

the name of salvation and of peace, was to direct the attention of the Jews, who had despised it in the person of our Saviour, to an awful omen; and this ungrateful people, having rejected one Jesus, who had preached to them grace, mercy, and life, God sent them another Jesus, who had to announce to them nothing but irremediable evils, and the inevitable decree of their approaching ruin.

Let us penetrate still further into the judgments of God, under the direction of his holy word. Jerusalem and its temple were twice destroyed, first by Nebuchadnezzar, and afterwards by Titus; but at each of these periods, the justice of God was manifested by the same means, though more strikingly in the latter.

In order the better to understand the progress of the divine counsels, let us first lay down this truth, so often established in the holy Scriptures, that one of the most terrible effects of the divine vengeance is, when, in punishment for our past sins, it abandons us to our own opinions; inasmuch that we become deaf to every reasonable warning, blind to the ways of salvation which are made known to us, eager to believe whatever may lead to our ruin, provided that it flatters us, and daring to undertake everything, without calculating our forces and those of our enemies.

Thus perished at the first time, by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Jerusalem, and all her princes. Weak, and always conquered by this victorious king, they had often proved that all their efforts against him were vain; and were at last obliged to swear allegiance to him. The prophet Jeremiah declared to them from God, that the Lord had delivered them up to this prince, and that there was no deliverance for them but by submitting to his yoke. To Zedekiah, and to all his people, he said, "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, for why should you perish, and this city be laid waste?" But they believed not his word. Whilst Nebuchadnezzar kept them closely shut up by the prodigious works with which he had surrounded the city, they suffered themselves to be deceived by their false prophets, who filled their minds with imaginary victories, and said to them in the name of the Lord, though God had not sent them, "I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon; and within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the Lord's house, that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, took away from this place, and carried to Babylon." Jer. xxviii. 2. The people, led away by these promises, suffered hunger and thirst, and were reduced to the greatest extremities; and, through their inveterate obstinacy, went to such lengths, that there remained no more mercy for them. The city was overthrown, the temple was burnt, and all was lost.

By these signs the Jews knew that the hand of God was upon them. But that the divine vengeance might be as evident to them in the last destruction of Jerusalem, as it had been in the first, we see in both the same departure from God, the same temerity, the same hardness of heart.

Though their rebellion had brought among them the Roman armies, and though they had rashly thrown off a yoke to which the whole world had submitted, Titus wished not to destroy them; on the contrary, he frequently offered them pardon, not only at the commencement of the war, but even when they could no longer escape out of his hands. He had already raised about Jerusalem a vast and extensive wall, furnished with towers and redoubts, as strong as the city itself, when he sent to them Josephus their citizen, one of their captains, one of their priests, who had been taken in this war whilst defending his country. What did he not say to move them! By how many forcible reasons did he urge them to return to obedience! He showed them that heaven and earth conspired against them, that their ruin was inevitable in case of their resistance, and that their deliverance depended solely on the clemency of Titus. "Save," said he to them, "save the whole city; save yourselves; save the temple, the wonder of the world, which the Romans respect, and which Titus could not see destroyed without regret." But by what means can people, bent on their own destruction, be saved? Seduced by their false prophets, they listened not to these judicious counsels. They were reduced to extremity: hunger killed more of them than the sword, and mothers even ate their own children. Titus,

affected by their distresses, called his gods to witness that he was not the cause of their ruin. During these misfortunes they gave increasing credit to the false predictions which promised them the empire of the world. The city was actually taken; the fire was already spreading on all sides; yet these infatuated people still believed the false prophets, who assured them that the day of deliverance was arrived, in order that they might resist to the last, and that there might be no more mercy for them. In fact, all were massacred, the city was completely overthrown, and, with the exception of some remains of towers which Titus left to serve as a monument to posterity, he left not one stone upon another.

You see, then, my Lord, that the same vengeance burst upon Jerusalem that had before been witnessed under Zedekiah. Titus is not less sent of God, than Nebuchadnezzar: the Jews perish in the same manner. We see Jerusalem in the same rebellion, the same famine, the same extremities; the same ways of deliverance open; the same seduction; the same hardness of heart; the same issue;—and that every thing might be alike, the second temple is burnt by Titus in the same month, and on the same day, on which the first had been by Nebuchadnezzar. It was necessary that every thing should be striking, that the people might not doubt of the divine vengeance.

