*sapor*) of good, because the foolishness of Eve was overreached by the malice of Satan. But if the serpent seemed to have conquered for a time by means of the woman, by the woman also he now laments that he has been eternally vanquished. For behold! Wisdom again took possession of the woman's heart and body, in order that we, who had been deformed unto foolishness by the woman, might again by the woman be reformed unto wisdom. And now wisdom is for ever overcoming malice in the minds into which it enters, and, expelling the relish for evil introduced by that, substitutes the relish for virtue. For when wisdom gains admission to the soul, it reveals to her the foolishness of following the senses, it purifies the intellect, and heals and renews the palate of the heart. With her spiritual taste thus restored, she begins again to have a relish for good,

and a relish for wisdom, than which there is no greater good.

How many good works are done by men who yet feel no pleasure in the good they perform ! This is due to the fact that such persons are not influenced in their actions by any relish for virtue, but only by motives of reason, by human respect, or by some kind of compulsion. On the other hand, many men find no satisfaction in the evils which they do, and are led to perform them either by the fear of other evil or by the desire of some good rather than by a love of evil for its own sake. But those who " have passed into the affection of the heart," as the Psalmist says, are either truly wise, and so take a delight in the relish of good, or they are truly malicious, and consequently find pleasure in evil, even when it entices them with no hope of anything beyond itself. For what is malice but a relish for evil ? Happy the soul which is entirely occupied by the love of good and the hatred of evil ! This is what is meant by being reformed unto wisdom, this is to enjoy in oneself the happy experience of wisdom's triumph. For by what is wisdom more evidently shown to have conquered malice than by the fact that, when the love of evil has been driven forth, the soul becomes conscious of a certain most intimate relish for good, which replenishes her whole interior with spiritual delight ? Therefore, it is the part of virtue to suffer tribulations with fortitude ; but it belongs to wisdom to *rejoice* in tribulations. It is the office of virtue to strengthen the heart and to " wait in patience for the Lord " ; but it is for wisdom to " taste and see that the Lord is sweet." And that both these moral endowments may be more clearly exhibited in their proper and formal effects, I say

that modesty of mind reveals the wise man, constancy of mind the virtuous man. Wisdom is rightly placed after virtue, because virtue is the strong and firm foundation, so to speak, whereupon "wisdom hath built herself a house." But it is necessary for both virtue and wisdom to be preceded by the knowledge of good, since the light of wisdom can have no fellowship with the darkness of ignorance. Goodness of will must likewise have preceded, because "wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul."

Now since the soul has given proof of her restoration to life by the change in her will, of her recovered health by her enlightenment, of her stability by her virtue, and finally of her maturity by her wisdom, it remains that we discover for her that beauty without which she cannot find favour in the eyes of Him Who is "beautiful above the sons of men." She has herself heard Him say in the psalm, "The King shall greatly desire thy beauty." How precious and how great are the gifts of the soul which I have enumerated, gifts bestowed upon her by the Word, namely, goodness of will, knowledge, virtue, and wisdom! Nevertheless the Word is nowhere said to desire any of these. The Scripture only says, "The King shall greatly desire thy beauty." In another place the Psalmist sings, "The Lord hath reigned, He is clothed with beauty." And why should He not desire a similar robe of beauty for her who is at once His image and His Spouse? For the more closely she resembles Him, the more tenderly shall He cherish her. Now in what exactly does the beauty of the soul consist? Shall we say that it consists in what is called holiness of life? For the present, at any rate, let us adopt this view, until something better occurs to us. To discover whether or not a soul possesses



holiness we have to examine her external conduct, because although external conduct does not constitute holiness, it is the medium by which holiness is manifested. In the heart holiness has its origin and its home, for its "glory is the testimony of conscience." Nothing can be clearer than this light, nothing more glorious than this testimony, when truth shines in the soul and the soul sees herself in truth. But how does she appear to herself? She appears chaste and modest, fearful and circumspect, carefully avoiding everything which could tarnish the glory of the testimony of her conscience, conscious to herself of nothing which could put her to shame in the presence of truth, of nothing which could compel her to turn away her eyes, dazzled and confounded, from the light of the glory of God. This, my brethren, this indeed is that beauty of the soul which beyond all her other gifts and graces delights the eyes of the Word, and to which I would give the name and definition of holiness of life.

