THE GOSPEL IN PARIS:

*SERMONS*

BY THE

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OF L’ÉGLISE DE L’ÉTOILE, PARIS.

*WITH PERSONAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR*

BY THE

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LONDON:

JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET.

MDCCCLXXXIII.

XXIII.

*THE SALT OF THE EARTH.*“Ye are the salt of the earth.”—MATT. V. 13.

THE Gospel abounds in extraordinary sayings whose strangeness is modified only by our familiarity with them. Among these are the words of my text. Imagine what a worldly philosopher would have felt if he had seen the disciples to whom they were addressed. The salt of the earth! They! those Galileans whose uncultured mind was incapable of understanding a lofty question, or of discussing it, those publicans, those fishermen, prejudiced and narrow-minded, those poor and ignorant beings who spoke in an unknown language, those men whose zeal was so often to fail them in presence of the slightest obstacles, and at length to transform itself before their Master’s Cross into a most shameful cowardice! They, the salt of the earth!

Nevertheless, these words were true! Today, whether they will or no, men are forced to admit it. Cast your eyes upon the map of the world. Where is moral life, where is progress, where is civilisation, where is hope, where is liberty, where, in a word, is the future? Where the words of those Galileans have been heard, where they have found their way into the national heart and spirit. Yes, the modern world owes what in it is best to that handful of men; they are our masters, and we are living upon their heritage. They have imparted to our beliefs and manners a power so great that we all feel its in­fluence. Whilst the ancient world gradually languished and decayed so that, at the very zenith of its civilisation, it had become a mere corpse whose decomposed elements crumbled into dust, in all Christian societies there is a hidden sap which resists everything, and which, after eighteen centuries, spreads its victorious power in all directions. The faith of the Galileans has so completely mingled with our life, that we can no longer eliminate it. It has entered our laws to transform and perfect them; it has entered our manners to save them from the corrup­tion in which modern paganism would plunge them; it has entered our home-life and dwells in the tender and holy respect with which the Christian wife and child are surrounded; it is in the purest of our joys which selfish­ness does not wither; it is in our ever-awakening and ever-increasing sympathy for the poor and the destitute; it is in the consolations which the Gospel pours upon our sufferings; it is in the words of life and hope immortal that we write upon the graves of our departed friends; it is in our conscience when it revolts against iniquities and crimes which, had it not been for Christianity, would have left us indifferent; it is even in the generous indigna­tion which the inconsistencies and cowardly infidelities which Christians call forth on the part of unbelievers; it is everywhere; and the Master spoke true when, addressing His disciples, He said to them: “Ye are the salt of the earth.”

It is this saying of our Lord that I would meditate upon today. It contains a simple and striking illus­tration of the influence which Christians are to exercise upon the world. What is the nature of this influence? How do we exercise it? Those are the two questions which, with God’s help, we shall endeavour to solve. There are two ways of acting upon men: the one outward, by material or moral constraint; the other inward, by persuasion. Which of these did Christ adopt? You know it as well as I. He who laid claim to universal dominion, He uttered not one word from which we may infer that He leaned upon the arm of force. With His Divine glance He embraced the future; He foretold the antipathy, the contempt, the persecution, the hatred which the Gospel would raise; but at the same time He promised that the truth deposited in the earth like a grain of mustard-seed would become a great tree beneath whose shadow all the nations would one day take refuge. He imparted to a dozen men the truth which He possessed unlimitedly, He inspired them with His spirit, and when He sent them to the conquest of the world. He said to them: “Ye are the salt of the earth.” Thus was the Church established; thus, after the lapse of three centuries, the Cross was planted on all points of the known world.

