

But if we look up towards the heavens, what a new scene of grandeur and beauty opens to our view! When we behold those numberless flaming orbs, or shining worlds, suspended in the void, and rolling so majestically over our heads, are we not lost in wonder and amazement! And ought not our hearts to overflow with gratitude and love to him, who has been pleased to create such an universe, to rear such a mighty fabric, and to prepare so magnificent a mansion for the reception and transient abode of his beloved creature Man! And if even here, where our life is but a day; if in this our place of banishment, this vale of tears, this region, whithal of misery, sin and death, he has done so much to sweeten our exile, and render our state not quite so wretched; what will he not do to complete our happiness in that region of endless felicity, which he has prepared for us in the life to come! *O neither eye has seen, says St. Paul, nor ear has heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive what things God has prepared in the next life for those who love and serve him.* 1 Cor. ii. 19.

Such then, in general, and so great, are the gifts of nature, which Almighty God has bestowed on man. But if we pass on to consider the gifts of Grace, or those more special favours, which man has received from his Maker, particularly such as are more directly conducive towards his eternal salvation; we shall find that they as far exceed those of nature, and are as much more excellent than they; as eternity exceeds time; and as the soul is more excellent than the body. The gifts of nature regard chiefly, or at least more immediately our temporal existence: those of grace, our eternal. God has therefore in this respect exerted his power in a more striking manner; and he has omitted nothing to manifest his unbonded love to man.

When our first parents had allowed themselves to be seduced by the serpent; and at his suggestion had disobeyed God by eating of the forbidden fruit; the offended Deity might have justly condemned them, if not all their posterity, to endless misery for this breach of his commandment; or at any rate deprived them of that endless bliss, which was otherwise to have been their perpetual inheritance. The rebel angels for the first sin they committed, and that but in thought, were immediately cast forth from his presence, and delivered over to eternal torments; and they, who till then, had been the happy objects of his love and complacency, became in an instant the wretched victims of his wrath and unrelenting vengeance. But with man, who had made himself their accomplice in guilt, how differently has this same God vouchsafed to deal! He who spares not the glorious princes of his own household, but for their very first offence, condemns them at once to endless misery, sets, as it were his own infinite wisdom at work, to find out a way to save this Child of the earth from being, as a partner of their guilt, involved in their destruction. O man, thou too wert lost, and yet thy God has sought and saved thee. Thou deservedst eternal punishment, and yet thy God has pardoned thee.

After our first parents had perpetrated the guilty

deed, *they heard the voice of the Deity walking in Paradise, and they hid themselves from his face among the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called Adam, and said to him: Adam, where art thou?* Gen. iii. 9. Was this the voice of an offended Deity? or not rather that of the good Shepherd, who already began to seek the sheep that was lost? He who might have appeared in the full blaze of his divinity, clad in all the terrors of his incensed majesty, and thundering in their ears the dreadful and irrevocable sentence of their condemnation; is pleased to go out after them, and to invite them back by that meek and gentle call: *Adam, where art thou?* Whither dost thou fly, O man; or where dost thou hope to find any happiness without thy God? Return to me again, and I will still receive thee into favor; and I will shew thee yet how much I love thee above all my other creatures. Whither wouldst thou stray, my poor forlorn creature. *Adam, where art thou?*

He deigns even to expostulate with them for what they had done. He hears their several excuses; and turning to the serpent, who had been the author of all this mischief, *because, says he, thou hast done this, thou art cursed among all the beasts of the earth. On thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed. She shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lay snares for her feet.* Gen. iii. 12.

