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*A. P. Smith*

# A SERMON

PREACHED ON THE SEVENTEENTH OF MARCH,

IN THE

IRISH FRANCISCAN CHURCH OF S. ISIDORE

IN ROME,

AND DEDICATED BY PERMISSION

TO HIS EMINENCE

THE CARDINAL DELLA SOMAGLIA,

BISHOP OF OSTIA AND VELETRI, DEAN OF THE SACRED

COLLEGE, VICE CHANCELLOR, &c. &c. &c.

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BY THE REVEREND

WILLIAM VINCENT HAROLD,

*Rector of the Irish Dominican College of Corpo Santo at Lisbon.*

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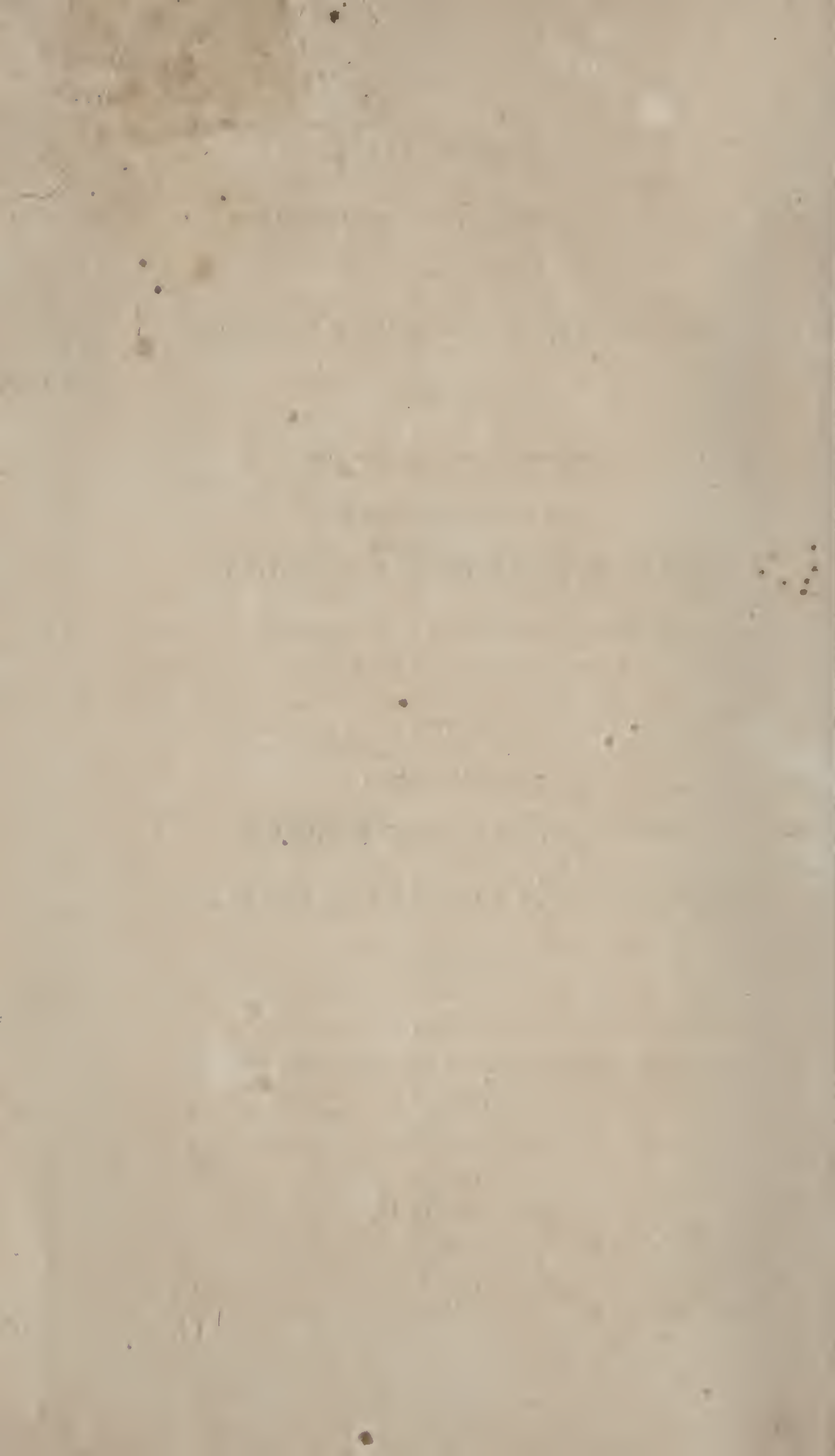
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MOST EMINENT

AND

MOST REVEREND LORD,

WHEN your eminence permitted me to dedicate to you this tribute of filial gratitude to the memory of the Apostle of Ireland, I felt that act of condescension as my country will feel it, not as a mark of your attention to an individual, obscure as myself, but as a proof of your regard for a church, which heresy never tainted, which schism never divided, which in ages of darkness was a beacon of light and safety to nations, and in ages of persecution, a rock, immoveable as that on which Christ built his Church. Standing nearest to the Chair of Peter, which your wisdom supports and your virtues adorn, you, most eminent Lord, are the natural patron of Apostolic zeal, and the Church of Ireland can yield to no other, her well earned claim to your protection and esteem. My Countrymen will feel as I do, that you have added a fresh wreath to the crown of their Apostle, and will unite with all good men, in praying the Prince of pastors and Lord of life, that he may continue to his Church, for many years, the aid which she derives from your great mind

and splendid virtues, so necessary both as a security and an example in these disastrous times. Deign, most eminent and most reverend Lord, to accept the sincere assurance of lasting gratitude and profound veneration from

