

JESUIT PRINCIPLES.

THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF ST. IGNATIUS.

An Introduction by the Late Cardinal Wiseman—Some of the Foundation Stones of the Order—Information for Catholics, Protestants and Infidels.

We have read so much of late about the Jesuits and their terrible secrets, their "occult machinations," and their mysterious plottings, and we hear so much preached against these servants of God, by men who are completely ignorant of the subject, that we have determined—without consulting anyone, Jesuit or non-Jesuit—to give our readers the framework of principles upon which the whole organization is built. We begin with Cardinal Wiseman's admirable preface to the "Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola," an edition of the work prepared by Rev. Father Bothan, and translated by Chas. Seager, M.A. These "Exercises" form the very essence of the Jesuits' life. On these are based the whole conduct of each member of that Order. The retreat for vocation, the retreat of novitiate, the novitiate, all are but the study, the meditation and the practice of these "Exercises." We know whereof we write; and if there is one who doubts the accuracy of all that follows, we take upon ourselves to invite that one—Catholic or Protestant, it matters not—to go to the Jesuit Novitiate at Sault au Recollet, and there he will learn the truth for himself. Every gentleman is welcome there. After this Preface, we will give the "Exercises," one after the other, with such meditations or comments as are made by the Jesuit novice or the Jesuit priest. We repeat, we are about to lay before our readers the law, the code, the all governing principles that underlie every Jesuit's life; and we defy any living man, priest or layman, Catholic, Protestant, Infidel or Pagan, to disprove our assertions.

Cardinal Wiseman's Preface.

The following is dated St. Mary's College, Feast of the Sacred Heart, 1847.

A man is presumed to enter into the cause of the spiritual exercises in the defilement of sin, under the bondage of every passion, wedded to every worldly and selfish affection, without a method or a rule of life; and to come out from them restored to virtue, full of generous and noble thoughts, self-conquering, self-ruling, but not self-trusting, on the arduous path of Christian life. Black and unwholesome as the muddy water that is poured into the filter, were his affections and his soul; bright, sweet, and healthful as the stream that issues from it, they come out. He was as dross when cast into this furnace and is pure gold when drawn from it.

Now the superficial reader of this excellent book will ask, how is this accomplished? Where is the power, the skill,—nay, perhaps he will add, the *machinery*,—by which such results are obtained? Whence springs the great confidence of its writer in its efficacy?

The answer to this question it is not easy to give in the short compass of a preface; nor will I, therefore, attempt it; but perhaps a few pages of explanation of the Exercises will enable the reader to discover it for himself.

It must be observed, then, that this is a *practical*, not a *theoretical*, work. It is not a treatise on sin or on virtue; it is not a method of Christian perfection; but it contains the entire practice of perfection, by making us at once conquer sin, and acquire the highest virtue. The person who goes through the Exercises is not instructed, but is made to act; and this book will not be intelligible apart from this view.

The reader will observe that it is divided into four weeks; and each of these has a specific object to advance the exercitant an additional step towards perfect virtue. If the work of each are to be *thoroughly* done, this is actually *accomplished*.

The first week has for its aim the cleansing of the conscience from past sin, and of the affections from their future dangers. For this purpose, the soul is made to convince itself deeply of the true end of its being—to serve God and be saved, and of the real worth of all things. This consideration has been justly called by St. Ignatius, the *principle* or *the entire system*. No

limits are put to the time that may be spent upon this subject; it ought not to be left till the mind is *made up*, that nothing is worth aiming at but God and salvation, and that to all other things we must be indifferent. They are but instruments or hindrances in the acquisition of these, and accordingly they must be treated. It is clear that the person, who has brought himself to this state of mind, has fully prepared himself, for submitting to whatever he may be required to do by God, for attaining his end.

Upon this groundwork is raised the duty of the first week. Considerations of the punishment of sin, which lead us gradually to an abhorrence of it, in itself, make the sinner sift and thoroughly unburthen his conscience. "The fear of God," which "is the beginning of wisdom," is thus the first agent in the great work of change; a change not prospective or mental, but *real*. Sin is abandoned, hated, loathed.

At the conclusion of this painful task, the soul finds itself prostrate and full of anxieties. The past is remedied; but what is to be done for the future? A rule to guide us, an example to encourage us, high motives to animate us, are now wanting; and the three following weeks secure us these.

In the second, the life of Christ is made our model; by a series of contemplations of it we become familiar with His virtues, enamoured of His perfections; we learn, by copying Him, to be obedient to God and man, meek, humble, affectionate; zealous, charitable and forgiving; men of only one wish and one thought, that of doing ever God's holy will alone; discreet, devout, observant of every law, scrupulous performers of every duty.