But when the brightness of this beauty has filled superabundantly the interior places of the heart and conscience, it must begin to reveal itself externally also, like a lamp hidden under a bushel, or rather as a "light shining in darkness," which cannot remain concealed. Accordingly, shining forth from its dwelling within, and sending out its luminous rays, so to speak, it acts upon the body, making it the image of the mind, diffuses its influence over all the members and faculties thereof, and communicates a new grace to a man's every action, word, look and movement, even to his laughter (if he should ever indulge in this), all of which appear now to be stamped with dignity and adorned with innocence. And when these and all other such

motions, activities, and exercises of the various bodily powers and members are seen to be grave, simple, and modest, neither insolent nor over-free, equally removed from sloth and giddiness, conformed to the rules of decorum, and conducive to piety, then, my brethren, the beauty of the soul is externally manifested, provided however that "there is no guile in her spirit." For it is possible that all such manifestations are merely simulated, and do not proceed out of the abundance of the heart. But in order that this spiritual loveliness may be exhibited in greater splendour, I shall here, if it is pleasing to you, define what is meant by that holiness which I have pronounced to be the formal constituent of the soul's beauty. Such holiness, then, is the nobility of a soul solicitous to preserve fair fame with purity of conscience, or, in the words of the Apostle, "to provide good things not only in the sight of God but also in the sight of all men." Blessed is the soul which has clothed herself with this beauty of sanctity, with this whiteness of heavenly innocence, whereby she can lay claim to a conformity, not with the world, but with the Word, of Whom it is written that He is "the Splendour of Eternal Life," "the Brightness of God's Glory and the Figure of His Substance."

Such a soul, my brethren, which has thus attained to the degree of holiness of life, now ventures to aspire to the spiritual nuptials of the Word. And why should she not, since by her resemblance to the Beloved she recognises herself to be qualified and ripe for union with Him? Nor, as His Bride, shall she fear the Majesty of Him with Whom she is in a manner associated by their mutual likeness, to Whose friendship she is admitted by the merit of her love, and to Whom the

marriage-vow unites her in wedlock. This is the marriage-vow: "I have sworn and am determined to keep the judgments of Thy justice." It was their fidelity to this engagement the apostles wished to signify when they said by the mouth of St. Peter, "Behold we have left all things and have followed Thee." Similar are the words of St. Paul, which, although spoken with reference to carnal marriage, may be also understood of the spiritual union of Christ with His Church. The Apostle says, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh." And in the psalm we hear the Bride of the Word singing with exultation, "But it is good for me to adhere to my God, and to put my hope in the Lord God." Therefore, my brethren, whenever you see a soul which, renouncing every other interest, cleaves to the Word with all her desires, lives by the Word, rules herself by the Word, conceives by His grace and inspiration the fruit of good works which she brings forth unto Him, so that she can say with the Apostle, "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain"; regard such a soul as a true Bride, united in wedlock to the Word. And "the Heart of her Husband trusteth in her," because she has given Him proof of her fidelity in that she has despised all things else for His sake, and "counts them but as dung that she may gain Christ." Such a soul did the Saviour recognise in him of whom He said, "This man is to Me a vessel of election." And surely that soul of St. Paul's was as tender a mother to her spiritual offspring as she was a faithful wife to her Husband: which may be inferred from his words, "My little children, of whom I am in labour again until Christ be formed in you."



But consider that in the state of spiritual marriage there are two modes of parturition, and consequently two kinds of offspring, distinct from each other, yet not opposed. For the mystical mothers bring forth souls by preaching, and interior lights by contemplation. In this second mode of parturition, the soul is sometimes rapt in ecstasy, and withdrawn from the bodily senses, and so completely absorbed in admiration of the Word that she loses even consciousness of self. This happens when, under the attraction of the Word's ineffable sweetness, she in a manner steals herself from herself, or rather is ravished away and escapes from herself, in order that she may enjoy the Word. But not in the same manner is the spiritual mother affected when she is occupied in bringing forth the fruit of souls to the Word, as when she is thus enjoying His caresses. It is purely out of solicitude for her neighbour and his necessities that she devotes herself to the former employment ; to the latter she is invited by the sweetness of the Word. As a mother she rejoices in her offspring ; but greater are the delights she experiences as a Bride in the arms of her Bridegroom. Dear to her heart are her children, the precious pledges of conjugal love ; but she finds more pleasure in the embraces of her Husband. It is good for her to be helping many to salvation ; but it is something far sweeter to be transported out of herself and united with the Word. But when does this happen ? And how long does it last ? It is an intercourse of love most delightful to experience, but it is as rare as it is delightful, and as short-lived as rare. This is what was placed last amongst the soul's motives for seeking the Word, in the list which I gave at the beginning of

this sermon, where I said that she seeks Him in order to feel the delight which is found in His caresses.

