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Wesley, Vol. 08 (of 32)**

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THE REV. JOHN WESLEY, VOL. 08 (OF 32) ***

The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.

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THE
WORKS

OF THE

Rev. JOHN WESLEY, M.A.

Late Fellow of *Lincoln-College*, OXFORD.

VOLUME VIII.

BRISTOL:

Printed by WILLIAM PINE, in *Wine-Street*.

MDCCLXXII.

THE
C O N T E N T S

Of the EIGHTH VOLUME.

An Extract from the Christian Pattern.

[Book II.](#)

[Book III.](#)

[Book IV.](#) (*An exhortation to the Holy Communion.*)

A Treatise on Christian Prudence.

[Chapter I.](#) *Of the end proposed by Christian Prudence, and the general means of obtaining it.*

[Chapter II.](#) *How far Christian Prudence is concerned in the manner of keeping God's commandments.*

[Chapter III.](#) *Of the subordinate means that serve to assist us in keeping the commandments of God.*

[Chapter IV.](#) *The conduct of a prudent Christian, with regard to the government of himself.*

[Chapter V.](#) *A persuasive to the study of Christian Prudence, with some advices relating to the practice of it.*

[Nicodemus:](#)

Or a Treatise on the Fear of Man.

[Chapter I.](#) *Of the nature and causes of the fear of man.*

[Chapter II.](#) *Of the signs and effects of the fear of man.*

[Chapter III.](#) *Of the mischiefs caused by the fear of man.*

[Chapter IV.](#) *Of the excuses that are usually made for the fear of man.*

[Chapter V.](#) *Of the means whereby we may be delivered from the fear of man.*

[Chapter VI.](#) *Of Christian discretion.*

[Chapter VII.](#) *Of the good which arises from the boldness of faith, conquering the fear of man.*

[Reflections](#) on the Conduct of Human Life; with reference to Learning and Knowledge.

[The Life of God](#) in the Soul of Man.



An Extract of the

CHRISTIAN PATTERN:

Or, a treatise on the imitation of Christ. Written in Latin by *Thomas a Kempis*.

B O O K II.

C H A P T E R VI.

Of the joy of a good conscience.

THE glory of a good man is the testimony of a good conscience.

Have a good conscience, and thou shalt ever have joy.

Thou shalt rest sweetly if thy heart condemn thee not.

Never rejoice but when thou hast done well.

Sinners have never true joy, nor feel inward peace; because *There is no peace to the wicked*, saith the Lord.

2. To glory in tribulation is no hard thing for him that loveth; for to glory so, is to glory in the cross of our Lord.

That glory is short which is given and received from men.

Sorrow always accompanieth the glory of the world.

The glory of the good is in their consciences, and not in the tongues of men. The gladness of the just is of God, and in God; and their joy is of the truth,

*He enjoyeth great peace of mind, that careth neither for the praise nor dispraise of men.

3. He will easily be content, whose conscience is pure.

Thou art not the more holy, though thou art praised; nor the less, though thou art dispraised.

*What thou art, thou art; neither canst thou be said to be greater than thou art in the sight of God.

If thou considerest what thou art within, thou wilt not care what men say of thee.

Man seeth the face, but God looketh into the heart.

Man considereth the deeds, but God weigheth the intention.

To do always well, and to dis-esteem himself, is a sign of an humble soul.

4. He that seeketh no witness for himself from without, doth shew that he hath wholly committed himself unto God.

For not he who commendeth himself is approved, saith St. Paul; but whom God commendeth.

*To walk inwardly with God, and not to love any thing without, is the state of a spiritual man.

CHAPTER VII.

Of the love of Jesus.

BLESSED is he that understandeth what it is to love *Jesus*, and to despise himself for *Jesus*.

Thou oughtest to leave what thou hast loved hitherto, for the sake of *Jesus*; for he will be loved alone.

The love of things created is deceitful and inconstant: the love of *Jesus* is faithful and constant.

*He that cleaveth unto a creature, shall fall when it falls: he that embraceth *Jesus*, shall stand firmly for ever.

Love him, and keep him for thy friend, who, when all go away, will not forsake thee.

*Thou must one day be left of all whether thou wilt or no.

2. Keep close to *Jesus*, both in life and death, and commit thyself unto his faithfulness, who, when all fail, can alone help thee.

Thy beloved will not admit of a rival, but will have thy heart alone, and sit like a king in his own throne.

*Whatsoever affection thou reposest in men out of *Jesus*, is all no better than lost.

*Trust not, nor lean upon a broken reed; for all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof shall wither away.

3. Thou shalt quickly be deceived if thou regardest only the outward appearance of men.

If in them thou seekest comfort and profit, thou shalt often feel loss.

If thou seekest *Jesus* in all things, thou shalt surely find *Jesus*.

*If thou seekest thyself, thou shalt also find thyself, but to thy own destruction.

For if a man doth not seek Jesus, he doth more hurt to himself than the world and all his adversaries could do.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of familiar friendship with Jesus.

***W**HEN Jesus is present, all is well; but when Jesus is absent every thing is hard.

When Jesus speaketh not inwardly, we have no true comfort: but if Jesus speak but one word, we feel much consolation.

Did not *Mary* presently rise from the place where she wept, when *Martha* said unto her, *The master is come and calleth for thee?*

Happy the hour when Jesus calleth from tears to spiritual joy!

How dry and cold art thou without Jesus! How foolish and vain if thou desirest any thing out of Jesus!

*Is not this a greater loss, than if thou shouldst lose the whole world?

2. What can the world profit thee without Jesus?

To be without Jesus is a grievous hell; and to be with Jesus a sweet paradise.

If Jesus be with thee, no enemy can hurt thee.

He that findeth Jesus, findeth a good treasure, yea, a good above all goods:

And he that looseth Jesus, looseth too much, and more than the whole world.

*He is most poor, that liveth without Jesus: and he is most rich that is well with Jesus.

3. It is a great skill to know how to converse with Jesus, and great wisdom to know and keep Jesus.

Be humble and peaceable, and Jesus will be with thee.

Be devout and quiet, and Jesus will stay with thee.

Thou mayest soon drive away Jesus, if thou turnest aside to outward things.

And if thou shouldest drive him away, unto whom wilt thou fly, and what friend wilt thou seek?

*Without a friend thou canst not live well, and if Jesus be not above all friends unto thee, thou shalt be very sorrowful and desolate.

Thou dost therefore foolishly, if thou dost trust or rejoice in any other.

It is better for thee to have all the world against [♦](#) thee, than Jesus offended with thee.

[♦](#) "hee" replaced with "thee"

Therefore of all things that are dear to thee, let Jesus alone be peculiarly thy beloved.

*Love all for Jesus, but Jesus for himself.

Jesus Christ alone is to be beloved; who alone is faithful above all friends.

For him, and in him, let as well friends as foes be dear unto thee; pray to him for all these, that all may know and love him.

*Never desire to be commended or beloved; for that appertaineth unto God.

*Neither do thou desire that the heart of any should be set on thee; nor do thou set thy heart on any: but let Jesus be in thee, and in every good man.

*4. Be pure and free within, and entangle not thy heart with any creature.

And truly, unless thou be prevented and drawn by his grace, thou shalt never attain to this, to forsake and cast off all, that thou mayst be united to him alone.

For when the grace of God cometh unto man, then he has power to do all things; and when that retires, he is poor and weak, and as it were, left only to affliction.

Yet in this thou oughtest not to despair; but to resign thyself to the will of God, and to bear all things that befall thee for the glory of Christ: for after winter followeth summer, and after a storm a great calm.

CHAPTER IX.

Of the want of all comfort.

IT is not hard to despise human comfort, when we have divine.

It is much to be able to want both human and divine comfort; and for the glory of God to be willing to endure desolation of heart.

What great matter is it, if thou be chearful and devout at the coming of grace? This hour is to be wished for of all men.

*He rideth easily enough whom the grace of God carrieth.

And what marvel, if he feel no burthen, who is bore up by the Almighty?

2. We are always willing to have something for our comfort: and a man doth hardly put off himself.

*See thou learn to forsake thy intimate and beloved friend for the love of God.

*Be not grieved when thou art forsaken by a friend, knowing that we all at length must be separated from one another.

When a man trusteth in himself, he easily slideth into human comfort:

But a true lover of Christ betakes not himself to human comfort, but rather sustains hard exercises and great labour for Christ.

*3. When therefore spiritual comfort is given thee from God, receive it thankfully: but know, it is the gift of God, not thy desert.

*Be not puffed up, neither do thou presume vainly: but be rather more humble for the gift, and more wary in all thy actions: for that hour will pass away, and temptation will succeed.

4. *David*, in the presence of the divine grace, said, *I said in my prosperity, I shall never be removed.*

But in the absence of it, having experienced what he was in himself, he adds, *Thou didst turn thy face from me, and I was troubled.*

Yet doth he not despair, but more earnestly prayeth unto the Lord, and saith, *Then cried I unto thee, O Lord, and gat me to my Lord right humbly.*

Lastly, he receiveth the fruit of his prayer, and witnesseth that he was heard, saying, *The Lord hath heard me, and taken pity on me: the Lord is become my helper.*

But wherein? *Thou hast turned*, saith he, *my heaviness into joy: thou hast compassed me about with gladness.*

5. Whereupon therefore can I hope, or wherein ought I to trust, but in the great mercy of God alone, and in the only hope of heavenly grace?

For whether I enjoy the presence of good men, or religious brethren, or faithful friends, or holy books, or excellent treatises, or sweet songs and hymns, all these help little, and have little relish, when grace forsaketh me, and I am left in my own poverty.

At such a time there is no better remedy than patience, and renouncing my own will, according to the will of God.

Temptation going before, is wont to be a sign of ensuing comfort.

And to those that are proved by temptations, heavenly comfort is promised. *He that shall overcome*, saith He, *I will give him to eat of the tree of life.*

6. Divine comfort is given, that a man may be stronger to bear adversity.

There followeth temptation lest he should grow proud thereof.

*The devil sleepeth not, neither is the flesh as yet dead; therefore cease not to prepare thyself to the battle, for on thy right hand and on thy left are enemies that never rest.

CHAPTER X.

Of thankfulness for the grace of God.

WHY seekest thou rest, since thou art born to labour?

*Dispose thyself to patience, rather than to comfort; and to the bearing of the cross, rather than to joy.

What worldly man would not willingly receive spiritual joy and comfort, if he could always have it?

For spiritual comforts exceed all the delights of the world, and pleasures of the flesh.

2. False freedom of mind, and trust in ourselves are very contrary to heavenly visitations.

God doth well in giving his grace of consolation; but man doth evil in not returning all again unto God with thanksgiving.

And therefore the gifts of grace cannot flow in us, because we are not thankful to the giver, and return them not wholly to the fountain.

For grace ever attendeth him that is thankful; and from the proud shall be taken that which is given to the humble.

All that is high is not holy; nor all that is sweet, good; nor every desire pure; nor every thing that is dear unto us, grateful to God.

*I willingly accept that grace, whereby I may ever become more humble and careful, and more ready to renounce myself.

He that is taught by the gift of grace, and instructed by the withdrawing thereof, will not dare to attribute any good to himself, but will acknowledge himself poor and naked.

Give unto God that which is God's, and ascribe unto thyself that which is thine own; that is, give thanks to God for his grace, and acknowledge that nothing is thine, but only sin, and the punishment due thereto.

3. Set thyself always in the lowest place, and the highest shall be given thee; for thou canst not be in the highest, till thou hast been in the lowest.

The chief saints before God are the least in their own eyes: and how much the more glorious, so much the more humble.

Those that are firmly settled and grounded in God, can no way be proud.

4. Be therefore thankful for the least gift, so shalt thou receive greater.

Let the least appear unto thee very great, and the most contemned as an especial gift.

If thou considerest the worth of the Giver, no gift will seem little, or of too mean esteem. For that is not little which is given by the most high God.

Yea, if he should give punishment and stripes, it ought to be grateful; for he doth it always for our welfare, whatsoever he permitteth to befall us.

*He that desireth to keep the grace of God, let him be thankful for the grace given, and patient for the taking away thereof. Let him pray that it may return. Let him be wary and humble, lest he lose it.

CHAPTER XI.

That there are few who love the cross of Christ.

JESUS hath many lovers of his heavenly kingdom; but few bearers of his cross.

He hath many desirous of comfort, but few of tribulation.

He findeth many companions of his table, but few of his abstinence.

All desire to rejoice with him, but few will suffer any thing for him.

Many love Jesus so long as adversity happens not.

Many praise and bless him, as long as they receive comforts from him.

But if Jesus hide himself, and leave them but awhile, they fall either into complaint, or dejection.

2. But they that love Jesus for Jesus, and not for some comfort of their own, bless him in all tribulation and anguish of heart, as well as in the greatest comfort.

And although he should never give them comfort, yet they would ever praise him and always give him thanks.

3. O how powerful is the pure love of Jesus, which is mixed with no self-interest!

Do they not shew themselves to be rather lovers of themselves than of Christ, that always think of their own pleasure?

Where may one be found that is willing to serve God gratis?

4. It is hard to find any one so spiritual, that is stript of the love of all earthly things.

*For where is any one to be found that is indeed free from all affection to creatures?

If a man should give all his substance, yet it is as nothing.

And if he should do great penances, yet they are but little.

And if he should attain to all knowledge, he is yet far off.

*And if he should be very fervent in devotion, yet there is wanting one thing, which is most necessary for him.

*What is that? That having left all, he leave himself, and go wholly out of himself;

And that when he hath done all which he knew ought to be done, he know that he hath done nothing.

5. Let him not think that a great thing, which others may think so; but according to truth let him affirm himself to be an unprofitable servant, as our Saviour hath said, *When ye have done all things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.*

*Yet no man richer, no man more powerful, no man more free, than he that can leave himself and all things, and set himself in the lowest place.

CHAPTER XII.

Of the royal way of the holy cross.

THIS speech seemeth hard to many, *Renounce thyself, take up thy cross, and follow Jesus.*

But it will be much harder to hear that last word, *Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire.*

This sign of the cross shall be in heaven, when our Lord shall come to judgment.

Then all the servants of the cross shall draw near unto Christ the Judge with great confidence.

2. Why therefore fearest thou to take up the cross, which leadeth to a kingdom?

*In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life, in the cross is protection against our enemies, in the cross is heavenly sweetness, in the cross is strength of mind, in the cross is joy of spirit, in the cross is the height of virtue, in the cross is the perfection of holiness.

There is no salvation of the soul, nor hope of everlasting life, but in the cross.

Take up therefore thy cross, and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting.

He is gone before bearing his cross, and is dead for thee on the cross; that thou mayst also bear thy cross, and desire to die on the cross with him.

For, if thou diest with him, thou shalt also live with him: and if thou be his companion in pain, thou shalt be partaker with him in glory.

*3. Behold in the cross all doth consist, and all lieth in our dying upon it: for there is no other way to life, and to true inward peace, but the way of the holy cross.

*Go where thou wilt, seek whatsoever thou wilt, thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the holy cross.

*Dispose all things according to thy will and judgment; yet thou shalt ever find, that thou must suffer somewhat, either willingly, or against thy will, and so thou shalt ever find the cross.

For either thou shalt feel pain in thy body, or in thy soul tribulation of spirit.

4. Sometimes thou shalt be tried of God, sometimes thou shalt be exercised by thy neighbour; and often thou shalt be irksome to thyself.

Neither canst thou be delivered by any other remedy or comfort; but so long as it pleaseth God, thou must bear it.

For God will have thee learn to suffer tribulation; and to subject thyself wholly to him.

No man hath so cordial a feeling of the passion of Christ, as he who hath suffered the like himself.

The cross therefore is always ready, and every where waits for thee.

*Thou canst not escape it, whithersoever thou runnest; for wheresoever thou goest, thou carriest thyself with thee, and shalt ever find thyself.

*Both above and below, without and within, which way soever thou dost turn thee, every where thou shalt find the cross; and every where thou must have patience, if thou wilt enjoy an everlasting crown.

*5. If thou bear the cross willingly, it will bear thee.

If thou bear it unwillingly thou increasest thy load, and yet thou must bear it.

If thou cast away one cross, without doubt thou shalt find another, and that perhaps a more heavy one.

6. Thinkest thou to escape that which no man could ever avoid? Which of the saints in the world was without crosses and tribulations?

Verily Jesus Christ our Lord was never one hour without suffering so long as he lived. Christ, saith he, ought to suffer, and rise again from the dead, and so enter into his glory.

And dost thou seek any other way than this royal way, which is the way of the holy cross?

The whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom; and dost thou seek rest and joy?

*7. Indeed it is not of man to bear and love the cross, to keep the body under, to fly honours, to suffer reproaches gladly, to despise himself, and to rejoice in being despised, to bear all adversities and losses, and to desire no prosperity in this world.

If thou considerest thyself, thou art able to perform nothing of this.

But if thou trustest in the Lord, strength shall be given thee from heaven, and the world and flesh shall be made subject to thy command.

Neither shalt thou fear the devil, if thou art armed with faith, and bearest the cross of Christ.

8. Set therefore thyself, like a faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the cross of thy Lord.

Prepare thyself to bear many adversities; for so it will be with thee, wheresoever thou be; and so surely wilt thou find it, wheresoever thou hidest thyself.

*Drink of the cup of the Lord gladly, if thou wilt be his friend.

As for comforts leave them to God; let him do therein as shall best please him.

Set thou thyself to suffer tribulations, and account them the greatest comforts; for the sufferings of this life are not worthy of the glory which is to come, although thou alone couldst suffer them all.

*9. When thou shalt come to this, that tribulation shall be sweet unto thee for Christ, then think it well with thee, for thou hast found a paradise upon earth.

As long as it is grievous to thee to suffer, and thou desirest to fly it, so long shalt thou be ill at ease, and the tribulation thou fliest will follow thee every where.

Although thou hadst been wrapt into the third heaven with Paul, thou wouldst not for this be secure from suffering. *I (saith Jesus) will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name.*

It remaineth, therefore, that thou suffer, if thou wilt love Jesus, and perpetually serve him.

10. O that thou wert worthy to suffer something for the name of *Jesus*! How great glory would it be to thee! What joy to all the saints of God! How great edification also to thy neighbour!

For all commend patience, though few are willing to suffer.

With great reason thou oughtest to be willing to suffer a little for Christ, since many suffer far greater things for the world.

11. Know for certain that thou art to lead a dying life. And the more every one dieth to himself, the more he liveth to God.

No man is fit to attain unto heavenly things, unless he submit to suffer for Christ.

Nothing is more grateful unto God, nothing more wholesome to thee in this world, than to suffer willingly for Christ.

And if it were thy choice, thou shouldst rather wish to suffer adversities for Christ, than to enjoy many comforts; because hereby thou shouldst be more like Christ, and more conformable to all the saints.

For our proficiency consisteth not in many sweetnesses and comforts, but rather in suffering great afflictions and tribulations.

12. If any thing had been better and more profitable to the salvation of man than suffering, Christ surely would have shewn it by word and example.

But he plainly exhorteth all that follow him, to the bearing of the cross, and saith, *If any will come after me, let him renounce himself, and take up the cross, and follow me.*

So that when we have read and searched all, let this be the last conclusion, that by many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.

An Extract of the

CHRISTIAN PATTERN:

Or, a treatise on the imitation of Christ. Written in Latin by
Thomas a Kempis.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

Of the inward speech of Christ unto a faithful soul.

Christian. I WILL hear what the Lord God will speak in me. Blessed is the soul that heareth the Lord speaking *in her*, and receiveth from his mouth the word of comfort.

Blessed are those ears that receive the whispers of the divine voice, and listen not to the whisperings of the world.

Blessed indeed are those ears that hearken not to the voice which soundeth outwardly, but unto the truth which teacheth inwardly.

Blessed are the eyes which are shut to outward things, but open to those that are internal.

Blessed are they that delight to be at leisure for God, and rid themselves of all worldly impediments.

2. Consider these things, my soul, and shut up the door of thy sensual desires, that thou mayest hear what the Lord God speaketh in thee.

**Christ.* I am thy peace, thy life, and thy salvation.

**Keep thyself with me, and thou shalt find peace.*

Leave all transitory, and seek everlasting things.

What are all temporal things, but snares? And what do all creatures avail thee, if thou be forsaken by thy Creator?

Forsake therefore all earthly things, and labour to please thy Creator, and be faithful unto him, that thou mayst attain true happiness.

CHAPTER II.

That truth speaketh inwardly, without noise of words.

Christian.* **SPEAK, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

*I am thy servant, grant me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

*Incline my heart to the words of thy mouth. Let thy speech distil as the dew.

The children of Israel said unto *Moses*, *Speak thou unto us, and we will hear thee: let not the Lord speak unto us, lest we die.*

*Not so, Lord, not so, I beseech thee; but rather with the prophet Samuel, I humbly and earnestly intreat, *Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth.*

*Let not Moses speak unto me, nor any of the prophets; but do thou rather speak, O Lord God, the inspirer and enlightner of all the prophets; for thou alone, without them, canst perfectly instruct me; but they, without thee can profit nothing.

2. They, indeed, may sound forth words, but they cannot give spirit.

They speak well; but if thou be silent, they inflame not the heart.

They teach the letter, but thou openest the sense.

They bring forth mysteries, but thou unlockest the meaning of them.

They declare thy commandments, but thou helpst to fulfil them.

They shew the way, but thou givest strength to walk in it.

They work only outwardly, but thou instructest and enlightnest the heart.

They water, but thou givest the increase.

They make a noise with words; but thou givest to understand them.