Here he seems to have forgotten the sin of our first parents, and turns the whole weight of his indignation against the serpent. He lays his curse upon him, and foretells that *the woman, the weakest half of man, whom he had seduced, should (particularly in the person of the Virgin Mother of our Lord, and in the persons of all holy women, who should imitate her purity of life) crush his head; that is, set all his craft and cunning at defiance; and that the seed of the woman, namely Jesus Christ, the Son of the woman, (not of the man); the second Adam, and first of men in dignity; whose blessed Mother, the second Eve, is the first of women in the order of grace; should be at enmity with him; and that their offspring, that is, the good and virtuous, should wage a perpetual war against him and his offspring, the wicked. That, in fine, this second Adam and his spiritual children, should finally prevail against the old serpent, by whose craft and guile the first Adam and his natural children were undone. For all this prophetic promise was contained in his mysterious address to the serpent in paradise.*

Thus, instead of punishing man for his disobedience, he promises him the greatest favour that Omnipotence itself can bestow; *an Emmanuel, that is a God with us.*

Having thus awakened the hope of our first parents, by such an assurance, and dispelled their fears, he then pronounces their doom; but in such mild and gentle terms, that he seems to lay upon them scarce any thing more than a few temporal sufferings. Nay, he even deigns already to become their servant. And seeing that now their eyes were opened, and that they perceived themselves to be naked, he makes for them garments of skins to cover their shame, and defend them against the inclemency of the weather, to which they were now about to be exposed. O the wonderful predilection that God has shewn to man! O the excess of his mercy and goodness towards so mean a creature!

Look into the sacred scriptures, and contemplate

there the stupendous effects of God's love to man. Follow out the thread of the sacred story down from the beginning of the world till the coming of our Saviour. What a fondness and paternal regard does he not shew for his faithful servants and chosen people! with what assiduous and unwearied, care does he not watch over them, and what wonders does he not often work in their behalf!

When the wickedness of man had grown to such a pitch, that it provoked God to destroy him; having found but one just person among all the children of Adam, him he resolves to save, and by his means to prevent the human race from being utterly extinguished. He deigns to become his instructor, and teaches him how to build an ark, in which he and his family, with some of all living creatures, that people the earth and the air, might avoid perishing in the deluge which he was going to pour out upon the guilty world.

Being again provoked by the unnatural crimes of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorra, when about to rain down fire and brimstone on those wicked cities, he sends his angels previously to lead forth the just Lot and his family from those places devoted to destruction: nor had the heavenly messengers power to execute their commission, till such time as the servant of God was in safety.

How carefully did he not watch over his faithful servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In all their peregrinations he was ever near them to guard them from dangers, and to render prosperous their undertakings. He went down to Egypt with his servant Joseph. He delivered him out of bondage, and placed him at the head of a great nation; thereby enabling him to receive and maintain his aged father and his brethren with their families during the famine that prevailed for seven years over all the earth.

And when the Egyptians, after the death of Joseph, began to oppress the Israelites, his chosen inheritance; he sends a Moses, armed as it were, with his own omnipotence, to desire King Pharaoh, to let his people go. On the king's refusal, he but raises his rod; and all the waters of Egypt are turned into blood. At a signal given, the whole land teems with frogs. The very dust of the earth seems changed into gnats and flies. The cattle are destroyed with a murrain: the people afflicted with boils and blains; and all the country is laid waste with fire and hail. What the tempest spares, is devoured up by the locusts. Pharaoh still remaining obstinate, his whole kingdom, save that part where the Israelites dwell, is enveloped in palpable darkness. At last, the Lord himself puts forth his hand in defence of his chosen people, and slays in one night all the first born of the Egyptians; from the first born of Pharaoh, who sat upon the throne, to the first born of the captive woman, who was in prison; and all the first born of cattle; (Exod. xii. 29.) and thus compels that hardened prince to let his people depart. Thus did he lead them forth in triumph from the land of slavery and the house of bondage, loaded with the spoils of their Egyptian oppressors. He then sends his angel before them, as a pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, to lead them on in their journey towards the land of promise.

At the approach of this army of the Lord of Hosts, the sea cleaves assunder to afford a retreat from the face of their enemies; and these venturing their pursuit through the miraculous pass, are suddenly overwhelmed with the waters, that close upon them at the waving of Moses' rod. In the parched and barren desert the rock melts into liquid streams of water to quench their thirst, and miraculous bread is rained down to them from heaven. Their clothes remain entire, and the very shoes on their feet are not worn during all the forty years that they continue wandering up and down in the wilderness. Deut. viii. 4. The Lord him-