Perhaps there are some of you who would now like an explanation of what it is to enjoy the Word in this way? If so, I can only counsel them to seek out one who has had the experience and to present their request to him. But even though I also had been privileged sometimes to enjoy that favour, do you suppose it would be possible for me to describe the ineffable? Hear how the Apostle speaks of such an experience, "whether we be transported in mind, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for you." As if he should say, "I have one kind of intercourse with God alone and by His sole will, and I have another kind of intercourse in which you may participate. The former may be enjoyed indeed, but cannot be expressed in human language; in the latter I condescend so far to you as to speak in words which you can comprehend." O whosoever thou art that wouldst learn what it is to enjoy the Word, get ready, not thine ear, but thy heart. For no tongue but grace alone is capable of teaching thee this. It is "hidden from the wise and the prudent" and "revealed to little ones." Great therefore, my brethren, truly great and sublime is the virtue of humility which can merit what cannot be taught, which is worthy of receiving what cannot be learned, which deserves to conceive of the Word and by the Word what no words can express. And wherefore? Not because these things are really due to the humble soul, but because such is the good pleasure of the Father of the Word, her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is over all things, God blessed for ever. Amen.

## SERMON LXXXVI.

### ON THE VIRTUE OF MODESTY.

*“ In my bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth.”*

There is no need for us, my brethren, to dwell any longer on the question as to why the soul seeks the Word, since the answer has already been given sufficiently, and in truth at unnecessary length. Come, then, and let us proceed with the exposition of our present text, so far as it appertains to morals. And here, at the very beginning, observe the modesty of the Spouse, than which I know not if anything can be found more beautiful in human virtue. This, first of all, I want to take in my hands, so to speak, and to pluck it from its place, in order that I may present it as a lovely spiritual nosegay to our young religious. Not that modesty ought not to be preserved, and with all diligence, even in our old age, since it is the ornament of every age ; but because the loveliness of this delicate virtue appears more conspicuously and to better advantage in youthful souls. What is there more amiable than a modest young man ? How beautifully, how brilliantly does modesty shine in the conduct and on the countenance of youth, as a very gem amongst the virtues ! How surely and infallibly does it prophesy of holiness to be ! How faithfully does it reveal to us the man of noble character ! To the young especially it is a rod of discipline which keeps down their evil passions, which restrains that levity of movement and action, and represses that arrogance of



manner so characteristic of slippery adolescence. Where shall you find another remedy so efficacious as this against indecent language and all manner of moral turpitude? Modesty is own sister to confidence. It is the most evident sign of dove-like simplicity. It is the lamp of a chaste soul, ever shining, so as to reveal instantly anything foul or unbecoming that attempts to invade her. And thus it is the expeller of evil, the defender of inborn purity, the special glory of the conscience, the guardian of fair fame, the seat and the first-fruits of virtue, the ornament of nature, the distinctive beauty of innocence. Even the very blush which modesty produces, what grace and loveliness does it not impart to the countenance !

So truly is modesty an innate ornament of the soul, that even those who have no fear of doing wrong are nevertheless ashamed to be discovered in their sins, according to the words of Christ, "Every one that doth evil hateth the light." The Apostle also tells us that "they who sleep, sleep in the night ; and they who are drunk, are drunk in the night," because they desire to conceal in darkness their works of darkness, works truly unworthy of the day. There is, however, a vast difference between modesty of this kind and the modesty of the Spouse. For whereas the former feels no shame in the presence of interior defilement, except when it has been discovered, the latter is not content with hiding moral filthiness, but disowns and rejects it. Hence the Wise Man says, "There is a shame that bringeth sin, and there is a shame that bringeth glory and grace." Thus the Spouse seeks the Word with modesty, because she seeks Him in her bed and during the night, and this is the modesty which bringeth

not sin but glory. She seeks the Word in order to the purification of her conscience; she seeks Him also that she may have testimony from the same,—that like St. Paul she may be able to say, “My glory is this, the testimony of my conscience.” “In my bed by night I sought Him Whom my soul loveth.” Here, my brethren, both the place and the time speak to us of modesty. What is so agreeable to a modest soul as privacy? Now privacy may be had in the bed and in the night-time. So, when we wish to pray, we are recommended to go into our chambers, clearly for the sake of privacy. This is manifestly intended for our protection, lest, whilst praying in public, human praise should rob us of the fruit of our prayer and render it inefficacious. But none the less, it teaches us modesty. For what is more a part of modesty than to avoid praise and self-glorification? It is clear, therefore, that He Who is the Child and the Master of modesty was looking to this virtue particularly when He bade us to pray in secret. What is so unbecoming, more especially in young people, as an ostentatious parade of piety? For youth is the age most apt and suitable for laying the foundations of a truly religious life, according to the testimony of the Prophet Jeremias, “It is good for a man when he hath borne the yoke of the Lord from his youth.” The prayer which thou art about to offer shall be excellently well commended if thou wilt make modesty its preface, and say with the Psalmist, “I am very young and despised, but I forget not Thy justifications.”