*3. Let not therefore Moses speak unto me, but thou, my Lord God, the everlasting truth; lest I die, and prove unfruitful, if I be warned outwardly only, and not inflamed within.

Let not the word heard and not fulfilled, known and not loved, believed and not observed, turn to my condemnation.

Speak therefore, Lord, for thy servant heareth; for thou hast the words of eternal life.

*Speak, unto me, to the comfort of my soul, and to the amendment of my whole life, and to thy praise and glory, and everlasting honour.

CHAPTER III.

That the words of God are to be heard with humility, and that many weigh them not.

Christ. **S**ON, hear my words, words of the greatest sweetness, excelling all the knowledge of the philosophers and wise men of this world.

My words are spirit and life, not to be weighed by the understanding of man.

They are to be heard with silence and to be received with all humility and great affection.

Christian. Blessed is the man whom thou shalt instruct, O Lord, and shalt teach thy law: that thou mayest give him rest from the evil days, and that he be not destroyed upon earth.

2. *Christ*. I have taught the prophets from the beginning, and cease not in these days to speak to every one; but many are hardened, and deaf to my speech:

Most men more willingly listen to the world than to God; and follow sooner the desires of the flesh, than the will of God.

The world promiseth temporal and small things, and is served with great eagerness: I promise high and eternal things, and the hearts of men are unmoved.

Who is he that serveth and obeyeth me, with such care as the world and the lords therefore are served with?

Blush, therefore, slothful and complaining servant, that they are more eager for destruction, than thou for life.

They rejoice more in vanity, than thou in the truth.

And yet they are often frustrated of their hope; but my promise deceiveth none, nor sendeth him away empty that trusteth in me.

What I have promised, I will give; I will fulfil what I have said, to him that remains faithful in my love to the end.

I am the rewarder of all that are good, and try my servants with strong trials.

3. Write my words in thy heart and think diligently of them; for they will be very necessary in the time of temptation.

*What thou understandest not when thou readest, thou shalt know in the day of visitation.

I am wont to visit my elect two ways; with temptation, and with comfort.

And I daily read two lessons unto them; one reprehending their vices, another exhorting them to the increase of virtues.

He that hath my words, and despiseth them, hath him that shall judge him at the last day.

*4. *Christian.* O Lord my God, thou art to me whatsoever is good. Who am I, that I dare speak unto thee? I am thy poorest servant and a most vile worm, much more poor and contemptible than I can express.

*Yet remember, O Lord, that I am nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing.

Thou alone art good, just, and holy: thou canst do all things, thou fillest all things, only the proud thou sendest empty away.

*Remember thy mercies, and fill my heart with thy grace, thou who willest not that thy works shall be empty.

5. How can I bear myself, unless thou strengthenest me with thy mercy and grace?

Turn not thy face from me; delay not thy visitation; take not away thy comfort, lest my soul become as the thirsty land.

*Lord, teach me to fulfil thy will, teach me to live worthily and humbly in thy sight; for thou art my wisdom, thou dost truly know me, and didst know me before the world was made, and before I was born in the world.

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CHAPTER IV.

That we ought to live in truth and humility before God.

Christ. SON, walk before me in truth, and ever seek me in simplicity of heart.

He that walketh before me in truth, shall be defended from evil; and the truth shall deliver him from seducers, and from the detractions of the wicked.

If the truth have made thee free, thou shalt be free indeed.

Christian. Lord, it is true. According as thou saidst, so I beseech thee let it be with me; let thy truth teach me, and keep me and bring me safe to an happy end.

Let it deliver me from all evil affection and inordinate love: and I shall walk with thee in great freedom of heart.

2. *Christ.* I will teach thee those things that are right and pleasing in my sight.

Think of thy sins with great displeasure and grief, and never esteem thyself any thing for thy good works.

Thou art in very deed a sinner, thou art subject to, and encumbered with many passions.

Of thyself thou always tendest to nothing: thou art quickly cast down, quickly overcome, quickly troubled, quickly dissolved.

Thou hast nothing wherein thou canst glory, but many things for which thou oughtest to despise thyself; for thou art much weaker than thou art able to comprehend.

3. Make no account therefore of any thing that thou dost.

Let nothing seem great, nothing precious and wonderful; let nothing seem worthy of estimation, nothing high, nothing truly praise-worthy and desirable, but that which is everlasting.

Let the eternal truth above all things please thee. Let thy own great unworthiness always displease thee.

Fear nothing, fly nothing so much as thy vices and sins.

Some walk not sincerely in my sight: but will know my secrets, and understand the high things of God, neglecting themselves and their own salvation.

These often, because I resist them, fall into great temptations and sins.

4. Fear the judgments of God; dread the wrath of the Almighty. But discuss not the works of the highest. Search thine own iniquities, how much thou hast offended, and how much good thou hast neglected.

Some place their religion only in books, some in images, some in outward forms and ceremonies.

Some have me in their mouths, but little in their hearts.

There are others that being illuminated in their understandings, and purged in their affection, continually pant after things eternal; these perceive what the spirit of truth speaketh in them.

Because it teacheth them to despise earthly, and love heavenly things; to neglect the world, and all the day and night to desire heaven.



CHAPTER V.

Of the wonderful effects of divine love.

* *Christian.* I PRAISE thee, O heavenly Father, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, for that thou hast vouchsafed to remember me a poor creature.

O Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, thanks be unto thee, who, with thy comfort refreshest me, unworthy of all comfort.

I ever bless and glorify thee, with thy only begotten Son, and the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever.

*O Lord God, the holy lover of my soul, when thou shalt come into my heart, all that is within me will rejoice.

Thou art my glory and the joy of my heart.

Thou art my hope and refuge in the day of my tribulation.

2. But because I am still weak in love, I have need therefore to be strengthened and comforted by thee.

Visit me therefore often, and instruct ◆me with thy holy discipline.

◆ “we” replaced with “me”

*Deliver me from evil passions, and heal my heart of all inordinate affections; that being healed within, I may be made fit to love, strong to suffer, and constant to persevere.

3. *Christ.* Love is a great thing, which alone maketh every burden light, and beareth all the vicissitudes of life.

*For it carrieth a burden without a burden, and maketh every thing that is bitter, sweet and savoury.

The love of Jesus impelleth to do great things, and stirreth up continually to desire greater perfection.

Love will be aloft, and not kept down with any earthly thing.

Love will be free and loose from all worldly affection, lest its inward sight be hindered, lest it be entangled by any temporal prosperity, or subdued by adversity.

*Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing is stronger, nothing higher, nothing more large, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller nor better in heaven or in earth.

Because love is born of God, and cannot rest but in God, above all creatures.

4. He that loveth, flieth, runneth and rejoiceth; he is free and not bound.

*He giveth all for all, and hath all in all; for he resteth in the supreme One, from whom all good proceedeth.

He respecteth not the gifts, but turneth himself above all goods unto the Giver.

Love often knoweth no measure, but is inflamed above all measure.

*Love feeleth no burden, weigheth no pains, desireth above its strength; complaineth not of impossibility; for it thinketh all things possible.

*It is therefore able to undertake all things, and performeth and bringeth many things to pass; whereas he that doth not love, fainteth and sinketh under them.

*5. Love watcheth, and sleeping sleepeth not.

*Being tired is not weary, straitened is not pressed: frightened is not disturbed: but like a lively flame, it bursteth out aloft, and securely passeth through all.

If any one loveth, he knoweth what this meaneth.

The ardent affection of the soul crieth aloud in the ears of God, when it saith, *My God, my love, thou art wholly mine, and I am wholly thine.*

*6. *Christian.* Enlarge me in love, that with the inward mouth of my heart I may taste how sweet it is to love, and to be melted and swim in thy love.

Let me be possessed by love, mounting above myself with excessive fervour and admiration.

Let me sing the song of love, let me follow thee on high, my beloved: let my soul die away in thy praise, rejoicing through love.

*Let me love thee more than myself, and not myself but for thee, and all in thee that truly love thee, as the law of love commandeth, which shineth out from thee.

*5. *Christ.* Love is swift, sincere, pious, pleasant, and delightful: strong, patient, faithful, prudent, long-suffering, manly; and never seeking itself.

For where one seeketh himself, there he falleth from love.

*Love is circumspect, humble, and upright: not soft, nor light, nor attending unto vain things; but sober, chaste, constant, quiet, and guarded in all the senses.

Love is subject and obedient to superiors, vile, and despicable to itself, devout and thankful unto God, trusting and hoping always in him.

*8. He that is not ready to suffer all things, and to stand to the will of his beloved, is not worthy to be called a lover.

A lover ought to embrace willingly all that is hard and distasteful for his beloved.



CHAPTER VI.

Of a proof of a true lover.

Christ. SON, thou art not a valiant and prudent lover.

Christian. Wherefore, Lord?

Christ. Because thou givest over thy undertakings for a small difficulty, and too greedily seekest after comfort.

A valiant lover standeth firmly in temptations, and giveth not credit to the crafty persuasions of the enemy.

2. A prudent lover considereth not so much the gift of his lover, as the love of the giver.

He regardeth the love more than the value, and valueth his beloved above all his gifts.

A generous lover resteth not in the gift, but in me above every gift.

3. Know that thy ancient enemy doth ever strive to hinder thy desire to good, and to divert thee from all religious exercises; to wit, from the devout memory of my passion, from the profitable remembrance of thy sins, from the guard of thine own heart, and from the firm purpose of profiting in virtue.

He injecteth many evil thoughts, that he may cause a weariness in thee, to drive thee from prayer and holy reading.

Humble prayer is displeasing unto him; and if he could, he would cause thee to cease from receiving the sacrament.

Care not for him, although he should often set snares for thee.

If he suggest evil thoughts, say unto him,

Away unclean spirit; blush, miserable wretch; thou art very unclean, that bringest such things to mine ears.

Away from me, thou shalt have no part in me; Jesus shall be with me as a strong warrior, and thou shalt stand confounded.

The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?

Though hosts of men rise up against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid.

The Lord is my helper and my Redeemer.

CHAPTER VII.

That grace is to be guarded by humility.

Christ. **T**HINK, when thou art in grace, how miserable thou art wont to be without grace.

The way of man is not in his power, but it belongeth to God to comfort when he will, and how much he will, and whom he will; as it shall please him, and no more.

They that are unacquainted in the way of the Lord, unless they govern themselves by the counsel of discreet persons, may easily be deceived and overthrown.

2. And if they will rather follow their own judgment, than give credit to others that are experienced, the event will be dangerous.

Christian. Shall I speak unto my Lord who am dust and ashes?

If I esteem better of myself, behold thou standest against me, and my iniquities bear true witness against me, neither can I contradict it.

But if I know myself to be nothing, if I renounce all self-esteem, and account myself to be but dust; thy grace will be favourable unto me, and thy light will be near my heart.

And all self-esteem, how little soever, shall be swallowed up, and perish everlastingly.

Thou shewest myself unto me, what I am, and what I have been; for I am nothing, and I knew it not.

And if I be left to myself, behold I become all weakness.

But if thou lookest upon me, I am made strong.

And it is a great marvel, that I am suddenly lifted up, and so graciously embraced by thee, who by my own weight always sink downward.

3. Thy love is the cause thereof, freely preventing me, and relieving me in so many necessities; preserving me also from grievous dangers, and delivering me from innumerable evils.

For by inordinate loving myself, I lost myself; and by seeking thee alone, and loving thee, I have found both myself and thee, and by that love have more deeply brought myself to nothing.

For thou, O most sweet Lord, dealest with me above all desert, above all that I dare hope or ask.

*4. Blessed be thou, my God; for although I be unworthy of any benefits; yet thy bounty, and thy infinite goodness, never ceaseth to do good even to the ungrateful, and them that are far from thee.

*Turn us unto thee, O Lord, that we may be thankful, humble, and holy; for thou art our power, and our strength, and our salvation.



CHAPTER VIII.

That all things are to be referred unto God, as unto their last end.

Christ. **S**ON, I ought to be thy last end, if thou desirest to be truly blessed.

By this intention thy affection shall be purified, which is often inordinately bent down to itself, and unto creatures.

For if in any thing thou seekest thyself, thou soon fallest into a langour.

Refer therefore all things unto me, for I am he that hath given all.

*2. Out of me, as out of a living fountain, the little and the great, the poor and the rich, draw the water of life: and they that willingly and freely serve me, shall receive grace for grace.

But he that will glory out of me, or be delighted in any good that tends not to me, shall not be grounded in true joy, nor enlarged in his heart, but shall be many ways incumbered and straitned.

Thou oughtest therefore to ascribe nothing of good unto thyself, nor attribute goodness unto any man; but give all unto God, without whom man hath nothing.

I have bestowed all, and will that all be returned unto me again: and with great strictness, I require thanks.

3. This is the truth that putteth to flight vain-glory.

And if true love enter in, there shall be no envy, or straitness of heart, neither shall there be any place for self-love.

If thou art truly wise, in me alone thou wilt rejoice, in me alone thou wilt hope: for none is good but God alone, who is to be praised above all things, and to be blessed in all.



CHAPTER IX.

That it is a sweet thing to despise the world, and serve God.

Christian. NOW I will speak again, O Lord, and will not be silent; I will speak in the ears of my God, my Lord, and my King that is on high.

*O how great is the abundance of thy goodness, O Lord, which thou hast laid up for those that fear thee!

*But what art thou to them that love thee? What to them that serve thee with their whole heart?

*Truly, unspeakable is the sweetness of contemplating thee, which thou bestowest on them that love thee.

In this chiefly thou hast shewed me the sweetness of thy love: in that when I was not, thou madest me; and when I went astray a far off from thee, thou broughtest me back again, that I might serve thee.

2. O fountain of everlasting love, what shall I say of thee?

How can I forget thee, that hast vouchsafed to remember me, even after I had pined away, and perished?

Thou hast shewed mercy to thy servant beyond all my expectation.

Thou hast exhibited thy favour and friendship beyond all my desert.

What shall I return to thee for this favour?

Is it much that I should serve thee, whom all creatures are bound to serve?

*It ought not to seem much unto me to serve thee: but this rather seemeth much and marvellous unto me, that thou vouchsafest to receive into thy service one so poor and unworthy, and to join him with thy beloved servants.

*3. Behold, all is thine which I have, and whereby I serve thee.

*And yet, contrary-wise, thou rather servest me, than I thee.

*Behold heaven and earth, which thou hast created for the service of man, are ready at hand, and all daily perform whatsoever thou dost command.

*And this is little: thou hast also appointed the angels to the service of man.

*But that which excelleth all this is, that thou thyself hast vouchsafed to serve man, and hast promised to give thyself unto him.

4. What shall I give thee for all these thousands of benefits?

Would I could serve thee all the days of my life!

Would I were able at least for one day, to do thee worthy service!

Verily, thou art worthy of all service, of all honour, and everlasting praise.

*Verily, thou art my Lord, and I thy poor servant, that am bound to serve thee with all my might; neither ought I ever to be weary of praising thee.

*This I wish to do, this I desire: and whatsoever is wanting unto me, vouchsafe, I beseech thee to supply.

C H A P T E R X.

That the desires of our hearts are to be examined.

N, thou must still learn many things, which thou hast not yet well learned.

Christ. **S** *Christian.* What are those, Lord?

Christ. That thou frame thy desires wholly according to my pleasure: and be not a lover of thyself, but a zealous follower of my will.

Thy desires often inflame thee, and that vehemently; but consider, whether thou art moved rather for my honour, or for thine own profit.

If I be the cause, thou wilt be well content, howsoever I shall ordain:

But if there lurk in thee any self-seeking, behold this is it that hindereth thee, and weigheth thee down.

2. Beware therefore thou lean not too much upon any desire conceived without asking my counsel; lest afterward it repent thee, and thou dislikest what before pleased thee, and which thou zealously desiredst as the best.

For every affection that seemeth good, is not presently to be followed: nor every affection that at first seemeth evil to be avoided.

It is expedient to use a restraint even in good desires and endeavours, lest by importunity of desire thou incur distraction of mind, and by want of self-government be a scandal to others, or being gainsayed by others, thou be suddenly troubled and fall.

But thou oughtest to use violence, and resist manfully thy sensual appetites, and respect not, what the flesh would or would not; but rather to labour, that even perforce it be subject to the spirit.

*Thou dust, learn to obey.

*Thou earth and clay, learn to humble thyself, to bow down beneath the feet of all men.

Learn to break thine own will, and to yield thyself to all subjection.

3. Be zealous against thyself, and suffer not pride to live in thee.

*Shew thyself so lowly, such a little child, that every one may go over thee, and tread thee as dirt under their feet.

*Vain man, what hast thou to complain of?

*Vile sinner, what canst thou answer to them who reproach thee, who hast so often offended God, and so many times deserved hell?

But mine eye hath spared thee, because thy soul was precious in my sight:

That thou mightest know my love and always remain thankful for my benefits.

And that thou mightest continually study true subjection and humility, and patiently endure to be despiseth.

CHAPTER XI.

Of the considering the secret judgments of God, lest we be exalted on account of our good deeds.

Christian. **T**HOU thunderest forth thy judgments over me, O Lord; thou shakest all my bones with fear and trembling, and my soul is sore afraid.

I stand astonished, when I consider that the heavens are not pure in thy sight.

If thou hast found wickedness in angels, and hast not pardoned them, what shall become of me?

Stars fell from heaven; and am I, who am dust, proud?

2. There is therefore no sanctity, if thou, O Lord, withdrawest thy hand.

No wisdom availeth, if thou ceasest to govern.

No strength helpeth, if thou leavest to defend.

No chastity is secure, if thou dost not protect it.

No vigilance profits, if thy sacred watchfulness be not present.

For if we be left, we sink and perish: but if thou visitest us, we are raised up and live.

We are inconstant, but by thee we are established; we grow cold, but by thee we are inflamed.

3. O how meanly ought I to think of myself! How nothing ought I to esteem it, if I seem to have any good!

O Lord, with what profound humility ought I to submit myself to thy inscrutable judgments: where I find myself to be a very nothing! O unmeasurable height! O unpassable sea, where I find myself to be altogether nothing! Where then is the hiding-place of glory? Where is the confidence I once conceived of my own virtue?

All glorying is swallowed up in the depths of thy judgments over me.

4. What is all flesh in thy sight?

Shall the clay glory against him that frameth it?

How can he be lifted up with vain words, whose heart is truly subject to God?

All the world cannot lift him up whom the truth hath subjected unto itself; neither shall he be moved with the tongues of all his praisers, that hath set his whole hope upon God.

For as for them that speak, behold they are all nothing; they shall pass away, as doth the sound of their words: but the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever.

CHAPTER XII.

How we are to be affected, and what we are to say, in every thing which we desire.

Christ. **S**ON, say thus, in every thing; Lord if it be pleasing to thee, let this be thus.

Lord, if it be to thy honour, let this be done in thy name.

Lord, if thou seest it expedient for me, and knowest it to be profitable, then grant me to use this unto thy honour;

But if thou knowest it will be hurtful unto me, and not profitable to the health of my soul, take away this desire from me:

For every desire proceedeth not from the Holy Ghost, though it seemeth unto man right and good.

It is hard to judge rightly, whether a good spirit, or the contrary, incline thee to desire this or that, or whether thou art not moved by thine own spirit.

Many are deceived in the end, who at first seemed to be led by a good spirit.

2. Always therefore, whatsoever seemeth desirable to thee, let it be desired and prayed for in the fear of God, and with humility of heart.

And above all, thou oughtest to resign thyself, and to commit the whole unto Me, and say,

“Lord, thou knowest what is best, let this or that be done as thou pleasest.”

Give what thou wilt, and how much thou wilt, and when thou wilt.

Deal with me as thou thinkest good, and as best pleaseth thee, and is most for thy honour.

Set me where thou wilt, and deal with me in all things according to thy will.

I am in thy hand; turn me, and turn me again, which way soever thou pleasest.

Behold, I am thy servant, prepared for all things; for I desire not to live unto myself, but unto thee: and O that I could do it worthily and perfectly!

3. Grant me thy grace, O most gracious Jesus, that it may be with me, and labour with me, and continue with me unto the end.

Grant me always to desire and will that which is most acceptable unto thee, and best pleaseth thee.

Let thy will be mine, and let my will ever follow thine, and agree perfectly with it.

Let my will and nill be all one with thine, and let me not be able to will or nill any thing else, but what thou willest or nillest.

4. Grant that I may die to all things that are in the world, and for thy sake love to be contemned, and not be known in this world.

Grant that above all things that can be desired, I may rest in thee, may quiet my heart in thee.

Thou art the true peace of the heart, thou art the only rest; out of thee all things are troublesome and unquiet.

In this very peace, that is in thee, the one eternal good, may I sleep and rest. *Amen.*”

C H A P T E R X I I I .

That true comfort is to be sought in God alone.

MY soul, thou canst not be fully comforted, but in God, the comforter of the poor, and the helper of the humble.

Wait ◆awhile, O my soul, wait the divine promise, and thou shalt have abundance of all good things.

◆ “awile” replaced with “awhile” per Errata

*Use temporal things, desire eternal.

Thou canst not be satisfied with any temporal good, because thou art not created to enjoy them.

Although thou hadst all created good, yet wouldst thou not be happy or blessed; but in God, that hath created all things, thy whole happiness consisteth.

Vain and short is all human comfort.

Blessed and real is that comfort, which is received inwardly from the truth.

A devout man every where carrieth with him Jesus his comforter, and saith unto him, “Be present with me, Lord Jesus, in every place and time.

*Let this be my comfort, to be willing to want all human comfort.