Your Eminence's

Most humble servant,

**WILLIAM VINCENT HAROLD.**

## A SERMON, &c.

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*Non vos me elegistis, sed ego eligi vos, et posui vos, ut eatis et fructum afferatis, et fructus vester maneat, et quodcumque petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, det vobis. Joannis, cap. 15. v. 16.*

*You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have appointed you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain, that whatever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he may grant it you. John c. 15. v. 16.*

THE first proselytes to Christianity might have been tempted to attribute to themselves some merit for having embraced a cause which doomed them to poverty, to persecution, to contempt, to danger and misery under every form. Pride so intertwines itself in every act and every thought of man; the feeling of self approbation is so artfully blended with our best actions, that light from Heaven is required, and no other can enable us to discover our imperfections, and distinguish the true grain of virtue from the chaff of vanity, whose emptiness is impervious to the dull and carnal eye of man. Christ, who knew the human heart, and came to guard us against its weakness, tells his followers—"You have not chosen me"—No man can come to me, except the Father, "who hath sent me, draw him." This is the deep and firm foundation on which the edifice of Christianity is raised. If our nature, unaided and uninspired, could approach to God, the great work of redemption would have been a work without an object, and the crown of justice, and of glory, instead of being regarded as the gratuitous gift of mercy, should be considered as a remuneration to which man was strictly entitled. If our nature could, by its own sufficiency, rise from its fall, and reestablish its correspondence with Heaven, the great wisdom and almost stainless virtue of many amongst the Pagans would have done so—But experience



has confirmed the declaration of St. Paul, "that all our sufficiency is from God," and that merely human wisdom, merely human virtue is shallow, vapid, and unavailing. How far better is this wise humility of the Apostle, than the impious arrogance of the most enlightened man the pagan world ever produced? "Deservedly," said Cicero, "are we praised for our virtues; justly do we glory in them, but who ever considered virtue as a gift from God? What good man ever thanked the gods for his goodness? We confess Jove the greatest and the best, not that we are indebted to him for justice, temperance, or wisdom, but that he has given us wealth, security, and abundance." These are the sentiments of a great philosopher, not uttered rashly and unguardedly, but after mature and deliberate meditation, recorded in his work on the nature of the gods. So much for pagan wisdom, and merely human virtue.

Our Divine Redeemer, having established the dependance of man on his Maker, tells his Apostles "I have chosen you."—What our frail and fallen nature could not attempt, the Deity has effected. Man could not rise to Heaven; but the mercy of his Maker stooped to lift him. "I have chosen you and appointed you." Invested with my authority, accredited by my choice, you are to appear before men as the representatives of their God. You are no longer to speak in the name, or according to the wisdom of man. You are to deliver the commands, and maintain the authority of your Master. "I have chosen and appointed you," not merely to the good work of your individual sanctification, but to the better and higher office of the apostolic charge. You must not retire into solitude, nor hide that light which came from Heaven, not to guide you alone. "I have appointed you to go."—You must ascend the mountain. You must move like pillars of light through a benighted world, like Jesus of Nazareth you must go about, "doing good." Here the Apostle will see the source of his authority, the form of his commission, the nature of his service, the fruits of his victory. "I have appointed you, that you should go, and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain." His divine appointment is the only source of apostolic power; the only security for its success. No man uncommissioned by God, should presume to speak in his name, and if he do, the imposition will

be detected and his arrogance will be humbled by a fruitless labour. Such men the Apostles have described as “clouds without water, tossed about by the winds”—as “trees of the autumn unfruitful and twice dead”—as “wandering stars”—as “waves of the sea foaming out their own confusion.” Self-created Apostles, like the fools of Babel, have sought to ascend to Heaven by the work of human hands; but when they fancied their tower just completed, and Heaven within their reach, the curse of pride fell amongst them; no one could understand the other; confusion, division, dispersion was the result of their toil. Such is the origin, such the progress and such the fruit of unauthorized preaching. Our Divine Redeemer, not only constitutes his Apostles the interpreters of his will, and the organs of his divine communications to man, but he appoints them the instruments of his mercy; he permits them to pledge the word and authority of their Sovereign, and binds himself to ratify what they in their public character shall have engaged. Knowing the trembling anxiety of an Apostle’s fears, lest that, which had cost him so much toil, should perish; lest those children, whose spiritual growth he had watched with more than a mother’s tenderness, should degenerate, he quiets such fears, and removes such apprehensions by this cheering assurance, that “whatsoever they should ask of the father in his name, he will give it them.” The very nature and object of the apostolic office, implies its continuance. The imperishable spirit of Christianity must raise up men to spread the light of its doctrine, until the mystery of redemption shall have been revealed to every portion of the human race. He who commanded the Gospel to be preached to all nations, did not confine that order to his first disciples; the execution of that command must be commensurate with the extent of the earth and the duration of time. The occasion which has collected us here this day, presents to us one of the most splendid examples of apostolic virtue, which the history of the church has recorded. I do not know that since the days of the Apostles there has appeared a more striking illustration of my text, than may be found in the life and labours of the great Apostle of Ireland. We shall see him surrounded by all the attributes of the apostolic character; that he was chosen by God—that he brought forth fruit—that his fruit has re-