But he who wishes to pray ought to select the proper time no less than the proper place. The hour of leisure is the fittest and the most convenient for this exercise,

particularly at night, when all the world lies buried in slumber and deep silence prevails. It is then that our prayers mount up to heaven with the greatest purity and freedom. Hence the Prophet's invitation, "Arise give praise in the night, in the beginning of the watches: pour out thy heart like water before the Face of the Lord." With how much confidence does prayer ascend in the night, when its only witnesses are God Himself and the holy Angel who receives and presents it at the altar above! How pleasing and beautiful it looks, crimsoned, as it were, with the blush of modesty! How serene and calm it shows itself, disturbed by no clamour, distracted by no tumult! Lastly, how pure and unspotted it appears, defiled with no dust of earthly solicitude, tempted by no praise or flattery from beholders! For these reasons, therefore, the Spouse practised modesty as well as prudence in seeking the privacy of the night and of her bed when she wanted to pray, that is, when she desired to seek the Word. For prayer is nothing else but the seeking of the Word. Consequently I do not pray as I ought, if in my prayer I seek anything outside the Word which I do not seek for the sake of the Word, because in Him I have all. In Him I find the remedy for my wounds, the relief of my necessities, the supply of my wants, the grace of my advancement, in short, whatever it is expedient, whatever it is right, whatever it is necessary for a man to receive and to possess. I have no need, therefore, to ask for anything of the Word besides Himself, since in Him I have all I desire. For even when, in our temporal necessities, we appear to solicit temporal goods, if our object in asking them is, as it ought to be, the glory of the Word, in that



case we are really seeking Him rather than them, because these are only sought for the sake of Him. What I say is nothing new to such souls as are wont to make use of all transitory things as a means of meriting the enjoyment of the Word.

Let us have the patience to investigate more closely still the privacy of this bed and this nocturnal hour, lest perchance some spiritual truth, which it would be well to bring to light, remains there as yet undiscovered. Well, then, if you will allow me to suppose that by the bed is designated human weakness, and by the darkness of night human ignorance, what can be more reasonable or more natural than that the Word, Who is the Power and the Wisdom of God, should be most earnestly sought as a divine remedy against both those evils inherent in our nature? For surely it is a most proper thing to oppose Power to weakness and Wisdom to ignorance. But lest any doubt should remain still in the minds of the more simple concerning the truth of this interpretation, let them hear what the Royal Prophet has to say on the same subject, "The Lord (doth) help him on his bed of sorrow: Thou hast turned all his couch in his sickness." This relates only to the bed. With regard to the night of our ignorance, can anything be clearer than the words of the same Prophet, where he says in another psalm, "They have not known nor understood; they walk on in darkness"? There can be no doubt that he is alluding here to the spiritual ignorance of the whole human race, and in which we have all been born. It is the same ignorance as I think, which the blessed Apostle acknowledges himself to have been born in, and boasts of having been rescued from, when he says, speaking of the

Father, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness." Hence in another place he writes, "We are not children of the night nor of darkness." And to the faithful in general he says, "Walk then as children of the light." \*

\* This sermon is incomplete, as may be inferred from its unusual brevity and the absence of the customary conclusion. Likely enough, it was interrupted in the delivery by one of those paroxysms of pain or fainting-fits which marked the close of the holy Preacher's life. Death came to him on August 20th, 1153, stilling one of the sweetest voices that ever gave utterance to human thought. It was only fitting that the last word of the Doctor of love should be of love. In reply to his brethren's request that he should ask God to remain longer with them, he said, "I know not to which I ought to yield, to the love of my children which urges me to stay here or to the love of my God which draws me to Him." Thus did he endure in himself that holy strife whereof he speaks in many of his discourses, and which St. Paul also experienced when he found himself "straitened between two" and knew not "which to choose" (Phil. i. 23).—(Translator.)





## APPENDIX A.

[The following prose translation is from the third chapter of the work entitled *The Mystical Vine*, commonly regarded as St. Bernard's. My reason for inserting it here is its remarkable resemblance in thought and expression to Sermon L<sup>XI</sup>. on the Canticle, and because it is too long to be given as a footnote. To this I have added an English version of the hymn "Summi Regis Cor Aveto," one of those found amongst the writings of the Mellifluous Doctor, as an equally eloquent witness to his love for the Sacred Heart.—TRANSLATOR.]

### ON THE SACRED HEART.

NOT content with digging His Hands and Feet, and opening His sacred Side, they pierced with the lance of furious hate that most holy Heart Which had already been wounded long before with the lance of love. "Thou hast wounded My Heart, My sister, My spouse," says the heavenly Bridegroom in the Canticle of love, "Thou hast wounded My Heart." Yes, Lord Jesus, Thy sister, Thy spouse, Thy beloved has wounded Thy Heart. What need, then, that It should be wounded again by Thine enemies? O enemies of Jesus, what are you about? If the Heart of my sweet Master has been wounded already, rather since It has already been wounded, why would you inflict on It another wound? Are you not aware that the human heart loses life and feeling when pierced by a single wound? The Heart of my Lord Jesus is therefore dead, slain by the wound of love. The Heart of Him Who is at once my Lord and the Bridegroom of my soul is possessed and occupied by the death of love. How then has It room for a second death? "Love is strong as death," aye, stronger than death. Hence the first death, which is charity, the death of all evil deaths, cannot be expelled from the heart which it has made its home by the inviolable right of its own proper wound. When enemies