And if thy comfort be wanting, let thy will, and just proving of me, be unto me as the greatest comfort: for thou wilt not be angry always, neither wilt thou threaten for ever.”

CHAPTER XIV.

That all our care is to be cast on God.

Christ. SON, suffer me to do with thee what I please: I know what is expedient for thee.

Thou thinkest like a man; thou judgest in many things as human affection persuadeth thee.

Christian. Lord, what thou sayest is true. Thy care for me is greater than all the care that I can take for myself.

*For he standeth very totteringly, that casteth not his whole care upon thee.

Lord, so that my will may remain right and firm towards thee, do with me whatsoever shall please thee.

For it cannot but be good, whatsoever thou dost with me.

2. If it be thy will I should be in darkness, be thou blessed; and if it be thy will I should be in light, be thou again blessed.

*If thou vouchsafest to comfort me, be thou blessed; and if thou wilt afflict me, be thou equally blessed.

Christ. Son, such must be thy disposition, if thou wilt walk with me.

Thou must be as ready to suffer as to rejoice.

Thou oughtest to be as willing to be poor and needy, as full and rich.

3. *Christian.* Lord, I willingly suffer for thee whatsoever thy pleasure is shall befall me.

I will receive indifferently from thy hand good and evil, sweet and bitter, delightful and sorrowful, and give thee thanks for all that befalleth me.

*Keep me from all sin, and I will neither fear death nor hell.

So thou dost not for ever cast me from thee, nor blot me out of the book of life, what tribulation soever befalleth me shall not hurt me.

CHAPTER XV.

Of suffering injuries; and who is proved to be truly patient.

Christ. **W**HAT is it thou sayest, son? Cease to complain, considering my passion, and that of my other saints.

Thou hast not yet resisted unto blood.

Do not say, I cannot suffer these things at the hand of such a person, nor ought I to suffer these things; for he hath done me great wrong, and upbraided me with those things which I never thought of: but of another I will willingly suffer.

Such a thought is foolish, it considereth not the virtue of patience, nor by whom it shall be crowned; but rather weigheth the persons and the injuries offered.

*2. He is not truly patient, that will not suffer but as much as he thinketh good, and by whom he listeth.

*But the truly patient man mindeth not by whom he is exercised, whether by his superior, or his equal, or by his inferior: whether by a good and holy man, or by a perverse and unworthy person.

*But indifferently from all creatures, how much soever, or how often soever any adversity befalleth him, he taketh all thankfully from the hands of God, and esteemeth it great gain;

*Seeing nothing how little soever, so it be suffered for God, shall pass without its reward.

3. Be thou therefore prepared for the fight, if thou wilt have the victory.

Without a combat thou canst not attain unto the crown of patience.

If thou wilt not suffer, thou refuseth to be crowned;

But if thou desirest to be crowned, fight manfully and endure patiently.

Without labour there is no coming to rest, nor without fighting can victory be obtained.

4. *Christian.* Lord, let that be made possible to me by thy grace, which seemeth impossible to me by nature.

Thou knowest, that I can suffer but little, and that I am quickly dismayed when a small adversity ariseth.

Let every exercise of tribulation be made amiable unto me, and be welcome for thy name; for to suffer and to be troubled for thy sake is very profitable for my soul.

I will confess against me my unrighteousness; I will confess unto thee, O Lord, my infirmities.

It is often a small matter that grieveth and dejecteth me.

I purpose to act with courage; but when a small temptation cometh, it bringeth me into great straits.

It is sometimes a very trifle, from whence great temptations proceed.

And whilst I think myself safe, when I least expect it, I am overcome with a small blast.

5. Behold, therefore, Lord, my frailty, every way known unto thee.

Have mercy on me, and deliver me out of the mire, that I stick not fast therein, and that I may not be cast down altogether.

6. O mighty God of Israel, the zealous lover of faithful souls, let it please thee to consider the labour and sorrow of thy servant, and assist him in all whatsoever he undertaketh.

Strengthen me with heavenly strength, lest the old man, the miserable flesh, not yet fully subject to the Spirit, prevail.

CHAPTER XVI.

That we are to rest in God above all his gifts and benefits.

Christian. **A**BOVE all things, and in all things, O my soul, rest in the Lord: for he is the everlasting rest of the saints.

*Grant me, O most sweet and loving Jesus, to rest in thee above all creatures:

Above all health and beauty, above all glory and honour, above all power and dignity, above all knowledge and subtilty, above all riches and arts, above all joy and gladness, above all hope and promise, above all desert and desire!

Above all gifts and presents that thou canst impart unto us;

Above all joy and triumph, that the mind of man can receive and feel:

Lastly, above the angels and arch-angels, and above all the host of heaven, above all visible and invisible things, and above all that thou art not, O my God.

*2. For, thou my Lord God, art best above all, thou alone art most high, thou alone most powerful, thou alone most full and sufficient, thou alone most sweet and overflowing with comfort, thou alone most lovely and loving, thou alone most noble and glorious above all things, in whom all good things are together, and most perfectly, and ever have been and shall be:

And therefore it is too little whatsoever thou bestoweth on me besides thyself, or revealest unto me of thyself, whilst thou are not seen and fully obtained;

For surely my heart cannot truly rest, unless it rests in thee, and surmount all gifts and creatures whatsoever.

3. O my beloved bridegroom, Jesus Christ the most pure lover, the governor of all creatures!

O that I had the wings of true liberty, that I might fly away and rest in thee!

O when shall it be granted me in quietness of mind, to see how sweet thou art my Lord God:

*When shall I fully gather up myself into thee, that by reason of my love to thee, I may not feel myself, but thee alone, above all sense or measure, in a manner not known unto every one?

4. O Jesus, the brightness of the eternal glory, thou comfort of the banished soul, with thee is my tongue without a voice, and my silence speaketh unto thee.

How long doth my Lord delay to come?

Let him come unto me, his poor servant, and make me glad.

Let him put forth his hand, and deliver me from all trouble.

*Come, O come! for without thee I shall have no joyful hour; for thou art my joy, and without thee my table is empty.

A wretched creature I am, until thou comfortest me with the light of thy presence, and settest me at liberty.

5. Let others seek what they please instead of thee; but for me nothing else doth, or shall delight me, but thou only, my God, my hope, my everlasting salvation.

I will not hold my peace, nor cease to pray, until thy grace returneth, and thou speakest inwardly unto me.

Christ. Behold I am here; behold I come unto thee, because thou hast called upon me.

Thy tears and the desire of thy soul, thy humiliation and the contrition of thy heart, have brought me unto thee.

Christian. Lord, I have called thee, and have desired to enjoy thee, being ready to cast away all things for thee.

For thou first hast stirred me up, that I might seek thee.

Blessed be thou, therefore, O Lord, that hast shewed thy goodness to thy servant, according to the multitude of thy mercies.

*6. What hath thy servant more to say before thee, but greatly to humble himself in thy sight, always mindful of his own iniquity and vileness?

For there is none like unto thee in all that is wonderful in heaven and earth.

Thy works are very good, thy judgments true, and by thy providence all things are governed.

Praise therefore, and glory, be unto thee, O Wisdom of the Father! Let my mouth, my soul, and all creatures together praise and bless thee.

C H A P T E R XVII.

Of the remembrance of the manifold benefits of God.

Christian. **O** PEN, O Lord, my heart in thy law, and teach me to walk in thy commandments.

Grant me to understand thy will, and remember thy benefits; that henceforward I may be able worthily to give thee thanks.

But I know and confess that I am not able to give thee due thanks for the least of thy favours.

I am less than the least of all thy benefits; and when I consider thy bounty, the greatness thereof maketh my spirit to faint.

2. All that we have in our souls and bodies, and whatsoever we possess outwardly or inwardly, naturally or supernaturally, are thy benefits, and speak thee bountiful, merciful, and good, from whom we have received all good things.

Although one have received more, another less, all notwithstanding are thine, and without thee even the least cannot be had.

He that hath received greater, cannot extol himself above others; for he is greater and better, that ascribeth least unto himself, and is more humble and devout in rendering thanks.

And he that esteemeth himself vilest of all men, is fitter to receive greater blessings.

3. And he that hath received fewer, ought not to repine, nor envy them that have greater store; but attend rather unto thee, and highly praise thy goodness, who bestowest thy gifts so bountifully, so freely, and so willingly, without respect of persons.

All things proceed from thee, and therefore in all things thou art to be praised.

Thou knowest what is fit to be given to every man, and why one hath less and another more.

It is not ours, but thine to judge, who dost exactly know what is meet for every one.

4. Nothing therefore ought so to rejoice him that loveth thee, and acknowledgeth thy benefits, as thy will in him, and the good pleasure of thy eternal appointment.

With this he ought to be so contented and comforted, that he would be as willing to be the least, as another is to be the greatest.

He is as peaceable and contented in the last as in the first place.

*He is as willing to be despised and contemned, and to be of no esteem or account, as to be preferred in honour above all others, and to be greater in the world.

For thy will, and the love of thy glory, ought to be preferred above all things:

And to comfort him more, and please him better than all the benefits which either he hath received or may receive.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Of four things that bring much peace.

Christ. SON, now will I teach thee the way of peace, and true liberty.

*Endeavour to do rather the will of another than thy own.

*Ever chuse rather to have less than more.

*Always seek the lowest place, and to be beneath every one.

*Continually wish and pray, that the will of God may be wholly fulfilled in thee.

Behold such a man entereth into the [◆](#)bounds of peace and quietness.

◆ “bonds” replaced with “bounds” per Errata

2. *Christian.* Lord, this thy short speech containeth much perfection.

Thou, who canst do all things, and ever lovest the profiting of my soul, increase in me thy grace, that I may fulfil thy works, and work out my own salvation.

My Lord God, be not far from me; my God, consider and help me; for sundry thoughts have risen up against me, afflicting my soul.

How shall I pass through them without hurt? How shall I utterly break them?

Christ. I will go before thee, and will humble the great ones of the earth. I will open the doors of the prison, and reveal unto thee hidden secrets.

Christian. Do Lord, as thou sayest, and let all evil thoughts fly before thy face.

This is my hope, my only comfort to fly unto thee in every tribulation; to trust in thee, to call upon thee from my heart, and to expect patiently thy comfort.

*3. Enlighten me, O good Jesus, with a clear shining inward light, and drive away all darkness from the habitation of my heart.

Repress my wandering thoughts, and drive away those temptations which violently assault me.

Fight strongly for me, and vanquish those evil beasts, these enticing lusts, that so peace may be obtained by thy power, and abundance of thy praise found in the holy court of a pure conscience.

*Command the winds, and the tempests; say unto the sea, Be still, and to the north wind, Blow not, and there shall be a great calm.

*4. Send forth thy light and thy truth, that they may shine upon the earth; for I am as the earth, without form, and void, until thou enlighten me.

*Pour out thy grace from above, let thy heavenly dew distill upon my heart.

*Supply streams of devotion, to water the face of the earth, that it may bring forth good and excellent fruit.

Lift up my mind, which is pressed down by the weight of my sins. Draw up my whole desire to heavenly things; that having tasted the sweetness of supernatural happiness, it may be irksome to me even to think of earthly vanities.

5. Snatch me, and deliver me from all the unlasting comfort of creatures; for no created thing can fully comfort and quiet my desire.

*Join me unto thee with an inseparable band of love; for thou alone dost satisfy him that loveth thee, and without thee all things are frivolous.

C H A P T E R X I X .

Of avoiding curious enquiry into the life of others.

Christ. **S**ON, be not curious, trouble not thyself with idle cares.

What is this or that to thee? Follow thou me.

For what is it to thee whether that man be such or no? Whether this man do or speak this or that?

Thou shalt not need to answer for others, but shalt give account of thyself.

Behold I know every one, and see all things that are under the sun, and understand how it is with every one; what he thinks, what he desires, and at what he aims.

All things therefore are to be committed unto me; but do thou keep thyself in peace, and let him that acts, act as he will.

Whatsoever he shall have done or said shall fall upon himself, for he cannot deceive me.

2. Be not careful for the shadow of a great name, or for the friendship of many; nor for the affection of particular men.

For these things distract and greatly darken the heart.

I would willingly utter my words, and reveal my secrets unto thee, if thou didst diligently observe my coming, and open the door of thy heart unto me.

Be careful and watch in prayer, and humble thyself in all things.

CHAPTER XX.

Wherein firm peace of heart and true profiting consisteth.

Christ. **S**ON, I have said, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*

All desire peace, but all care not for those things that appertain unto peace.

My peace is with the humble and meek of heart; thy peace doth consist in much patience.

If thou wilt hear me, and follow my voice, thou mayest enjoy much peace.

Christian. What then shall I do, Lord?

**Christ.* In every thing attend unto thyself, what thou dost, and what thou sayest; and direct thy whole intention unto this, that thou mayest please me alone, and desire to seek nothing besides me.

Of the sayings and doings of others, judge not rashly, neither do thou entangle thyself with things not committed unto thee: and doing thus, thou shalt be little or seldom troubled.

Yet do not esteem highly of thyself, or account thyself to be especially beloved, if thou be in great devotion and sweetness; for the profiting and perfection of a man consists not in these things.

2. *Christ.* Wherein then Lord?

Christian. In offering thyself with thy whole heart unto the will of God, not seeking thine own, neither in great nor little, neither in time nor in eternity.

So that thou keepest one and the same even countenance with thanksgiving, both in prosperity and adversity, weighing all in an equal balance.

If, when inward comfort is withdrawn from thee, thou preparest thy heart to suffer greater things; and dost not justify thyself, as tho' thou oughtest not to suffer these so great afflictions, but justifiest me in whatsoever I appoint, ◆and praisest my holy name; then thou walkest in the true and right way of peace.

◆ duplicate word "and" removed

And if thou attainest to the full contempt of thyself, then shalt thou enjoy abundance of peace.

C H A P T E R X X I .

Of the excellent liberty which humble prayer sooner gaineth than reading.

Christian. **L**ORD, it is the work of a perfect man, never to slacken his mind from the attentive thought of heavenly things, and to pass without care among many cares; not like a dull sluggard; but by a free mind, adhering to no creature with inordinate affection.

2. I beseech thee, my most gracious God, preserve me from the cares of this life, lest I be entangled thereby; and from the many necessities of the body, lest I should be caught by pleasure; and from whatsoever is an obstacle to the soul, lest broken with troubles I should be overthrown.

3. O my God, who art ineffable sweetness, embitter unto me all carnal comfort, which draws me away from the love of eternal things, by the hope of present delight.

Let me not be overcome, O Lord, let me not be overcome by flesh and blood. Let not the world, and the short glory thereof deceive me. Let not the devil and his subtilty supplant me.

*Give me strength to resist, patience to suffer, and constancy, to persevere.

Give me, instead of the comforts of the world, the unction of thy Spirit; and for carnal love pour into my soul the love of thy name.

Herein, I beseech thee, let thy hand govern me, and teach me, that I may fall into no extreme.

CHAPTER XXII.

That self-love most hindereth our attainment of the supreme love.

Christ. **S**ON, thou oughtest to give all for all, and to retain nothing of thyself.

Know, that the love of thyself doth hurt thee more than any thing in the world.

According to the love and affection thou bearest to it, every thing cleaves unto thee more or less.

If thy love be pure, thou shalt not be in bondage to any thing.

Covet not that which thou mayst not have. Be not willing to have that which may deprive thee of inward liberty.

It is strange that thou committest not thyself wholly unto me, from the bottom of thy heart, with all things that thou canst desire or have.

2. Why dost thou consume thyself with vain grief? Why art thou tired with needless cares?

Stand to my will, and thou shalt suffer no detriment.

*If thou seekest this or that, and wouldest be here or there, to enjoy thy own will and pleasure; thou shalt never be at quiet, nor free from care:

*For in every thing somewhat will be wanting, and in every place there will be some that will cross thee.

3. It availeth thee therefore not to multiply outward things, but to despise them, and utterly root them out of thy heart.

Unless thou standest stedfast in me, thou mayst change, but not better thyself.

For when occasion of change happens, and is embraced, thou shalt find not only those things which thou soughtest to fly, but a great deal more.

4. *Christian.* Strengthen me, O God, by the grace of thy Holy Spirit.

Give me to be strengthened in my inward man, and to empty my heart of all uncomfortable care.

*Not to be drawn away with the desire of any thing, either mean or precious; but to look upon all things as passing away, and myself as passing away together with them.

5. Grant me, O Lord, heavenly wisdom, that I may learn above all things to seek and find thee, above all things to relish thee, and to love thee.

And to think of all other things as they are, according to the disposal of thy wisdom.



CHAPTER XXIII.

How we ought to call upon God, and bless him in tribulation.

Christian. **B**LESSED, O Lord, be thy name for ever, who art pleased that this temptation and tribulation should come upon me.

I cannot fly it; but must needs fly to thee, that thou mayst help me, and turn it to my good.

Lord, I am now afflicted. I am much troubled with this present suffering.

And now, dear Father, what shall I say? I am in a strait, save me from this hour.

Yet therefore came I unto this hour, that thou mayst be glorified, when I shall have been brought very low, and then delivered by thee.

Let it please thee, Lord, to deliver me; for, what can I do, and whither shall I go without thee?

Grant me patience, Lord, at this time also.

Help me, my God, and then I will not fear, how grievously soever I be afflicted.

2. And now, in these my troubles, what shall I say? Lord, thy will be done, I have deserved to be afflicted.

Surely I ought to bear it; and O that I could bear it with patience, until the tempest be passed over!

But thy hand is able to take even this temptation from me, and to assuage the violence thereof, that I utterly sink not under it, as often heretofore thou hast done unto me, O my God, my merciful God.

And the more hard it is to me, the more easy is this change to the right hand of the Most High.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Of craving the divine aid, and confidence of recovering grace.

Christ. **S**ON, I am the Lord, that giveth strength in the day of tribulation.

Come unto me when it is not well with thee.

This is that which most of all hindereth heavenly consolation, that thou art slow in turning thyself unto prayer.

For before thou dost earnestly pray unto me, thou seekest many comforts, and triest to refresh thyself with outward things.

And hence it comes to pass that all doth little profit thee, until thou considerest, that I am he that delivers those that trust in me; that out of me is neither powerful help, nor profitable counsel, nor lasting remedy.

But now having recovered breath after the tempest, gather strength again in the light of my mercies, for I am at hand to repair all, not only entirely, but also abundantly.

2. Is there any thing hard to me? Or am I like unto him that promiseth and performeth not?

Where is thy faith? Be firm and constant.

Take courage and be patient; comfort will come to thee in due time.

Wait, wait for me, I will come and heal thee.

Let not thy heart be troubled, neither let it fear.

Believe in me, and put thy trust in my mercy.

When thou thinkest thyself farthest off from me, often I am nearest unto thee.

When thou judgest, almost all is lost, then often is the greatest opportunity of improvement.

That which I have given I can take away; and restore it again when I please.

*3. When I give it, it is mine; when I withdraw it, I take not any thing that is thine; for mine is every good and perfect gift.

If I send any cross, repine not, nor let thy heart fail: I can quickly succour thee, and turn all thy heaviness into joy.

Nevertheless I am righteous, and greatly to be praised, when I deal thus with thee.

As my Father hath loved me, I also love you, said I unto my beloved disciples; whom I sent not to temporal joys, but to great conflicts: not to honours, but to contempts; not to idleness, but to labours; not to rest, but to bring forth much fruit with patience.

My son, remember these words.

CHAPTER XXV.

Of the contempt of all creatures, in order to find out the Creator.

* *Christian.* **L**ORD, I stand in need of greater grace, to attain that state wherein no man or creature may be a hindrance to me.

For as long as any thing detains me, I cannot freely take my flight unto thee.

What is more quiet than a single eye? And what more free than he that desireth nothing upon earth?

And unless a man be free from the affections of all creatures, he cannot freely attend unto divine things.

Long shall he be little, and lie groveling below, that esteemeth any thing great, but the one infinite and eternal good.

For whatsoever is not God, is nothing, and ought to be accounted as nothing.

Christ. Son, thou canst not possess perfect liberty, unless thou wholly renounce thyself.

All who are lovers of themselves are in bondage, full of desires, curious wanderers, seeking self-indulgence, and not the things of Jesus Christ, but often devising and framing that which shall not stand.

For all that is not of God shall perish.

*Keep this short and perfect saying, Forsake all, and thou shalt find all; leave desire, and thou shalt find rest.

Consider this well, and when thou hast fulfilled it, thou shalt understand all things.

2. *Christian.* Lord, that is not one day's work; yea, in this short word is contained all perfection.

Christ. Son, thou must not go back, nor straitways be dejected, when thou hearest of the ways of the perfect; but rather be stirred up to higher things, and at least desire and sigh after them.

I would thou wert come to this, that thou wert no longer a lover of thyself, but didst stand merely at my beck.

Then thou wouldst please me, and all thy life would pass away in joy and peace.

Thou hast yet many things to forsake; which, unless thou wholly resignest up unto me, thou shalt not attain that which thou desirest.

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayst be rich: that is, heavenly wisdom, which treadeth under foot all earthly things.

Cast away earthly wisdom, and all study to please others or thyself.

He that is wise, and well instructed in spirit, standeth fast, not heeding any thing, but that the whole intention of his mind may tend to the right end.

For thus he may continue one, and the selfsame, and unshaken in the midst of so many various events, directing continually the single eye of his intention unto me.

3. And the purer the eye of the intention is, the more steadily doth he pass through various storms.

But in many things the eye of a pure intention waxeth dim, for it quickly looketh upon any delightsome object that occurs.