mained, are truths which it has become my duty to demonstrate this day. That I shall do so in a manner worthy of our illustrious patron and apostle, I do not presume to think. To do justice to such a subject belongs to talent of the highest order. I have nothing to entitle me to your indulgence and attention, but that I feel, in common with you, the most profound veneration for that distinguished Saint, who carried the best of blessings, Christianity, to our country.

To form a just estimate of the apostolic character, we must feel the blessings which result from the Apostle's labours. Accustomed as we are to live amongst Christians, we enjoy these blessings, without seeming to know, or wishing to inquire whence they came, or to what cause they are to be attributed. We go to history for information, which we should find in our hearts. We never reflect what we should have been, had not the mercy of the Almighty called us from darkness to light. We forget that our best happiness here, and all our hopes of happiness hereafter, originate in religion. That without it, misery could have no alleviation, power no controul, life no security, passion no effectual restraint, man no real dignity; that he would live like a demon, and expire like a brute. Such was the general state of mankind when Christianity appeared, and the Apostles called the world from moral death and degrading superstition to life, and light, and immortality—when Christians began to act what philosophers could only teach—when the martyrs gave a lesson of fortitude, of which the history of the brave had furnished no example—when the followers of the Cross taught mankind to requite injuries with blessings, to redress their wrongs by taking their enemies to their bosoms—when peace, and humility, and meekness softened and civilized the world—when the universal church of Christ displayed all the charities of a private family—when the Apostle could say to the followers of his Master—“Concerning fraternal charity, I have no need to write to you, for you yourselves have learned of God to love one another.” This benevolent religion was extending its influence and its blessings through the earth, and had already realized the most sanguine wishes of its followers, when that Almighty Being, who holds in his hands the fate and fortune of nations, whose ways



are wisdom and whose will is mercy, permitted this brilliant picture to be obscured, and checked for a time the brightest hopes of man. Christianity had now become the religion of the civilized world—a Christian sat on the imperial throne of Rome. But lest it might be said, the gospel required any other support than the word of him who gave it, heaven decreed, that the empire of Rome should perish, and the throne of the Cæsars should moulder into ruins—lest it might be said, that science had lighted the gospel to its conquests, the Deity permitted the torch of science to be extinguished, and that barbarism should rule, where letters and civilization had flourished. The uncultivated nations of the north, presented themselves as the ready instruments of his inscrutable decrees. They burst through the barriers which discipline had placed before them, and the laurels of Rome withered in the presence of these ferocious savages. Rapid and irresistible, like the torrents from their mountains, they spread ruin and devastation, where peace and security had taken up their dwelling. Dark as the woods from which they issued, they despised that science, which proved powerless to resist them. Nurtured in blood, knowing no law but force, no pleasure but revenge, they hated a religion whose fruit is peace, whose first and ruling principle is charity. They abhorred the gospel more than the Roman. The latter could not meet their force, the former yet contended with those passions which gave to their force its most destroying impulse. Such was the state of Europe in the beginning of the fifth century.

The Vandals had obtained possession of Africa, and that distinguished portion of the fold of Christ, then governed by more than 400 Bishops—that church which had given to religion and to science, a Cyprian, a Tertullian, and an Austin, expired under the brutal government of these merciless conquerors. The Franks under Clovis had effected the conquest of Gaul—the Goths had established their power in Spain—even the classic soil of Italy, was defiled by the track of these barbarians—the empire was in ruins—and the light of Christianity itself must have been quenched, could the power and malice of men have brought that curse upon the world. But he who conquered death and rose from his

glorious sepulchre, had promised, that he would be with his church to the end of ages, and hell and man have witnessed his fidelity. The spirit of Christianity rescued the world a second time, from the two fold degradation of barbarism and infidelity. She sent her Apostles to the den of these barbarians, to effect that, which arts and arms had attempted in vain, to tame the savage, and save the world. She cherished the last expiring spark of science, and in a happier time, she held it up to enlighten those, whose madness would then have extinguished it. In the midst of these horrors, when every nation in Europe was bending in ignominious servitude, and almost deprived of that religion, which softens and mitigates even the sorrows of slavery, the illustrious Apostle of our nation appeared.