There are, however, between these two downfalls of Jerusalem, and of the Jews, some remarkable differences; but all of them unite to show in the last, a more rigorous and manifest justice. Nebuchadnezzar set fire to the temple: Titus used every means to save it, though his counsellors represented to him, that as long as it remained, the Jews, who attached to it their destiny, would never cease to be rebels. But the fatal day was come: it was the tenth of August, the day on which the temple of Solomon had been already burnt. Notwithstanding the prohibitions of Titus, delivered in the hearing both of the Romans and of the Jews, and notwithstanding the natural inclination of the soldiers, which would rather lead them to plunder than to destroy so much riches, a soldier, urged, says Josephus, by a divine inspiration, raised himself, by the help of his companions, to one of the windows, and set fire to this august temple. Titus hastens to the spot—he commands the rising flame to be instantly extinguished—but it spreads throughout in an instant—and this beautiful edifice is reduced to ashes!

If the obstinacy of the Jews, under Zedekiah, was the most terrible effect, and the most convincing proof of divine vengeance, what shall we say of their blindness in the time of Titus? At the first destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews were at least united among themselves: during the last, Jerusalem, besieged by the Romans, was rent by three factions. If the hatred which they all felt towards the Romans arose even to fury, they were not less enraged against each other; the battles from without cost them less blood than those from within. Immediately after the assaults of the enemy, the citizens re-commenced their intestine war; while violence and robbery reigned on every side. The city was hastening to destruction, and becoming nothing more than a large field covered with the bodies of the dead, while the chiefs of the factions eagerly contended for empire. Was not this an image of hell, where the damned do not hate each other less than they hate the fiends, who are their common enemies, and where all are full of pride, confusion, and rage?

Let us acknowledge, then, my Lord, that the judgment of God, inflicted on the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar, was only a shadow of that of which Titus was the minister. What city has ever seen eleven hundred thousand men perish in seven months, and in a single siege? This was what the Jews beheld at the last siege of Jerusalem. The Chaldeans did not cause them to suffer any thing like this. Under them, their captivity lasted only seventy years: sixteen hundred have now elapsed since they have been scattered as slaves throughout the world, and they are not yet, in any measure, relieved from their bondage.

We need not be astonished that the victorious Titus, after the capture of Jerusalem, should refuse to receive the congratulations of the neighbouring nations, and the crowns which were sent him in honour of his victory. So many memora-

ble circumstances, the wrath of God so evident, and his hand which he still saw so manifest, struck him with profound astonishment, and made him say, that he was not the conqueror, but merely the feeble instrument of divine vengeance.

He did not know all the secret: the hour was not yet come in which the kings of the earth were to acknowledge Jesus Christ. This was the time of the humiliations and persecutions of the church. For this reason, Titus, sufficiently enlightened to know that Judea had perished by a striking instance of the justice of God, knew not for what crime God had so terribly punished her. It was for the greatest of all crimes—a crime till then unheard of: it was *Decide*—a crime which was the occasion of a vengeance of which the world had never seen any example.

But if we open our eyes a little, and consider the order of things, neither this crime of the Jews, nor its punishment, can be hidden from us.

Let us only recollect what Jesus Christ had predicted concerning them. He had foretold the entire destruction of Jerusalem, and of the temple. "There shall not," said he, "remain one stone upon another." He had foretold the manner in which this ungrateful city should be besieged, and that frightful circumvallation which should surround it; he had predicted that horrible famine which should distress the inhabitants, and omitted not to mention the false prophets by whom they should be deceived; he had warned the Jews that the time of their destruction was at hand; he had given certain signs by which they should know the precise hour in which it should take place; he had reminded them of the long list of crimes which was to draw on them this punishment: in a word, he had given all the history of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

And observe, my Lord, he announced to them these predictions, only a short time before his Passion, that they might the better know the cause of all their calamities. His Passion was drawing near, when he said, "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate." Matt. xxiii. 34-38.

Such is the history of the Jews. They persecuted the Messiah, both in his own person, and in that of his followers; they stirred up the whole world against them, and permitted them not to rest in any city; they armed the Romans and their Emperors against the infant church; they stoned Stephen, killed the two James's, whose sanctity had rendered them venerable, even among them, and put to the sword St. Peter and St. Paul, by the hand of the Gentiles. They must, therefore, perish. So much blood, mixed with that of the prophets, whom they had massacred, cried for vengeance before God; their houses and their city are desolate, and their destruction is not less than their crime. Jesus Christ had warned them thereof: the time is at hand: "this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled:" that is, the men who then lived should witness these events.

But let us attend to the order of our Lord's predictions. As he made his entry into Jerusalem a few days before his death, affected by the calamities which it should draw down on this unhappy city, he beheld it, and weeping, exclaimed, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another: because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Luke xix. 41-44.

This prediction pointed out, with sufficient clearness, both the manner of the siege, and the