

priesthood, therefore, in that Church, is ordination to the office of New Testament Presbyterian as that Church understands the office. Again, the Romish priest is previously ordained to the diaconate, wherein he is distinctly appointed to preach and baptize. When he passes into the priesthood he may not be ordained specifically to these functions, because he carries them with him. The superior office includes the inferior, otherwise it were quite incompetent for a Presbyterian minister to deliberate, much less preside, in a deacon's court. But we do not believe that he is officially incompetent to do that, even though he never was ordained as a deacon. So then, *a fortiori*, the Romish priest not only is appointed to the offering of sacrifice, etc., but also to preach and administer sacraments. Hence if we re-ordain a Romish priest we do it, not so much to give him new functions, as to dismantle him of some of his old ones. Surely if the Church satisfies herself as to the soundness of the views of converted priests, concerning the Christian ministry, if such a man must be called by a congregation before he can act as a presbyter, and if he can then satisfactorily answer the questions of the formula prescribed by our Church for induction to a pastoral charge, and by prayer and the right hand of fellowship by the presbytery, be appointed to the pastoral care of an assenting congregation, have we not done enough to guard the interests of truth, and of the Church? And if we should have erred, is it not better to err on the side of charity than of rashness, remembering Him who said, "with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged?"

Lastly, "Erigena" has referred to the feelings of converted priests as being favourable to re-ordination. I have only to state that others have as strongly asserted that such a requirement on our part would be a humiliating hindrance to them, and, besides, the Reformers, with all their strong views of Antichrist, etc., were not so enthusiastic about re-ordination and anabaptism as some of your correspondents seem to be.

H.

May 8th, 1880.

ECCLESIASTICAL COURTESY.

MR. EDITOR,—Is there any rule or order to be observed in the formation of preaching stations? A station, e.g., with preaching supply has been set going just four and a quarter miles from a congregation which forms part of a settled charge in another Presbytery. This is done without the sanction of any authority, so far as I know, and in the absence of a word of communication with those whose interests are directly affected thereby. Is this right? Is this Presbyterian policy?

BENTINCK.

4th May, 1880.

CANADIAN MORALITY.

MR. EDITOR,—In your last is an article entitled, "Is general morality failing, or the reverse, in Canada?" The article so far as it goes is very good, but, I think, one or two important points are overlooked. First, I would mention the unsavory and unwholesome practice of smoking tobacco, to say nothing of chewing it, which is a beastly practice. Smoking has increased very much, and is just about as pernicious in its effects as excess in drinking, except that people don't make quite such fools of themselves. Then there is a sad falling off in common honesty, and embezzling money seems to be quite common now, which it certainly was not some ten years ago. When I was a young man (no doubt, a good many years ago) and a clerk in a merchant's office, a protested note was looked upon with perfect horror; now, such an event is taken quite coolly, and failures in business are thought nothing of, indeed, there is good reason to believe that some people make money out of their own failures. Then, luxury has made a great advance in the country, and I remember reading a speech of an English gentleman on his return from a visit to Canada, in which he stated boldly, that Canada was the most luxurious country he had seen, to be so young a country. I will just conclude this short article by giving you the opinion of a Presbyterian minister of high standing in the United States, who stated that he believed more souls in North America would be lost by the love of money in men, and the love of dress in women, than from drinking and all its baleful effects.

CANADIAN PRESBYTERIAN.

May 17th, 1880.

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

VASTNESS OF THE MATERIAL UNIVERSE.

There is a mild and modest form of that impiety which takes its rise from the circle of our modern astronomy, and it may be thus described. It admits freely the Divine Existence, and the attributes of wisdom, power, and benevolence, but in musing upon the vastness of the material system, in calculating the incalculable numbers of visible worlds, in adding to those the higher numbers which probably lie quite beyond our prospect; in thus conversing with infinity, and in surcharging the mind with the greatness of nature, man and his destinies disappear, or seem to hide themselves under a veil of utter insignificance. "If," says the sentimentalist, "if when our eyes are confined to earth, and if, when the pomp of human power and the pride of human knowledge are full in our view, it shews himself to be great, and asserts an immeasurable superiority over the inferior tribes, this exaggerated impression is utterly dispelled when we turn our gaze upward, and bring, as we ought, into our estimate, the real magnitude of the system in which we are moving. It is then that we are taught to think soberly of ourselves, it is then that the apparent distance between man insect as he is, and the insects he proudly tramples on, sinks into nothing, and we are compelled to confess that no folly can be so enormous as that which attaches any high degree of importance to a being that might with all his millions, be blotted from creation without more loss or notice than is occasioned by the crushing of a moth." If things be so, how preposterous must we deem any religious dogmas which place man in immediate correspondence with the Creator, and imply that the Sovereign Power actually occupies himself with the individual welfare of men, or that they are destined to act a part that shall make them conspicuous among high and intelligent orders! "What is man," says a reasoner of this class, "what is man, when viewed in his just proportions on the scale of the universe?"

This mode of thinking is natural, and the prejudice whence it springs is hard to be entirely dislodged from the mind, but it is a prejudice, and one which peculiarly infests spirits that are at once meditative, modest, and infirm. Nevertheless its influence is of the most pernicious kind, nor will religion of any sort (Christianity especially) adhere to the heart until the illusion be dissipated.