Britain claims the honour of his birth—his family was Roman, his father held a command in the army of Britain, at that time principally recruited from the military colonies, which the policy of the Roman government had established in that province, at an early period after its subjugation. From a letter which he addressed to Corotic, a predatory chieftain in Wales, it appears that his rank was noble and his possessions considerable. But these are circumstances of trifling import in a christian's life; a christian's nobility is virtue; a christian's home is heaven; the country of an Apostle is that where his aid is most required. In his view the whole human race is but one family. The glory of God and the safety of man so fill the heart, and occupy the mind of an Apostle, that he can not stoop to consider the trifling distinctions, which vanity or prejudice may have invented to injure and divide those, whom reason and religion combine in proclaiming the children of one Father, the creatures of one God, entitled to the same glorious and immortal inheritance, through the merits and sufferings of a common Saviour. We know from his book of confessions, that his parents were Christians, and the proofs of extraordinary virtue which marked the commencement of his life, warrant us in believing, that they had faithfully attended to his moral and religious education. If parents are generally responsible for their children's crimes, they are also justly entitled to share in the reward of their virtues; and it will not detract from the fame of our Apostle, to divide with his parents the bright and lasting glory



of having given to a nation the greatest blessing which man can be instrumental in securing to his fellow creatures. The illustrious men, whose names history has recorded, generally trace the origin of their greatness to the parental school; there we find their virtues cherished by a parent's fondness, their passions restrained by a parent's solicitude, their principles confirmed, and their future course marked out by a parent's example, rendered doubly attractive, by the combined influence of virtue and of love. But at an age when others were growing into greatness under such advantages and such security, Patrick had commenced his life of public service. God had already called him to a higher school. He had already given his mind a direction to immortality, by one of those saving lessons of misery, which wean the heart for ever from this world. In his sixteenth year he was torn from his country and his home by a band of barbarians, and with many of his father's vassals, was carried into Ireland, where these wretches found a market for their fellow men. To reason against this horrible commerce would be useless, as no second opinion can exist on the subject: as well might you reason on murder. To reason with Christians on such a crime, would be almost blasphemy, as if Christianity could have left a doubt of its enormity—as if he could be a Christian, who had ceased to be a man—as if the charity of the gospel could abide in the heart of that monster, who could buy or sell his brother. But we have to thank that all bounteous God, who can draw good out of evil, for having made this crime the occasion of our nation's conversion. Had he not been purchased, his life would, in all probability, have been taken by those wretches, who had robbed him of his liberty; had he not been purchased in Ireland, that market might not have been closed by Christianity against this horrid traffic; had not his body been galled by a captive's chain, he might not have directed his thoughts to the worse and more degrading slavery of the soul. He tells us in his book of Confessions, that it was in the hour of suffering, when his body was perishing from the rigours of an inclement season, when his heart was breaking for the loss of parents, country and liberty, when he wandered through the bleak mountains, tending the flock of his barbarous master, when all hope of deliverance had died within him; it was then he gave



his heart wholly to God. When his hapless lot had taught him the instability of earthly blessings, religion lifted his thoughts to happiness which cannot change. Amidst the pleasures of the world, enjoying in the ease of opulence the attachment of friends, and the fondness of parents, he might have offered a divided heart to his Maker, but bereft of every joy, surrounded by misery in every form, his heart had no object but one, and to that one object he devoted it with a fidelity, which has never been surpassed.— He had been already a christian by baptism and education; he was now about to become a christian in spirit and in truth.

What were the feelings of this illustrious and injured youth? Did the blood of his Roman ancestry rush in burning torrents through his veins, when he felt himself a slave? Did the image of his sorrowing parents present itself to his tortured imagination, and call him to avenge the wrongs they endured? Did he seek to shorten the hours of his captivity by meditating plans of retributive justice on his oppressors? Did he employ his time in examining the coast, and marking the place where, on some future day, he might land at the head of his indignant countrymen, to spread the miseries of war and extermination through our guilty island? Had he so employed himself, we might have found his name amongst the most illustrious in history. He might have been what the world calls a *hero*. Such a mode of conduct would have been described as manly, spirited and magnanimous. It would indeed have been far more magnanimous than the achievements of most of those persons who, in ancient and modern times, have worn the laurels, and won the name of heroes. It would have been less detestable than the atrocious achievements of those men, who, in our day, have raised the pillar of their fame on the ruins of Europe. Patrick had to avenge the greatest wrong which man can suffer, and had he acted on human motives, or yielded to the impulse of human feelings, he would have looked forward to vengeance. But how little and contemptible are merely human feelings when compared to those which Christianity inspires! How mean is the triumph of the conqueror compared to that which charity can win! Instead of brooding over his injuries, this youth had already devoted himself for the happiness of his persecutors. He was planning his return to Ireland, not with the avenging

sword, but with the saving Gospel—not to requite with slavery those who had robbed him of freedom, but to bless them with the liberty of the children of God. Would it not seem that Heaven had held up to his view the trials which, in future times, awaited his flock, in order that succeeding generations should find in his life, the great lesson of Christian magnanimity, the great virtue of Christian forgiveness? Yes! my countrymen! receive this lesson from the life of your Apostle. Though brutal power, and barbarous hands may injure and enslave, it is the command of Christian charity, it is the privilege of Christian greatness, it is your peculiar inheritance, descending to you from the Apostle of your country, not merely to forgive such wrongs, but to requite them with full-hearted and unconditional benevolence.

