

## Chapter 7: The French Clergyman's Counsel, Part 2

But I shall not make digression into other men's stories which have no relation to my own; so I return to what concerns our affair in the island. He came to me one morning (for he lodged among us all the while we were upon the island), and it happened to be just when I was going to visit the Englishmen's colony, at the furthest part of the island; I say, he came to me, and told me, with a very grave countenance, that he had for two or three days desired an opportunity of some discourse with me, which he hoped would not be displeasing to me, because he thought it might in some measure correspond with my general design, which was the prosperity of my new colony, and perhaps might put it, at least more than he yet thought it was, in the way of God's blessing.

I looked a little surprised at the last of his discourse, and turning a little short, "How, sir," said I, "can it be said that we are not in the way of God's blessing, after such visible assistances and deliverances as we have seen here, and of which I have given you a large account?"

If you had pleased, sir," said he, with a world of modesty, and yet great readiness, "to have heard me, you would have found no room to have been displeased, much less to think so hard of me, that I should suggest that you have not had wonderful assistances and deliverances; and I hope, on your behalf, that you are in the way of God's blessing, and your design is

exceeding good, and will prosper. But, sir, though it were more so than is even possible to you, yet there may be some among you that are not equally right in their actions: and you know that in the story of the children of Israel, one Achan in the camp removed God's blessing from them, and turned His hand so against them, that six-and-thirty of them, though not concerned in the crime, were the objects of divine vengeance, and bore the weight of that punishment."

I was sensibly touched with this discourse, and told him his inference was so just, and the whole design seemed so sincere, and was really so religious in its own nature, that I was very sorry I had interrupted him, and begged him to go on; and, in the meantime, because it seemed that what we had both to say might take up some time, I told him I was going to the Englishmen's plantations, and asked him to go with me, and we might discourse of it by the way. He told me he would the more willingly wait on me thither, because there partly the thing was acted which he desired to speak to me about; so we walked on, and I pressed him to be free and plain with me in what he had to say.

"Why, then, sir," said he, "be pleased to give me leave to lay down a few propositions, as the foundation of what I have to say, that we may not differ in the general principles, though we may be of some differing opinions in the practice of particulars. First, sir, though we differ in some of the doctrinal articles of religion (and it is very unhappy it is so, especially in the case

before us, as I shall show afterwards), yet there are some general principles in which we both agree - that there is a God; and that this God having given us some stated general rules for our service and obedience, we ought not willingly and knowingly to offend Him, either by neglecting to do what He has commanded, or by doing what He has expressly forbidden. And let our different religions be what they will, this general principle is readily owned by us all, that the blessing of God does not ordinarily follow presumptuous sinning against His command; and every good Christian will be affectionately concerned to prevent any that are under his care living in a total neglect of God and His commands. It is not your men being Protestants, whatever my opinion may be of such, that discharges me from being concerned for their souls, and from endeavouring, if it lies before me, that they should live in as little distance from enmity with their Maker as possible, especially if you give me leave to meddle so far in your circuit."

I could not yet imagine what he aimed at, and told him I granted all he had said, and thanked him that he would so far concern himself for us: and begged he would explain the particulars of what he had observed, that like Joshua, to take his own parable, I might put away the accursed thing from us.

"Why, then, sir," says he, "I will take the liberty you give me; and there are three things, which, if I am right, must stand in the way of God's blessing upon your endeavours here, and which I should rejoice, for your sake and