Every meditation on these subjects shows us *how* to do all this; in fact, *makes us do it*.

Still up to this point we have been dealt with kindly, as the Apostles were treated by their good Master. He told them not of these things, that is, of His sufferings, at first, lest sorrow should fill their hearts (John xvi. 5, 6). The milk of consolation and encouragement must precede the strong food of patience and conformity. The third week brings us to this. Having desired and tried to be like Christ in action, we are brought to wish and endeavor to be like unto Him in suffering. For this purpose His Sacred Passion becomes the engrossing subject of the Exercises. The soul which has been brought near Him in admiration now clings to Him in loving sympathy,—nay, finds her admiration redoubled at His divine bearing in sorrow, ignominy and pain. Having already made up her mind to be like Him in all things, she is not to be scared from resemblance by the bitterness of suffering or disgrace. On the contrary, she wishes to suffer for Him and with Him, for the very love's sake, which made Him so suffer. Every meditation on the Passion strengthens, deepens, matures, this feeling, and renders it a new power and affection of the soul. She has become a martyr in resolution and desire; she would go forth from this holy rock of meditation to the realization of her earnest desire to suffer for Jesus; she is prepared for mortifications, for tribulations, for persecutions, for death, for anything whereby she may be likened to her Lord and God.

But she must be convinced and feel, that if she suffers, she shall also be glorified with Him; and hence the fourth and concluding week raises the soul to the consideration of those glories, which crowned the humiliations and sufferings of Our Lord. As throughout He is represented to us in His blessed humanity as being our model, so here are our thoughts directed to Him, triumphant over death, but still conversing among men,—those now who love Him; that so our love may be likewise with Him, in holy conversation and familiar intercourse, and so He may draw up our hearts with Him, when He ascends to His Father; and there they may ever abide where our Treasure is. Thus we have been gradually raised from fear to love, which henceforward is the "informing principle" (to borrow a phrase from the schools) of our lives and being.

It is clear that if the various principles and feelings have been really infused into us, if they have been worked into our hearts, so as to form a part of their real practical influences, we shall come from the Exercises, duly performed, completely changed, and fitted for our future course. Many indeed have experienced this. They have entered the place ap-

pointed for them, like a vessel shattered by the storms, bruised and crippled, and useless; they have come forth with every breach repaired, every disfigurement removed; and, what is of more importance, furnished with rudder and compass, sail and anchor, all that can direct and guide, impel and secure them. What wonder if their songs of gratitude and joy resound along the main?

Two things will perhaps strike the reader as drawbacks to the attainment of this object; first, the scantiness of the matter furnished in the book for filling up time; and secondly, the obvious want of a regulating and adapting power in its application. For it is clear, that the work of one week should be continued till its object is attained, and the exercitant is prepared for the impressions of the next. These apparent wants are supplied by one essential element of a spiritual Retreat (for so the exercises reduced to action are popularly called), *Direction*. In the Catholic Church no one is ever allowed to trust himself in spiritual matters. The Sovereign Pontiff is obliged to submit himself to the direction of another, in whatever concerns his own soul. The life of a good Retreat is a good director of it. He it is that modifies (not arbitrarily but by fixed rules and principles), (see the *Directorium*), the order of the exercises, diminishes their number, and curtails their duration; he shortens and lengthens each week, and watching the workings of grace on each one's spirit, suppresses meditations, or introduces additional ones, to second them. It is he who prepares materials for the exercitant to meditate on, divides the subject for him into its parts, suggests its applications, and leads him step by step through his various duties. He wards off or suppresses disturbing emotions, spiritual dryness, dejection, and scruples; he represses over eagerness, rashness, and enthusiasm; and regulating the balance of contending affections, endeavours to keep all at a steady and peaceful level, so that the grace of God may gently, and, as it were, by a breath, move and regulate every determination. Let no one think of undertaking these holy exercises without the guidance of a prudent and experienced director.

It will be seen that the *weeks* of the Exercises do not mean necessarily a period of seven days. The original duration of their performance was certainly a month; but even so, more or less time was allotted to each week's work, according to the discretion of the Director. Now, except in very particular circumstances, the entire period is abridged to ten days; sometimes it is still further reduced. But even so, the form and distribution of the Exercises must be strictly kept, and no anticipations or inversions must be permitted. It is impossible to make the slightest change in this subject, without injury. Gladly would I enter fully into this subject and show the admirable and beautiful chain-work which connects all the Exercises or meditations from the first to the last, connects them as clearly and as intimately as any series of sound mathematical propositions can be connected. But it would take a long essay to do justice to this matter.