Having now passed six years in prayer and sufferings, he tells us, that the approaching termination of his captivity was made known to him in a vision, and that he was directed to proceed to the coast, where he should find the means of returning to his country. He had already experienced the mercy of the Almighty, in delivering him from the captivity of sin, and he did not hesitate to obey the voice which called him from servitude. He hastened to the shore, found a ship ready to sail for Britain, and joy revisited the hearts of his afflicted parents. It is not difficult to conceive the feelings which this change of fortune must have excited in his breast—He had tasted the bitterest draught of misery; he had been a slave, and was now free; he had been forced to bear the heaviest and the hardest trial that can fall on a man of noble race, of liberal habits, and ample fortune; he had been reduced to dependence; he had been forced to crouch to the frown, and endure the lash of a ruffian master; he had felt the miseries of cold, hunger, and nakedness; he now received the homage of his vassals, and enjoyed in the society of his family and friends, every pleasure which opulence could procure. He had, it is true, in his hour of trial, lifted his heart to God, and devoted himself to the spiritual aid of his enemies. But did not self-love suggest to him that this determination might have been an illusion—an imprudent effusion of zeal, which misery might have extorted from a youthful and care-worn heart? Did not self-love tell him, that in forgiving his enemies he had already acted a great and Christian part? Did not this syren



passion insinuate, that wealth and salvation are not incompatible; that ease is not inconsistent with virtue; that man may obey all the laws of the Gospel, without devoting himself to the perils, and crosses, and responsibility of an apostolic life? Did not his parents adjure him to pity their declining years, and not to plunge them back into such unutterable misery as his loss had already occasioned? Did not his friends laugh to scorn his infatuated vow, to abandon wealth, and rank, and safety, in order to teach a hostile and barbarous people, who would spurn his services, chain him again in slavery, or sacrifice him on the blood-stained altars of their gods? Yes! with all these difficulties Patrick had to contend. He tells us that nothing was left untried to divert him from his purpose. But his generous soul had caught the flame of charity, as it came down from heaven, pure, ardent, inextinguishable. He renounced friends, family, and home. He abandoned what the world calls all, and embraced what the world calls folly. He took the great, the decisive, the irrevocable step of an Apostle. He left all things and followed Christ. "I have chosen you." Charity called him to the apostleship, and charity is God, and God is charity.

But the spirit which called Patrick to the apostleship taught him, that zeal alone could not qualify him to discharge the duties of that great and perilous office. The history of his life presents us with nothing of the folly or rashness of blind and intemperate fanaticism. He did not attempt to ascend the holy mountain, until encouraged by the call, supported by the strength, and enlightened by the glory of him who was on its summit. He felt that the structure of apostolic virtue rises in proportion to the solidity of its base: that an edifice whose top is to reach the heavens, can be secured only by a broad and firm foundation. He knew that the operations of grace, like those of nature and reason, are gradual and consistent; that there is nothing sudden, nothing rash, nothing disproportioned in the spiritual life; that it rises from infancy to maturity, progressively and securely. Patrick had all the zeal of an Apostle; but he had not yet acquired that knowledge necessary to that character. Learning is to the priesthood an indispensable qualification. Not that learning, which merely serves to extend the sphere and multiply the objects of pleasure; which only enables us to idle more agreeably, and gives us a quicker relish for refined



amusement. Not that learning which tempts us to look down with fastidious disregard on those, whom God has formed for immortality, and Christ has died to save. Not that unmeaning pedantry, without any object, rational or religious, which wastes the light which should guide ourselves and others to heaven, in a childish pursuit of trifles, until light and life are both extinguished in death. The learning to which our Apostle aspired, was the knowledge of Christ and his law; that knowledge which should multiply his means of reaching heaven, and of securing to his fellow-creatures that glorious consummation; that learning which should enable him to detect the fallacy of error, to pour the light of evidence around truth, to remove the doubts of the wavering and the darkness of the ignorant. Fortunately for the world, the barbarous invaders from the north, though they found it easy to level the thrones of kings, could not succeed in destroying the religion of Christ; hence the torch of science is now blazing through Europe. We can pity ignorance; but we must despise and abhor the base ingratitude, the mean and illiberal vanity of those who blush to acknowledge where that torch was lighted. No press then facilitated the diffusion of learning. No university then existed, where science, living and concentrated, opened its halls to the aspirant after learning. Within the cloister the sacred fire had been preserved. To those hallowed retreats of sanctity and wisdom are we indebted for all that we possess of knowledge, sacred and profane. To them are we indebted for the poetry, the oratory, the philosophy of Greece and Rome. To them are we indebted for the immortal works of the fathers of the Christian church. To their fearless zeal and generous devotion Heaven committed, in those days of war and violence, the sacred Gospel itself. No wonder then that a shallow and presumptuous philosophy, which has brought nothing but curses to the world, should have directed its pointless and despicable invectives against these wise and sacred institutions. No wonder that the monks and the cloister should be honoured with the hostility of those vulgar and short sighted politicians, whose first and leading principle is self-interest, whose utmost refinement in political economy is robbery. The happiness and prosperity of a nation never did rise, never will rise from the ruins of such establishments; and should they sink, even the de-

generate race, which shall consent to their fall, will discover, when too late, that the provident, the beneficent, the Christian spirit which called them into existence, is but badly and unwisely exchanged for the sophistry and the dagger of withered and heartless infidelity.

