

as we read in the Gospel, *The wicked are salted with fire—Where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.—Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is never extinguished.—Where according to the wise man, (Eccles. xxxix. 33.) There are spirits created for vengeance, & in their fury they shall lay on grievous stripes. In the day of destruction they shall pour out their forces and appease the wrath of him who made them. Fire hail, famine, and death, and the teeth of beasts, and scorpions, and serpents. Where in a word, according to St. John; the wicked shall be made to drink of the wine of the wrath of God; and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone; and the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever; and they shall have no rest day or night. Apoc. xiv. 10, 11. Which of you can dwell with devouring fire, exclaims the prophet Isaias: which of you can endure everlasting burnings?*

Alas! dear Christians, which of us, for any reward, could be prevailed upon to hold his finger in the flame of a candle, but for one quarter of an hour? But to be chained down for ever to a bed of fire, who can endure the idea of such a torment? And yet, as the royal prophet assures us, *the Lord will make his enemies as an oven of fire in the time of his anger; he shall trouble them in his wrath; and fire shall devour them up. Ps. xx, 10. Fire and brimstone, says he, and the spirit of whirlwinds, shall be the portion of their cup for ever. x. 7.*

O ye, who at present delight in good cheer, and in drinking off your cups! *enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is your belly, & who glory in your shame!* Who now think it hard to obey your holy Mother the Church, when at certain seasons she commands you to mortify your sensual appetites by fasting and abstinence, and thus make up for the sin of disobedience and intemperance by which our first parents opened the flood-gates of misery upon themselves and their posterity? How shall you some day endure to swallow down those nauseous draughts of liquid brimstone, which the devils shall in mockery hold out for you to drink? *Fire and brimstone, and the spirit of whirlwinds, shall be the portion of their cup for ever.* Or rather say, how shall you be able to keep that rigid and eternal fast; how shall you endure that craving hunger, that parching and intolerable thirst, to which the rich glutton is condemned? And you, who suffer your eyes to wander without restraint on every immodest object, how shall the scene, alas! be changed in your regard, when instead of the short-lived beauties, on which you were wont to gaze with such rapture, and criminal desire, you shall behold nothing but hideous spectres and terrifying apparitions. When, instead of those carnal embraces, in which you took such sinful delight, you shall find yourselves close locked in the foul embraces of fiery dragons, that shall gnaw into your bosoms, and prey upon your vitals for all eternity! When your ears, that listened with such attention, to the malignant whispers of detraction and calumny, to lewd and immoral discourse; or to the scoffs of the impious at God and his saints, at his holy Church and her Pastors, at

whatever savoured of religion, virtue, and piety, shall be for ever stunned with the dreadful noise and uproar, the curses and lamentations of the devils and damned. When your tongue, that so often took the name of God in vain; that was so accustomed to cheat and lie; that has been made the guilty vehicle of evil advice, or the cause of discord and dissention among your fellow-creatures; that has often so little scrupled to injure the character of your neighbour; has frequently dipped in immodest and criminal conversation; when that tongue, in fine, that so seldom was employed in prayer, or in praising its Maker, to whom all praise is due; shall be condemned to curse that God, whom it would not bless; and to pour forth for ever the most bitter and lamentable, but vain and unavailing complaints. Yes, dear Christians, each of the senses, by which the sinner offends his God, shall find its own particular torment in hell.

But the most bitter ingredient of the cup of the wrath of God, which the damned are compelled to drink, is the dreadful reflection that their miseries shall never end; and that their torments, without intermission or diminution, shall last for ever. And, indeed, if one short night seems so long to a man in a burning fever; if he tosses and turns, and no where finds rest; if he counts every minute and longs for the morning; how long ah! how insufferably long must that dreadful night of eternity seem to the damned, who feel such exquisite and excruciating torments! But, alas! that night shall never know the morning; nor ever expect the dawning of the day. No glimpse of hope shall ever penetrate into those gloomy regions of never ending despair. Millions of millions of years shall roll over their heads; and ten hundred thousand millions of ages shall pass away; and yet at the end of this immense tract of time, their torments shall be just as far from ending as when they first began. Then shall the sinner look back through the long and immeasurable space of ages spent in hell, on the small and scarce perceptible point of time, during which he lived on this earth: and he will scarce be able to credit his own folly in having for the rapid enjoyments of a moment, forfeited a happy eternity, and that crown of immortal glory designed for him; till for his crimes it was taken from him, and given to some other more worthy than he; who now reigns with his God in heaven, while he lies howling in hell.

Here spiritual writers scruple not to assert, and their assertion, which is evidently true, is enough to chill the blood in our veins with horror, and to make the very hair of our head stand on end. They assert, that such a soul would find herself considerably comforted, were she but assured that she should be delivered out of hell, when, at the rate of shedding but one tear every thousand years, she should have shed tears enough to make an ocean, like that which surrounds our globe. The imagination is more than lost in computing the time it would require to shed such a prodigious flood of tears. For, as the world has not yet lasted six thousand years: the first of the damned could not as yet have shed six tears, a quantity so

small that you could scarce perceive it, if trickled on your clothes. Yet certain it is, that the time shall come, when any one of the souls in hell may at the rate of shedding but one tear every thousand years, have shed tears enough not only to make such a sea, but even to drown the whole world; to fill up the immense space between the heavens and the earth: and to deluge the whole creation! And yet, dreadful to think! her misery were still then as far from ending, as when it first began.

O eternity, eternity! how little does the worldling think of thee in the midst of his criminal enjoyments! How little does the sinner think of thee, when he is about to sin! How little do I myself, who now hold thee forth to the consideration of others, make thee the object of my meditation! But thou, O my God, who hast chosen me, though unworthy, from among men; and hast commissioned me to feed thy sheep; do thou so fill my mind with the awful idea of eternity; do thou so aid and assist me with thy grace, that while I preach to others, I may not myself become a castaway. Do thou also give to my words the power of touching the hearts of my hearers, and of persuading them, in fine, to take off their affections from the perishable goods of this world, and fix them on those of the world to come!

After all I have said concerning the evil of sin, and its dreadful consequences for time and eternity; I have but one observation more to make, which will enable each of us to bring home the subject to himself in particular: and that is, that if the sin of our first parents, that of only eating an apple against the command of God, could bring upon themselves, and entail on all their descendants such an endless train of calamities; what has not the habitual sinner to fear, whose transgressions of the divine law are daily so multiplied, and each of them is probably of a much deeper dye? And has he not also the more cause to dread their consequences, as now the whole of his guilt rests with himself alone, and is not, like that of our first parents, extended to others: so that the sinner now alone must take all the consequences of his sin. But if the consequences of only eating an apple against the command of God, are so dreadfully fatal, when extended to all; or in other words, if that sin, so comparatively small, could bring such miseries on the whole human race; what misery is not the impenitent sinner exposed to, whose sins exceed in number the hairs of his head; and each of them, perhaps, is more heinous than that of our first parents, the full consequences of which he must now take upon himself alone.

Christians! let us stop here at last, for there is no end of reasoning on the enormity of the evil of sin, and on its dreadful consequences. To whatever side we turn ourselves to consider this monstrous evil, the mind is apt to lose itself in a boundless and fathomless abyss. No finite mind is capable of fully comprehending the Deity. No finite mind therefore can fully comprehend the evil of sin. Only God himself, who knows himself, can