And it is rare to find one that is wholly free from all blemish of self-seeking.

So the Jews of old came to Bethany to Martha and Mary, not for Jesus alone, but to see Lazarus also.

The eye of thy intention therefore is to be purged, that it may be single and right, directed unto me beyond the manifold earthly objects that come between.

CHAPTER XXVI.

That God is sweet above all things, and in all things, to him that loveth.

Christian. **M**^Y God and my all. What would I have more, and what greater happiness can I desire?

O sweet and pleasing word! But to him that loveth the word; not the world, nor those things that are in the world.

My God and my all! Enough is said to him that understandeth; and to him that loveth it is pleasant to repeat it often.

For when thou art present, all things please; but when thou art absent, all things disgust.

Thou givest quiet of heart, and much peace, and pleasant joy.

Thou makest us think well of all things, and praise thee in all things: neither can any thing please long without thee.

*But that any thing may be pleasant, thy grace must be present, and it must be seasoned with the sweetness of thy wisdom.

2. What is not tasteful unto him who tasteth thee?

And him who delighteth not in thee, what can delight?

*3. O thou everlasting light, surpassing all created lights, dart the beams of thy brightness from above, piercing the most inward parts of my heart.

Purify, rejoice, enlighten, and enliven my spirit, with all the powers thereof, that I may cleave unto thee with abundance of joy and triumph.

*O when will that blessed hour come, when I shall be filled with thy presence, and thou be unto me all in all!

As long as this is not granted me, I shall not have full joy.

Alas! the kingdom of my soul is not yet in peace.

4. But thou that rulest the raging of the sea, and stillest the waves thereof when they arise, arise and help me:

Scatter the people that delight in war, destroy them in thy might.

Display thy greatness, and let thy right hand be glorified; for there is no other hope nor refuge for me, but in thee, my Lord God.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Of a pure and entire resignation of ourselves, for the obtaining freedom of heart.

Christ. **S**ON, forsake thyself, and thou shalt find me.

Stand without chusing any thing and without seeking to have any thing as thy own.

Resign thyself, without resuming thy claim.

Christian. Lord, how often shall I resign myself? And wherein shall I forsake myself?

**Christ.* Always and every hour, as well in little things as in great; I except nothing, but require that thou be naked and void of all things.

Otherwise how canst thou be mine, and I thine, unless both within and without thou art free from all self-will?

2. Some resign themselves, but with some exception; for they put not their whole trust in God, and therefore they study how to provide for themselves.

*Some also at first offer all; but afterwards being assaulted with temptation, return again to that which they had left, and therefore they go not forward in virtue.

These shall not attain to the true liberty of purity of heart, nor to the favour of my sweetest familiarity, unless they first make an entire resignation, and a daily oblation of themselves unto me.

3. I have often said unto thee, and now again I say the same; forsake thyself, resign thyself, and thou shalt enjoy much inward peace.

* Give all for all; seek nothing, require back nothing, abide purely and with a firm confidence in me, and then thou shalt enjoy me.

*Thou shalt be free in heart, and darkness shall not have any power over thee.

*Let this be thy prayer, let this be thy desire; that being stript of all selfishness, thou mayst follow naked the naked Jesus, and dying to thyself, mayst live eternally with me.

C H A P T E R X X V I I I .

Of the good government of ourselves in outward things, and of recourse to God in danger.

Christ. **S**ON, thou oughtest with all diligence to endeavour, that in every place and action of business, thou be inwardly free, and master of thyself, and that things be under thee, and not thou under them.

That thou mayst be lord of thy actions, not a servant or a hireling, but rather a freeman, and a true Hebrew, enjoying the liberty of the sons of God:

Who stand above the things that are present, and view the things which are eternal:

*Who look on transitory things with the left eye, and with the right behold the things of heaven:

Whom temporal things cannot draw to cleave unto them; but they rather draw temporal things to serve them, in such a way as they are appointed by the Creator of all, who hath left nothing in his creatures without due order.

2. If thou remainest stedfast in all events, and dost not weigh by the outward appearance, the things which thou seest and hearest; but presently in every affair dost enter with *Moses* into the tabernacle, to ask counsel of the Lord, thou shalt hear the divine oracle, and return instructed, concerning many things both present and to come.

Always fly to the closet of thy heart, earnestly craving the Divine favour.

For the scripture testifieth, that therefore were *Joshua* and the children of *Israel* deceived by the *Gibeonites*, because they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.

Always commit thy cause to me, I will dispose well of it in due time.

Wait for my ordering of it, and thou shalt find it well for thy good.

Christian. Lord, I most willingly commit all unto thee, for my care can avail little.

*O that I cleaved not too much to future events, but offered myself with all readiness of mind to thy good pleasure!

3. *Christ.* Son, a man often earnestly labours for what he desireth; and when he hath gotten it, he beginneth to be of another mind.

For men's affections do not long continue fixed on one thing.

It is therefore no small thing for a man to forsake himself, even in the smallest things.

4. The true profiting of a man consisteth in the denying of himself.

But the old enemy ceaseth at no time from tempting, but day and night layeth grievous snares, if haply he may cast the unwary into them.

Therefore watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.

CHAPTER XXIX.

That man hath no good of himself, nor any thing whereof he can glory.

Christian. **L**ORD, what is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man that thou visitest him?

What hath man deserved, that thou shouldst give him thy grace?

Lord, what cause have I to complain, if thou forsakest me; or if thou dost not that which I desire?

Surely, Lord, I am nothing, I can do nothing, I have nothing that is good of myself, but in all things I am defective, and do ever tend to nothing.

And unless thou help and inwardly instruct me, I become altogether cold and dissipated.

2. But thou, O Lord, art always the same, and endurest for ever; always good, just, and holy, doing all things well, justly and holily, and disposing all things with wisdom.

But I, that am more ready to go backward than forward, do not ever continue in one estate; for seven times are passed over me:

Yet it is soon better with me, when it so pleaseth thee, and when thou vouchsafest to stretch forth thy helping hand.

For thou alone canst help me without the aid of man, and so strengthen me, that my countenance shall be no more changed, but my heart shall be turned to thee alone, and there shall rest.

3. Thanks be unto thee, from whence all proceedeth, as often as it goeth well with me:

But I am mere vanity in thy sight, an inconstant and weak man.

Wherefore then can I glory? Or for what do I desire to be esteemed?

For nothing? But this is most vain?

The true glory and holy rejoicing is for a man to glory in thee, and not in himself:

To rejoice in thy name and not in his own virtue; nor to delight in any creature but in thee.

Praised be thy name, not mine: magnified be thy work, not mine.

Let thy holy name be blessed; but to me let no part of men's praise be given.

Thou art my glory, thou art the joy of my heart.

In thee will I glory and rejoice all the day; but as for myself I will not glory, but in my infirmities.

4. Let the *Jews* seek honour one of another; I will desire that which is from God only.

For all human glory, all temporal honour, all worldly highness is vanity and folly.

O my truth, my mercy, my God, most blessed Trinity; to thee alone be praise, honour, power, and glory for evermore.

CHAPTER XXX.

That our peace is not to be placed in men.

* *Christ.* **S**ON, if thou placest thy peace in any one, because he thinketh like thee, and liveth with thee, thou shalt be unstable and entangled,

But if thou hast recourse unto the ever-living and eternal truth, a friend going from thee or dying shall not grieve thee.

*The love of thy friend ought to be grounded in me; and for me he is to be beloved, whosoever he be who is dear to thee in this life.

No friendship can avail, or continue without me; neither is that love true and pure, which is not knit by me.

Thou oughtest to be so dead to such affections toward men, that thou shouldst wish to be without all friendship purely human.

2. But he that attributeth any good unto himself, hindereth God's grace from coming unto him.

For the grace of the Holy Ghost ever seeketh an humble heart.

When thou casteth thine eyes on creatures, the sight of thy Creator is taken from thee.

Learn to overcome thyself in all things for the love of thy Creator; and then thou shalt be able to attain to divine knowledge.

How little soever the thing be, if it be loved and regarded inordinately, it defileth the soul, and hindereth the enjoyment of the supreme good.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Against vain knowledge.

Christ. **S**ON, let not the fair speeches and subtle sayings of men move thee: for the kingdom of God consisteth not in word but in power.

Labour to mortify thy sins; for that will profit thee more than the knowledge of many difficult questions.

2. When thou hast read and knowest many things, thou must ever return to one principle.

*I am he that teacheth man knowledge, and giveth unto babes a more clear understanding than can be taught by man.

He to whom I speak, shall quickly be wise, and he shall profit much in the spirit.

Woe be to them that enquire many curious things of men; and little mind the way how to serve me.

*The time will come, when the Master of Masters shall appear, Christ the Lord of angels, to hear the lesson of all, that is, to examine the conscience of every one.

And then he will search *Jerusalem* with a candle, and the hidden things of darkness shall be laid open, and the arguing of men's tongues shall be silent.

*3. I am he that teacheth without the noise of words, without the confusion of opinions.

I am he that teacheth to despise earthly things, to disdain things present, to seek the everlasting, to relish things eternal, to fly honours, to suffer injuries, to place all hope in me, to desire nothing out of me, and above all things ardently to love me.

I am the teacher of truth, the searcher of the heart, the discerner of the thoughts, the promoter of good actions, distributing to every one as I judge meet.

C H A P T E R X X X I I .

Of putting our trust in God when we are evil spoken of.

Christ. **S**ON, stand firm, and put thy trust in me: for what are words but words? They fly through the air, but hurt not a stone.

If thou be guilty, see that thou be willing to amend: if thou be innocent, suffer this willingly for God.

It is but a small matter to suffer a few words, if thou hast not yet the courage to endure hard stripes.

Give diligent ear to my words, and thou shalt little regard ten thousand words spoken by men.

*2. *Christian.* O Lord God, thou just judge, strong and patient, thou who knowest the frailty and wickedness of man, be thou my strength, and my whole trust, for my own conscience sufficeth me not.

Thou knowest that which I know not, and therefore in every reproof, I ought to have humbled myself, and to have borne meekly.

Vouchsafe mercifully to pardon me as often as I have failed herein, and give me grace to bear it better hereafter.

For thy abundant mercy is more available to me for the obtaining of pardon, than my fancied justice for my defence, since I cannot see to the bottom of my conscience.

Although I know nothing by myself, yet I cannot hereby justify myself: for without thy mercy no man living shall be justified in thy sight.

C H A P T E R X X X I I I .

Of eternity, and the shortness of this life.

Christian. **O** MOST blessed mansion of the heavenly city! O most clear day of eternity, which night obscureth not, but the highest truth ever enlighteneth!

A day of continual joy, of perpetual quietness, and never changing into a contrary state!

O that that day would once appear, and all these temporal things were at an end!

To the saints above it shineth with everlasting brightness; but to those that are pilgrims upon earth, it appeareth only afar off, and through a glass.

O good Jesus, when shall I stand to behold thee! When shall I contemplate the glory of thy kingdom! When wilt thou be unto me all in all!

O when shall I be with thee in thy kingdom, which thou hast prepared for thy beloved from all eternity!

2. Comfort my banishment, assuage my sorrow; for my whole desire sightheth after thee.

My God, be not far from me, depart not in thy wrath from thy servant.

Cast forth thy lightning and disperse them; shoot out thine arrows, and consume all the imaginations of the enemy.

Gather in, call home my senses unto thee, make me forget all the things of this world:

Grant me to cast away speedily the imaginations of wickedness.

*Succour me, O thou, the everlasting truth, that no vanity may move me.

*Come, heavenly sweetness, and let all impurity fly from thee.

Pardon me as often as I think upon any thing besides thee in prayer.

I truly confess, that I am wont to be subject to many distractions.

For oftentimes I am not there, where I stand or sit; but I am rather there whither my thoughts carry me.

Where my thoughts are, there am I; there are often my thoughts where my actions are.

But blessed is that man, that for thee, O Lord, dismisseth all creatures, violently resisteth nature, and through fervour of spirit, crucifieth the lusts of the flesh: that so with a serene conscience he may offer pure prayer unto thee, and be meet to be admitted into the angelical choirs, all earthly things both outwardly and inwardly being excluded.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Of the desire of everlasting life, and how great rewards are promised to those who fight valiantly.

Christ. **S**ON, when thou perceivest the desire of everlasting bliss given thee from above, open thy heart wide, and receive this holy inspiration with thy whole soul.

Give most ardent thanks to the heavenly goodness, that dealeth with thee so favourably, visiteth thee mercifully, stirreth thee up fervently, sustaineth thee powerfully, lest through thine own weight thou fall down to the things of earth.

Neither dost thou obtain this by thine own thought or endeavour, but by the mere condescension of heavenly grace:

To the end that thou mayst make a farther progress in holiness and humility, and prepare thyself for future battles:

And that thou mayst cleave unto me with the whole affection of thy heart, and serve me with fervent desire.

2. Ask not that which is delightful and profitable unto thee, but that which is acceptable to me, and for my honour.

For if thou judgest aright, thou oughtest to prefer and follow my appointment, rather than thine own desire.

I know thy desire, and have heard thy frequent groans.

Thou wouldst now enjoy the everlasting habitation; and thy heavenly country, replenished with all joy, now delights thee.

But that hour is not yet come; as yet there is another time, a time of war, a time of labour and trial.

Thou desirest to be filled with the supreme good, but thou canst not attain it for the present.

I am the supreme good: patiently wait for me, until the kingdom of God come.

3. Now therefore be humbly obedient unto all, and regard not who said or commanded this:

But take great heed, that whether thy superior, inferior, or thine equal, require any thing of thee, or insinuate their desire, thou take it all in good part, and endeavour to fulfil it with a sincere will.

Let one seek this, another that; let him glory in this, the other in that, and be praised a thousand times; but do thou neither rejoice in this, nor in that, but in the contempt of thyself, and in my good pleasure and honour alone.

This art thou to wish, that whether it be by thy life or by thy death, God may be always glorified in thee.

CHAPTER XXXV.

How a person in heaviness ought to give up himself into the hands of God.

Christian. **L**ORD God, holy Father, be thou blessed both now and for evermore; because as thou willest, so it is done, and what thou dost is good.

Let thy servant rejoice in thee, not in himself, nor in any thing else; for thou alone art the true gladness, thou art my hope and my crown, thou art my joy and my honour, O Lord.

What hath thy servant, but what he hath received from thee, even without any merit of his?

Thine is all that thou hast given, and whatsoever thou hast made.

I am poor, and in labour from my youth: and sometimes my soul is sorrowful even unto tears; sometimes also it is troubled, by reason of the evils which hang over my head.

2. I long after the joy of peace, I earnestly crave the peace of thy children, that are led by thee in the light of thy comfort.

If thou givest peace, if thou pourest into my heart holy joy; the soul of thy servant shall be full of gladness, and shall become devout in thy praise:

But if thou withdrawest thyself, he will not be able to run the way of thy commandments, but rather he will bow his knees, and smite his breast, for it is not with him as it was heretofore, when thy candle shone upon his head, and he was protected under the shadow of thy wings, from the temptations which violently assaulted him.

*O righteous Father, and ever to be praised, the hour is come that thy servant is to be tried.

Behold, dear Father, meet it is that in this hour thy servant suffer something for thy sake.

O Father, ever more be honoured, the hour is come; that for a short time thy servant should outwardly be oppressed, but inwardly live with thee.

That he should be a little despised, humbled, and made abject in the sight of men, and worn down with heaviness; that he may rise again with the morning of the new light, and be glorified in heaven.

Holy Father, thou hast so appointed it; and this is fulfilled which thyself hast commanded.

3. It is a favour to thy friend, that he may suffer and be afflicted in the world for the love of thee, how often soever, and by whomsoever, thou permittest it to fall upon him.

Nothing cometh to pass on earth without thy counsel, without thy providence, or without a cause.

It is good for me, Lord, that thou hast afflicted me, that I may learn thy righteous judgment, and cast away all haughtiness of heart, and presumption.

*It is profitable to me, that shame hath covered my face, that I may rather seek to thee for comfort than to men.

4. I have learned also here to dread thy unsearchable judgments, who afflictest the just with the wicked, but not without equity and justice.

I give thee thanks, for that thou hast not spared my sins, but hast worn me away, inflicting sorrows, and sending griefs within and without.

There is none under heaven that can comfort me, but thou my Lord God, the heavenly physician of souls, that strikest and healest, bringest down to hell, and bringest back again.

Let thy correction be upon me, and let thy rod instruct me.

5. Behold, dear Father, I am in thy hands, I bow myself under the rod of thy correction:

Strike my back and my neck, that my perverseness may be conformed to thy will.

Make me an holy and humble disciple of thine (as thou art wont to do) that I may be ready at every beck of thy pleasure.

I commend myself and all that is mine unto thee to be corrected.

It is better to be corrected here than hereafter.

Thou knowest every thing, and there is nothing in the conscience of man hidden from thee.

Before things are done, thou knowest that they will come to pass, and hast no need that any should teach thee, or admonish thee of those things which are done on earth.

Thou knowest what is expedient for my profiting, and how fit tribulation is to scour off the rust of my sins.

Do with me according to thy good pleasure, and disdain me not for my sinful life; better and more clearly known to none than to thee alone.

6. Grant me, O Lord, to know that which ought to be known, to love that which ought to be loved;

To praise that which pleaseth thee most, to esteem that which is precious unto thee, to despise that which is contemptible in thy sight.

Suffer me not to judge according to the sight of the outward eyes, nor to give sentence according to the hearing of the ears of ignorant men.

But to discern invisible and spiritual things with a true judgment, and, above all things, ever to search after thy good will and pleasure.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

That a man ought to esteem himself not worthy of any comfort.

Christian. **L**ORD, I am not worthy of any comfort nor of any spiritual visitation.

And therefore thou dealest justly with me; when thou leavest me poor and desolate.

For though I could shed a sea of tears, yet I were not worthy of thy comfort.

For, alas, I deserve nothing but to be punished, in that I have grievously offended thee in many things.

But thou, O merciful God, who willest not that any should perish, to shew the riches of thy goodness, vouchsafest to comfort thy servant above the manner of men:

For thy comforts are not like the words of men.

2. What have I done, O Lord that thou shouldest bestow any heavenly comforts upon me?

I remember not that I have done any good, but have been always prone to sin and slow to amendment.

This is true, and I cannot deny it: if I should say otherwise, thou wouldst stand against me, and there would be none to defend me.

What have I deserved but hell and everlasting fire?

I confess in very truth, that I am worthy of all scorn and contempt, and it is not fit that I should be numbered among thy saints.

3. What shall I say, guilty as I am, and full of all confusion?

I have nothing to say but this; I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned; have mercy on me, pardon me;

*Suffer me a little, that I may vent my grief, before I go into the land of darkness, a land covered with the shadow of death.

What dost thou require of a guilty and miserable sinner, but that he humble himself for his offences?

Of true contrition and humbling of the heart, ariseth hope of forgiveness; the troubled conscience is reconciled to God; the favour of God which was lost, is recovered; man is preserved from the wrath to come, and God and the penitent soul meet together with an holy kiss.

4. Humble contrition for sin is an acceptable sacrifice unto thee, O Lord, savouring much sweeter in thy presence than the perfume of frankincense.

This is also the pleasant ointment which thou wouldst should be poured upon thy sacred feet.

For thou never despisest a contrite heart.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Of the different motions of nature and grace.

Christ. **S**ON, mark diligently the motions of nature and grace, for they move in a very subtle manner, and cannot be discerned but by him that is spiritually enlightened.

All men pretend some good in their words and deeds; and therefore under the shew of good many are deceived.

Nature is crafty, and seduceth, entangleth, and deceiveth many, and always proposeth herself for her end:

But grace walketh in simplicity, useth no deceit, and doth all things purely for God's sake, in whom also she finally resteth.

2. Nature will not willingly die, nor be kept down, nor be overcome, nor be subject to any:

But grace studieth mortification, resisteth sensuality, seeketh to be subject, is willing to be kept under, and will not use her own liberty.

She loveth to be kept under discipline, and desireth not to rule any, but always to live and remain wholly subject to God; and for God, is ready humbly to obey all men.

Nature striveth for her own advantage, and considereth what profit she may reap by another;

But grace considereth not what is profitable unto herself, but what is profitable to many.

Nature willingly receiveth honour and respect.

But grace faithfully attributeth all honour and glory unto God.

3. Nature feareth shame and contempt;

But grace rejoiceth to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.

Nature loveth ease and bodily rest;

But grace cannot be idle, but willingly embraceth labour.

Nature seeketh to have those things that are beautiful, and abhorreth that which is mean or coarse;

But grace delighteth in plain and humble things, and despiseth not rough things, that are old and mean.

Nature respecteth temporal things, rejoiceth at earthly gain, sorroweth for loss, is moved with every little injurious word;

But grace thinketh on that which is everlasting, and cleaveth not to temporal things; she is not troubled at losses, nor disquieted with hard words; because she hath placed her treasure and joy in heaven, where nothing perisheth.

4. Nature is covetous, and doth more willingly receive than give; she loveth her own things;

But grace is bountiful to all, shunneth private interest, is content with a little, thinketh it more blessed to give than to receive.

Nature inclines to the creatures, to her own flesh, to vanities and wanderings;

But grace draweth unto God, and unto goodness, renounceth creatures, flieth the world, hateth the desires of the flesh, restraineth wanderings abroad, blusheth to be seen in public.

Nature is willing to have some outward comfort, wherein she may be sensibly delighted;

But grace seeketh comfort in God alone, and delighteth above all visible things in the highest good.

