

feely nugatory. On the contrary an Indulgence is granted on the supposition that sin has been either removed or destroyed by the previous remission of the eternal debt. For this reason its privileges are never conceded by the Church, unless to those who are in the state of grace, and therefore one of the ordinary conditions of this spiritual favour is,—as on the present occasion—that the individual who is to gain it, shall worthily receive the sacrament of Penance. From those principles it follows, that the eternal debt due by sin can be remitted, while the temporal debt, or at least some portion of it may still remain. Of this truth we have the clearest Scriptural evidence in addition to the constant practice and teaching of the Church from the Apostolic age.

The example of David alone would be a sufficient illustration and proof. After the commission of two most grievous crimes, a Prophet is sent him by the Most High to reveal to him the enormity of his offence, and to excite him to repentance. The royal penitent is touched with remorse, his soul is filled with the grief of true compunction, and in the bitterness of an humble and contrite heart, he openly confesses that he has “sinned against the Lord.” The Prophet on the part of God replies: “The Lord also hath taken away thy sin.” Here is the remission of what we call the eternal debt. David is restored to the state of grace and friendship with God, in consideration of his sincere repentance. But immediately after the Prophet announces those temporal evils which were to befall him, and from which even fasting and prayer did not deliver him, thereby intimating that another debt contracted with the Divine Justice was still unpaid. “Nevertheless . . . the child that is born to thee shall surely die.” (2 Kings vii. 13. 14.)

The amount of temporal debt or punishment annexed to each crime is known only to Him who alone can understand the malice and enormity of sin, and determine in justice what satisfaction ought to be rendered to his outraged majesty. In the fervent ages of Christianity, when primitive discipline was in full vigour, the Catholic Church in her Penitential Canons imposed upon every sinner a course of satisfactory works proportioned to the number and enormity of his crimes. This penitential discipline was intended not only as a wholesome restraint and healing remedy, but also as a punishment of sin. The sinner was thus enabled to satisfy the offended justice of God, and to avert by his own voluntary works of penance, the temporal evils which impended over him. According to the nature of the offence, was this penitential course prolonged, or abridged by the Church. In some cases, it was mitigated either on account of the great fervour or delicate health of the penitent, the intercession of the martyrs or confessors of the faith in prison, or through some other equally religious and prudent motive. In process of time this severe discipline began to relax, until at length from the decay of morals, the tepidity of the faithful, and many other causes it almost wholly disappeared. Nevertheless, the Church continued to teach her children the necessity of appeasing God’s wrath by satisfactory works, and of removing the temporal chastisements due to their sins by voluntary practices of atonement through the merits of Christ; and in order to encourage them to sincere repentance, she changed the rigid discipline of ancient usage for other works of charity and piety, thereby imparting Indulgences to her children from the rich treasury of which she is the guardian, and dispenser, and releasing them in the sight of God from either all, or a portion of that temporal debt to which we have alluded. That she has power to absolve her children in the latter sense, we know from the universal privilege conferred upon her by Jesus Christ when he said, without any exception or limitation. “WHATSOEVER thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven,” and again. “Amen I say unto you, WHATSOEVER you shall bind upon earth it shall be bound also in Heaven; and WHATSOEVER you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven.” (Matt. x. i. 19. xviii. 18. See also John xx. 23.)

We thus perceive, Dearly Beloved Brethren, how rational and Scriptural is this doctrine of Indulgences in which the Divine Justice and Mercy are sweetly blended together, and by which our Holy Mother the Church succours the spiritual weakness, and promotes the eternal welfare of her beloved children.

When, therefore, you shall hear in the approaching days of the Jubilee, those “who blaspheme what they know not,” (Jude 10.) reviling the tenets of the Catholic Church, and amongst other misrepresentations, falsely asserting that an Indulgence is a license for crime, or a permission to commit sin, “do you who are spiritual, instruct,” or at least endure the taunts of “such a one in the spirit of meekness,” (Galat vi. 1.) and charity, remembering that our Lord himself was calumniated on earth, and had false testimony adduced against him, to which he replied only by an admirable and patient silence, and that he has declared in his Gospel: “Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake; rejoice and be exceedingly glad, because your reward is very great in heaven.” (Matt. v. 11. 12.)

Prepare yourselves Dearly Beloved Brethren, for a secure participation in the many spiritual blessings of the approaching Jubilee. For “behold now is the acceptable time; these are the days of salvation.” (2 Cor. vi. 2.) How happy shall we be if all that was prefigured by the Jubilee of Moses, shall be accomplished in us! Of the ancient Jubilee it was written: “In the year of the Jubilee all shall return to their possessions.” (Levit. xxv. 13.) Let us therefore strive to recover by sincere repentance, the possession of that eternal inheritance which we received at our Baptism, but have unhappily forfeited by sin; and accept this Indulgence of the Church with respectful gratitude and an entire obedience of faith.

“We have declared to you before, that in order to gain an indulgence, you must be in the state of sanctifying grace; and that none but the just, and the friends of God can reap the advantages of the Jubilee. All obdurate and impenitent sinners are therefore excluded; and as this may be the last opportunity of conversion which many of you can enjoy, we beseech you to embrace it with all the ardour of your souls, for “it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews x. 31.)

Wherefore “laying aside every weight and the sin that surroundeth us, by patience let us run to the fight proposed unto us; looking on Jesus the author and finisher of faith.” (Ib. xii. 1.)

Let us go up into the Tabernacle of the Lord, and adore in the place where his feet hath stood (Ps 131) “that we may see the delight of the Lord, and visit his Temple” (Ps. 26.) We “shall go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the House of God, with the voice of joy and praise.” (Ps. 41.) “Blessed are they that dwell in thy House O Lord, they shall praise thee for ever and ever . . . for better is one day in thy courts above thousands.” (Ps. 83.) After having fulfilled this condition of the Jubilee, and offered our petitions to our Heavenly Father in the name of his Son Jesus, we will be enabled to say with the Royal Psalmist: “We have received thy mercy, O God, in the midst of thy Temple.”—(Ps. 47. v. 10.)

To the holy exercise of prayer you will add the salutary practice of fasting which is commended to us by the example of the saints in the old and new Covenant, as well as in the person of the King of Saints Himself, (Deutr. ix. 9. 18, 1 Kings vi. 6. 3 Kings xix. 8, xxi 27; 2 Paral xx. 3; Daniel x; Ezechiel xvii. 32; Joel ii. 13; Psalms passim; Matt. iv. 1; Luke ii. 37; Acts xii. 2, 3, &c.) We read in the Book of Life that when “dread and horror seized upon the minds” of “the children of Israel” on account of the apprehended invasion of the cruel Holofernes, “they did as the Priest of the Lord Eliachim had appointed them. And all the people cried to the Lord with great earnestness; and they humbled their souls in fastings and prayers . . . . and they cried to the Lord the God of Israel with one accord . . . . Then Eliachim the High Priest of the Lord went about all Israel, and spoke to them saying: Know ye that the Lord will hear your prayers, if you continue with perseverance in fastings and prayers in the sight of the Lord.” (Judith iv. 2 11.) We give you the same assurance “Dearly beloved Brethren, and promise you in the name of the Lord, that if you pour forth your souls in prayer, and humble them in fasting, “the ear of the Most High will listen even to the preparation of your hearts” (Ps. x. 17.) and the