meet who are of equal strength, but one happens to be within the house and the other outside, is it not certain that the victory must go to the former? And see how great is the force of charity which not alone in the Heart of Jesus, but also in the hearts of His servants, has obtained dominion and most sweetly inflicted death. Let us contemplate the holy martyrs. See how they smile at terrors! How they rejoice under the lash! They are slain, and behold they triumph! How is this? Because having died the death of charity interiorly in their hearts, they have long been dead to sin, dead to the world; and rendered thus insensible, they can no more be affected by menaces or torments or by any violence. What wonder is this since they have ceased to live? "You are dead," says the Apostle, writing to the Colossians. It is such a death the wisely-foolish Balaam desired for himself, when he prayed, "Let my soul die the death of the just, and my last end be like to them." Happy death which makes us indifferent to death! Happy death which leads to everlasting life! Thus was the Heart of Jesus wounded and slain long ago for our sakes, "when all the day long we were counted as sheep for the slaughter." Corporal death also came upon Him and prevailed awhile, but only to be eternally vanquished. It was vanquished because, "rising from the dead, He dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over Him."

But,\* since we have come to the most sweet Heart of Jesus, and "it is good for us to be here," let us not suffer ourselves to be easily torn away from so holy a Sanctuary, whereof we read, "They that depart from Thee shall be written in the earth." But what of those who draw nigh? Thou hast told us Thyself, O Lord Jesus, for it is to such Thou didst say, "Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." What then of those who "are written in the earth"? Doubtless, they shall mourn. But who would not wish to rejoice? Who could refuse an invitation like this? Let us therefore approach to Thee and "we will be glad and rejoice in Thee, remembering Thy Heart." Oh, "how good and how pleasant

\* This and the following passages are read in the Office of the Sacred Heart, forming the lessons of the Second Nocturn

it is to dwell" in the Heart of Jesus! A rich Treasure, a Pearl beyond price, is this Heart of Thine, O good Jesus, which we have found in the digged field of Thy wounded Body. Who would throw away such a Pearl? Nay, rather I will sell my all, I will barter away all the thoughts and affections of my soul in order to acquire It as my possession, casting all my care on the Heart of my Lord Jesus, and without any doubt, It will have care of me. "I will worship towards this holy Temple," this Holy of Holies, this Ark of the Covenant, "and I will praise the name of the Lord," saying with David, "I have found my Heart that I may pray to my God." \* Yes, I have found the Heart of my sweet Jesus, my King, my Brother, my Friend. And shall I not pray? Most assuredly I shall. For His Heart is also mine. I affirm it boldly, because Christ is my Head. Therefore, as the eyes of my natural head are my eyes, so is the Heart of my mystical Head my Heart. What happiness for me! I have really one Heart with Jesus! Nor is there anything surprising in this, since we know that in the early Church, "the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul." Therefore, having found this Heart of mine and Thine, O sweetest Jesus, I will pray to Thee, my God. Only do Thou admit my supplication into the Sanctuary of Thy gracious mercy, yea, draw me entirely into Thy Heart. For although the labyrinthine maze of my sins stands in my way, yet that Heart has been limitlessly dilated and expanded by the force of charity, and Thou alone canst "make him clean that is conceived of unclean seed"; so that freed from the encumbrance of sin, I may be able to pass through the narrow door. O Jesus, beautiful above all in all manner of beauty, "wash me yet more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." Thus purified by Thee, I shall be able through Thee to approach to Thy most Holy Presence and deserve to dwell in Thy Heart all the days of my life, having ever the light to know Thy will and the grace to accomplish it. For this was Thy sacred Side opened, that we might have free access to Thy Heart. For this was Thy Heart wounded that

\* "Inveni cor meum ut orem Deum meum." These words are not found in the Vulgate.—(Translator.)