To qualify himself for the arduous work to which he had devoted his life, our illustrious Apostle left his Country, and passing into France, assumed the religious habit in the great monastery which St. Martin had established at Tours. In this asylum, sacred to solitude, piety and learning, he remained for six years. When we consider the motives which led him to this great seminary, the ardour which urged him to commence his apostolic labours, that he brought to his studies great talents, and an undivided heart, we might be led to conclude, that every essential literary acquirement, must have been attained within that period. But our Saint had formed a juster notion of the important duty for which he was preparing. He felt its fearful responsibility. He knew that whatever is to be great and permanent, is slow in growth and advances gradually to perfection, and that learning rapidly acquired, is quickly forgotten. As well might you expect fruit, before the tree expands its foliage, or the blossom appears, as to look for maturity of christian knowledge from him, whose soul has scarcely yet received the life giving seed of the word of God, whose heart has scarcely felt that prolific heat which quickens the seed to life, and advances it to ripeness. He did not offer himself as a light to the Gentiles, until the author of light had shed its brightest and most ardent rays on his soul. He made the inspired writings the subject of his most constant and intense meditation, and to fix their spirit more deeply in his heart, he sought the acquaintance of those most distinguished in his time, for sanctity and erudition. For this purpose he passed into Italy, where religion and science have found in every age their brightest ornaments. The travels of Patrick were not undertaken with any view to the gratification of idle curiosity—not to trace the battlefield where the fate of nations had been decided—not to bend over a poet's tomb, nor stand in the theatre where oratory had triumphed. No! his was a wiser, a nobler, a holier purpose. He came to take from Italy, not the drawing of a ruined temple or a



triumphal arch, but to bear to our benighted country the true wisdom of the gospel, to fill his mind with the eloquence of an Ambrose, to kindle his zeal on the classic ground of Christianity, covered as it was with the monuments of christian victory, the glorious records of its martyrs' courage and its virgin's purity. He came to the city where a Paul had preached, and which a Peter had blessed with all his wisdom and all his blood. Our Apostle viewed the fragments of ruined greatness, not with the morbid and sickly sensibility of a heart, wedded to lower things; he saw them as the destroying angel will see a sinking world. He said in his heart, these things are not worth a tear, and looked up to him who liveth for ever and ever. Man in ruins is the only object which can find interest in an Apostle's heart.

He had now laboured for many years, to attain those qualifications, without which a preacher of the gospel, instead of guiding others to safety, may be the occasion of incalculable and irretrievable mischief. He knew that the divine constitution of the christian church was so formed, as to protect mankind from the rashness of presumption and the intemperance of imaginary zeal. He knew that the legitimate preaching of the gospel was, from the beginning, a charge founded on commission, originating in Christ, and continued in those whom the Holy Ghost had placed "bishops to rule the church of God." He knew that Saint Paul, though called from Heaven to the apostleship, did not consider himself warranted to pass by him, whom Christ had placed supreme in power, even amongst the apostles; that he came to Jerusalem to profess his subjection to Peter, "lest (as he says) I should run, or had run in vain." He knew that Saint Paul, writing to the Romans on the preaching and preachers of the gospel, had said, "how can men believe him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher, and how can they preach unless they be sent?" He knew that the perpetuity promised by Christ to his church, did not rest on a better foundation than the primacy of power and jurisdiction conferred by Christ on Peter: that as the church did not perish when the Apostles died, neither did the primacy die with Peter: that no man can be a minister of the church, whose ministry is not sanctioned by, and derived from, and in communion with the head of the church. He knew that



from the days of the apostles to his own, the church had never tolerated any encroachment on this system of divine legislation. He knew that whoever ventured to take on him the preaching of the gospel, without being sent; whoever, like Core, dared to seize with an unblest hand, the sacred censer; whoever presumed to usurp the authority of the christian ministry, the spirit of Christianity cast him from her communion: and history told him, that these rash and sacrilegious members had withered and died, when separated from that body, which the spirit of truth must animate, and the presence of Christ must preserve to the end of time. Impressed with a full conviction of the truth of this doctrine, and anxious to secure to his apostleship the sanction of legitimate authority and the promise of lasting fruit, our illustrious Saint submitted his design to Pope Celestine, who then sat in the chair, and inherited the power of Peter. That venerable Pontiff, whose apostolic zeal for the conversion of nations, history has applauded, had been long praying the Lord of the harvest, to send forth labourers to carry the tidings of redemption to our country. He embraced our saint as a messenger sent from God to relieve his pastoral anxiety, and bring a great nation to his saving fold. He promoted him to orders, raised him to the episcopal dignity, and sent him forth to kindle that fire, whose heat is charity, and whose light is truth; that fire which Christ came "to send on the earth," and which the devastation of war had nearly extinguished in blood, or the march of barbarism had involved in darkness, in those countries, which had flourished for ages under its salutary influence.