But the Church grew weary of that slow and sublime task. Forgetting that the Master had bid her subdue the world by truth, she sought to govern it by the hand of might. She asked for that outward dominion which Jesus Himself had refused in the day of His temptation. She obtained it—by what craft, by what violence, by what persecution, you well know. I am aware that many pretend that the Church herself never oppressed souls, and that this responsibility must be cast upon civil power. But this mode of reasoning is simply a strange equivocation; as for me, between the ecclesiastical power which gives up to the executioner, and the executioner himself, I see only the distance which separates the head that thinks from the arm that strikes, and, all things considered, I think that the arm which kills is less odious than the head that wills and orders the murder. Let us be true! The Church has sought to rule by force; she has pretended to realise a universal theocracy. Ah! I know how much of true greatness there was in this dream; I know that she meant to save souls; I know that she said to the world: “Obey me, I am thy mother!” But the world was seized with a shudder of horror when it saw that mother’s hands dyed in the blood of her wan­dering children. She thought thus to acquire supreme dominion over the nations. Of course success would not have justified her; but has she met with success? It may have seemed so when at certain epochs she contrived to stifle heresy, and to impose Catholic unity upon the nations crouching at her feet. But what has been over­looked is the fact, that from that very hour the missionary spirit which had characterised primitive Christianity was suddenly arrested; that at the close of the Middle Ages the Christian Church had witnessed the decline and fall of all the centres of life and light; of Carthage, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Constantinople, Athens; that the third part of her territory had escaped her even before the Reformation. That which is too much disregarded is the fact that it is in the midst of the races which have bowed longest beneath the yoke of that factitious unity that modern unbelief makes most ravages and provokes the most bitter hostilities against Christianity. That is what the Church has gained by wishing to govern the world by force, instead of subduing it by the Spirit.

Against this spectacle allow me to set another. One day, about two centuries and a half ago, a handful of exiles landed on a rock of the New England coast. They had come to seek a spot where, unmolested, they might pray the God of the Bible. There, in solitude, amidst all manner of privations, they raised the first refuge which ever was opened in the whole world for conscience freed from the yoke of men. Slowly they grew. In that new society there was neither the authority of a secular hier­archy, nor altar protected by the sword, nor dominion assured to the clergy, nothing but Christian faith acting by its own inherent virtue, nothing but the salt of the earth permeating consciences with its strong savour; and some years ago, the nation which they thus founded pre­sented to the world a magnificent spectacle before which Protestants and Catholics alike gazed with admiration. It was the spectacle of an immense people spontaneously bowing beneath the Divine hand, the spectacle of Chris­tian faith sincerely, openly professed by the most illus­trious chiefs, magistrates, and soldiers, who in their pro­clamations, in the senate as in the camp, affirmed the true God and His intervention in history, spoke of repent­ance and humiliation, joined in a common prayer, and thus closed the most gigantic struggle without one appeal to vengeance, without one attack against liberty. That is what we have seen, and in the words of a great Catholic orator, the sun of the nineteenth century never shone on anything more beautiful.

Therefore faith, Christian life, acting from soul to soul and thereby penetrating the world, is the only efficacious means of establishing the reign of God here below. Moreover, it is the only means we have still at our dis­posal, and I rejoice at this. I know that many believers turn a regretful glance upon the past, and dream for the Church of a return to those privileges, to those prero­gatives which would anew ensure its dominion over souls. Vain regrets! That time has fled, and fled for ever. All your complaints will not bring it back again. Modern society will no longer accept the external yoke of a Church; it will never again give you what you ask of it. What surprises me is that faith should ever be shaken by such a fact. What! your faith falters be­cause the Church is brought back again to the very conditions in which Christ had established it, because instead of imposing itself upon the world as a political institution, it must act in its bosom as the salt of the earth! Your faith totters because you can no longer obtain a dominion which would rest merely upon a factitious and soon hypocritical respect. Ah! look be­yond this, and instead of claiming of this world the power and outward authority which it denies you, ask of the Head of the Church the secret of that invisible and spiritual power by which alone the world can be conquered.

We now understand what is the nature of the influ­ence which Christians are to exercise upon the world. That influence is spiritual, and, in the second place, I add that it is individual; by this I mean that every believer is to exercise it. I insist upon this thought, and this is why. It is impossible not to be struck with the inclination we all have of shaking off the yoke of our religious responsibility, and of casting it upon a system or an institution. For the great majority of our fellow-men, faith consists in accepting what the Church does for them; the Church teaches, prays, confirms, absolves, sanctifies, guides the soul from the cradle to the grave, and the first of their duties towards it is docility. Well, I believe that this idea which favours our secret instincts of levity and moral apathy is directly opposed to the spirit of the Gospel. It is not of the Church Jesus spoke when He said: “Ye are the salt of the earth,” neither was it of revealed truth, but of Christians. We must be made aware of this; no institution, no system, no book, not even the Bible, can fulfil the mission for which it has pleased God to call us. This is alarming, overpowering for our weakness, but it is so nevertheless. Ye are the salt of the earth. It has pleased God that the truth, having become incarnate in His Son, should also in a certain measure become in­carnate in every Christian, that in him it should trans­form itself into life, and thus, passing from heart to heart, convert the world. Christianity will be what Christians are. Vainly would you escape this solemn responsibility, vainly would you cast it upon others; no one has a right to take it from you, and you have no right to shake it off. Vainly would you, lay Christians, lay it upon us, your ministers; in the name of the Gospel I reject it, for here we may apply the words of the Apostle: “Every man shall bear his own burden.” Whatever you do, you must be the salt of the earth, and the future of truth in the world depends upon each of you. How, then, shall we exercise that mighty influence? That is the question we have still to solve.