5. Nature worketh all for her own profit; she can do nothing but for benefit she hopeth to obtain, either that which is equal or better, either praise or favour, and coveteth to have her works and gifts much esteemed:

But grace requireth no other reward than God alone; nor desireth more of temporals, than may serve her for the obtaining of things eternal.

6. Nature rejoiceth to have many friends and kinsfolks; glorieth in noble place and birth; is obsequious to the powerful, fawneth upon the rich, and applaudeth those that are like herself;

But grace loveth her enemies, and is not puffed up with multitudes of friends, nor esteemeth place or birth, but where it is joined with virtue:

She rather favoureth the poor than the rich; hath more tenderness for the innocent than the powerful; rejoiceth in the true, not in the deceitful:

Always exhorting good men to labour for more excellent gifts; and by goodness to resemble the Son of God.

Nature quickly complaineth of want and trouble; grace with constancy endureth need:

Nature coveteth to know secrets, and to hear news; she will appear abroad, and make proof of many things by her own senses; she desireth to be known, and to do those things for which she may be praised and admired:

But grace careth not for hearing curious matters;

She teacheth to restrain the senses, to avoid vanity and ostentation; and in every thing and every knowledge to seek the praise and honour of God.

She will not have praise, but desireth that God should be praised in his gifts, who of mere love bestoweth all things.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Of the corruption of nature, and efficacy of Divine grace.

Christian. O LORD, my God, who ♦ hast created me after thy likeness, grant me this grace which thou hast shewed to be so necessary to salvation, that I may overcome my wicked nature, which draweth me to sin and perdition.

♦ “has” replaced with “hast” per Errata

For I feel in my flesh the law of sin contradicting the law of my mind; neither can I resist, unless thy most holy grace, infused into my heart, assist me.

2. O Lord, how exceeding needful is thy grace for me to begin any good work, to go forward, and to accomplish it;

For without it I can do nothing; but in thee I can do all things.

Arts, riches, beauty, strength, wit, eloquence, are of no value with thee, O Lord, without thy grace.

3. O most blessed grace, that makest the poor in spirit rich in virtue, and makest the rich in many blessings, to be humble in heart;

Come, come down unto me, replenish me early with thy comfort, lest my soul should faint for weariness and dryness of mind.

O Lord, thy grace is sufficient for me, though other things that nature desireth be wanting.

If I be tempted and vexed with many tribulations, I will not fear any evils, while thy grace is with me:

This is stronger than all enemies, and wiser than all the wise.

Let thy grace, O Lord, always prevent me, and follow me, and make me ever diligent in good works, through Jesus Christ thy Son. *Amen.*

CHAPTER XXXIX.

That we ought to deny ourselves and imitate Christ.

Christ. FOLLOW Me, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

I am the way, which thou oughtest to follow; the truth which thou oughtest to trust; the life which thou oughtest to hope for.

I am the strait way, the supreme truth, the true life: yea, the blessed life, the uncreated life.

If thou remainest in my way, thou shalt know the truth, and the truth shall make thee free, and thou shalt lay hold on everlasting life.

2. *Christian.* Lord Jesus, forasmuch as thy life was poor and contemptible unto the world, grant me grace to imitate thee in suffering worldly contempt.

For the servant is not greater than his Lord, nor the disciple above his Master.

Let thy servant be exercised in thy life, for therein my salvation consists.

Whatsoever I read or heard besides it, doth not refresh or delight me fully.

3. *Christ.* Son, now thou knowest these things, happy shalt thou be if thou do them.

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me;

And I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him, and make him sit with me in the kingdom of my Father.

Christian. Lord Jesus, as thou hast said and promised, so let it come to pass.

I have received the cross, I have received it from thy hand; I will bear it, and bear it till death, as thou hast laid it upon me.

Truly the life of a Christian is the cross; but yet it is a guide to paradise.

I have begun, I may not go back, neither is it fit to leave that which I have undertaken.

Behold, our King goeth before us, who also will fight for us.

Let us follow him manfully, let none be dismayed, but be ready to die valiantly in the battle, and let us not blemish our glory by flying from the cross.

CHAPTER XL.

That a man be not too much dejected when he feeleth some defect.

Christ. **S**ON, patience and humility in adversity are more pleasing to me, than much devotion in prosperity.

Why art thou grieved for every little trifle spoken against thee?

Although it had been much more, thou oughtest not to have been moved.

But now let it pass; it is not the first that hath happened, nor is it any new thing, neither shall it be the last.

Thou art valiant enough, as long as no adversity happeneth.

Thou canst give good counsel, and strengthen others with thy words; but when tribulation cometh to thy door, thou art destitute of counsel and strength.

I yet live, saith the Lord, ready to help thee, and to give thee greater comfort than before, if thou puttest thy trust in me, and callest devoutly upon me.

2. Be patient, and prepare thyself to greater sufferings.

All is not lost, if thou feelest thyself afflicted, or grievously tempted.

I am he, who will strengthen with health them that mourn, and raise up unto glory those that know their own infirmity.

3. *Christian.* Lord, blessed be thy word, more sweet unto my mouth than honey, and the honey-comb.

What should I do in tribulations, unless thou didst comfort me with thy holy words?

What matter is it, how much and what I suffer, so I may at length attain the port of salvation?

Grant me a good end. Grant me a happy passage out of this world!

Be mindful of me, O my God, and direct me in the right way to thy kingdom. *Amen.*

CHAPTER XLI.

Of searching the secret judgments of God.

Christ. **S**ON, beware thou disputest not of high matters, nor of the secret judgments of God.

Why this man is left, and that man taken into favour; why this is so much afflicted, and that so greatly advanced:

These things are beyond the reach of man; neither can reason search out the judgments of God.

When the enemy therefore suggesteth these things unto thee, answer; thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgments are right.

And again, the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

Thy judgments are to be feared, not to be discussed; they are such as cannot be comprehended by the understanding of man.

2. Neither enquire or dispute of the merits of saints, which of them is holier than the other.

3. I know both the first and the last: I embrace all with inestimable love.

I am to be praised in all my saints; I am to be blessed above all things, and to be honoured in every one.

CHAPTER XLII.

That all our hope and trust is to be fixed in God alone.

Christian. **L**ORD, what is my trust in this life? Or what is my greatest comfort of all things under heaven?

Is it thou, my Lord God, whose mercies are without number?

Where hath it been well with me without thee? Or when could it be ill with me, when thou wert present?

I had rather be poor for thee, than rich without thee.

I had rather chuse to be a pilgrim on earth with thee, than to possess heaven without thee.

*Where thou art, there is heaven; and there is death and hell, where thou art not.

Thou art my desire; and therefore I cannot but sigh, and cry, and pray unto thee.

For I have none to trust in, none that can help me in my necessities, but thee alone, my God.

*Thou art my hope, thou art my trust, thou art my comfort, and most faithful unto me in all things.

2. All men seek their own; thou only seekest my salvation, and turnest all things to my good.

Although thou exposest me to divers temptations and adversities; yet thou orderest all this to my advantage, who art wont to try thy beloved a thousand ways.

In which thou oughtest no less to be loved and praised, than if thou didst fill me with heavenly comforts.

3. In thee therefore, O Lord God, I put my whole hope and refuge:

On thee I rest in all tribulation and anguish.

For I find all to be weak and inconstant, whatsoever I behold out of thee.

*For neither can my friends avail, nor strong helpers aid, nor wise counsellors give any profitable answer, nor the books of the learned comfort, nor any wealth deliver, nor any secret or pleasant place defend: if thou thyself dost not assist, help, strengthen, comfort, instruct, and keep us.

4. For all things that seem to make for peace, without thee are nothing, and bring indeed no felicity at all.

Thou therefore art the end of all that is good, the height of life, the depth of wisdom:

*And the strongest comfort of thy servants is, to trust in thee above all things.

To thee therefore do I lift up mine eyes; in thee O my God, the Father of mercies, I put my trust.

*Bless and sanctify my soul with thy heavenly blessing, that it may be made thy holy habitation, and the seat of thy eternal glory:

*And that nothing may be found in the temple of thy glory, that may offend the eyes of thy majesty.

According to the greatness of thy goodness, and the multitude of thy mercies, look upon me, and hear the prayer of thy poor servant, who is far exiled from thee in the land of the shadow of death.

*Protect and keep the soul of thy servant, amidst so many dangers of this corruptible life, and by thy grace accompanying me, direct it by the way of peace to the country of everlasting light. *Amen.*

An Extract of the

CHRISTIAN PATTERN:

Or, a treatise on the imitation of Christ. Written in Latin by
Thomas a Kempis.

B O O K IV.

An Exhortation unto the Holy Communion.

The voice of Christ.

COME unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden and I will refresh you.

The bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.

Take, eat, this ◆is my body that is given for you: do this in remembrance of me.

◆ “in” replaced with “is”

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

The words which I speak unto you are spirit and life.

CHAPTER I.

With how great reverence Christ ought to be received.

The voice of the disciple.

THESE are thy words, O Christ, the everlasting truth.

Because therefore they are thine, and true, they are all thankfully and faithfully to be received by me.

They are thine, and thou hast spoken them; and they are mine also, because thou hast spoken them for my salvation.

I willingly receive them from thy mouth, that they may be the deeper imprinted in my heart.

These gracious words, so full of sweetness and love, encourage me; but mine own offences drive me back from receiving so great mysteries.

2. Thou commandest me to come confidently unto thee, if I will have part with thee; to receive the food of immortality, if I desire to obtain everlasting glory.

Thou sayest, Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.

O sweet and friendly words in the ear of sinners, that thou, my Lord God, shouldst invite the poor and needy to the participation of thy most holy body?

*But who am I, Lord, that I should presume to approach unto thee?

*Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, and thou sayest come ye all unto me!

3. What meaneth this so gracious condescension, this so friendly invitation?

How shall I dare to come, that know no good in myself?

How shall I bring thee into my house, that have so often offended thy most gracious countenance?

*The angels and archangels revere thee, and the saints and just men fear thee, and thou sayest, come ye all unto me.

Unless thou, O Lord, didst say it, who would believe it to be true?

And unless thou didst command it, who would dare to come unto thee?

*Behold, Noah, a just man, laboured an hundred years in making of the ark, that he might be saved with a few; and how can I in one hour prepare myself to receive, with reverence the maker of the world?

4. Moses, thy great servant, and thy special friend, made an ark of incorruptible wood, which also he covered with most pure gold, to put the tables of the law therein; and I a corruptible creature, how shall I dare lightly to receive the maker of the law, and the giver of life?

Solomon, the wisest of the kings of Israel, bestowed seven years in building a magnificent temple to the praise of thy name.

He celebrated the feast of the dedication thereof eight days together; he offered a thousand peace-offerings, and he solemnly set the ark on the place prepared for it, with the sound of trumpets and joy.

*And I the most miserable and poorest of men, how shall I bring thee into my house, that can scarce spend one half hour devoutly? Yea would I could once spend near half an hour in a due manner!

5. O my God, how much did they do out of an endeavour to please thee! And, alas, how little is that which I do! How little time do I spend to prepare myself to receive!

I am very seldom wholly recollected, very seldom free from all distraction;

And yet surely no unbecoming thought ought to appear in the presence of the Deity, nor any creature find any place in me, for I am not to harbour an angel, but the Lord of angels.

6. And yet there is great difference between the ark of the covenant, and thy most pure body! Between those legal sacrifices, figures of future things, and the completion of all antient sacrifices.

Why therefore am I not more inflamed at thy venerable presence?

7. The devout King *David* danced before the ark of God with all his might, calling to mind the benefits bestowed upon his fore-fathers.

He often sung to the harp, being inspired with the grace of the Holy Ghost.

He taught the people of Israel to praise God with their whole heart, and with joint voices every day to bless and praise him.

If so great devotion was then shewn, and there was such celebrating of the divine praise before the ark of the testament; what reverence is now to be performed in receiving the most precious body and blood of Christ?

8. O God, the invisible creator of the world, how wonderfully dost thou deal with us!

How sweetly and graciously dost thou dispose of all things for thine elect, to whom thou offerest thyself to be received in this sacrament!

This exceedeth all understanding! This strongly draweth the hearts of the devout, and inflameth their affections.

9. O the admirable and hidden grace of this sacrament, which only the faithful ones of Christ know: but the unbelieving, and such as are slaves unto sin, cannot experience;

In this sacrament spiritual grace is given, and strength which was lost restored in the soul, and the beauty disfigured by sin returns again.

This grace is sometimes so great, that not only the mind, but the weak body also, feeleth great increase of strength.

10. Our coldness and negligence is much to be bewailed, that we are not drawn with greater affection to receive Christ, in whom all the hope and merit of those that are to be saved consists.

For he is our sanctification and redemption: he is the comforter of us travellers, and the everlasting fruition of saints.

O the blindness and hardness of man's heart, that doth not more deeply weigh so unspeakable a gift!

11. If the most holy sacrament was celebrated in one place only, and consecrated by one only person in the world, with how great desire would men be affected to that place, and to such a priest, that they might enjoy these divine mysteries!

But now there are many priests, and Christ is offered in many places; that so the grace and love of God to men may appear greater, the more this sacred communion is spread through the world.

Thanks be unto thee gracious Jesus, the everlasting shepherd, who hast vouchsafed to refresh us poor exiles with thy precious body and blood, and to invite us to the receiving of these mysteries with the words of thine own mouth, saying, Come unto me all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.

CHAPTER II.

That the great goodness and love of God is exhibited to man in this sacrament.

The voice of the disciple.

***I**N confidence of thy goodness and mercy, I come, O Lord, a sick man unto my Saviour, hungry and thirsty to the fountain of life, needy to the king of heaven, a servant unto my Lord, a creature to my Creator, disconsolate to thee my merciful comforter.

But whence is this to me, that thou vouchsafest to come unto me? Who am I, that thou shouldst give thyself unto me?

How dare a sinner appear before thee? And how is it that thou dost vouchsafe to come unto a sinner?

Thou knowest thy servant, and seest that he hath no good thing in him, for which thou shouldst bestow this favour upon him.

I confess my unworthiness; I acknowledge thy goodness; I praise thy mercy, and give thee thanks for thy transcendent love.

For thou dost this for thine own sake, not for any merits of mine: that thy goodness may be better known unto me, thy love more abundantly shewn, and thy gracious condescension the more eminently displayed.

Since therefore it is thy pleasure, and thou hast commanded that it should be so, this thy favour is also pleasing to me, and may my sins be no hindrance.

2. O most sweet and benign Jesu, how great reverence and thanks [◆](#)are due unto thee for the receiving of thy sacred body, whose preciousness no man is able to express!

[◆](#) "is" replaced with "are" per Errata

But what shall I think, now I am to approach unto my Lord, whom I am not able duly to honour, and yet I desire to receive him with devotion?

What can I think better and more profitable, than to humble myself wholly before thee, and to exalt thine infinite goodness over me?

I praise thee, my God, and will exalt thee for ever. I despise and submit myself unto thee, in a deep sense of my own unworthiness.

3. Behold thou art the holy of holies, and I the vilest of sinners!

Behold thou inclinest unto me, who am not worthy so much as to look up unto thee.

Behold thou comest unto me, it is thy will to be with me, thou invitest me to thy banquet.

Thou wilt give me the food of heaven, and bread of angels to eat, which is no other indeed than thyself, the living bread, that descended from heaven and giveth life unto the world.

4. From whence doth this love proceed! What a gracious condescension appeareth herein! How great thanks and praises are due unto thee for these benefits!

O how good and profitable was thy counsel, when thou ordainedst it! How sweet and pleasant the banquet when thou gavest thyself to be our food!

How wonderful is thy operation, O Lord, how mighty is thy power, how unspeakable is thy truth!

For thou saidst the word, and all things were made; and this was done which thou commandedst.

5. A thing of great admiration, that thou my Lord God, shouldst be exhibited unto us by the elements of bread and wine.

Thou who art the Lord of all things, and standest in need of none, hast pleased to dwell in us by means of this thy sacrament.

*Preserve my heart and body undefiled, that, with a chearful and pure conscience, I may celebrate thy mysteries, and receive them to my everlasting health: which thou hast ordained and instituted for thy honour and for a perpetual memorial.

6. Rejoice O my soul, and give thanks unto God for so excellent a gift, so singular a comfort left unto me in this vale of tears.

For as often as thou receivest, so often art thou made partaker of all the merits of Christ.

For the love of Christ is never diminished, and the greatness of his propitiation is never exhausted.

Therefore thou oughtest always to weigh with attentive consideration, this great mystery of thy salvation.

*So great, new, and joyful it ought to seem unto thee, when thou comest to these holy mysteries; as if the same day Christ first descending into the womb of the virgin, was become man; or hanging on the cross, did suffer and die for the salvation of mankind.

CHAPTER III.

That it is profitable to communicate often.

The voice of the disciple.

***B**EHOLD, O Lord, I come unto thee, that I may be comforted by thy gift, and delighted in thy holy banquet, which thou, O God, hast prepared in thy goodness for the poor.

Behold in thee is all I can or ought to desire; thou art my salvation, and my redemption, my hope and my strength, my honour and my glory!

*Make joyful, therefore, this day, the soul of thy servant, for I have lifted it up unto thee, O Lord Jesus.

*I desire to receive thee now with devotion and reverence. I long to bring thee into my house; that with *Zaccheus* I may be blessed by thee, and numbered among the children of *Abraham*.

My soul thirsteth to receive thy body and blood, my heart desireth to be united with thee.

*2. Give me thyself, and it sufficeth; for, besides thee, no comfort is available.

I cannot be without thee, nor live without thy visitation;

And therefore I must often come unto thee, and receive thee for the welfare of my soul, lest haply I faint in the way, if I be deprived of thy heavenly food.

For so most merciful Jesu, thou once didst say, preaching to the people, and curing sundry diseases, I will not send them home fasting, lest they faint in the way.

Deal thou therefore in like manner now with me, who hast vouchsafed to leave thyself in the sacrament for the comfort of the faithful.

For thou art the sweet refection of the soul; and he that eateth thee worthily, shall be partaker of everlasting glory.

3. O the wonderful condescension of thy mercy towards us, that thou, O Lord God, the Creator and giver of life to all spirits, dost vouchsafe to come unto a poor soul, and with thy whole deity to replenish her hunger!

O happy mind and blessed soul, that receives thee, her Lord God, with devout affection, and in receiving of thee is filled with spiritual joy!

O how great a Lord doth she entertain! How beloved a guest doth she harbour! How pleasant a companion doth she receive! How faithful a friend doth she take in! How lovely and glorious a spouse doth she embrace!

She embraceth him, who is to be loved above all that is beloved, and above all things that may be desired.

*Let heaven and earth, and all the hosts of them, be silent in thy presence; for what praise and beauty soever they have, it is received from thy bounty, and cannot equal the beauty of thy name, of whose wisdom there is no number.

CHAPTER IV.

That many gifts are bestowed upon them that communicate devoutly.

The voice of the disciple.

***M**Y Lord God, prevent thy servant with the blessings of thy sweetness, that I may approach worthily and devoutly to thy glorious sacrament.

*Stir up my heart unto thee, and deliver me from a heavy numbness of mind.

*Visit me with thy salvation, that I may taste in spirit thy sweetness, which plentifully lieth hid in this sacrament as in a fountain.

Enlighten also my eyes to behold so great a mystery, and strengthen me to believe it with steady faith.

For it is thy work, and not man's power; thy sacred institution, not man's invention.

For no man is of himself able to comprehend these things, which surpass the understanding even of angels.

What therefore shall I, unworthy sinner, dust and ashes, be able to comprehend of so high and sacred a mystery?

2. O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, at thy commandment I come unto thee, with hope and reverence, and believe thou art present in this sacrament.

Thy will is, that I receive thee, and that by love I unite myself unto thee.

*Wherefore I implore thy mercy, and crave thy special grace, that I may wholly melt and overflow with love unto thee, and hereafter never seek any comfort out of thee.

For this sacrament is the remedy of all spiritual weakness: hereby my vices are cured, my passions bridled, temptations overcome, grace infused, virtue begun increased, faith confirmed, hope strengthened, and love inflamed.

3. For thou dost bestow many benefits in the sacrament upon thy beloved ones that communicate devoutly. O my God the protector of my soul, the repairer of human frailty, and the giver of inward comfort.

Thou impartest unto them much comfort against sundry tribulations.

For who is there, that approaching humbly unto the fountain of sweetness, doth not carry away from thence at least some little sweetness?

Or who, standing by a great fire, receiveth not some heat thereby?

Thou art a fountain always full and overflowing, a fire ever burning and never decaying.

4. Wherefore, if I cannot draw out of the full fountain itself, nor drink my fill; I will, notwithstanding, set my lips to the mouth of this heavenly conduit, that I may draw from thence at least some drop to refresh my thirst; and not be wholly dried up.

And though I be not altogether heavenly; nor so inflamed as the cherubim and seraphim; I will endeavour after some spark of divine fire, by humbly receiving of this enlivening sacrament.

And whatsoever is wanting in me, O merciful Jesu, most holy Saviour, do thou bountifully and graciously supply, who hast vouchsafed to call all unto thee, Come unto me, all ye that travail and are ◆heavy laden, and I will refresh you.

◆ “heaven” replaced with “heavy” per Errata

5. I indeed labour in the sweat of my brow, I am vexed with grief of heart, I am burthened with sin, I am troubled with temptations, I am entangled and oppressed with many evil passions; and there is none to help me, none to deliver and save me, but thou O Lord, my Saviour, to whom I commit myself, and all that is mine, that thou mayst keep me, and bring me to life everlasting.