Having now received the apostolic commission: being "chosen and appointed to go and bring forth fruit," he obeyed the impulse of that charity which had so long burned in his heart. He re-passed the Alps, cheered by the presentiment of victory, though dangers the most appalling and difficulties almost insuperable, stood in his way, and seemed to forbid his hopes. Had his apostolic commission directed him to a people, relaxed and weakened by the softness and sensuality of effeminate habits, he might cherish the hope of reclaiming them; for in the most depraved heart there is a sense of shame, a feeling of disgust, which makes a party with virtue, joins the gospel and loathes sensual turpitude, as

unworthy of man. Had he been sent to a nation enlightened by science, living under civilized institutions, inured to order and accustomed to obedience; the wisdom of the gospel, its sublime view of man's nature, its pure and lofty morality, must not only have obtained a respectful hearing, but have commanded reverence and extorted applause from the wise and the good. But no facility of this kind opened to him a prospect of success. He had to preach the gospel to a people, whose institutions, civil, political and religious, were founded on principles which reason and Christianity condemn. He had to preach charity and peace to a people then proverbially ferocious, and at all times instinctively martial. He had to preach justice to a people, who had lived for ages on the plunder of their neighbours. He had to preach meekness and resignation to men, who knew no law but their will, no judge but the sword, no vileness equal to that of leaving an insult unavenged. He had to preach Christianity to a people, who had never heard the voice of religion, but in the blood stained field, when the haggard form and maddening appeal of the druid priest, called them to victory or death. Such was the state of Ireland when Patrick landed on its shore in the year 432.

He did not go as they went, who brought ruin under the pretence of carrying Christianity to America, with the sword in one hand and the gospel in the other. He did not go forth, as more modern preachers have gone, protected by the arms and supported by the active co-operation of a great empire. He could not command the resources of missionary associations. His bark was not freighted with bibles nor his mission armed with power. He had no means to bribe the avaricious, nor to affright the timid, nor to overawe the obstinate into a seeming acquiescence in his doctrine. Had he approached our nation in such a way, the result of his labours would have proved what history has confirmed and experience is confirming, that the arm of flesh is weak, and the wisdom of the world is folly, when they attempt to force religion on man. Such means may produce hypocrites. God alone can make Christians. Patrick carried a living gospel in his heart. He came to our nation in the power of Christ, and they bent their unconquered necks to his yoke. He came in the simplicity of an Apostle, professing himself as nothing, but proclaiming the om-



nipotent majesty of his master, declaring that he could do all things in Christ who strengthened him, and he established the truth of that declaration, by the most striking monument which any individual, since the days of the Apostles, had raised to the power and majesty of the deity—the conversion of an entire nation effected by his single exertions. He preached the charity of the gospel to our fathers, and his return to bless a country where he had endured the miseries of slavery, presented such an exalted commentary on that virtue, as rendered its worth self-evident and its charms irresistible. He preached “Christ crucified,” and our brave ancestors found in the mystery of redemption a virtue so far exalted above the powers of human nature; they found courage, compassion, and mercy so sublimated, so divine, so much above the utmost reach of their conception, that they destroyed their altars, abjured their false Gods, took to their hearts, and for ever, the cross of mercy and the law of Christ. He preached the pure morality of the gospel, and supported his preaching by the evidence of a conduct so blameless, that the duties which he enforced by his eloquence, were more strongly reflected from his life. No labour appeared to affect, no reverse to discourage, no danger to intimidate this extraordinary man. The fears of the weak, the terrors of the superstitious, the time-serving policy of the great, the formidable hostility of the druids, were all brought to bear against him. But opposition only served to quicken his zeal, and danger to call forth his courage. He had laid up his treasure in another world, seemed utterly regardless of this, and was always prepared to devote his life for the gospel. After having passed to every part of the island with a rapidity which nothing but an Apostle’s spirit could render practicable; after having spread the light and administered the consolation of religion to the barbarians in their forests, he met the majesty of the nation at Tara, and the monarch and his vassal kings, listened with reverence to this wondrous stranger, whilst he opened to their ambition a new road to glory, and presented to their hopes an object, which until then, they had never known. Such was the activity of his zeal, that in forty years, he converted an entire nation, and filled it with institutions which evince more than the ordinary success of an Apostle. He not only enforced obedience to the precepts of christian morality, but



led his people to practise the sublime counsels of gospel perfection. He founded religious establishments, where persons from every rank in society devoted themselves to the cultivation of virtue in its utmost refinement, to virgin purity, to perfect self-denial, to an unqualified renunciation of property and independence. After having endured all the trials and privations of an apostolic life, contempt, imprisonment, every thing but the martyr's death, which his zeal had so often provoked, Heaven blessed his labours with success never surpassed, and equalled only by the first disciples of Christ. He had fought the good fight, he had kept the faith, he was finishing his course. He could look back with pleasure and forward with hope. He was preparing to offer up his soul into the hands of his Maker, and he had enhanced the value of that offering by the most acceptable tribute which man could present to the deity—an entire people reclaimed, converted, and regenerated. This good and faithful servant had improved the talents committed to him with such industry, that when the giver of the talents came to demand his account, he had not merely to say, "Lord, thou hast delivered to me five talents, behold I have gained other five over and above"—he could say, Lord I have, by thy grace multiplied these talents incalculably—I have purchased for thee a great people—I have ensured, with these talents, the safety of millions and generations to come. Yes, my countrymen! the seed which he committed to our soil did not produce a weed, which rises and flourishes and dies in a season. It grew up like our oak, advanced gradually to maturity, to live on for ages and enjoy immortality. He was not, what the Apostle called the false teachers of his day, a wandering star, a light and fleeting meteor, rising, dazzling, and disappearing, leaving no blessing on earth, no track in the heavens, no impression on man but that of surprise and disappointment. Patrick rose on the moral horizon of our country, as the sun rises in the heavens, with ease and with majesty. He moved through his course, enlightening, cheering, fertilizing. And when he had done the service for which he was chosen, and left us a blessing, which we will keep until his next appearance, he set in cloudless glory.