There are two modes by which we can act spiritually upon our brethren: by language, written or spoken, and by our life. In the first place, by language. Language! What power lies in human speech! The Word is the name by which St. John calls the Son of God Himself. Well! our words must be so thoroughly impregnated with the savour of the Gospel that they will bear within themselves a virtue. Is that your idea and your ambi­tion? Alas! I know that for many of those who hear me, it is enough that the Christian word be heard from the pulpit, and to that quarter they look for the pro­pagation of truth. Preaching! Ah! you can never say anything too lofty or too grand concerning it. Yes, when the words which are uttered from the Christian pulpit are truly penetrated with the salt of the Gospel, when they reach consciences and alarm them, when they trouble hearts and stir them, when they place before our eyes the realities of the invisible world so that they seem truly present to us, then indeed they are the two-edged sword of which Scripture tells. Yes, were those words uncultured and rude, awkward and unpolished, if they issue from a deeply convinced heart, if they have that inimitable accent of authority which Christian faith gives, they are indeed a power which can transform the world. But how can we think, without a fearful heart-sinking, of what preaching becomes when the salt of the Gospel has lost its savour? A man ascends this pulpit which Christian faith has prepared for him, and this man, instead of looking to the God who sends him, thinks only of those who listen to his words; instead of being preoccupied with the message of which he is but the bearer, he thinks only of the ideas of his age which he is anxious to please; instead of troubling consciences, he aims only at quieting them, and people think they have sufficiently praised him when they have said that he is a successful and popular preacher. Popular! Ah! was St. Paul popular when his voice troubled sinners and scandalised the wise? Was Christ popular when He saw crowds murmuringly disperse and He was left well-nigh alone? Ah! God preserve us from such popularity as this! No! it is by another feature that you must recognise a faithful preach­ing, by this feature which a great monarch, too much accustomed to the low flattery of court preachers, pointed out in a single phrase: One day Louis XIV. said to a monk who had preached the Gospel without weakness, “Father, when I hear others preach, I am satisfied with their sermons; but when I hear you, I am dissatisfied with myself.” He was right, and would to God that he had never heard any but such preaching! Would to God that, enlightened on his monstrous pride, he had spared his country the demoralising spectacle of a persecuting devotion joined to the most shameful pollution! Ah! would to God we also, in our turn, might send you away dissatisfied with yourselves! Would to God we might so deeply stir your hearts that you would leave this sanctuary anxious, annoyed, it may be, but at least troubled and serious!

Nevertheless, do not be mistaken; preaching, were it the most faithful, will never suffice to propagate the Gospel. As for me, I confess with sorrow that I am struck with its impotence. Think of all that is displayed in our pulpits of energy, conviction, efforts, thoughts, and words, and for what mean results! What may be the cause of this? Habit, doubtless, and especially the idea, which is so deeply rooted in our midst, that pulpit language is more or less a conventional language. Everything is allowed to the pulpit. No one will be surprised if from it, in general terms, I oppose unbelief and worldliness, if I speak of the judgment of God, or of the necessity of repentance and conversion. On the contrary, people expect this. They expect and require it, and the unbeliever and worldling find it most natural; beforehand they know what they will hear, and after having heard it and given their appreciation of our discourse, they find it equally natural to resume, at the very door of our churches, their frivolous thoughts, their trivial conversations, and their worldliness. In vain do we summon all our energy, and beg of them to alter their life; they will perhaps say that the sermon was impressive, but not for an instant will they think that it referred to themselves, to their own salvation, to their eternal future. Oh, sorrowful thought! But now enter this court of justice, see that advocate who, without con­viction, perhaps, pleads before a tribunal a cause with which important interests are connected. See how his client listens, see how his lustrous eyes, his compressed features, his whole attitude betrays the anxiety with which he follows the argument; for upon this pleading depends a fortune or an inheritance. Does this heir whom passion absorbs think for a moment of the out­ward form of the discourse he hears, of its literary beauties, of the inflections of the voice or of the graceful attitude of his advocate? He cares very little indeed for all this. What he wishes is that it be proved that he has the law on his side; what he wishes is that his cause be victorious. His cause, do you hear? Yes, that injured right, that disputed heritage, that fortune upon which his happiness depends. Alas! and when we speak to you of the inheritance of the skies, of the salvation of your soul, and of the irrevocable sentence of the just Judge, you listen with more or less attention or curiosity, you sum up your critical impressions in a general judg­ment, and declare that, all things considered, the dis­course was tame or that it was interesting.