On which side soever we turn, we find some confutation of this false modesty. It is quite evident that the whole (great as it may be) must at length be annihilated or made unimportant, if we annihilate, or reduce to insignificance, one by one, its several constituent parts. And the very reason which would lead us thus to scorn one part, ought to have the same effect in relation to another, and another, until the whole is disposed of. The material universe consists throughout of separate portions, apparently similar to that on which ourselves are placed; nor is this our world, how diminutive soever in comparison with the universe, immensely diminutive in comparison with other worlds. It is not as if, from our remote and petty globe or islet, we looked up to a central and immeasurable continent of matter, wherewith we could place ourselves in no sort of comparison, and which we might suppose the abode of beings as much more excellent and important than ourselves, as that continent was more vast than this world on which we tread. On the contrary, the greatness of the universe is nothing else than the greatness of accumulation. The visible system is indeed immeasurably wide and deep; and it is stocked with innumerable worlds: but (so far as science gives its evidence) the stupendous structure is reared throughout of the same material, and consists of parts which bear a relation of symmetry, one to another.

If, in imagination, we stretch the wing to distant quarters of the realm of nature, and if we take with us the sober expectations which philosophy authenticates, what shall we find—east or west, above or below—but suns and planets, much diversified, no doubt, in figure and constitution; yet nothing more than solid spheres, of measurable diameter, and fraught, like our own, with organization and intelligence. Let us indulge as freely as we choose in prodigious conceptions of magnitude and splendour; still we must (unless we discard all probability, and all actual appearances) keep within

certain bounds. Suns are but suns, planets only planets. This vastness of the universe, therefore, which, when thought of collectively overpowers the mind, reduces itself, when rationally analyzed, to what we have already stated—namely, the greatness of accumulation. Who shall count the stars, or who number the worlds that are revolving around those centres of light? No one attempts this arithmetic, any more than he sets about to reckon the sands of the shore; but the infinitude of grains makes not each grain either more or less important than it would be, if the number of the whole were much fewer than it is.

And certainly, if our earth may retain its individual importance, notwithstanding the countless infinity of the worlds among which it moves, it may do so notwithstanding its comparative diminutiveness. True, its disk is barely perceptible from planets which, by the breadth of their own, dazzle our sight. But no such rule of valuation can ever be assented to; for it is favoured by no analogy. If the earth is to be deemed insignificant, merely because it is vastly less than Jupiter or Saturn, we ought to judge that Greece, Italy, and England, merit no attention, in comparison with Africa and Asia, and yet in fact it is these petty regions, not the continents adjoining them, that have successively concentrated the intelligence of the world.

But in looking more narrowly to this prejudice, and in tracing it to its elements, it resolves itself altogether into a natural infirmity of our limited faculties. What then is this conception of vastness, and what is the emotion of sublimity that attends it, and with which we so much please ourselves? It is nothing more, and it is nothing better, than the struggle or agony of the mind under the consciousness of its ignorance, and of its inability to grasp the object of its contemplation. Whatever far surpasses the reach of the intellectual powers, whatever can be conceived of only imperfectly, and vaguely, is thought of as stupendous, sublime, infinite; and while we entertain the ever-swell-ing but never perfected idea, an emotion that is partly pleasurable and partly painful inflates the bosom. Now the notion of insignificance, or diminutiveness, though it may seem to be independent of any other, is in fact a correlative of the notion of magnitude; and a mind that had no idea of greatness or sublimity, would never form one of meanness. But as the notion of vastness is directly the offspring of the limitation and feebleness of the human mind, its opposite—the notion of insignificance—has nothing in it of reality. It is an *idolum tribus*, or prejudice which, though common to mankind, is so in consequence of the poverty of the human faculties.

But can we for a moment suppose that the Supreme Intelligence looks abroad upon His works in any such manner, as vast in the whole, and petty in the parts? Does He know them as we do—a portion perfectly, and the rest vaguely? Does He think of them, now with ease and familiarity, and now with labour and difficulty? Does He see the universe in perspective, as from a central station? Is He moved, as we are, by the conception of the sublime? or does He, as we, look down at single atoms of the material system, and call them minute, remote, or inconsiderable? Any such supposition as this were most egregious; on the contrary, we may boldly affirm that, as the Divine knowledge is absolute, and extends itself equably and invariably, over the entire surface, and through all masses of the universe, so it utterly excludes the notion (proper to finite minds) of any part being insignificant and unimportant, in consequence of its disproportion to the immensity of the whole. There is perhaps no instance more striking of the influence of those imbecile conceptions which infest the human mind, than this notion of the comparative insignificance of the earth and its inhabitants, because it is a mere point in the vastness of the heavens. The man of frigid and infirm temperament, who, with an affected or a pulling modesty, after gazing upon the sky, turns and contemns his planet, and his species, and says—What is man, that he should think himself worthy to be noticed, or specially cared for, by the Creator? may, on the soundest principles, be charged with making God altogether such a one as himself: the deity he conceives of is finite, not infinite.

If we wanted sensible proof that this prejudice concerning comparative vastness and insignificance, is not at all recognized on high, and enters not into the operative principles of the Creator, we should only have to look beneath us, adown the scale of magnitude. Does it appear then as if the Divine power and