in It and in Thee we might dwell in tranquility, secure from the perturbation of external things. For this, too, was Thy Heart wounded, that the visible wound of the lance might reveal to us the invisible wound of love. How couldst Thou better manifest the ardour of Thy divine charity than by permitting Thy Heart to be pierced? Therefore, the carnal wound is but the manifestation of the spiritual. And perhaps it is to signify this that in the verse of the Canticle the words "thou hast wounded Me" are repeated. For she who is at once Thy spouse and Thy sister is represented as the author of both wounds; as if the Bridegroom were to say openly, "Because thou hast wounded Me by the vehemence of thy love, therefore have I been wounded also by the soldier's lance." Had His Heart not been first pierced by love, never surely would He have allowed the steel to invade It. Hence He says, "Thou hast wounded My Heart, My sister, My spouse, thou hast wounded My Heart." But why does He call her both sister and spouse? Would not the title of sister alone or spouse alone be sufficient to express the affection of a loving Bridegroom? And why is she called spouse rather than bride? Is it not as a bride that the Church or the faithful soul is expected to bring forth the daily fruit of good works to Christ, her heavenly Bridegroom? My reply shall be brief. Persons united in wedlock are wont to love each other less ardently than during the period of espousals, when love alone was the link between them. The Divine Bridegroom, then, to show that the greatness of His love suffers no diminution from time, calls His beloved by the name of spouse, His affection for her being ever new. But since earthly spouses are loved according to the flesh, and in the love of Christ there is nothing carnal, He also addresses His spouse under the title of sister, for sisters are loved with a pure affection. He says, therefore, "Thou hast wounded My Heart, My sister, My spouse," which is equivalent to this: "Because I love thee supremely as My spouse, chastely as My sister, therefore for thy sake has My Heart been wounded." Oh, who would not love that Heart so cruelly wounded? Who would not return It love for love? Who would not embrace so pure a Heart? Certainly the spouse loves It, for she is herself wounded for Its sake by an excess of

charity. "I am wounded with charity," she exclaims. Is it possible that she who says, "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you tell Him that I languish with love"—is it possible, I repeat, that *she* does not reciprocate her Bridegroom's affection? And she loves Him with a sisterly love, for she says: "Who shall give Thee to me for my Brother, sucking the breasts of my mother, that I may find Thee without and kiss Thee, and now no man may despise me?" But what does she mean here by "without"? Without the body, very likely. For "while we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord." Who could suffer in patience such an absence, such an exile, embittered as it is by sorrow for the past, labour in the present, fear of the future? And although the grace of consolation is sometimes experienced, when the Bridegroom reveals Himself for a moment, yet He stands afar off, behind the wall, as it were, this body of sin making a division between Him and us; nor does He readily give Himself to be touched and kissed, except to the soul which has advanced so far in merit as to deserve to be thus addressed by Him, "Arise, My love, My dove, My beautiful one." It is only such a soul that can say in those rare moments when she seems to herself to "have attained," at least in some sense, "I have found Him whom my soul loveth, I held Him and will not let Him go."

But it is not everyone who can attain to this perfection of charity. As for us who are still "within," that is, who still abide in our mortal bodies, let us love as ardently as we can, let us requite with love, let us tenderly embrace our Wounded Love, Whose Hands and Feet and Side and Heart, those impious husbandmen so cruelly dug; and let us implore of Him that He would vouchsafe to bind to His own with the bonds of love, and pierce with the lance of love, those hearts of ours, still hard and impenitent.

"SUMMI REGIS COR AVETO."

I.

O Heart of Him Who reigns on high,  
With gladsome soul I bid Thee hail !  
And to Thy love's embraces fly  
Where joys abound that never fail.  
Give me courage now to speak,  
Thou so great and I so weak.

II.

Oh, what strong love Thy might could bend,  
For my poor heart what strong desire,  
That Thou shouldst so exhaust and spend  
And give Thyself to me entire !  
Happy if Thou couldst but save  
Even so Thy rebel slave.

III.

Most bitter had that death to be,  
Most greedy and insensitive  
To violate this Sanctuary  
Where dwelt the Life of all that live,  
Rending with sharp pangs the shrine  
Filled with sweetnesses divine.

IV.

I pray Thee by Thy death of pain,  
O Heart beloved ! endured for sin  
And me, that Thou my heart would deign  
To take and hold Thyself within.  
This is now my one desire,  
This is the grace I most require.

V.

Detach my soul from earthly things,  
From joys and cares, my only Love !  
Bid love and fear provide the wings  
To bear my heart to Thee above,  
Where from dark 'twill lightsome grow,  
And from cold with fervour glow.



## VI.

Although a rebel slave of Thine  
To whom but stripes are justly due,  
I pray Thee, let Thy love divine  
Consume and pierce me through and through.  
Happy shall the torments be  
Caused by wounds of charity !

## VII.

Expand, sweet Heart ! Thyself unfold,  
As does the rose of fragrant breath,  
And mine, encompassed, captive hold  
To die in Thee a blissful death !  
For what ill can him befall  
Who makes Thee his all in all ?

## VIII.

The soul that feels this flame divine  
No longer can herself restrain,  
She acts as one o'er-charged with wine,  
And modes and measures give her pain :  
Subject now to foreign sway  
She does not herself obey.

## IX.

With all the force which love can lend,  
O Heart beloved ! I Thee implore  
That Thou wouldst to my level bend  
And make me Thine for evermore !  
So my heart with pulses sweet  
Henceforth but for Thee shall beat.