their own, to see removed. And, sir, I promise myself that you will fully agree with me in them all, as soon as I name them; especially because I shall convince you, that every one of them may, with great ease, and very much to your satisfaction, be remedied. First, sir," says he, "you have here four Englishmen, who have fetched women from among the savages, and have taken them as their wives, and have had many children by them all, and yet are not married to them after any stated legal manner, as the laws of God and man require. To this, sir, I know, you will object that there was no clergyman or priest of any kind to perform the ceremony; nor any pen and ink, or paper, to write down a contract of marriage, and have it signed between them. And I know also, sir, what the Spaniard governor has told you, I mean of the agreement that he obliged them to make when they took those women, viz. that they should choose them out by consent, and keep separately to them; which, by the way, is nothing of a marriage, no agreement with the women as wives, but only an agreement among themselves, to keep them from quarrelling. But, sir, the essence of the sacrament of matrimony" (so he called it, being a Roman) "consists not only in the mutual consent of the parties to take one another as man and wife, but in the formal and legal obligation that there is in the contract to compel the man and woman, at all times, to own and acknowledge each other; obliging the man to abstain from all other women, to engage in no other contract while these subsist; and, on all occasions, as ability allows, to provide honestly for them and their children; and to oblige the women to the same or like conditions, on their side. Now, sir," says he, "these men may,

when they please, or when occasion presents, abandon these women, disown their children, leave them to perish, and take other women, and marry them while these are living;" and here he added, with some warmth, "How, sir, is God honoured in this unlawful liberty? And how shall a blessing succeed your endeavours in this place, however good in themselves, and however sincere in your design, while these men, who at present are your subjects, under your absolute government and dominion, are allowed by you to live in open adultery?"

I confess I was struck with the thing itself, but much more with the convincing arguments he supported it with; but I thought to have got off my young priest by telling him that all that part was done when I was not there: and that they had lived so many years with them now, that if it was adultery, it was past remedy; nothing could be done in it now.

"Sir," says he, "asking your pardon for such freedom, you are right in this, that, it being done in your absence, you could not be charged with that part of the crime; but, I beseech you, flatter not yourself that you are not, therefore, under an obligation to do your utmost now to put an end to it. You should legally and effectually marry them; and as, sir, my way of marrying may not be easy to reconcile them to, though it will be effectual, even by your own laws, so your way may be as well before God, and as valid among men. I mean by a written contract signed by both man and woman, and by all the witnesses present, which all the laws of Europe would decree

to be valid."

I was amazed to see so much true piety, and so much sincerity of zeal, besides the unusual impartiality in his discourse as to his own party or church, and such true warmth for preserving people that he had no knowledge of or relation to from transgressing the laws of God. But recollecting what he had said of marrying them by a written contract, which I knew he would stand to, I returned it back upon him, and told him I granted all that he had said to be just, and on his part very kind; that I would discourse with the men upon the point now, when I came to them; and I knew no reason why they should scruple to let him marry them all, which I knew well enough would be granted to be as authentic and valid in England as if they were married by one of our own clergymen.

I then pressed him to tell me what was the second complaint which he had to make, acknowledging that I was very much his debtor for the first, and thanking him heartily for it. He told me he would use the same freedom and plainness in the second, and hoped I would take it as well; and this was, that notwithstanding these English subjects of mine, as he called them, had lived with these women almost seven years, had taught them to speak English, and even to read it, and that they were, as he perceived, women of tolerable understanding, and capable of instruction, yet they had not, to this hour, taught them anything of the Christian religion - no, not so much as to know there was a God, or a worship, or in what manner God was to be

served, or that their own idolatry, and worshipping they knew not whom, was false and absurd. This he said was an unaccountable neglect, and what God would certainly call them to account for, and perhaps at last take the work out of their hands. He spoke this very affectionately and warmly.

"I am persuaded," says he, "had those men lived in the savage country whence their wives came, the savages would have taken more pains to have brought them to be idolaters, and to worship the devil, than any of these men, so far as I can see, have taken with them to teach the knowledge of the true God. Now, sir," said he, "though I do not acknowledge your religion, or you mine, yet we would be glad to see the devil's servants and the subjects of his kingdom taught to know religion; and that they might, at least, hear of God and a Redeemer, and the resurrection, and of a future state - things which we all believe; that they might, at least, be so much nearer coming into the bosom of the true Church than they are now in the public profession of idolatry and devil-worship."

I could hold no longer: I took him in my arms and embraced him eagerly.

How far," said I to him, "have I been from understanding the most essential part of a Christian, viz. to love the interest of the Christian Church, and the good of other men's souls! I scarce have known what belongs to the being a Christian."