That is why it is foolish to expect the diffusion of truth from preaching alone. But do you know the means of rendering these same truths efficacious and powerful? Preach them elsewhere. Try this, and you will see if the salt of the Gospel has lost its savour? Here you are, for instance, my young brother, in a circle of men of your own age, engaged in the same pursuits as you; around you all the questions of the day are dis­cussed with the rashness and intrepidity of youth, which no problem arrests. The conversation soon turns upon religious matters; all you believe, all we preach to you here, is discussed, criticised, attacked, and perhaps ridiculed, in a few moments. You suffer; a secret uneasiness tortures you, but you remain silent. Yes, strange to say, men are cowards when they are called to confess their faith. Men who would affront death without shrinking, men who, for a political cause, will become impassioned and will brave raillery, such men will now be timid and fearful, trembling lest they should call forth a smile. Oh! if the question were simply to declare in favour of this or that religious opinion, of the Pope’s temporal power or against it, of the orthodox or the liberal party, they would not be embarrassed. But to open their hearts, to affirm what they believe in their intimate and hidden life, to speak of the God in whom they hope, that seems to them an impossibility. And yet if, triumphing over that natural cowardice, you dared to speak then, if without infatuation and in courageous, firm, and sincere accents you confessed your faith and your hopes, I affirm that in this there would be something more persuasive than in all our discourses. Were your words rejected or scoffed at, you would not­withstanding inevitably awaken in the minds of those who would hear you, a feeling of respect, and without con­fessing it, it may be, they would understand all there is of power in that faith which, when it passes by our mouth, scarce succeeds in moving them.

Oh! what power, brethren, in language thus placed at the service of truth, and how truly it is the salt of the earth! Yes, even though it seems to have been lost on the soil like a useless seed. Can you ever tell what a word of faith, truth, and love may bring forth? Do you know how far its mysterious action may extend? Do you know how many hearts it may reach? Does not history, in each of its pages, reveal the extraordinary influence of words uttered in secret, perhaps, and which, falling into a heart, have become the germ of a renewed life? In Egyptian tombs, grains of wheat have been found which had been deposited in the hands of the dead three thou­sand years ago. They have been cast in the ground and have germinated, and produced magnificent ears of corn. Yes, thirty centuries passing over those seeds buried in the depths of the grave, had not destroyed that prodigious vitality. And think you that God, who has endowed matter with so mighty a power of life, will allow those words of faith, hope, and love which you cast into the vast field of the world to be wholly wasted away? Be undeceived: they can never die; they also will germi­nate in the depths where they are buried. Christians, ye who speak in the name of the living God, ye are the salt of the earth!

But what, after all, are words without action? And what influence can they exert if they are not the expres­sion of our life? It is the honour of Christianity that it cannot progress if it be not realised by those who pro­claim it. That the savour of the Gospel may be im­parted to others, it must, first of all, have penetrated us. Other causes may succeed if pleaded by rhetoricians, by phrasemongers; that of the Gospel cannot. Suppose a Church possessing the most powerful orators, the most skilful apologists, the most profound reasoners, if that Church be without holiness, it will also remain without influence.