It is, however, to this logical and argumentative arrangement that the exercises, in a great measure, owe their certainty of result. The mind may struggle against the first axiom, or rather demonstrable truth, in the series; but once satisfied of this, resistance is useless, as unreasonable; the next consequence is inevitable, conclusion follows conclusion, and the triumph is complete. The passions may entrench themselves at each step, behind new works, but each position carried is a point of successful attack upon the next, and grace at length wins this very citadel. Many is the fool who has entered into a Retreat "to scoff and has remained to pray."

Besides the regular work of the Exercises, there are other matters connected with them, which this volume contains. One of the most important of these is the method of "election," or choice of a state of life,—a duty usually performed in a spiritual Retreat. This is, perhaps, the most delicate, difficult, and even dangerous point with which the Director and his disciple have to deal. No one can study the rules laid down by St. Ignatius without admiring their prudence, their sagacity, and their certain power. But they require a wise and steady hand and eye for their application. It has been reported that these Exercises are to be soon published as a work "adapted for members of the

Church of England," in the same way as other Catholic books have appeared. If so, we cannot anticipate any result but misunderstanding and fatal error, from the attempt to employ them as spiritual instruments. If left to individual application they will only lead the soul into a maze of perplexities and bewilderment, and, deprived of their adjusting power, Direction, give rise to sadness and discouragement, or presumption and self-will. And of this there will be a much greater danger, by far, than a similar use would cause in a Catholic, from the want of safeguard, which a definite dogmatic teaching alone can give, as well as of that aid which familiarity with ascetic principles and the ordinary use of the sacraments confer. And if, on the other hand, it is intended to put the Exercises into practice under direction, we are sure that much mischief will ensue: from the absence of all training and traditional rules, which guide the Catholic Director in his arduous duty. It will be the blind leading the blind, to the fatal detriment of both. Bits and particles of the Catholic system cannot be thus detached with impunity, and incorporated with another system; not only is the effect a monstrous incongruity, but it is at once a piece of bad faith with one side and of injustice to the other.

Among the valuable matter contained in this work may be certainly classed the "Three Methods of Prayer," which cannot be practised without great profit; the golden "Rules for ever thinking with the Orthodox Church;" those for "almsgiving," and for "discovering scruples;" but, above all, the invaluable principles and maxims for the "discernment of spirits," adapted, in two divisions, to the first and second weeks. These form the basis of treatises on this most difficult and important part of mystical theology. But they, more than any other, require application by an enlightened Director.

What has been said will perhaps explain, though inadequately, the wonderful power and efficacy of the "Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius," in thoroughly reforming the soul and bringing it from sin to virtue. But the grand secret may be said to consist in two points.

First, the entire work is performed by *principles*, not by emotions which pass away. Conviction of the truth and reality of all that is inculcated is aimed at and secured; reason is enlisted on the side of conscience; and whatever usefulness made of the feelings in the course of the Exercises is but as scaffolding to assist in the erection of a solid structure of virtue, which will stand and weather the storm, after it has been removed.

Secondly, the mind is made to act throughout, and to work out its own resolutions. Nothing is imposed on us by others, either through persuasion or by authority; we are made to think, to conclude, to determine, and to act, by a process essentially our own; so that there is no escape, and no danger from the reaction of self-love. No influence has been used, further than to guide rightly the exercise of our own powers; and even that direction has been given to us with our eyes open, and under the full conviction that we cannot shrink from a single step, without going against reason and conscience.

It is now time to say a few words on this translation. The original of the Spiritual Exercises was written by St. Ignatius in Spanish. Of two translations into Latin, in his own time, one was preferred for publication which was more elegant in its language. This is the standard revision religiously adhered to in all subsequent editions. It therefore forms the text from which the present translation has been made. Fidelity has been aimed at in it above every other quality. Its author has studied to make it as accurate as possible, at the cost of what might be a more flowing style. It has also been carefully revised and compared with the original by the writer of this preface.

The present General of the Society of Jesus (Rev. P. Bothan), anxious to regain, if possible, the original of the Saint, has published a new version from the Spanish, side by side with the common edition. It contains many important varieties. Such as appeared to the translator worthy of particular notice have been incorporated in the present translation.

May this become an instrument in the hands of Divine Providence to bring many souls to grace and virtue; and to the many wonderful fruits which this little volume has already produced to the Church.