"Oh, sir! do not say so," replied he; "this thing is not your fault." - "No," said I; "but why did I never lay it to heart as well as you?" - "It is not too late yet," said he; "be not too forward to condemn yourself."

"But what can be done now?" said I: "you see I am going away."

"Will you give me leave to talk with these poor men about it?"

"Yes, with all my heart," said I: "and oblige them to give heed to what you say too."

"As to that," said he, "we must leave them to the mercy of Christ; but it is your business to assist them, encourage them, and instruct them; and if you give me leave, and God His blessing, I do not doubt but the poor ignorant souls shall be brought home to the great circle of Christianity, if not into the particular faith we all embrace, and that even while you stay here." Upon this I said, "I shall not only give you leave, but give you a thousand thanks for it."

I now pressed him for the third article in which we were to blame. "Why, really," says he, "it is of the same nature. It is about your poor savages, who are, as I may say, your conquered subjects. It is a maxim, sir, that is or ought to be received among all Christians, of what church or pretended church soever, that the Christian knowledge ought to be propagated by all



possible means and on all possible occasions. It is on this principle that our Church sends missionaries into Persia, India, and China; and that our clergy, even of the superior sort, willingly engage in the most hazardous voyages, and the most dangerous residence amongst murderers and barbarians, to teach them the knowledge of the true God, and to bring them over to embrace the Christian faith. Now, sir, you have such an opportunity here to have six or seven and thirty poor savages brought over from a state of idolatry to the knowledge of God, their Maker and Redeemer, that I wonder how you can pass such an occasion of doing good, which is really worth the expense of a man's whole life."

I was now struck dumb indeed, and had not one word to say. I had here the spirit of true Christian zeal for God and religion before me. As for me, I had not so much as entertained a thought of this in my heart before, and I believe I should not have thought of it; for I looked upon these savages as slaves, and people whom, had we not had any work for them to do, we would have used as such, or would have been glad to have transported them to any part of the world; for our business was to get rid of them, and we would all have been satisfied if they had been sent to any country, so they had never seen their own. I was confounded at his discourse, and knew not what answer to make him.

He looked earnestly at me, seeing my confusion.

Sir," says he, "I shall be very sorry if what I have said gives you any offence."  
- "No, no," said I, "I am offended with nobody but myself; but I am perfectly confounded, not only to think that I should never take any notice of this before, but with reflecting what notice I am able to take of it now. You know, sir," said I, "what circumstances I am in; I am bound to the East Indies in a ship freighted by merchants, and to whom it would be an insufferable piece of injustice to detain their ship here, the men lying all this while at victuals and wages on the owners' account. It is true, I agreed to be allowed twelve days here, and if I stay more, I must pay three pounds sterling PER DIEM demurrage; nor can I stay upon demurrage above eight days more, and I have been here thirteen already; so that I am perfectly unable to engage in this work unless I would suffer myself to be left behind here again; in which case, if this single ship should miscarry in any part of her voyage, I should be just in the same condition that I was left in here at first, and from which I have been so wonderfully delivered." He owned the case was very hard upon me as to my voyage; but laid it home upon my conscience whether the blessing of saving thirty-seven souls was not worth venturing all I had in the world for. I was not so sensible of that as he was. I replied to him thus:  
"Why, sir, it is a valuable thing, indeed, to be an instrument in God's hand to convert thirty-seven heathens to the knowledge of Christ: but as you are an ecclesiastic, and are given over to the work, so it seems so naturally to fall in the way of your profession; how is it, then, that you do not rather offer yourself to undertake it than to press me to do it?"

Upon this he faced about just before me, as he walked along, and putting me to a full stop, made me a very low bow.

I most heartily thank God and you, sir," said he, "for giving me so evident a call to so blessed a work; and if you think yourself discharged from it, and desire me to undertake it, I will most readily do it, and think it a happy reward for all the hazards and difficulties of such a broken, disappointed voyage as I have met with, that I am dropped at last into so glorious a work."