## X.

Oh, let me but to love Thee live !  
And lest upon me sloth should steal,  
A prayerful worship to it give  
And for Thy glory fiery zeal.  
Granted this, my life shall be  
Full of joy since full of Thee.

## XI.

Expand, sweet Rose, no limits hold,  
Disperse abroad Thy fragrance sweet,  
Within Thy amplitude enfold  
This heart of mine and make it beat  
Henceforth with the one desire  
Still to burn in love's dear fire.

## XII.

But let my heart affliction smite  
And thus secure this union make,  
For heart to heart will well unite  
When each is pierced for other's sake.  
Come, then, sorrow, point thy dart,  
Pierce with woe this willing heart !

## XIII.

As else to live I cannot bear,  
Oh, let me ever in Thee dwell,  
Whose bitter-sweets I fain would share,  
And share Thy glorious shames as well.\*  
Heart divine, my heart unfold,  
Since itself it cannot hold.

## XIV.

There let me live, there let me die !  
For out of Thee I cannot rest,  
Oh, quench not, but intensify  
The flame that rages in my breast !  
Strengthen in my soul Thy sway,  
Dearer growing day by day.

\* " In dolore gaudioso,  
Cum deformi specioso."

## APPENDIX B.

### GLORIES OF SAINTS BERNARD AND AUGUSTINE.

“AS St. Gertrude reflected at Mass on the merits of St. Bernard, to whom she had a particular devotion on account of his sweet eloquence, the illustrious Abbot appeared to her, clothed in ineffable glory and in three different colours, each of which was equally brilliant—white, which indicated the integrity of his innocence and purity; violet, his perfection as a religious; and crimson, the fervour of his love; and these three colours appeared to impart a special pleasure to all the saints. He had also golden bracelets, in which precious stones were interlaced with admirable skill: the gold indicated the inestimable value of his rare and admirable doctrine, and all that he had said or written for the good of souls; the precious stones indicated his burning love of God. Our Lord drew into His Heart all the merits and advantages which had ever been gained by any person, either in heaven or on earth, from his words or writings, causing this to radiate from His Heart into that of St. Bernard, which resounded like a sweet instrument of music—his virtues, and, above all, his innocence and love, producing the sweetest melody imaginable.

“The heart of the Saint was also adorned with a brilliant diadem of many colours, on which appeared the profit which he had desired should be gained from his writings for the greater glory of God. St. Gertrude then repeated the *Laudate* two hundred and fifty-five times in honour of the Saint, returning thanks to God for all the graces with which He had favoured him. Then all that he said appeared on the vestments of the venerable Father in the form of little shields, on which were engraven the virtues for which he had been specially distinguished when on earth; and they shone also into the soul of Gertrude, who had returned thanks to God for them.



“ As the Saint prayed at Mass for all the religious of whom she had charge, and especially for those who were devout to St. Bernard, although they had not been recommended to her prayers, she beheld this venerable Father again clothed in glory, the splendour of which appeared to pass from him to all those who desired to obtain the same fervent love of God as he had, through his merits. As Gertrude marvelled at this, she inquired why those persons who had not practised the same virtues as he had done could appear thus enriched with his merits. He replied, ‘ A lady of noble birth is not less admired when clothed with the habits of another than when she wears her own, provided she is beautiful and perfectly formed. Thus the virtues of the saints obtain the same advantages for those who praise God for their fervour in acquiring them.’

“ St. Gertrude now observed that those who had recommended themselves to her prayers with devotion appeared adorned with a singular brightness, which others did not obtain ; to show that the least action done with a right intention profits much, and that the least negligence, even in little things, may be a serious loss.

“ On the same day, as the Saint reflected on the glory of St. Augustine, to whom she had always been devout, and thanked God for the favours he had bestowed on him, he appeared to her with St. Bernard, as if equal to him in glory, as he had been equal to him in sanctity and doctrine. This great Bishop stood before the throne of the Divine Majesty, magnificently apparelled, while rays of ardent fire appeared to shoot forth from his heart, as also from the heart of St. Bernard, towards that of Jesus Christ ; this indicated the eloquence by which the holy Doctor had enkindled the fire of divine love in the hearts of men. Rays of light, like sunbeams, proceeded from his lips, which filled the whole heavens, and figured the abundant and marvellous doctrines with which he had enlightened the Church. Beneath these rays there appeared arcades of light, of admirable clearness, which attracted the attention of all, and gave abundant pleasure and content to those who gazed upon them. As the Saint beheld this with

joy and admiration, she learned from St. Bernard that these arcades represented the light of the doctrine of St. Augustine, and his immense labours in defence of the Catholic faith, that he might be able to close up the way of error to all men, and to open the way of the true faith.

“ St. Gertrude then inquired of St. Bernard if he had not had the same end in his writings. He replied : ‘ I spoke, wrote, and acted under the impulse of an impetuous love of God ; whilst this illustrious Doctor wrote from a principle of divine love, and moved by the miseries which he had himself experienced.’

