

shortened, or changed into easier performances; sometimes wholly remitted; as in the case of the incestuous Corinthian, on account of his extreme sorrow and edifying repentance.—1 Cor. v.—2 Cor. ii. 5. Now every such diminution, commutation, or remission of the temporal punishment for past sin, is an *indulgence*: a total remission, is what is called a *plenary indulgence*.

But all such penances, enjoined by the proper authority, are binding and obligatory; otherwise the Saviour's declaration to his pastors, whose sins you shall retain, they are retained—John xx. 23, —was vain: and that, in particular made to his chief pastor,—to thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven.—Mat. xvi. 19. If then what is thus bound, is not loosed in this life, either by the exact fulfillment of the penance enjoined; or by the indulgence granted by the binding authority; a punishment proportioned to the penance enjoined here remains to be endured hereafter.

But, with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, is granted to the chief pastor the power to open as well as to shut: to loose, as well as to bind: to forgive, as well as to retain sin. It is then of this discretionary power, granted by Jesus Christ to his pastors, that the Church avails herself, under the constant guidance promised her of the holy ghost, for the spiritual advantage and final safety of her children. She relaxes therefore, though reluctantly the primitive holy rigor of her penances; which, in the present lukewarm state of the world, would lighten from her communion too large a portion of mankind; who, to avoid the temporal punishment here, would thus incur the eternal hereafter. She uses thus, like a tender mother, the saving power granted her by her divine spouse, of screening her dear children by any rate from the wrath to come: Thess. i. 10.—*Pulling them, as it were, out of the fire: having mercy on others in fear; hating also the spotted garment, which is carnal.*—Jude, v. 53.—and substituting, instead of her former rigorous penances, which lasted often for years, and corresponded with the immense fervour and zeal of her earliest offspring; more lenient and practicable duties of obedience: for as it was by disobedience and sinful self-indulgence, that we fell from God; so it is by obedience and self-denial that we can ever hope to rise to him again: and hence are we assured in scripture that *obedience is better than sacrifice.*—1 Kings xv. 22.

Relying therefore on the saving virtue of obedience, she spares the weakness of the weak; and administers her wholesome severities only on the strong; whom she thereby transmits into eternity, and delivers up to divine justice, with less to endure, and a better account to render, than those who shrink here from her mild correcting rod. Such she is forced to leave exposed to the full measure of their punishment hereafter; a punishment far exceeding all that we can imagine endurable in this present life. For it is a dreadful thing, says St. Paul, to fall into the hands of the living God. Heb. x. 3,—Whereas, as the same holy Apostle tells us, if we

judge and condemn ourselves now, we shall not be judged and condemned hereafter.—1 Cor. xi 31.—Such is the Catholic doctrine of indulgence. It is besides, an article of the Catholic faith, that, in order to receive the benefit of an indulgence, one must be in the state of grace: for all in the state of mortal sin, are enemies of God; and God owes nothing to his enemies, but punishment. All such must then avail themselves of the means afforded them in the Church of Christ, of effecting with their offended God a thorough reconciliation. This, every Catholic knows, can never be accomplished but by a sincere repentance; which supposes a real sorrow for our sins; a resolution never to commit them more; a renunciation of our evil habits; a reparation of all injuries done to our neighbor; and a humble, true and full confession of our guilt to our spiritual director; by whose counsel we are bound to abide. This duty concluded with a worthy communion, and the exact fulfilment of what other good works are enjoined, as the conditions of our obtaining an indulgence, will secure to us all the advantages of one; and therefore confession and communion invariably make part of the conditions on which such a spiritual favour is granted. Is there ought in all this encouraging to sin, as has been asserted by the lying reformers?

This granting of indulgence is one of the many ways, by which, during the present season of mercy and grace, the Church applies the purifying and sanctifying efficacy of the Saviour's atonement to the souls of her obedient and dutiful children. That this, or any other of her sacred institutions, may be abused, none will deny. Must then the institution itself, when abused, be rejected? Or is the Church to be blamed for the infringement of her precepts?