I discovered a kind of rapture in his face while he spoke this to me; his eyes sparkled like fire; his face glowed, and his colour came and went; in a word, he was fired with the joy of being embarked in such a work. I paused a considerable while before I could tell what to say to him; for I was really surprised to find a man of such sincerity, and who seemed possessed of a zeal beyond the ordinary rate of men. But after I had considered it a while, I asked him seriously if he was in earnest, and that he would venture, on the single consideration of an attempt to convert those poor people, to be locked up in an unplanted island for perhaps his life, and at last might not know whether he should be able to do them good or not? He turned short upon me, and asked me what I called a venture? "Pray, sir," said he, "what do you think I consented to go in your ship to the East Indies for?"

"ay," said I, "that I know not, unless it was to preach to the Indians." -

"Doubtless it was," said he; "and do you think, if I can convert these thirty-

seven men to the faith of Jesus Christ, it is not worth my time, though I should never be fetched off the island again? - nay, is it not infinitely of more worth to save so many souls than my life is, or the life of twenty more of the same profession? Yes, sir," says he, "I would give God thanks all my days if I could be made the happy instrument of saving the souls of those poor men, though I were never to get my foot off this island or see my native country any more. But since you will honour me with putting me into this work, for which I will pray for you all the days of my life, I have one humble petition to you besides." - "What is that?" said I. - "Why," says he, "it is, that you will leave your man Friday with me, to be my interpreter to them, and to assist me; for without some help I cannot speak to them, or they to me."

I was sensibly touched at his requesting Friday, because I could not think of parting with him, and that for many reasons: he had been the companion of my travels; he was not only faithful to me, but sincerely affectionate to the last degree; and I had resolved to do something considerable for him if he out-lived me, as it was probable he would. Then I knew that, as I had bred Friday up to be a Protestant, it would quite confound him to bring him to embrace another religion; and he would never, while his eyes were open, believe that his old master was a heretic, and would be damned; and this might in the end ruin the poor fellow's principles, and so turn him back again to his first idolatry. However, a sudden thought relieved me in this strait, and it was this: I told him I could not say that I was willing to part with Friday on any account whatever, though a work that to him was of

more value than his life ought to be of much more value than the keeping or parting with a servant. On the other hand, I was persuaded that Friday would by no means agree to part with me; and I could not force him to it without his consent, without manifest injustice; because I had promised I would never send him away, and he had promised and engaged that he would never leave me, unless I sent him away.

He seemed very much concerned at it, for he had no rational access to these poor people, seeing he did not understand one word of their language, nor they one of his. To remove this difficulty, I told him Friday's father had learned Spanish, which I found he also understood, and he should serve him as an interpreter. So he was much better satisfied, and nothing could persuade him but he would stay and endeavour to convert them; but Providence gave another very happy turn to all this.

I come back now to the first part of his objections. When we came to the Englishmen, I sent for them all together, and after some account given them of what I had done for them, viz. what necessary things I had provided for them, and how they were distributed, which they were very sensible of, and very thankful for, I began to talk to them of the scandalous life they led, and gave them a full account of the notice the clergyman had taken of it; and arguing how unchristian and irreligious a life it was, I first asked them if they were married men or bachelors? They soon explained their condition to me, and showed that two of them were widowers, and the other three were

single men, or bachelors. I asked them with what conscience they could take these women, and call them their wives, and have so many children by them, and not be lawfully married to them? They all gave me the answer I expected, viz. that there was nobody to marry them; that they agreed before the governor to keep them as their wives, and to maintain them and own them as their wives; and they thought, as things stood with them, they were as legally married as if they had been married by a parson and with all the formalities in the world.

I told them that no doubt they were married in the sight of God, and were bound in conscience to keep them as their wives; but that the laws of men being otherwise, they might desert the poor women and children hereafter; and that their wives, being poor desolate women, friendless and moneyless, would have no way to help themselves. I therefore told them that unless I was assured of their honest intent, I could do nothing for them, but would take care that what I did should be for the women and children without them; and that, unless they would give me some assurances that they would marry the women, I could not think it was convenient they should continue together as man and wife; for that it was both scandalous to men and offensive to God, who they could not think would bless them if they went on thus.