“ Our Lord then drew to Himself from the blessed and from the hearts of the faithful still on earth the faith, consolation, light, and love which the writings of St. Augustine had produced ; perfecting this, uniting it to His Heart, and then pouring it forth into the heart of the Saint, whose soul was penetrated by this divine influence, and became like a harp before God, emitting the most perfect and sweetest melody ; and as the virginity and love of God had formed an admirable concert in the heart of St. Bernard, the penitence and fervent love of St. Augustine produced a similar effect, so that it was impossible to decide which was the most melodious. After this, St. Bernard informed St. Gertrude that the melodies which she heard were those which were spoken of in the words, ‘ Omnis illa Deo,’ etc. ; for the heart of each saint emits a melody which corresponds to its virtues, and all are ever employed in the divine praises.”—Cusack’s *Life and Revelations of St. Gertrude*, Ch. 1., pp. 446–449.

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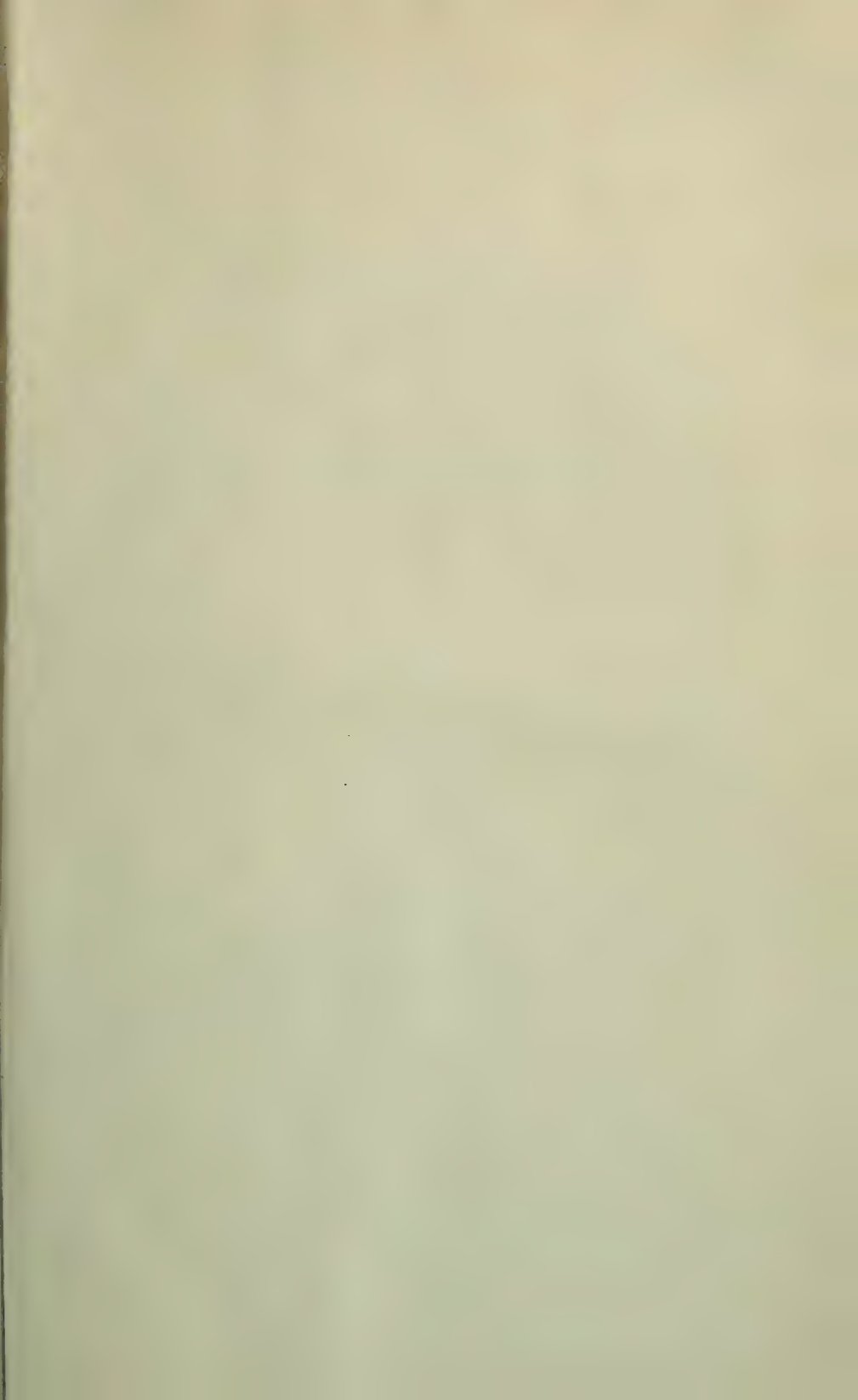
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