

evil from which no good, but evil is derived: for, as the same holy Apostle affirms, *the wages of sin is death*. Rom. vi. 22. It is the only evil, which God never made; which God, though omnipotent, could not make; because he is essentially good; and what is essentially good cannot produce what is essentially evil. Because he is essentially perfect; and that which is essentially perfect cannot produce that which is essentially bad: for essential evil is the very reverse of essential perfection. Sin is therefore the sovereign evil, as God is the sovereign good; and therefore it deserves to be hated with a sovereign hatred, as God deserves to be loved with a sovereign love. This then is the measure of your hatred for sin, that you hate and abhor it as much as you love God. Now if there is any thing in this world which we love as much as God, then we do not love God as we ought. And if there is any evil in nature which we abhor and avoid as much as sin, then we do not abhor and avoid sin as much as we are in duty bound to do.

Besides, sin is a formal contempt of God, in as much as by it the sinner prefers the creature, and often the very meanest of creatures to the Creator. For finding himself in the absolute necessity of either renouncing the unlawful pleasure he proposes to himself in committing sin; or of losing the divine grace and favour; he chooses rather to break friendship with his God, and to forfeit his grace, than to forego the proposed criminal satisfaction.

In the mean time he knows that God deserves to be loved and preferred before all things; and this knowledge serves to augment his guilt, and to heighten the outrage offered to the Deity; since, in spite of what he knows, he still prefers a vile creature, and the gratification of his passion before him. What an insult is here offered to the divine Majesty! And by whom? By a poor worm of the earth. This is what makes the insult so intolerable. For the heinousness of an offence is always estimated by the dignity of the person offended and the meanness of the offender. If one insults his equal the offence is not so great as if he insulted his superior; as if a servant, for instance, insulted his master. But if a subject insult his sovereign; if a beggar insult the king, the offence becomes a capital crime and deserves death. Every insult then, which the sinner offers to God, who is infinitely raised in dignity above all the creatures, must be an offence infinitely heinous, and consequently must deserve an infinite chastisement.

Add to this the black ingratitude of the sinner towards the best of Benefactors, whose inestimable favours he repays with the very worst of evils. His breach of the indispensable obligation of ever loving, honouring and serving God, which obligation is nothing less than infinite, otherwise he might acquit himself of it in time, so that after some given term he would no longer be bound to love, honour, and serve his God; which is evidently absurd. Now if this obligation is infinite, as it most certainly is, it necessarily follows that every breach of it is a crime of infinite malice, because it is the breach of an infinite obligation.

But nothing can give us such an idea of the enormity of sin, as what St. Bernard affirms upon the subject. "The sinner," says he, "who prefers his own will to the will of God, destroys and annihilates, as much as in him lies, the very being of a God. For he must wish either that God were ignorant of his sin; or that he had no power to chastise him for his sin; or that he had not, any will to punish his sin. He must wish then that God were without wisdom, without power, without justice. But a God without wisdom, a God without power, a God without justice, is no God. Therefore the sinner would wish there were no God." *Dixit insipiens in corde suo, non est Deus.* The good said in his heart there is no God.

"In fine," continues the same holy Father, "we must observe that the very essence of the Deity consists in his independence and the absolute dominion he has over all his creatures. So that if but one man could exist without depending upon God, God would then cease to be God, and that man would occupy his place. Now as the sinner does not choose to depend upon God, but withdraws himself from his dominion, and refuses him his obedience, he wishes consequently to wrest the sceptre from the omnipotent hand of God, to strip him of his crown; and as much as in him lies, to deprive him of his very existence."

Christians? what a complication of guilt is here! And yet all this complication of guilt is found in the perpetration of one single mortal sin. O cruel and unnatural monster, sin; which armest the creature against the very author of its being and of all its good! Which forest the Creator to cast away for ever, as polluted by thee, the noblest portion of his work; and to devote to endless misery those, whom he had made to be for ever happy in the enjoyment of himself! But, O blind presumption! O fatal and unaccountable madness of the sinner, who dares thus to wage war with the Almighty, and to set all his power at defiance! Great God! how canst thou endure for one moment such insolence in a mere worm of this earth.

The reason, Christians, why Almighty God bears so very patiently with sin, is the extreme desire he has of the sinner's conversion. He is loath to see his beloved creature perish, for he still loves the sinner, though he hates the sin, and would save him, did he but consent in time to be separated from the sin. O the stupendous goodness, the ineffable mercy of my God, who while I was so outrageously offending him, had nothing more at heart than my eternal welfare! And shall I still continue to provoke so good a God by sin? No, my God! assisted by thy grace I will never more be guilty of such monstrous ingratitude. I will think on my past sins in the bitterness of my soul. I will judge myself now as the apostle exhorts, and condemn myself, that thou mayest not judge and condemn me hereafter.

2^o. Having considered the greatness of the evil of sin in itself, and its opposition to God; let us pass on to consider the greatness of this evil in its consequences, and its opposition to the welfare and happiness of the creatures.

The dreadful consequences of sin appear first in

the condemnation of the rebel angels. No sooner had those once glorious spirits consented to sin, than the fire of hell was enkindled against them. Their beauty was instantly changed into the very excess of deformity; and from the height of heaven were they precipitated into the flaming, deep, unquenchable abyss.

Man was created to succeed in their room, and inherit that bliss, from which they had fallen. Man therefore becomes the object of their envy; and they endeavour to compass the ruin of this new favourite of heaven, Satan, the chief of those rebel spirits, being allowed to put man's fidelity to the test succeeds in tempting our first parents to disobey the command of God, by eating of the forbidden fruit; and thus renders them his accomplices in guilt.

But mark now the dreadful consequences of sin in the human race; and the many miseries temporal and eternal flowing in upon us, like a deluge, from the crime of our first parents.

Man having therefore yielded to the suggestion of the fiend; his soul was immediately stripped of her original innocence. Her knowledge, in which she proudly wished to have equalled God himself, became overclouded with ignorance, and liable to error and illusion. The passions, no longer under reason's controul, began to mutiny and to domineer in their turn. Her body, which had been created immortal and incorruptible, was made liable to all kinds of diseases, and was finally doomed to return to the dust from whence it was taken; and thus the whole man, now vitiated by sin, was sentenced first to the temporal death of the body; and finally to that of the body and soul in the flames of hell.

It is true, God moved by his unspeakable mercy had resolved to put it in man's power to rise again from his fallen state, and to regain his lost inheritance. But still all the children of Adam must feel at least the temporal effects of sin. And they who neglect to profit by the means allowed them of regaining that bliss, from which all have fallen, after having been subjected in this life to the temporal consequences of sin, shall in the next be also subjected to the eternal.

Let us then consider a little more in particular those consequences of sin temporal and eternal, that we may form to ourselves once for all a proper notion of this sovereign evil; and learn to detest and to shun the poisonous source, from which such waters of bitterness flow.

Man had no sooner revolted from his God by sin than he found the inferior part of himself beginning to rebel against the superior. His whole frame was unbinged; and his passions, which had been given him only as incitements to what is laudable and becoming a rational creature, began to tyrannize over him; and have since proved the cause of all the moral evils, that have ever afflicted the human race. Look round you, dear christians, and consider for a moment the present state of the world, and see into what excess the unhappy children of Adam are hurried by their unruly passions.

In all ranks and degrees of life we discover no-