All this went on as I expected; and they told me, especially Will Atkins, who now seemed to speak for the rest, that they loved their wives as well as if

they had been born in their own native country, and would not leave them on any account whatever; and they did verily believe that their wives were as virtuous and as modest, and did, to the utmost of their skill, as much for them and for their children, as any woman could possibly do: and they would not part with them on any account. Will Atkins, for his own particular, added that if any man would take him away, and offer to carry him home to England, and make him captain of the best man-of-war in the navy, he would not go with him if he might not carry his wife and children with him; and if there was a clergyman in the ship, he would be married to her now with all his heart.

This was just as I would have it. The priest was not with me at that moment, but he was not far off; so to try him further, I told him I had a clergyman with me, and, if he was sincere, I would have him married next morning, and bade him consider of it, and talk with the rest. He said, as for himself, he need not consider of it at all, for he was very ready to do it, and was glad I had a minister with me, and he believed they would be all willing also. I then told him that my friend, the minister, was a Frenchman, and could not speak English, but I would act the clerk between them. He never so much as asked me whether he was a Papist or Protestant, which was, indeed, what I was afraid of. We then parted, and I went back to my clergyman, and Will Atkins went in to talk with his companions. I desired the French gentleman not to say anything to them till the business was thoroughly ripe; and I told him what answer the men had given me.

Before I went from their quarter they all came to me and told me they had been considering what I had said; that they were glad to hear I had a clergyman in my company, and they were very willing to give me the satisfaction I desired, and to be formally married as soon as I pleased; for they were far from desiring to part with their wives, and that they meant nothing but what was very honest when they chose them. So I appointed them to meet me the next morning; and, in the meantime, they should let their wives know the meaning of the marriage law; and that it was not only to prevent any scandal, but also to oblige them that they should not forsake them, whatever might happen.

The women were easily made sensible of the meaning of the thing, and were very well satisfied with it, as, indeed, they had reason to be: so they failed not to attend all together at my apartment next morning, where I brought out my clergyman; and though he had not on a minister's gown, after the manner of England, or the habit of a priest, after the manner of France, yet having a black vest something like a cassock, with a sash round it, he did not look very unlike a minister; and as for his language, I was his interpreter. But the seriousness of his behaviour to them, and the scruples he made of marrying the women, because they were not baptised and professed Christians, gave them an exceeding reverence for his person; and there was no need, after that, to inquire whether he was a clergyman or not. Indeed, I was afraid his scruples would have been carried so far as that he



would not have married them at all; nay, notwithstanding all I was able to say to him, he resisted me, though modestly, yet very steadily, and at last refused absolutely to marry them, unless he had first talked with the men and the women too; and though at first I was a little backward to it, yet at last I agreed to it with a good will, perceiving the sincerity of his design.

When he came to them he let them know that I had acquainted him with their circumstances, and with the present design; that he was very willing to perform that part of his function, and marry them, as I had desired; but that before he could do it, he must take the liberty to talk with them. He told them that in the sight of all indifferent men, and in the sense of the laws of society, they had lived all this while in a state of sin; and that it was true that nothing but the consenting to marry, or effectually separating them from one another, could now put an end to it; but there was a difficulty in it, too, with respect to the laws of Christian matrimony, which he was not fully satisfied about, that of marrying one that is a professed Christian to a savage, an idolater, and a heathen - one that is not baptised; and yet that he did not see that there was time left to endeavour to persuade the women to be baptised, or to profess the name of Christ, whom they had, he doubted, heard nothing of, and without which they could not be baptised. He told them he doubted they were but indifferent Christians themselves; that they had but little knowledge of God or of His ways, and, therefore, he could not expect that they had said much to their wives on that head yet; but that unless they would promise him to use their endeavours with their wives to

persuade them to become Christians, and would, as well as they could, instruct them in the knowledge and belief of God that made them, and to worship Jesus Christ that redeemed them, he could not marry them; for he would have no hand in joining Christians with savages, nor was it consistent with the principles of the Christian religion, and was, indeed, expressly forbidden in God's law.