The last test of the apostolic character is the permanence of his work—"I have appointed you, that you should produce fruit,

and that your fruit should *remain*." The monument which guides us to an apostle's grave is the fruit of his toil. And who ever raised a more glorious monument to the apostleship than Saint Patrick? Does it not stand lofty and unbent after 1400 years? Has time corroded, has violence shaken it? Does not the flock of Patrick stand forth a bright and almost a solitary monument of fidelity, which no bribe could corrupt, no persecution could affright, no temptation could seduce from the faith which they had once received? Had not Saint Paul written his Epistles, what monument remains to attest, that the name and glory of Christ had ever been proclaimed at Athens, at Corinth, at Thessalonica or Philippi? Not one. Had not the sacred scriptures informed us, that all the Apostles, with united zeal, and tender solicitude, guarded for many years the cradle of Christians in Jerusalem; that this native vineyard of the Lord had been cultivated by the combined industry of all those, on whom the Holy Ghost descended in visible glory, how could we believe it? What living monument remains to bear evidence to their labours? None whatever. Blasphemy rules in the city where the sufferings of Christ atoned for the sins of the world. Did we not know from history, that the beloved disciple John, lived for nearly a century in Asia Minor; that he established churches throughout all that region; that the vast numbers whom his irresistible charity attracted to the faith, were enlightened and confirmed by his sublime theology, what but the testimony of history could induce us to believe it? Does there exist a living monument to attest these facts? No!—the very name of Christ is almost forgotten there. Had the writings of Clement, of Cyril, of Origen and Athanasius been lost, what could induce us to believe, that the church of Alexandria had been founded by Mark the Evangelist? that Egypt was filled with Christians? that its very deserts breathed the odour of sanctity? There is no living evidence to these incontestible facts. Pagan robbers and brutal Mahometans now fill that country, which Christianity more than its pyramids, had made the wonder of the world. All these churches have perished, and perished ingloriously. But the church of Ireland like the universal church of Christ, of which it forms so interesting a portion, grew and flourished under persecution. Patrick planted the tree of Christianity in no shifting and sandy



soil. Storms only served to fix its roots more deeply in our Island. Not a branch of it would have yielded, scarcely would its leaves have been affected by such a force, as proved sufficient to sweep every trace of the catholic religion from other countries. Other Christians have confessed their faith, when to confess it was an honour and a profit even before men; but in the day of its trial and distress, they meanly and wickedly abjured it. But our great, our admirable, our immortal ancestors clung to it under all circumstances. They loved their religion in its splendour, but they loved it better in its humiliation. They reserved their most sacred, their most inviolable, their most invincible attachment for that time, when the cross of redemption became a badge of infamy, when to profess the catholic religion was treason, when the very name of catholic doomed him who bore it, to an ignominious grave. Oh no! My countrymen! The death of your ancestors was not ignominious. It was the death of the saints—the death of the brave and the faithful—and what are arts, what is science, what is victory, what is empire, when compared to such a death?

Father of our country! sacred and venerated Apostle! Obtain, we beseech thee, pardon for our offences, pity for our degeneracy. Obtain for us a just sense of gratitude for that priceless treasure which thy ministry has deposited amongst us. Obtain for all the children of Ireland temporal and eternal happiness. Teach them, O God, to love one another, grant them peace, and charity, and christian benevolence, through thy dear Son and our Saviour Christ Jesus. Amen.

IMPRIMATUR.

Si videbitur Rmo P. Magistro Sacri Palatii Apostolici.

*Candidus Maria Frattini Archiepiscopus Philippensis Vicesgerens.*

APPROVAZIONE.

Ex commissione Rmi Patris Magistri, Fr. Pii Mauriti Viviani, S. Ordinis Prædicatorum Pro-Vicarii & Procuratoris Generalis, hanc Orationem Penegyricam attentè legimus, & in eo nihil prorsus reperimus, quod vel Catholicæ Fidei, vel bonis moribus adversetur. Romæ ad S. Mariæ Pacis, XV. Kalendas Aprilis, Anno Domini 1821.

Robertus Waterfordiensis & Lismoriensis Episcopus.

Fr. Franciscus Josephus O'Finan O. P.

IMPRIMATUR

Fr. Philippus Anfossi Sacri Palatii Apostolici Magister.













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