C H A P T E R V.

Of the examining our conscience, and purpose of amendment.

The voice of the Beloved.

ABOVE all things, the minister of God ought to come to celebrate and receive this sacrament with great humility of heart, and lowly reverence, and a pious intending the honour of God.

Examine diligently thy conscience; so that there be nothing that may breed in thee remorse of conscience, and hinder thy free access.

And, if thou hast time, confess unto God in the secret of thy heart, all the miseries of thy disordered passions.

2. Lament and grieve, that thou art yet so worldly, so unmortified as to thy passions;

So unwatchful over thy outward senses, so often entangled with vain imaginations;

So negligent and cold in prayer, so undevout in celebrating, so dry in receiving;

So quickly distracted, so seldom wholly recollected;

So suddenly moved to anger, so apt to take displeasure against another;

So prone to judge, so severe to reprehend;

*So often purposing much good, and yet performing little.

3. These and other thy defects being confessed, with full resignation, and with thy whole will, offer up thyself a perpetual sacrifice to the honour of my name, on the altar of thy heart, faithfully committing thy body and soul unto me;

That so thou mayst come worthily to celebrate this sacrifice, and to receive profitably the sacrament of my body.

4. For a man hath no other oblation than to offer himself unto God in the holy communion.

And whensoever he shall come to Me for pardon and grace, as I live, saith the Lord, who willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live, I will not remember his sins any more, but they shall all be forgiven him.

CHAPTER VI.

Of the oblation of Christ on the cross, and resignation of ourselves.

The voice of the Beloved.

* **A**S I willingly offered up myself unto God my Father for thy sins, my hands being stretched forth on the cross, so that nothing remained in Me that was not wholly turned into a sacrifice, for the appeasing the Divine Majesty;

So oughtest thou also to offer up thyself willingly unto me every day, as a pure and holy oblation, with all thy might and affection, in as hearty a manner as thou canst.

What do I require of thee more than that thou entirely resign thyself unto me?

Whatsoever thou givest besides thyself is of no account in my sight; for I seek not thy gifts but thyself.

2. As it would not suffice thee to have all things besides me; so neither can it please me, whatsoever thou givest, if thou offerest not thyself.

Offer up thyself unto me, and give thyself wholly to God, and thy offering shall be accepted.

Behold I offered up myself wholly unto my Father for thee, that I might be wholly thine, and thou remain mine.

But if thou dost not offer thyself up freely unto my will, thy oblation is not entire, neither will the union between us be perfect.

Therefore a free offering up of thyself into the hands of God, ought to go before all thy actions, if thou wilt obtain freedom and grace.

For this cause so few become inwardly free, because they cannot wholly deny themselves.

My saying is unalterable, unless a man forsake all, he cannot be my disciple.

Therefore, if thou desirest to be my disciple, offer up thyself unto me with thy whole affections.

CHAPTER VII.

*That we ought to offer up ourselves, and all that is ours unto God,
and to pray for all.*

The voice of the disciple.

THINE, O Lord, are all things that are in heaven, and in earth.

I desire to offer up myself unto thee, as a free oblation, and to remain always thine.

O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart I offer myself unto thee this day, for a sacrifice of perpetual praise, to be thy servant for ever.

2. I offer unto thee, O Lord, all my sins and offences, which I have committed before thee and thy holy angels, from the day wherein I first could sin, to this hour, upon thy merciful altar.

Consume and burn them all with the fire of thy love, and wash out all the stains of my sins.

O cleanse my conscience from all offences, and restore to me again thy grace, which I lost by sin, fully forgiving me all my offences, and receiving me mercifully to the kiss of peace!

3. What can I do for my sins, but humbly confess and bewail them, and incessantly intreat thy favour?

I beseech thee, hear me graciously, when I stand before thee, O my God!

All my sins are very displeasing unto me. I will never commit them any more; but I bewail and will bewail them as long as I live, and am purposed to repent, and according to the utmost of my power to please thee.

Forgive me, O God, forgive me my sins for thy holy name's sake.

Save my soul, which thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood.

Behold, I commit myself to thy mercy, I resign myself over into thy hands.

Do with me according to thy goodness, not according to my wickedness and iniquity.

4. I offer up also unto thee all that is good in me, although it be very little and imperfect, that thou mayst amend and sanctify it:

That thou mayst make it grateful and acceptable unto thee, and always perfect it more and more.

And bring me also, who am a slothful and unprofitable creature, to a good and blessed end.

5. I offer up also unto thee all the pious desires of devout persons, the necessities of my parents, friends, brethren, sisters; and of all those that are dear unto me, and that have done good either to myself or others:

And that have desired me to pray for them and theirs; that they all may receive the help of thy grace and comfort, protection from dangers, deliverance from pain; and being freed from all evils, may joyfully give worthy thanks unto thee.

6. I offer up also unto thee my prayers, especially for them who have in any thing wronged, grieved, or slandered me, or have done me any damage or displeasure:

And for all those also, whom I have at any time troubled, grieved or scandalized by words or deeds, wittingly or unawares; that it may please thee to forgive us all our sins and offences, one against another.

Take, O Lord, from our hearts all jealousy, indignation, wrath, and contention, and whatsoever may lessen brotherly love.

Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy on those that crave thy mercy: give grace unto them that stand in need thereof; and grant that we may be counted worthy to enjoy thy grace, and so attain life everlasting. *Amen.*

CHAPTER IX.

*That the body of Christ, and the holy scripture, are most necessary
unto a faithful soul.*

The voice of the disciple.

OLORD Jesus, how great sweetness hath an holy soul that feasteth with thee in thy banquet, where there is set no other food to be eaten but thyself, her only beloved, and the most to be desired above all desires of her heart!

And verily it would be a sweet thing unto me to pour out tears from the very bottom of my heart in thy presence: and with holy *Magdalene* to wash thy feet with my tears.

But where is this devotion? Where is this plentiful shedding of holy tears?

Surely in the sight of thee and thy holy angels my whole heart should be inflamed, and even weep for joy.

2. For to behold thee in thine own divine brightness, mine eyes would not be able to endure it.

Neither could the whole world stand in the brightness of the glory of thy majesty.

I really enjoy and adore him whom the angels adore in heaven.

But I, as yet, by faith; they by sight, ◆and without a veil.

◆ duplicate word "and" removed

I ought to be content with the light of true faith, and to walk therein until the day of everlasting brightness break forth, and the shadows of figures pass away.

But when that which is perfect shall come, the use of the sacraments shall cease.

For the blessed in heavenly glory need not any sacramental remedy, but rejoice without end in the presence of God.

Beholding his glory face to face, and being transformed from glory to glory into the image of the incomprehensible Deity, they taste the word of God made flesh, as he was from the beginning, and as he remaineth for ever.

3. Thou art my witness, O God, that nothing can comfort me, no creature can give me rest, but thou my God, whom I desire to behold everlastingly.

But this is not possible while I remain in this mortal life:

Therefore I must frame myself to much patience, and submit myself to thee in all my desires.

For thy saints also, O Lord, who now rejoice with thee while they lived, expected in faith and great patience the coming of thy glory. What they believed, I believe: what they hoped for, I also hope for: whither they are come, I trust I shall come by thy grace.

In the mean time I will go forward in faith, strengthened by their examples.

I have also thy holy book for my comfort and guide, and, above all these, thy spiritual body for a remedy and refuge.

4. I perceive two things to be especially necessary for me in this life, without which it would be insupportable, food and light.

Thou hast therefore given unto me a weak creature, thy sacred body and blood for the nourishment of my soul and body; and thou hast set thy word as a light unto my feet:

Without these two I could not well live.

For the word of God is the light of the soul, and thy sacrament the bread of life.

These also may be called the two tables, set on the one side and on the other, in the store-house of the holy church.

One is the holy altar, having the holy bread, that is the sign of the precious body of Christ.

The other is of the divine law, containing holy doctrine, teaching the true faith, and certainly leading to that within the veil, where is the holy of holies.

Thanks be unto [♦](#)thee, O Lord Jesus, the light of everlasting light, for the table of holy doctrine, which thou hast offered us by thy servants the prophets, and apostles, and other teachers.

[♦](#) “tbee” replaced with “thee”

5. Thanks be unto thee, O thou Creator and Redeemer of man, who to manifest thy love to the whole world, hast prepared a great supper wherein thou hast set before us to be eaten (not the typical lamb, but) thy most sacred body and blood.

Rejoicing all the faithful with thy holy banquet, and replenishing them with the cup of salvation, in which are all the delights of paradise: and the holy angels feast with us, but yet with a more happy sweetness.

Nothing but what is holy, no word but what is good and profitable ought to proceed from his mouth, who receiveth the sacrament of Christ.

7. Simple and chaste ought to be the eyes that behold the body of Christ.

8. Assist us, Almighty God, with thy grace, that we who have undertaken the office of priesthood, may serve thee worthily and devoutly, in all purity and good conscience.

And, if we cannot live in so great innocency as we ought, grant us at least duly to bewail the sins which we have committed; and in the spirit of humility, and with full purpose of heart, to serve thee hereafter more fervently.



◆ CHAPTER IX.

How he who is to communicate, ought to prepare himself.

◆ Chapter number duplicated in text

The voice of the Beloved.

I AM the lover of purity, and the giver of all holiness.

I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of my rest.

Make ready and adorn for me the great chamber, and I will keep with thee the passover among my disciples.

2. Know thou, notwithstanding, that no merit of any action of thine is able to make this preparation, altho' thou shouldst prepare thyself a whole year together, and think of nothing else.

Thou art of my mere grace and favour suffered to come to my table.

Like a beggar invited to dinner by a rich man, who hath nothing else to return him for his benefits, but to humble himself, and give him thanks.

Do what lieth in thee, and do it diligently; not for custom, nor for necessity; but with fear and reverence, and affection, receive thy beloved Lord God, who vouchsafeth to come unto thee.

*I am he that hath called thee; I have commanded it to be done; I will supply what is wanting in thee; come and receive me.

3. When I bestow the grace of devotion, give thanks to thy God; for it is given thee, not for that thou art worthy, but because I have mercy on thee.

If thou hast it not, but dost feel thyself dry, continue in prayer, sigh, and knock, and give not over until thou art meet to receive some crumb or drop of saving grace.

Thou hast need of me, not I of thee.

Neither comest thou to sanctify me, but I come to sanctify and improve thee.

Thou comest that thou mayst be sanctified by me, and united unto me, that thou mayst receive new grace, and be enflamed anew to amendment.

CHAPTER X.

That a devout soul ought to desire with her whole heart to be united unto Christ in the sacrament.

The voice of the disciple.

WHO will give me this, O Lord, to find thee alone, and open my whole heart unto thee, and enjoy thee as my soul desireth?

And that no man may look toward me, nor any creature move or regard me, but thou alone mayst speak unto me, and I to thee, as the beloved is wont to speak to his beloved, and a friend to banquet with his friend?

This I pray for, this I desire, that I may be wholly united unto thee, and may withdraw my heart from all created things.

That I may [♦](#)by often communicating, learn more and more to relish heavenly and eternal things.

[♦](#) “be” replaced with “by” per Errata

Ah Lord God, when shall I be wholly united to thee, swallowed up in thee, and altogether forgetful of myself?

Thou in me, and I in thee, and so grant us both to continue in one.

2. Verily, thou art my beloved, the choicest among thousands, in whom my soul is well pleased to dwell all the days of her life.

Verily, thou art my peace-maker, in whom is great peace and true rest, without whom is labour and sorrow and infinite misery.

Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, ◆and thy counsel is not with the wicked, but thy speech is with the humble and simple of heart.

◆ duplicate word "and" removed

O Lord, how sweet is thy Spirit, who to shew thy sweetness toward thy children, vouchsafest to feed them with the bread which descendeth from heaven, and is full of all sweetness!

Verily, there is no other nation so great that hath God so nigh unto them, as thou our God art present to all thy faithful ones.

Unto whom, for their daily comfort, and for the raising up of their hearts to heaven, thou givest thyself to be eaten and enjoyed.

3. For what other nation is there so honoured as the Christian people?

Or what creature under heaven so beloved as a devout soul, to whom God himself cometh to feed her with his glorious flesh?

O unspeakable grace! O admirable condescension! O infinite love, singularly bestowed upon man!

But what shall I give unto the Lord in return for his grace, for so eminent an expression of love?

There is nothing more acceptable, that I am able to give, than to give my heart wholly to my God, and to unite it close unto him.

Then shall my inward parts rejoice, when my soul shall be perfectly united unto God.

Then he will say unto me, if thou wilt be with me, I will be with thee.

And I will answer him, Vouchsafe, O Lord, to remain with me, and I will gladly be with thee.

This is my whole desire, that my heart may be united unto thee.

CHAPTER XI.

Of the fervent desire of some devout persons, to receive the body of Christ.

The voice of the disciple.

O HOW great is thy goodness, O Lord, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!

When I remember some devout persons, who come unto thy sacrament, O Lord, with the greatest affection, I am confounded, and blush within myself, that I come so heavily and coldly to thy table.

That I remain so dry and without hearty affection, that I am not wholly inflamed in thy presence, my God, nor so earnestly drawn in affection, as many devout persons have been, who with desire both of soul and body, earnestly longed after thee, O God, the living fountain.

*Be merciful unto me, good Jesu, gracious Lord, and grant me, thy poor needy creature, to feel sometimes at least, in this holy communion, somewhat of thy tender, cordial affection!

That my faith may be more strengthened, my hope in thy goodness increased, and that my love once perfectly inflamed, after the tasting of heavenly manna, may never decay.

2. Thy mercy, O Lord, is able to give me the grace I desire, and to visit me most mercifully with the spirit of fervour when it shall please thee.

For though I burn not with so great desires as those that are so singularly devoted to thee: yet notwithstanding, by thy grace, I desire to have this inflamed desire:

Praying and craving that I may partake with all such thy fervent lovers, and be numbered among them.

C H A P T E R XII.

That the grace of devotion is obtained by humility and renouncing ourselves.

The voice of the Beloved.

***T**HOU oughtest to seek the grace of devotion fervently, to ask it earnestly, to expect it patiently and with confidence, to receive it gratefully, to keep it humbly, to work with it diligently, and to commit the time and manner of this heavenly visitation to God, until it shall please him to come unto thee.

Thou oughtest chiefly to humble thyself, when thou feelest inwardly little or no devotion; and yet not be too much dejected.

*God often giveth in a moment that which he hath a long time denied.

He giveth sometimes in the end, that which in the beginning of prayer he deferred to grant.

*It is sometimes a little thing that hindereth and hideth grace from us;

If it may be called little, and not rather great, that hindereth so great good.

But if thou removest this, be it great or small, thou shalt have thy desire.

2. For, as soon as ever thou hast delivered thyself to God with thy whole heart, and seekest not this or that for thine own pleasure or will, but fixest thyself wholly upon him, thou shalt find thyself united and at peace.

For nothing will relish so well, and please thee so much, as what pleases the divine will.

Then shall he see, and be filled and wonder, and his heart shall be enlarged within him; because the hand of the Lord is with him, and he hath put himself wholly into his hands for ever.

Behold, so shall the man be blessed that seeketh God with his whole heart, and busieth not his soul in vain.

This man obtaineth a high degree of divine union, in receiving the holy eucharist.

Because he respecteth not his own devotion and comfort; but above all devotion and comfort, the honour and glory of God.

CHAPTER XIII.

That we ought to lay open our necessities to Christ, and crave his grace.

The voice of the disciple.

* **O** MOST loving Lord, whom I desire to receive with all devotion, thou knowest my infirmity, and the necessity which I endure, with how many evils I am oppressed, how often I am grieved, tempted, troubled and defiled.

I am come unto thee for remedy, I crave of thee comfort and succour.

I speak to him that knoweth all things, to whom all my inward parts are open, and who alone can perfectly comfort and help me.

Thou knowest what good things I stand most in need of, and how poor I am in virtues.

2. Behold, I stand before thee poor and naked, calling for grace, and craving mercy.

Refresh thy hungry beggar, inflame my coldness with the fire of thy love, enlighten my blindness with the brightness of thy presence.

Turn all earthly things to me into bitterness, all things grievous into patience, all created things into contempt and oblivion.

Lift up my heart to thee in heaven, and suffer me not to wander upon earth.

Be thou only sweet unto me from henceforth for evermore.

For thou only art my meat and my drink, my love and my joy, my sweetness and all my good.

3. O that with thy presence thou wouldst wholly inflame, burn, and transform me into thyself;

That I might be made one spirit with thee by the grace of inward union, and by the meltings of ardent love!

Suffer me not to go from thee hungry and thirsty; but deal mercifully with me, as thou hast often dealt wonderfully with thy saints.

What marvel is it, if I should be wholly inflamed by thee, and die to myself!

Since thou art a fire always burning and never decaying, love purifying the heart and enlightning the understanding!

CHAPTER XIV.

Of fervent love, and vehement desire to receive Christ.

The voice of the disciple.

WITH great devotion and ardent love, with the affection and fervour of my whole heart I desire to receive thee, O Lord, as many saints and devout persons have desired thee, when they received thy sacrament.

O my God, my everlasting love, my whole good, my never-ending happiness, I would gladly receive thee with the most vehement desire and most worthy reverence that any of the saints ever had.

2. And although I be unworthy to have all those feelings of devotion, yet I offer unto thee the whole affection of my heart, as if I had all those inflamed desires:

Yea, and whatsoever an holy mind can conceive and desire, all this, with the greatest reverence, I offer and present unto thee.

I desire to reserve nothing to myself, but freely and most willingly to sacrifice myself and all mine unto thee.

My Lord God, my Creator and my Redeemer: I desire to receive thee this day with such affection, reverence, praise and honour, with such gratitude and love, with such faith, hope and purity, as thy holy mother received thee, when she humbly and devoutly answered the angel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be unto me according to thy word."

I offer and present unto thee, the joys, fervent affections, extasies, and supernatural illuminations and heavenly visions of all devout hearts, with all the virtues and praises celebrated by all creatures in heaven and earth, that by all thou mayst be worthily praised and glorified for ever.

4. Receive, my Lord God, my wishes and desires of giving thee infinite praise and immense blessing, which according to the multitude of thy unspeakable greatness, are most justly due unto thee.

These I yield thee, and desire to yield thee every day and moment; I do intreat and invite all heavenly minds, and all thy devout servants to give thanks and praises together with me.

5. Let all people, tribes and tongues, praise thee and magnify thy holy name, with the highest joy and most fervent devotion;

And let all that reverently celebrate the sacrament, find grace and mercy at thy hands, and pray humbly for me a sinful creature.

And when they shall have obtained their desired devotion and joyful union, and depart from thy sacred table, well comforted, and marvellously refreshed, let them vouchsafe to remember my poor soul.



A Treatise on
CHRISTIAN PRUDENCE.

Extracted from Mr. NORRIS.

C H A P T E R I.

Of the end proposed by Christian Prudence, and the general means of obtaining it.

1. **B**Y prudence I here mean, the same with wisdom, a practical knowledge of the best end and the best means to attain it, actually directing us to the choice of that end, and the use of those means.

2. The end of every reasonable creature is God: for he alone is the true object of our happiness: all the happiness we desire, or are capable of, being to be found in him, and him only.

3. That the happiness of man is not to be found in any thing but in God, is usually proved by shewing that it cannot consist in sensual pleasure, riches, honour or power. But the shortest way of proving it is, by shewing at once that it cannot consist in any created good. For as by happiness we mean a state wherein the mind totally acquiesces, and takes full rest and satisfaction, so that which is the object of happiness must be such a good, as perfectly satisfies the mind, contents all its desires, and gives it an absolute tranquility and repose. But that no creature does this is plain from experience, from the vanity which we find in all things, and that restlessness and desire of change which is consequent upon it. *We try one thing after another, as the searching bee wanders from flower to flower; but we go off from every one with disappointment, and a deluded expectation. Almost every thing promises, but nothing answers, and even the succession of new enjoyments (the best remedy for the emptiness we find in each) amuses, but does not satisfy. And as no created good actually does this, so 'tis plain by reason none can. For as none but infinite truth can satisfy the understanding, so only infinite good can satisfy the will. But this the creature is not. As its being is, so is its goodness, both of a limited extent, and so by no means fit to satisfy the capacity of that mind, which aspires after all good. Every creature therefore must confess its utter insufficiency to be the object of our happiness: Nay, the whole collection and amasment of created good, must acknowledge the same; the very depth and abyss of it must say, *It is not in me.*

4. It is in God alone: he is the fountain of eternal blessedness; all the springs of our happiness are in him: he is our good, and our end, as being every way sufficient for our happiness. For he is all goodness; he is that infinite good which is the entire and adequate object of our will; and which being the proper object of all its inclinations, must needs be able to satisfy them. They cannot aspire to any thing beyond him, and therefore must needs center and acquiesce in him. *When I awake up after thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it. Then, and not before; which all resolves into that pious saying of St. Austin, Thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart has no rest till it rests in thee.*

5. It must therefore be the first office of Christian prudence, to make God our end. For indeed not to do so, is the greatest folly that any man can possibly be guilty of. For what can we expect but vanity and disappointment all over, a fruitless labour, and a deluded and abortive hope, if we place our happiness any where but in him, who is the true object of it? 'Tis like leaning with our full force upon what cannot bear our weight, the consequence of which is, to fall with violence. And what an imprudence is this, especially for a Christian, since the clear revelation of the gospel, concerning the true end and final happiness of man: wherein our Saviour hath plainly declared, *This is life eternal to know thee, the only true God!* Since God has not only given us a nature capable of happiness, but has also endued us with faculties and desires, which nothing but himself can satisfy, and he both can and will; and above all, since he has been pleased, lest we should miss the end ♦of our being, to point it out to us, and to tell us that himself is the good, which we so passionately desire, and so blindly seek; it must be the very foolishness of folly for any Christian not to make God his end; much more, so to forget himself and him, as to place it in any thing of this vain world: whether it be directly and professedly, according to the language of the rich epicure, *Soul, take thy ease*; or consequentially, by pursuing the world, and cleaving to its interests, as if it were his end. And besides the folly of this conduct, it bespeaks also such a contempt of God, and of his immense greatness and goodness, as nothing can either parallel or excuse! Especially since the Son of God hath been pleased to concern himself so far for our happiness, as to make this great and excellent end attainable to us, preparing and providing, and procuring an union and communion of God with man, by uniting them both in his own person. Whether, therefore we consider the excellency, or the attainableness of this good, or the manner or price whereby it becomes attainable, God, by all means, is to be made our end, the end of all our desires, and the end of all our designs, the end of all our undertakings, all our actions, and all our hopes, to which we are to refer whatever we think, whatever we speak, and whatever we act, and in one word, to which our whole life is to be directed.