They heard all this very attentively, and I delivered it very faithfully to them from his mouth, as near his own words as I could; only sometimes adding something of my own, to convince them how just it was, and that I was of his mind; and I always very carefully distinguished between what I said from myself and what were the clergyman's words. They told me it was very true what the gentleman said, that they were very indifferent Christians themselves, and that they had never talked to their wives about religion.

Lord, sir," says Will Atkins, "how should we teach them religion? Why, we know nothing ourselves; and besides, sir," said he, "should we talk to them of God and Jesus Christ, and heaven and hell, it would make them laugh at us, and ask us what we believe ourselves. And if we should tell them that we believe all the things we speak of to them, such as of good people going to heaven, and wicked people to the devil, they would ask us where we intend to go ourselves, that believe all this, and are such wicked fellows as we indeed are? Why, sir; 'tis enough to give them a surfeit of religion at first hearing; folks must have some religion themselves before they begin to teach

other people."

"Will Atkins," said I to him, "though I am afraid that what you say has too much truth in it, yet can you not tell your wife she is in the wrong; that there is a God and a religion better than her own; that her gods are idols; that they can neither hear nor speak; that there is a great Being that made all things, and that can destroy all that He has made; that He rewards the good and punishes the bad; and that we are to be judged by Him at last for all we do here? You are not so ignorant but even nature itself will teach you that all this is true; and I am satisfied you know it all to be true, and believe it yourself."

"That is true, sir," said Atkins; "but with what face can I say anything to my wife of all this, when she will tell me immediately it cannot be true?"

"Not true!" said I; "what do you mean by that?"

"Why, sir," said he, "she will tell me it cannot be true that this God I shall tell her of can be just, or can punish or reward, since I am not punished and sent to the devil, that have been such a wicked creature as she knows I have been, even to her, and to everybody else; and that I should be suffered to live, that have been always acting so contrary to what I must tell her is good, and to what I ought to have done."

"Why, truly, Atkins," said I, "I am afraid thou speakest too much truth;" and with that I informed the clergyman of what Atkins had said, for he was impatient to know.

Oh," said the priest, "tell him there is one thing will make him the best minister in the world to his wife, and that is repentance; for none teach repentance like true penitents. He wants nothing but to repent, and then he will be so much the better qualified to instruct his wife; he will then be able to tell her that there is not only a God, and that He is the just rewarder of good and evil, but that He is a merciful Being, and with infinite goodness and long-suffering forbears to punish those that offend; waiting to be gracious, and willing not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should return and live; and even reserves damnation to the general day of retribution; that it is a clear evidence of God and of a future state that righteous men receive not their reward, or wicked men their punishment, till they come into another world; and this will lead him to teach his wife the doctrine of the resurrection and of the last judgement. Let him but repent himself, he will be an excellent preacher of repentance to his wife."

I repeated all this to Atkins, who looked very serious all the while, and, as we could easily perceive, was more than ordinarily affected with it; when being eager, and hardly suffering me to make an end, "I know all this, master," says he, "and a great deal more; but I have not the impudence to talk thus to my wife, when God and my conscience know, and my wife will

be an undeniable evidence against me, that I have lived as if I had never heard of a God or future state, or anything about it; and to talk of my repenting, alas!" (and with that he fetched a deep sigh, and I could see that the tears stood in his eyes) "'tis past all that with me."

"Past it, Atkins?" said I: "what dost thou mean by that?"

"I know well enough what I mean," says he; "I mean 'tis too late, and that is too true."

I told the clergyman, word for word, what he said, and this affectionate man could not refrain from tears; but, recovering himself, said to me, "Ask him but one question. Is he easy that it is too late; or is he troubled, and wishes it were not so?" I put the question fairly to Atkins; and he answered with a great deal of passion, "How could any man be easy in a condition that must certainly end in eternal destruction? that he was far from being easy; but that, on the contrary, he believed it would one time or other ruin him."