History furnishes us with a striking example of this. I know not if in any country or at any period of its history the Catholic Church possessed so great a number of noble minds and fine geniuses as towards the year 1700. What an age was that in which Bossuet, Fénélon, Massillon, Bourdaloue, each of whom would have sufficed to render his epoch illustrious, were heard in turns in the churches of Paris! Depth of thought, sublimity of expression, exactness of reasoning, penetrating unction, clearness, grace, poetry, all was there; if ever human language seemed likely to be efficacious, it surely was then; and yet, thirty years later, France, corrupted by the regency, was at the feet of Voltaire, and the eighteenth century was prepared. Now, if we have beheld that profound and unexampled fall, it is because in the Church that produced those great men, laxity of morals, venality, corruption had entered; it is because, in spite of Pascal, casuistry reigned over conscience, a dull hypocrisy was secretly mining its foundations, unbelief was rapidly in­vading the clergy itself, so that, when philosophy swept over France like a stormy wind, it found no rampart whatever to arrest its progress. Ah! if for our happi­ness we had but possessed beside that brilliant constella­tion of distinguished men a humble, living, and faithful Church, impregnated with the Spirit of God, which had been for us the salt of the earth!

Let us come back to ourselves. If all we have said be true, it follows that our life, far more than our words, exercises a powerful influence around us. The action of words is intermittent; that of life is continuous. Now what is an intermittent power beside a permanent force? What is the blast of the most violent storm beside that law of tides which daily raises and lowers the ocean in an endless motion? What is the eruptive force which casts up to the sky the burning lava of a volcano com­pared with the power of gravitation which brings down to the centre all the elements of matter? Likewise what are our words, our prayers, our liveliest effusions of piety, beside that still and unostentatious preaching of our daily life? That is not all. The action of our life is involun­tary, and therein lies its strength. Let us not be mis­taken. It is not when we wish to act upon others that we best succeed; on the contrary, when our fellows discover our intention, they instinctively guard against us; they arm themselves with mistrust, and close their hearts to us; but how will they escape the influence of a life which daily, hourly, by the fruits it bears, proclaims the sentiment by which it is animated? Do you not see that under all its forms, and in every way it enters and penetrates minds, and leaves in them a savour which nothing can destroy, so that if you should ask me what is the most powerful, the most efficacious method of pro­pagating saving truth, I would be forced to answer that the best means is to realise it fully in your life.

Besides, all are not called to speak; but show me the Christian who, in his own special way, cannot act upon the world by his life. He fills this mission, the man who, in presence of injustice, powerfully protests and startles as by a thunderbolt the conscience of his con­temporaries; but she fills it also, the poor nurse who, in the wards of a hospital, breathing a murderous atmo­sphere, watches beside the couch of the victims of the dreaded pestilence. He fills this mission, the missionary who, far from all his heart could love, and in presence of a dull and stony indifference, prays, preaches, waits and glorifies God by his patience more than many another by his martyrdom; but he fills it also, the young man who, at the entrance of a brilliant career, called to take part in an unfair transaction, breaks all his future hopes and silently returns to the painful labour which will procure him his daily bread. He fills this mission, the scholar, the writer, who, indefatigable even to his old age, employs all his powers in defending the convictions upon which his soul lives; but she fills it too, the maiden who, at the age when the world calls her and surrounds her with its seductions and flattery, resists it, chooses a life of devotion and sacrifice, and displays the pure light of grace and beauty decked with a celestial reflection. He fills this mission, the man who, having received of God immense wealth, consecrates it with unwearied activity and perseverance to works of faith and charity; but he fills it also, the sick man who, upon his bed of pain and incapable of action, living upon charity perhaps, serves God without complaint, bows his head beneath His paternal hand, and teaches us by the touch­ing outbursts of his gratitude to blush at our own thanklessness. Well? all these visible or secret actions, all these known or unknown acts of devotion, all these sufferings, all these sacrifices, all these are what sustains the Church, what causes the truth to progress, what saves the world. Suppress them all, and what will be left you wherewith to face the powers of evil? What force, what resistance will you have to oppose them? What would we become without that continued action of holiness, of Christian charity, which daily, hourly, fills the Church and the world with a renewed life? What would be the ocean if its waters, losing their powerful savour, became tasteless, insipid, nauseous, and left deadly miasma upon our shores after each of its tides? What would become of society deprived of the salt of the Gospel? What would become of that bril­liant civilisation which bears in its midst so many elements of scepticism and dissolution? Ah! see how the ancient world expires, after forty centuries’ exis­tence, in the mire of despotism and of an unutterable corruption.