♦ duplicate word "of" removed

6. What a thorough concern then ought every Christian to feel, how hearty a care ought he to take for the obtaining and securing this his right and only end, the fruition of God? This our Saviour calls *The one thing needful*, in opposition to the many things that are apt to trouble and distract us in this busy life, which unless so far as they fall in with this, are all mere trifle and amusement. Even those affairs which carry the face of the greatest seriousness, and pretend to be of the weightiest consequence, if they are not so many parts of this, are *lighter than vanity and nothing*. For indeed a man has but one business in the world, and that is, to make sure his everlasting happiness, and to secure to himself the fruition of that excellent good, which is the true end of his being. This is the whole of man, his only considerable interest, and that upon which all depends. 'Tis not necessary, that he should be born to an estate, or that he should acquire one. 'Tis not necessary that he should succeed in his attempts, for this or that dignity or preferment; that he should live long to enjoy his wealth or greatness, or even that he should live at all. But it is absolutely necessary that he should arrive at his end, that he should attain to the fruition of God, whose loving-kindness is better than life, and without whom he cannot be happy. All the rest may be spared, but there is no dispensing with this. Should he lose all besides, and gain this one thing, yet still he would be happy. And should he gain all besides, and lose this one thing, yet still he would be miserable: for what gain will ever make amends for such a loss? Not that of the whole world, if we believe our Saviour: *What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* Which is then only lost, when it loses God. 'Tis therefore one great part of the prudence of every Christian, after he has fixed this his right end, to endeavour, by much consideration, to possess his mind with a due sense of its moment and importance; and of what consequence it is, that he should succeed in this affair, whatever he miscarries in besides: which when he is once thoroughly convinced of, he will then diligently apply himself to the use of such means as are necessary thereto.

7. All the particular acts of prudence with regard to these means, may be summed up in one general one, and that is, to chuse those very means to this our great end, which God has chosen for us already. To follow his, is indeed an implicit choice, but at the same time 'tis a very safe and a very wise one. For he cannot but know what means are most fit to procure the end for which he made us. And he will not impose upon our weakness, or do what he hath forbidden us, *Make the blind go out of his way*. And therefore, without enquiring into its intrinsic nature, we may securely depend upon this in general, that the way which he has prescribed, must be the very best, and consequently, that it is our wisdom to walk in it.

*8. Now the means which God hath chosen for us are no other than his commandments, which were intended by God for our direction to happiness. As he made us for himself, so the laws which he prescribes to us are but a pursuance of the same kind design, namely, to bring us to himself. For since we cannot suppose him to propose any advantage of his own, by giving us rules of life; and since we can as little suppose that he does it for so poor a reason as only to shew his authority, and much less that he does it for no reason at all, we cannot but conclude, that the laws of God are given us with this design, to shew us the path of life, the true way to that great end for which we were made, the everlasting fruition of God. A consideration which, by the way, ought greatly to endear the laws of God to us, and invite us to yield a free, ready, and chearful obedience to them. Especially if we add,

9. That as they were given for our direction to happiness, so they actually lead to it: *If thou wilt enter into life*, saith our Saviour, *keep the commandments*. This is the path of life, the way of the kingdom, the direct road that leads to happiness, described to us by him who is himself the way, the truth and the [♦](#)life. Men may employ their wits, consult their ease, and flatter their hopes in the invention of other ways; but if we will believe our guide, the way of happiness is the way of obedience.

♦ “life, and men” replaced with “life. Men” per Errata

10. That it is so by the positive order and appointment of God, is plain from the whole tenor of the gospel. And equally plain it is, that he therefore appointed these means, because they naturally conduce to our happiness. For some things are, by the very original constitution of their being, conducive to our good, as others to our hurt; the former he commands, and the latter he forbids. That there is this difference in things with regard to our present happiness, is evident from experience. Temperance, for instance, is more conducive than intemperance to the health of the body, and consequently to the health of the mind too, as depending upon the other. The power which plants have variously to affect our bodies, either by the way of physic or poison, is not more plain and certain than the different influence which different dispositions have upon the well or ill being of our souls. And God in his laws concerning these things, does but what a physician does for those, whose health he takes care of; he prescribes the wholesome diet or physic, and forbids the poison.

11. The same observation will hold as to future happiness; which resulting (as all happiness does) from a certain proportion and agreement between the faculty and the object, must depend upon, and require a certain temper and disposition of the mind, as a natural qualification for it. We find it is [so](#) even in the pleasures of sense. Let the ear be unmusically disposed, and the sweetest sounds put together with the greatest art, will give it no entertainment. And if the organs of taste are indisposed, either naturally or by a disease, the most delicious food is brought in vain, which, as it finds no taste, will give no relish. And if it be thus in the lowest pleasures, can it be otherwise in the highest? If a guest sits idle at a nice and plentiful table, merely because he wants a stomach to eat, or a palate to relish what he finds there, shall an indisposed soul enjoy God? Is there no disposition requisite to make it relish the heavenly banquet? Are these the *only* pleasures that are to be enjoyed at any rate, and however disposed we come to them? No, without doubt there are dispositions for this, as well as for other enjoyments, a certain temper of mind, which as the apostle speaks, is to make us *meet partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*.

[so](#) “even so” replaced with “so even” per Errata

12. Now this temper that qualifies us for happiness, must be in general, to be like him who is the object of it, to have our minds conformable to his mind, and our wills conformable to his will; to resemble him as far as he is imitable by us, to have a godlike frame of spirit, or, as the apostle expresses it, *to be partakers of the divine nature*. And that for this clear reason, because without being in some measure like God, 'tis not possible we should enjoy him, or take any delight in beholding his excellent glory. But *when I awake up after thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it*. Lord, what a satisfying likeness is thine? Our likeness to the world makes us love it, but the love of it does not satisfy. O make us like unto thee, that we may be satisfied with thee!

13. More particularly, the temper that qualifies us for happiness, consists in those virtuous dispositions, which the gospel enjoins to all Christians, such as truth, justice and mercy: because in these consists that part of the divine nature, wherein alone we can be like him: his other perfections being peculiar to himself, and ♠ such as no creature can partake of. And accordingly we are exhorted to *be holy, as the Lord our God is holy; to be followers of God, as dear children; to be perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect*. There is therefore a necessity for us, ♠ as to be like God, that we may enjoy him, so ♣ to be endued with virtuous habits, without which we cannot be like him, nor consequently enjoy him.

♠ extraneous word "as" removed per Errata

♠ "to" replaced with "as to" per Errata

♣ "so as to" replaced with "so to" per Errata

14. But there are two dispositions, which are more particularly necessary to qualify us for the fruition of God, charity and purity: that charity, as it signifies the love of our neighbour, is a necessary qualification is plain, because without this we can't be like God, who is all love and goodness, overflowing with kindness to all his creatures, and continually doing good to them all, as far as they are capable of receiving it. If ever therefore we mean to be happy with and in him, we must be of the same good loving spirit. And as to charity, taken in its primary sense, for the love of God, this is so immediate a qualification for happiness, that nothing can be more so, since all enjoyment depends upon the love of what we are possessed of, and therefore unless we love God, 'tis impossible we should enjoy him. And for this reason it is, that the love of God is so strictly enjoined, and in so high a measure, no less than that of our whole heart and soul, and mind and strength; and that the precept which requires it is called, the first and great commandment: first and great in many respects, and particularly in this, that 'tis the fundamental qualification for happiness, as immediately respecting the object of it, which if we do not love, we can never enjoy.

*15. The other great qualification for the enjoyment of God is purity; that part of it especially which relates to the pleasures of sense. Now the reason why this is such a qualification for our final happiness is this: God, the object of it is a spiritual being, and the happiness of heaven which consists in the fruition of him, is all over of a rational and intellectual nature: being indeed no other than this, the pleasure of the understanding contemplating the supreme truth, and of the will transported with the love of the sovereign good. And therefore a love of sensual pleasure must indispose us for the love of a good so purely spiritual. And if ever it rises so high as to become the prevailing and governing affection of the soul (the case and character of those who are *lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God*) it must utterly unqualify us for it. For what can a sensualized soul find in heaven, that will suit with his distempered taste? A *Mahometan* paradise would suit with such affections well; but in heaven they would meet with nothing but disappointment; and therefore St. *Peter*, with a pressing earnestness, cautions us against them: *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly desires that war against the soul.* They war against the soul, not only by betraying us into sin, either by consenting to them in unlawful circumstances, or by indulging them in an immoderate degree, but chiefly by indisposing us for the enjoyment of a far nobler happiness. And accordingly St. *John*, among all virtuous dispositions, singles out purity as a preparation for heaven. *Every man*, says he, *that hath this hope, purifieth himself as he is pure.* And our Saviour applies this purity to the heart, to shew how that ought to be disposed for happiness. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* O infinite purity, what heart will be fit to see thee, if thou dost not purge and cleanse it? O purify us by thy grace, and so fit us for thy glory!

16. By all these considerations it appears, that the commandments of God are the means that lead us to happiness. And for this reason it is, that God, who is willing we should be happy, having made us for that very end, requires them of us, and obliges us to them by all the authority he has over us. For this reason it is, for instance, that he commands us to love him. What is our love to him? Nothing at all. But though it be nothing to him, yet it is to ourselves, as being a necessary qualification for our happiness. This God knows, and therefore requires us to love him; nay, to love him with all our heart and all our strength, because he knows a less degree of love is neither [♦](#)worthy of him, nor will qualify us to be happy in him. And so in every other instance, God makes those things our duty, which have a close connection with our happiness; and this is that which makes his laws so good and so excellent, and his service a truly reasonable service; for certainly nothing can be more reasonable, than for a man to pursue his own good, nor consequently than to serve and obey God, since this is a certain means to that end, and his own good is the natural fruit of that obedience; and how should this (as was intimated before) endear the service of God to us? How should it make us in love with our duty to him, and glad to be subject to his government? How should it incite us, to yield the most free, ready, chearful and zealous obedience to his laws? In a word, to do his will on earth as the angels do it in heaven, since our own advantage is both the reason of his laws, and the sure consequence of keeping them. *Every prudent Christian therefore looks upon the commandments of God, not as so many imperious curbs and retrenchments of his liberty, nor as so many arbitrary impositions, much less as burthens and grievances (as human laws sometimes are, for want of wisdom or goodness in those that make them) but as so many kind provisions for our happiness, and so many merciful instructions to bring us to our true end: and in this view he yields them obedience, not such as is forced and violent, servile and extorted by fear, such as slaves pay to tyrants, but such as is liberal and ingenuous, and wherein love is the prevailing principle; as becomes one who is under a government so good and gracious, and so every way directed and administered for the best advantage of the subject, as that of God is.

[♦](#) added missing word “worthy” per Errata

17. And now since it appears that the means that lead to our end, the great highway to happiness, are no other than the commandments of God, it appears with equal clearness, that the one business of every prudent Christian is, to pay a due obedience to all these commandments. This is our wisdom, and indeed the only wise thing we can do, not to indulge our own fancies, not to fulfil our own will, or to follow the devices and desires of our own hearts, but to apply ourselves to the law of God, to lay hold of those *paths of life* which he hath described to us. By doing this, we shall give a better proof of our wisdom, than by all the fine-wrought plots, and cunning intrigues of worldly policy, or by the most acute reasonings of philosophy, or deepest treasures of learning. These things cast indeed a dazzling light, and make a figure in the world: but after all, the wisdom of man is, to attain to his end, and consequently to find and use the true means of attaining it. And since the commandments of God are those true means, *to keep and do them is our wisdom and understanding*, or, as *Job* expresses it: *Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*

18. It is not only wisdom, but our wisdom, the wisdom of *man*, the wisdom that belongs to his *nature*, as being made for happiness; that belongs to the present *state* and *condition* of his nature, as having capacities to qualify himself fully for this; whereas his faculties will carry him but a very little way in speculative knowledge: it is the wisdom that belongs to his present *circumstances* in this world, which is wholly in order to the other, and is no farther considerable than it is a preparation for eternity; and after this I need not say, it is the wisdom that belongs to his *interest*, nothing being more evident, than that it is every man's greatest interest to be everlastingly happy. Upon all which considerations it appears, that the study and practice of God's commandments, the devoting himself to his service, and to the obedience of all his laws, is the true and proper wisdom of man, in which alone he is concerned to employ and improve himself, and to which all his other learning, knowledge and business, all he thinks, says, or does, is to be referred.

CHAPTER II.

How far Christian Prudence is concerned in the manner of keeping God's commandments.

1. **A**S to the manner of keeping God's commandments, the main difficulty is in the *doing*, and not in determining what in prudence ought to be done. Prudence doubtless (as well as duty) requires, that we should keep them in as good a manner as we can. For since the commandments of God are evidently the means that qualify us for happiness, it follows, that the better they are kept by *us*, the more we shall be qualified by *them*. Now 'tis unquestionably the part of every prudent man, to obtain as much happiness as he can: and consequently to do his best to serve God, and keep his commandments, in the most perfect manner he is able; because the better he keeps them, the happier he will be; and no wise man would be less happy when he may be more so.

2. Setting aside therefore all inducements of either love or fear, all arguments of gratitude or generosity, all the reasonableness and justice of serving God, and living in obedience to his laws, all the pleasures of religion, and the present advantage of it both to our souls and bodies I say, tho' we should set aside all these considerations, yet there is a prudential consideration, sufficient to engage every wise Christian to do his best, and to be as holy as he can, *viz.* That the better he is, the happier he will be; every addition to virtue being so much stock laid in for his future happiness. The question concerning *degrees of glory*, seems to have been put merely for argument sake, for it cannot be put seriously, but by one that is as ignorant of the nature of things, as of divine revelation: were the scripture silent, yet the very nature of the thing infers it; for since holiness is a natural qualification for happiness, it necessarily follows, that the more holiness the more happiness; and consequently, that the best must be the happiest man; and therefore 'tis great prudence for every Christian, to labour to be excellently good, as good as he can be, according to the measure of grace imparted to him. To reduce this to an instance; our Saviour has annexed to purity of heart a particular blessedness, even that of seeing God: whence we may gather, that this is a particular qualification for the beatific vision, and accordingly, that those who have most of this purity, will be most happy, as either seeing more of God, or as being more delighted with what they see of him; and therefore every prudent Christian *that hath this hope*, will study to *purify himself* as much as he can, that so he may be a more meet partaker of that happiness, which is promised to the pure in heart.

*3. Let not therefore any Christian content himself with his present state, or his past attainments in goodness; much less let him designedly aim at a slender degree, such as he thinks may just carry him to heaven. He may be mistaken in his measure, and when laid in the balance be found wanting: but suppose he be not, yet he stands in his own light, and is frugal to his own great loss: for, 'tis but an ill thrift to deal hardly for heaven, and to think to go thither the cheapest way; since beside the danger of miscarrying, so much as he abates of his holiness, so much he abates of his own perfection, and cuts short his own happiness: and where is the gain or the wisdom of such a thrift? 'Tis folly and loss all over. Let us not therefore rest satisfied with narrow and scanty measures, much less expressly design them: for besides, that 'tis not easy to *persevere* in such a weak and languishing state of piety (every little blast of temptation being ready to blow out a lamp that is fed with so little oil:) suppose we should persevere in it, yet there is no getting over this consideration, that the more we come short in goodness, the more we shall fall short in happiness; that every abatement in the former is so much deducted from the latter, a jewel taken out of their crown. Therefore let no one who pretends to Christian prudence, sit down with a low infant-state of goodness, but let him endeavour to grow in grace, and always to abound in the work of the Lord: not contenting himself with his present state, but always studying to excel himself, to grow better and better, and to make a constant progress in religion, correcting what is amiss, and supplying what is wanting, and aspiring after the largest measures and fullest degrees of holiness, always remembering, that all the while he is thus serving God, he is consulting his own interest, and that the more goodness he brings with him to heaven, the more happiness he will find there.

4. In consequence of this, a prudent Christian will begin betimes, and set out early in the ways of piety; not only that he may have the advantage of the morning, the proper time for travelling, and the satisfaction of serving God in the prime of his age, and the vigour of his strength: but also that he may lengthen his day, and have the more time to serve God in, and to prepare himself for the fruition of him in glory; that he may have the more time before him, to correct his disorders, to fill up his deficiencies, to regulate his passions, to purify his heart, to perfect his habits, to adorn his soul with all Christian virtues; in a word, to compose the state and frame of his mind for happiness, and to put himself in a due order for heaven. For these reasons 'tis Christian prudence to begin betimes, to run the way of God's commandments, and not to defer that work to the declining part of life, which is the one business of the whole.

5. But if it be prudence, as to keep the commandments of God, so to keep them in the very best manner we can, what shall we think of those who serve God by halves, who halt between two masters, the almost Christians? Because this is so common a case, it may be proper to bestow some reflections upon it. I shall therefore consider more at large,

First, what it is that hinders their rising any higher than to be almost Christians. And

Secondly, The imprudence of this lame way of serving God, of being Christians by halves.

*6. First, The general hindrance to our being more than almost Christians, is the corrupt perverseness of human nature: this it was that made the fair inclinations of King *Agrippa* proceed no farther than they did: than to extort from him that ingenuous confession, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*. Then, it seems, he was not absolutely persuaded, tho' he was inclining toward it. Poor *Agrippa*! He had heard St. *Paul* giving an account of his manner of life from his youth, and of his miraculous conversion to Christianity, with great plainness, modesty and simplicity, and was not a little affected with the discourse; especially with the conclusion, *King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest*. This nearly touched him, and left a very sensible impression upon his heart.

And yet there was something more prevalent within him, that would not suffer him quite to yield. He had a good mind to be a Christian, but fear, interest and prejudice outweighed that inclination, and after some uncertain suspenses, the scale turned on the other side. And this is the case of too many: they have several good thoughts and purposes: but their thoughts and purposes are too much like the endeavours of those that are trying to wake out of a deep sleep, into which they sink back again, overcome by the dead weight that hangs upon them. There is a weight, an impediment in their will, that stops the wheels of virtuous action, so that there can be no motion, tho' the springs of religion bear ever so hard upon them. Sometimes indeed conscience works so strongly, that she wants but little of gaining her point. But even that little, it seems, is too much; she is like a bowl thrown up against a steep bank, which it nimbly climbs, till it is just about to lodge and settle at the top: but wanting some degrees of force to overcome the resistance, it cannot reach it, and rolls back again.

7. *Thou art not far from the kingdom of God*, was just such a cast as this: and *yet lackest thou one thing*, was such another. These men's religion had carried them a good way, and they were well onward in their journey to heaven; but it tired, and grew faint in the latter stages of the road, which was found either too narrow or too long, and so they stopped short, and made an eternal halt, when a little more resolution would have carried them through. The same thing we now see every day; there are many who have a liking to religion, who have had a good natural disposition, assisted by a religious education. Nor are they only inclined to religion, but partly practise it; they do many things, and forbear others. All goes on hopefully toward a thorough conversion; they are already past the most painful part of it, and are now upon the critical point; so that a grain or two more would turn the scale; insomuch, that there begins to be joy in heaven, and the angels are tuning their harps: yet there wants a little more weight on the side of religion, for want of which the counter-weight prevails against it; against reason, religion and divine grace together. They have indeed the workings of religion upon them; they feel several pangs of the new-birth; but after all, they want strength to bring forth.

8. The imprudence of this lame way of serving God (which I was to shew in the second place) appears first from this, that it is insufficient. Such a half religion can never hold weight in the balance of the sanctuary. Such men, 'tis true, are almost good; but almost to hit the mark is really to miss it. For religion consists in an entire love of God, and an effectual resolution to obey him. Even a bad man may love what is good in some degree, but not with an effectual, prevailing love. This therefore is what denominates a man good, when religion is the commanding ◆ bias of his soul. And none but those who are thus thoroughly good, are so good as to be fit for happiness. To make us capable of that, there must be a peculiar frame of mind, to affect which in us is the one business of religion. And if it does this only almost, and by halves, as it can never bring us to heaven, so neither if it could, would it be able to make us happy there.