"What do you mean by that?" said I. - "Why," he said, "he believed he should one time or other cut his throat, to put an end to the terror of it."

The clergyman shook his head, with great concern in his face, when I told him all this; but turning quick to me upon it, says, "If that be his case, we may assure him it is not too late; Christ will give him repentance. But pray,"

says he, "explain this to him: that as no man is saved but by Christ, and the merit of His passion procuring divine mercy for him, how can it be too late for any man to receive mercy? Does he think he is able to sin beyond the power or reach of divine mercy? Pray tell him there may be a time when provoked mercy will no longer strive, and when God may refuse to hear, but that it is never too late for men to ask mercy; and we, that are Christ's servants, are commanded to preach mercy at all times, in the name of Jesus Christ, to all those that sincerely repent: so that it is never too late to repent."

I told Atkins all this, and he heard me with great earnestness; but it seemed as if he turned off the discourse to the rest, for he said to me he would go and have some talk with his wife; so he went out a while, and we talked to the rest. I perceived they were all stupidly ignorant as to matters of religion, as much as I was when I went rambling away from my father; yet there were none of them backward to hear what had been said; and all of them seriously promised that they would talk with their wives about it, and do their endeavours to persuade them to turn Christians.

The clergyman smiled upon me when I reported what answer they gave, but said nothing a good while; but at last, shaking his head, "We that are Christ's servants," says he, "can go no further than to exhort and instruct: and when men comply, submit to the reproof, and promise what we ask, 'tis all we can do; we are bound to accept their good words; but believe me, sir,"

said he, "whatever you may have known of the life of that man you call Will Atkin's, I believe he is the only sincere convert among them: I will not despair of the rest; but that man is apparently struck with the sense of his past life, and I doubt not, when he comes to talk of religion to his wife, he will talk himself effectually into it: for attempting to teach others is sometimes the best way of teaching ourselves. If that poor Atkins begins but once to talk seriously of Jesus Christ to his wife, he will assuredly talk himself into a thorough convert, make himself a penitent, and who knows what may follow."

Upon this discourse, however, and their promising, as above, to endeavour to persuade their wives to embrace Christianity, he married the two other couple; but Will Atkins and his wife were not yet come in. After this, my clergyman, waiting a while, was curious to know where Atkins was gone, and turning to me, said, "I entreat you, sir, let us walk out of your labyrinth here and look; I daresay we shall find this poor man somewhere or other talking seriously to his wife, and teaching her already something of religion." I began to be of the same mind; so we went out together, and I carried him a way which none knew but myself, and where the trees were so very thick that it was not easy to see through the thicket of leaves, and far harder to see in than to see out: when, coming to the edge of the wood, I saw Atkins and his tawny wife sitting under the shade of a bush, very eager in discourse: I stopped short till my clergyman came up to me, and then having showed him where they were, we stood and looked very steadily at

them a good while. We observed him very earnest with her, pointing up to the sun, and to every quarter of the heavens, and then down to the earth, then out to the sea, then to himself, then to her, to the woods, to the trees.

Now," says the clergyman, "you see my words are made good, the man preaches to her; mark him now, he is telling her that our God has made him, her, and the heavens, the earth, the sea, the woods, the trees, &c."

"I believe he is," said I. Immediately we perceived Will Atkins start upon his feet, fall down on his knees, and lift up both his hands. We supposed he said something, but we could not hear him; it was too far for that. He did not continue kneeling half a minute, but comes and sits down again by his wife, and talks to her again; we perceived then the woman very attentive, but whether she said anything to him we could not tell. While the poor fellow was upon his knees I could see the tears run plentifully down my clergyman's cheeks, and I could hardly forbear myself; but it was a great affliction to us both that we were not near enough to hear anything that passed between them. Well, however, we could come no nearer for fear of disturbing them: so we resolved to see an end of this piece of still conversation, and it spoke loud enough to us without the help of voice. He sat down again, as I have said, close by her, and talked again earnestly to her, and two or three times we could see him embrace her most passionately; another time we saw him take out his handkerchief and wipe her eyes, and then kiss her again with a kind of transport very unusual; and



after several of these things, we saw him on a sudden jump up again, and lend her his hand to help her up, when immediately leading her by the hand a step or two, they both kneeled down together, and continued so about two minutes.