And here what I affirmed of the human language comes back to me with renewed force: words of truth, I have said, can never be lost. Now, do you think that an action of faith, of charity, can ever perish? No; it enters that immense *ensemble* of good which increases, and derives strength from each of our acts of devotion, from all our prayers, from all our sacrifices. Though ignored and despised, it serves nevertheless to the advancement of the reign of God upon earth. Each act of abnegation, of charity, is for the Church a victory and for the empire of evil a defeat. Each sacrifice which faith inspires renders the triumph of truth more certain. Some years ago, an English ship, the “London,” perished in the Bay of Biscay, dragging down with it into the depths of the ocean more than two hundred human beings; but on this ship, amidst that fearful scene and the roar of the storm, the voice of prayer was heard; in the supreme hour, when the only remaining boat was being detached from the side of the vessel, some of the shipwrecked were seen, oh, heroic spectacle! giving up their only chance of safety to others whose lives they considered more useful than their own; and when the boat rowed off from the deck of the ship, now almost buried beneath the waves, the wife of a missionary unfastened her cloak and flung it after the departing ones, that it might serve to protect some of them from the cold. Will this touching and sublime act of Chris­tian charity die buried with her beneath the waves of the ocean which have swept over the bodies of those unfortunate beings? No, it remains, it has been added to that marvellous history of the sacrifices which the spirit of Christ produces here below; and in the unceas­ing struggle which Christian love wages against selfish­ness, it will be of more service towards the progress of truth than all our words.

I have shown what is the influence which every Christian life must exert on the world. Have you recognised yourselves in this picture, and are you sure that you exercise this penetrating action upon those who surround you?

The world is unanimous today in condemning the austere piety which dreads the contact of mankind, which feels no sympathy for the generous causes that inflame humanity, which keeps away from public life, from all the noble research of the human mind, and admits of no possible holiness save in the narrow circle wherein it confines itself. In all imaginable strains men say and repeat that the Christian must join in the preoccupations of his age, and that there is no sphere of human activity, whether politics, science, art, or literature, in which religion cannot find its place. So long as this general principle is affirmed, no objection is raised. How could the natural heart look with anything but joy upon those paths which open to it? With joy it enters them, and thus returns to the world; but is it to permeate it with the spirit of Christ? That is the question. Ah! if it be to lose the stern savour of piety, to become converted to the ideas, sentiments, and language that reign in the world, better far had it been for it to remain in solitude; for solitude, in spite of its strange and gloomy aspects, is a power; by keeping apart from society, one may act upon it more powerfully than at first sight it would seem. We complain of the scarcity of individual convictions and of strong characters. Such convictions, such characters are not to be acquired in the world. It is not on the road-side, it is not in the dust of our public walks that we see the oak raising heavenward its gigantic trunk, and spreading its vigorous branches in all direc­tions; neither is it in the enervating atmosphere of worldly circles that you will find truly virile souls capable of will and action. The greatest prophets have all dwelt in the desert; there is also a moral solitude which all who aim at being the witnesses of the truth must know. Society, even the best, weakens and un­nerves us in the long run; we continually, though unawares, yield to the opinions of others; we often sacrifice to them what was most precious to us, the share of the truth which we were called to give to the world. I even dare to affirm that religious society may become unwholesome if the soul, in its midst, cannot enter into communion with God; there also we may fall into the prevailing current of ideas, of injustice, of prejudices as regards men and things; there also we may don I know not what pious livery which is the fashion of the day. What, then, will it be if the Christian imprudently associates with those who are strangers to his faith and hopes? Foolish, indeed, must he be if he does not per­ceive that in this dangerous intercourse he will be the loser! See, in fact, how rapidly the world succeeds in robbing him of the convictions which were his strength! It employs all manner of means to attain this end—threats or flattery, promises or scorn; and the day comes when the salt loses its savour, and sorrowfully we question whether it will ever get it back again. How many Christian lives which, of yore, were full of the most austere fervour, have thus ended miserably! Vainly would they employ themselves in the service of God to­day. They can no longer do so. The world ensnares them more and more; it enchains and paralyses them. Do not look for any generous devotion on their part; charity becomes ever more foreign and sacrifice ever more impossible to them, and the service of God ceases to have any attraction in their sight. O God, keep us from such an end, and after having deposited Thy saving truth in our souls, grant that we may ever be its firm and faithful witnesses!