The indulgence granted for contributing towards the building of St. Peter's Church in Rome, was Luther's first pretended plea for quarrelling with the Pope; and the occasion of his apostacy from the faith. He began by railing against that particular indulgence; the preaching up of which had been transferred from the monks of his order, the Augustinians, to those of the Institute of St. Dominic. He next attacked the general doctrine of indulgence: and then continuing to pull down article by article, the whole Catholic faith; proclaimed his work of ruin a glorious reformation: his random negatives, his loose and contradictory ravings, a fairer scheme of christianity, than any hitherto existing, or henceforth imaginable.

Yet, what rational christian, but must own that the undertaking, for which this indulgence was granted, was proper, pious, praiseworthy and meritorious? The building of the temple by Solomon; and the rebuilding of it by Esdras, were undertakings, as the scripture shews, praised and rewarded by God himself. And is the building of a temple to the same God by the converted nations less deserving of his approbation? Was it not becoming the christian world to rear such a monument to the glory of the Messiah; who, disowned and rejected by the Jews, was received & worshipped by the Gentiles? To erect on the ruins of idolatry, laid prostrate in her own warring capital, an illustrious trophy to the victorious prince of peace? To bid his blessed banner be displayed; the cross, his royal standard, be exalted, on the remarkable spot, where Peter, his chief Apostle, and deputed champion, had beaten down the proud imperial standard of Satan; the gory ensign of Mars, the slaughtering Abaddon; the destroyer?

To be continued.

BIBLICAL NOTICES AND EXPLANATIONS.

Continued.

NUMBERS.

Chapter 24th, V.—It is allowed by all that Balaam's prophetic praise was spoken in favor of the Church of the redeemer; of which in the camp of Israel he beheld only the figure. It is of her he exclaims: *How beautiful are thy tabernacles, o Jacob! and thy tents, o Israel! As woody valleys; as watered gardens near the rivers; as tabernacles, which the Lord hath pitched; as cedars by the water side.*

Verse 7th. *Water shall flow out of his bucket.* The cleansing and refreshing stream of grace in Messiah's sacraments; particularly in baptism.

And his seed shall be in many waters: that is, his offspring born to him of water and the holy ghost,—John iii. 5.—These are his seed of many waters; children, no more of the natural, but of the spiritual Adam, who is Christ.

For Agag, his King, shall be removed, and his kingdom shall be taken away. This seems to denote the fall of some great opposing power to the Saviour's spiritual sway; the greatest such was pagan Rome, and her persecuting emperors.

Verse 8.—*God hath brought him out of Egypt.* The circumstance of the Saviour's return out of Egypt, whether he was carried to avoid being slain with the innocents in Bethlem, is here foretold, as it was afterwards by the prophet Oseas, 11, 1, under the collective figure of Israel, out of Egypt have I called my son, whose strength is like the Rhinoceros; that is irresistible and destined to prevail.

The Nations shall devour his enemies; and break their bones: and pierce them with arrows. The Romans first destroyed and scattered his enemies, the Jews, who had rejected and condemned him to death. The Romans themselves next, for persecuting him in his members, are devoured up, by the Northern hordes, that broke into their empire; and thus have been seen in various warfare the nations to devour his enemies.

Lying down, he hath slept as a lioness; whom none shall dare to rouse.—This is the same figurative description of the Saviour, as that given by Jacob, in his blessings to Juda. Gen. xlix. 9. Shewing his terrific might if roused, even while he seems to slumber.

He, that blesseth thee, shall also be blessed: and he that curseth thee, shall also be cursed. He is the sovereign and sole source of benediction.

Balaam, still full of the spirit of prophecy, continues, in spite of Balac's angry remonstrances, to pour forth his predictions.

Verse 17.—*I shall see him, says he, but not now: I shall behold him, but not near.* This evidently points at the Saviour.

A star shall rise out of Jacob: and a sceptre shall spring up from Israel; and shall strike the chiefs of Moab; and shall waste all the children of Seth. And he shall possess Idumea; the inheritance of Seir shall come to their enemies; but Israel shall do manfully.

The miraculous star is here predicted, which appeared at the birth of the Saviour; and the sceptre mentioned, indicates his regal dignity. Hence the wise men from the East, who recognizing the wondrous sign, and following it, had come to worship him, enquired: *Where is he, who is born King of the Jews; for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to adore him?* His spiritual conquests, and subjugation of the nations are next alluded to under the names of Moab, Seth, Seir, and Idumea. These the Prophet follows down, till he comes to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; and the disappearance of the Romans themselves.

To be continued.