My friend could bear it no longer, but cries out aloud, "St. Paul! St. Paul! behold he prayeth." I was afraid Atkins would hear him, therefore I entreated him to withhold himself a while, that we might see an end of the scene, which to me, I must confess, was the most affecting that ever I saw in my life. Well, he strove with himself for a while, but was in such raptures to think that the poor heathen woman was become a Christian, that he was not able to contain himself; he wept several times, then throwing up his hands and crossing his breast, said over several things ejaculatory, and by the way of giving God thanks for so miraculous a testimony of the success of our endeavours. Some he spoke softly, and I could not well hear others; some things he said in Latin, some in French; then two or three times the tears would interrupt him, that he could not speak at all; but I begged that he would contain himself, and let us more narrowly and fully observe what was before us, which he did for a time, the scene not being near ended yet; for after the poor man and his wife were risen again from their knees, we observed he stood talking still eagerly to her, and we observed her motion, that she was greatly affected with what he said, by her frequently lifting up her hands, laying her hand to her breast, and such other postures as express the greatest seriousness and attention; this continued about half a

quarter of an hour, and then they walked away, so we could see no more of them in that situation.

I took this interval to say to the clergyman, first, that I was glad to see the particulars we had both been witnesses to; that, though I was hard enough of belief in such cases, yet that I began to think it was all very sincere here, both in the man and his wife, however ignorant they might both be, and I hoped such a beginning would yet have a more happy end.

But, my friend," added I, "will you give me leave to start one difficulty here? I cannot tell how to object the least thing against that affectionate concern which you show for the turning of the poor people from their paganism to the Christian religion; but how does this comfort you, while these people are, in your account, out of the pale of the Catholic Church, without which you believe there is no salvation? so that you esteem these but heretics, as effectually lost as the pagans themselves."

To this he answered, with abundance of candour, thus: "Sir, I am a Catholic of the Roman Church, and a priest of the order of St. Benedict, and I embrace all the principles of the Roman faith; but yet, if you will believe me, and that I do not speak in compliment to you, or in respect to my circumstances and your civilities; I say nevertheless, I do not look upon you, who call yourselves reformed, without some charity. I dare not say (though I know it is our opinion in general) that you cannot be saved; I will by no

means limit the mercy of Christ so far as think that He cannot receive you into the bosom of His Church, in a manner to us unperceivable; and I hope you have the same charity for us: I pray daily for you being all restored to Christ's Church, by whatsoever method He, who is all-wise, is pleased to direct. In the meantime, surely you will allow it consists with me as a Roman to distinguish far between a Protestant and a pagan; between one that calls on Jesus Christ, though in a way which I do not think is according to the true faith, and a savage or a barbarian, that knows no God, no Christ, no Redeemer; and if you are not within the pale of the Catholic Church, we hope you are nearer being restored to it than those who know nothing of God or of His Church: and I rejoice, therefore, when I see this poor man, who you say has been a profligate, and almost a murderer kneel down and pray to Jesus Christ, as we suppose he did, though not fully enlightened; believing that God, from whom every such work proceeds, will sensibly touch his heart, and bring him to the further knowledge of that truth in His own time; and if God shall influence this poor man to convert and instruct the ignorant savage, his wife, I can never believe that he shall be cast away himself. And have I not reason, then, to rejoice, the nearer any are brought to the knowledge of Christ, though they may not be brought quite home into the bosom of the Catholic Church just at the time when I desire it, leaving it to the goodness of Christ to perfect His work in His own time, and in his own way? Certainly, I would rejoice if all the savages in America were brought, like this poor woman, to pray to God, though they were all to be Protestants at first, rather than they should continue pagans or heathens;

firmly believing, that He that had bestowed the first light on them would farther illuminate them with a beam of His heavenly grace, and bring them into the pale of His Church when He should see good."