◆ "biass" replaced with "bias"

*9. This imperfect piety is farther condemned by Christian prudence as very absurd. If we did not intend to go through, why did we set out? If we did, why do we stop? If we think there is no reason in religion, why do we any thing? But if we think there is, why don't we do enough? For the same reason that we do so much, why don't we do more? For either religion has truth on its side, or not. If not, why do we take so much labour *needlesly*? But if it has, why do we take so much labour *in vain*? 'Tis, I own, a strange piece of even brutal indifference, to do nothing in order to our eternal happiness: and, yet, methinks, to do a part only, has something in it more extravagant than the other. He that does nothing, whatever he loses besides, has yet no labour to lose. But to labour by halves, is to lose the same good, and all that we do in order to it. The atheist and libertine have something to pretend; but the half-religious has no excuse; since that very religion he has will condemn him, as an inconsistent, unprincipled fool.

10. The last censure of Christian prudence upon the half-way state of piety, is, that it is very unhappy, I mean even in this world. The almost Christian is the *double-minded man* St. James speaks of, who has two wills, one for God and another for the world, between which he variously fluctuates. Such an one is *unstable in all his ways*: he is a mixed, doubtful, unsettled, wavering creature, never out of perplexities and intanglements, always disconformable to himself, doing what he would not, and not doing what he would and should, never long satisfied with himself. He has indeed a kindness for religion, but he has a greater kindness for something else; so that his religion just serves to disturb the enjoyment of his lusts, as his lusts to deprive him of the comfort of his religion. Nor can he be perfectly at peace with himself, but by being thoroughly wicked or thoroughly good. So wicked as to *have his conscience sear'd with a hot iron*, or so good as to act up to his principles. He must be of a single mind, one way or the other, before he can be at rest. And yet this double-mindedness is the state in which most men chuse to live and die, having religion enough to disturb them in their sins, but not enough to engage them to part with them.

*11. And now methinks, I hear one saying within himself, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*. Alas! why not *quite*? Is it that we want the art of address, that we do not touch the right spring of your soul? But sure our cause has weight enough to bear itself out, and to supply any defect in the management of it. For is there not truth and reason enough in religion, to gain a reasonable creature? Or can any motive have a greater force or persuasion, than the joys of heaven and the pains of hell? Or do you question whether God be able to reward your entire love and compleat obedience? If you indeed *believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, as even your indifferent way of serving him seems to suppose, then you must needs think it wisdom, to lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees; to be heartily and thoroughly religious, and not to be guilty of so inconsistent a folly as to take *some* pains all your life for heaven, and yet go at last to hell.

12. Considering then the insufficiency, the absurdity, and the unhappiness of a half religion, let us instantly labour *to fill up the things that are behind*, that are wanting to the measure of our righteousness. Let us earnestly endeavour to bring ourselves under the full power and influence of religion, that it may have its due work upon our hearts and lives, that we may *be perfect, entire, and wanting nothing*: always imploring the Holy Spirit of God, by the victorious sweetness of his divine grace, to give the last finishing to that holy birth, he is forming in us, that it may *come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*: that so, according to the apostle's wish, we may be both almost, and altogether Christians!

CHAPTER III.

Of the subordinate means that serve to assist us in keeping the commandments of God.

1. **W**E have seen that the immediate means to happiness are the commandments of God. We come now to consider the subordinate means to it, which serve to assist us in the keeping of those commandments. And these are of two sorts: either such as are appointed and commanded by God, or such as are recommended by human prudence.

2. Of the first sort is prayer. This is a glorious means, to withdraw our thoughts, and affections from sensible objects, and to fix them upon God and the things of heaven: to stir up in us a sense of our wants and infirmities, and to quicken our desires of what we pray for: to maintain a religious warmth in our minds, and to keep up there a spirit of devotion, the flame of which would soon be extinct without the breathings of prayer to fan it, and give it motion: to nourish our communion with God, and make us continually mindful of him, *in whom we live, move, and have our being*. It is also a key to open the store-houses of God's treasures to us, whereby we may obtain a supply of all our wants, and particularly *grace to help in time of need*, to enable us to resist all temptations.

3. A prudent Christian will therefore pray often: for temporal things conditionally, as not knowing whether, or how far these may be for his good, or serve as means to his end. But for spiritual, such as pardon of sin, and grace to leave it, he will pray not only with greater earnestness, but also absolutely, and without any condition, because he knows that God *would have all men to be saved*, to attain the happiness for which he made them; and that those (if he be not wanting to himself) are certain means to his salvation.

4. Reading of the scriptures is the next means which God has ordained to assist us in keeping his commandments. And an excellent means it is, both to enlighten our understanding, and to compose our minds into a religious temper. *All scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*. And therefore every prudent Christian gives all attendance to reading it. And that not out of curiosity, or for speculation only, but with a practical design, to learn and do the whole will of God. And accordingly he will not lay them aside, when he thinks he understands them, but will renew and continue his perusal of them, for his constant and greater edification. His delight will ever be in the law of the Lord, and in his law will he meditate day and night.

5. A third means of religion appointed by God, is the hearing the word preached. This is a standing provision which God has made for the edification of his church; therefore a prudent Christian, who never thinks himself too wise to learn, or too good to be better, and who never omits any means that may bring him nearer his end, is careful to pay his due attendance to it, humbly waiting for the grace and blessing of God in the use of his own ordinance.

6. Neither will the sacraments, fourthly, be ever undervalued or neglected by a prudent Christian, who never thinks himself either too wise or too good for any institution of God. As to the Lord's *supper* in particular, he never omits any opportunity of receiving it, knowing the excellent ends for which it serves, and its great usefulness to serve them. It serves as a sensible image of the death of Christ, and of our spiritual communion with him; as a memorial of his atonement for our sins, actually applying it to ourselves. In short, it serves as a channel to convey all the blessings of God to us, and as a pledge to assure us of them. And in all this he admires the wisdom and goodness of God, in making this merciful provision for his church, who, considering our frame, and how large a share sense has in our composition, was pleased, in condescension to our infirmity, to address himself to us by that weaker side of our nature; and lest, in such a croud of sensible objects, as we daily converse with, we should (as we are too apt) be tempted to forget him, was pleased, by those very objects, to bring us to himself, by making use of some of them as his *remembrancers*, and as steps whereby we might ascend to the contemplation of the most spiritual and heavenly mysteries.

7. *Church-communion*, in the last place, is an excellent means for the mutual edification of Christians; for the preservation of the Christian faith and doctrine, and for the encouragement of Christian practice. And since for these and the like reasons, God, by his Son Jesus Christ, has erected and constituted that spiritual society call'd *a church*, whereof the same Jesus Christ is the head, as that is his body, according to the apostle; Christian prudence obliges every man not to look upon himself only as a private or independent Christian, that is at liberty to serve God as he pleases, in his own solitary way, but as a member of this one church, whereof Christ is the head, and consequently bound to hold communion with it. This therefore, a prudent Christian will be sure to do, and think it a great happiness and privilege to have such a help, to enjoy the communion of saints, and worship God in the assemblies of his people. From these he will by no means *excommunicate* himself: but as he is in spirit united to the whole Christian church, so he actually communicates with that particular branch of it, whereof he is a member: and hereby he shews his union with the whole, in which he will be careful to make no schism; lest, by dividing from that church whereof Christ is the head, he be divided from Christ, his end as well as his way.

CHAPTER IV.

The conduct of a prudent Christian, with regard to the government of himself.

1. **H**ITHERTO we have been conducting our prudent Christian to his end, by the chief of the ways that lead to it, *viz.* by the direct and immediate means of happiness, first, the duties of the divine law, and then by the means to those means, such of them in particular, as are of divine appointment. For the application of which, it may now be convenient to draw a little nearer, and consider the conduct which a prudent Christian uses in the government of himself.

2. And first let us consider [♦](#)how the prudent Christian pursues improvement by the government of his senses. He does not study the pleasing of his senses. This indeed many make the great end of their lives, which are almost wholly devoted to the pursuit, and spent in the various entertainments of *sensible pleasure*; as if they thought (and perhaps some of them do) that their supreme happiness consisted in it. But this a prudent Christian will not do; for he knows we are already too much in love with sensible pleasure, the great disease of our nature, and therefore will not by indulging it inflame a passion which is already too violent. *He finds that as the more we abstain from these pleasures, the more cold we grow to them, so by indulgence our appetite acquires a new edge, and grows the more sharp and keen: he that drinks of this water shall not only thirst again, but the more he drinks, he shall thirst the more. He considers likewise, how entirely different from these, are the intellectual pleasures of heaven, and how apt the love of them is to indispose us for these, and in this sense *to alienate us from the life of God*. He is therefore so far from feasting his senses (as the manner of the world is) by all the variety of studied entertainments, that he endeavours by all manner of ways to mortify them, and instead of setting up for a soft, voluptuous life (according to St. *Paul's* advice to *Timothy*) *inures himself to hardships, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*: Not indeed by any such rigid austerities, as would destroy or impair his health, but by such a sparing use of, and well-governed abstemiousness from, even those pleasures which are lawful in themselves, as may deaden his love to them, and make him more indifferent to the enjoyment of them.

[♦](#) inserted the word "how" per Errata

◆4. He will likewise keep a strict guard over his senses themselves; as knowing they are the inlets of temptation, the landing ports of our spiritual enemies, and the feeble parts of our nature, which expose us to continual danger. Particularly, what can be more dangerous than an unguarded eye or ear, while there is every day so much to be seen and to be heard, to provoke to wickedness, and so little to encourage holiness? Over these therefore he keeps a constant guard, to prevent invasion and surprize, especially over the eye, the most dangerous of the two, as being concerned with more objects: praying also to God, without whose keeping the city the watchman waketh but in vain, *To turn away his eyes lest they behold vanity, and to quicken him in his way*; that nothing he sees or hears in this his pilgrimage, may either turn him out of it, or hinder him in it.

◆ point "3." skipped in text

*5. We may, secondly observe, how a prudent Christian pursues improvement by the government of his understanding. Considering, in the first place, what an excellent faculty and great endowment understanding is, and for what great ends it was given him by God, he thinks himself concerned not to let it lie idle, but to employ and improve it as much as possible, that he may hereafter give a good account of his talent: but were no account of it to be given, yet considering himself farther as a traveller in his way to his end, and his understanding as a torch that is to light him in it, he would think it very proper to take care of it, and that not only to preserve it from going out, but to feed it with such supplies of oil, that it might shine the more brightly and clearly.

*6. But yet as much as he is for improving his understanding, he does not affect universal knowledge, as well knowing the vanity of pretending to it, by one whose capacity is no greater and whose life is no longer. Neither is he for filling his head with little things, no nor with such great things as do not conduce to his end, and whose impertinency to his business renders them as very trifles to him as the other. Nor will he apply himself to the study of vain and unprofitable sciences, nor yet of such theories as exceed the proportion of his understanding: but as he must be ignorant of many things, so he will not so much as endeavour to know such as are not to be comprehended: indeed if God reveals them, he does not think their being above his understanding, any reason why they should not be believed. But though he believes them, yet he can see no cause, to engage his thoughts, or employ his time in the search and study of such things, only to lose himself in unfathomable depths, to the neglect of other matters which he can comprehend, and is more concerned so to do. And for the same cause he declines prying into the hidden scenes of providence, those secret things that belong to God, which though not absolutely incomprehensible in themselves, yet being locked up in the womb of futurity, are by that wall of partition, as inaccessible to us as the other.

*7. The same wisdom directs him not to study such things as require great expence of time and labour to master them, unless they bring him in an advantage answerable to the time and pains which he bestows upon them. For he has so little time, and so great an interest depending, he can't think it frugal to throw away a moment. Upon the same ground he does not regard what in reputation, and in the vogue of the world passes for learning, but what is true and real knowledge, and fit to perfect the mind of man. And even in pursuing this he is on his guard, not suffering himself to be transported by an immoderate thirst of it: but as his enquiries into truth are modest, so he is discreet and select in making them, applying himself to those most which are of greatest importance, most serviceable to his moral conduct; especially to the knowledge of God and of himself, wherein is contained the sum of human wisdom.

*8. In all his studies he takes care to avoid the two great disorders incident to studious men, curiosity and vain-glory: curiosity, which puts them upon useless enquiries, only to please themselves; and vain-glory, which puts them on many dry and insipid studies, only to please and procure the admiration of others. Nor does he make any knowledge an end, but refers all to the great ends of virtue and happiness: in all his intellectual applications making this his one care, to love God, and to be loved by him.

9. After the regulation of his understanding, the next work of a prudent Christian is, the government of his will and affections. These of themselves are in the utmost disorder, caused by the general corruption of our nature: and unless this is removed, no man can be either good, or happy hereafter.

10. His first step towards this, is to teach his will to follow in all things, not natural inclination, but the will of God revealed to us in his word: for the will of God sways more with a prudent Christian than any inclination of his own, which he is ready at all times, and in all cases, to sacrifice to his duty; and his only care is to conform his will to the will and word of God, as knowing that God, being infinitely wise as well as good, cannot possibly command any thing, but what, upon the whole account, it is best for him to do. Most cheerfully therefore does he depose his own will from the throne, and sets up the will of God.

*11. Nor is he less obedient to a *providential* than to the *written* will of God. Not adhering to any private fancies, opinions or wishes of his own, he absolutely refers himself to God, to his gracious and all-wise disposal. He lodges all his concerns in his hands, and is willing he should chuse for him; and when he does so, concluding it best that things should be as the Governor of the world would have them, he thankfully accepts his choice, and humbly acquiesces in the wisdom of his providence: and accordingly, instead of cherishing any thought, or using any language of discontent, he is in all things ready to say with his Lord, *Not as I will, but as thou wilt*. Lord, thy will was an innocent will, and yet thou didst resign it. How much more should we resign our perverse and corrupt wills?

CHAPTER V.

A persuasive to the study of Christian prudence, with some advices relating to the practice of it.

1. **H**AVING thus laid down the principles of Christian prudence, what remains but to persuade men to the study of it? And the first consideration I shall offer to recommend the study of this wisdom is, that it is attainable. *Many things employ the search of studious men, which, after all, they can never master, but must sit down, if not with a *contented*, yet with an *unavoidable* ignorance of. But it is not so with wisdom: the acquisition of this depends not upon great parts, but upon a willing mind. Speculation indeed is infinite, and the well of truth has no bottom, and besides, *Many have nothing to draw with*. But wisdom, like a fountain, lies open, and within common reach. Some care, and pains, and diligence only it takes to drink of it; an easy price for so precious a treasure. Now this certainty of success is an encouraging motive to search after it in good earnest. Men may seek for silver, and not find it, and search for hid treasures, without being able to break in upon their dark retirements. And yet they search on: how much more should we search for wisdom, when we are sure not to be disappointed in our search?

2. But may we not be so in our *finding*? Many things are attainable by our labour, which are not worth our labour to attain. But wisdom is not of those; on the contrary, nothing is so well worth attaining. Wisdom it is that keeps the world in order, and makes living in it a blessing, that is the parent of laws, the foundation of government, and the great upholder and sweetner of all society. Wisdom it is that teaches a man how to obey, and how to govern even that ungovernable creature himself: to moderate his passions, to compose his manners, to behave well in all circumstances of life. In a word, that teaches a man to know God and himself, and by the shining paths of virtue leads him to everlasting glory and happiness.

*3. Therefore it is that *Solomon* exhorts us with so passionate an earnestness, *with all thy gettings, get wisdom*. As much as to say, whatever thou gettest, or with the expence of all thou hast gotten, get wisdom, as being of infinitely more value than all. It is a pearl of so great price, that the merchant who finds it, will buy it with the price of all that he has. And a wise merchant he is who buys it even at this price, for it can never be bought too dear. Honour and greatness may; nay, and so may the whole world, if the price be a man's soul. But wisdom cannot; therefore again, *Get wisdom, and with all thy gettings, get understanding*. If we get wisdom 'tis no matter what else we lose. And if we lose it, 'tis no matter what else we get. And indeed it matters not what we get or lose, so we get that which directs us in the way to happiness, which giveth *life* to them that have it, and teaches them how to *live*.

*4. Another consideration to persuade us to the serious study of wisdom, is this, that if we do not now apply ourselves to it, we shall hereafter earnestly wish we had. I know hardly any other study, the neglect of which we shall finally repent of. He that has not studied mathematics, suppose, though he may perhaps sometime while he lives, reflect upon himself with some blame for the neglect of such an accomplishment, yet when he comes toward the concluding scene of life, and that of eternity begins to open, I presume he will not then think this a neglect worth repenting of. And so as to other studies. But he who has not studied wisdom, will then most certainly wish he had, and think it the greatest gain, could he exchange all the sciences he is master of, for this one, the science of life. This is the science that receives our last and best approbation, when other things that make a greater shew and noise, and which perhaps we liked better when we knew less, do not find so great a share in our esteem. Useless notions, and new systems, and fine-spun theories, will not always please us. The days will come when we shall say, we have no pleasure in them. But wisdom will relish with us to the very last, and more at last than ever. When other things leave us, wisdom will stay behind, and more than supply their loss: and when we have outlived the pleasures of the world, then will it be in the greatest esteem with us, as being the only thing of all our acquirements, whose possession and enjoyment too is immortal.

5. When the gaities and follies of life are over (for folly will not always please) when even the more serious entertainments of manhood appear to us as more solemn titles; when covetousness itself, the last folly that forsakes us, because it begins so late, that it often settles upon the dregs of life, as upon a firm and immoveable ground, when even this cleaving folly, shall uncling and drop from us, when the world itself shall be a burden to us; then shall the remembrance of wisdom be sweet unto us, and we shall delight in her conversation, and every step in her ways will give us more comfort than all the little things of the world. Those who have been strangers to wisdom before, will be ready enough to claim acquaintance with her then and to say unto wisdom, *Thou art my sister, and to call understanding their kinswoman*. But she will not then be so forward to own them. And therefore happy is he that has contracted a friendship with her in the days of his youth and strength, that he may not be disowned by her in that hour wherein he most wants her favour: that he may not have wisdom then to learn, when he should be actually wise, and have the benefit and comfort of her light to guide him through the vale of the shadow of death. In order to which we should always remember that excellent advice of St. Bernard, *To rejoice in those things when we are young, which we shall not repent of when we are old*.

6. I have now only to add a few prudential advices relating to the practice of a Christian life. Of which the first shall be that of the apostle, *To walk circumspectly*, that is warily and heedfully, with all possible care, caution and exactness. This is such walking as shews we are duly apprehensive of our condition: the danger of which must be allowed to be exceeding great, since besides our own corrupt nature, and the wickedness of the world that surrounds us, we have the prince of darkness for our profest enemy; *even our adversary the devil, who as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*. He does not tarry 'till the prey comes in his way, but seeks after it, but walks about seeking who is fit to be made a prey of; whose idleness or whose business, whose temper or constitution, whose age or whose carelessness may give him any advantage. He begins with us very early, laying his siege against us in our very infancy. Then he tempts us with sensible objects, and easily increases our natural propension to them. For reason is then in a dead sleep, and sense altogether awake, being in its greatest perfection, by reason of the fineness of the blood and spirits, and the tenderness of the parts, which easily yielding to the impression of sensible objects, endear them more and more to us, and so confirm that *friendship with the world, which is enmity with God*. This thoughtless age is succeeded by childhood and youth; and then indeed reason begins to awake; but so slowly, that we are all this time, as it were, between sleeping and waking; the weight still hangs upon our temples. Our passions are much too strong for our weak reason to govern, which accordingly our enemy makes his advantage of, and tempts us with the baits of sensuality, with those *youthful lusts* which 'tis then hard to fly. This boisterous season also blows over, and is followed by manhood. And now indeed reason is stronger and passion cooler, and so the devil changes his former bait for that of pride and ambition, whereby himself fell, and wherewith he assaulted even the Son of God. Now he lifts us up to, and shews us the grandeur and glory of the world, and tries to persuade us what a happiness it would be, could we make a part of that glittering scene. Well, but neither will this last always; our sun soon begins to decline, and old age comes on, the winter of our year, or rather the evening of our short day. And now our reason grows heavy and sleepy again, and our passions also flag with it, hang their wings, and make our flight nearer the earth, as not being able to bear up in the higher regions. We are now no longer fit for our former entertainments, and having seen what little dependance there is on

the world, having lost some of our friends, and proved the insincerity of others, this experience, together with the natural sinking of our spirits, makes us grow timorous, jealous and distrustful, and sollicitous to secure ourselves in this forlorn state, and so we stand fairly disposed for covetousness. And accordingly the devil now draws us into this snare, which reigns the more absolute over us, as having us almost entirely to itself, without competition from other vices. Thus our adversary is always intent upon our ruin, meeting us at every turn of our lives, and suiting his temptations to the several states and conditions of them. And therefore it highly concerns us to walk circumspectly, as knowing both the infinite worth of our souls, and the numberless hazards they are exposed to, from which (next to the grace of God) nothing but an extraordinary caution can secure them.

7. And because these hazards are chiefly from sensible objects, my next advice shall be, *To walk by faith, not by sight*; to order your conversation not by what you see of this world, but by what you believe of the next. *Not to look at the things which are seen, but at things that are not seen; because the things that are seen are temporal*, and so do not affect our final state: *but the things that are not seen are eternal*, and so the proper objects of an happiness that is never to expire. A Christian then ought to keep his eye always fixed on his happiness; to walk continually in view of this his end, and have it before him as near as he can, in every action and word, in every deliberate step of his Christian progress: not to content himself with having referred all he does to it once in general; but to renew and repeat the proposal of it, as often as conveniently he can. Beside the habitual reference of his actions to their end, let every prudent Christian be more and more diligent to have an actual regard to it, as far as is possible, in every step of his life. For the having before us that eternal weight of glory, that crown that fadeth not away, must needs quicken our devotion and inflame our zeal, and inspirit us with new life and vigour in the running our Christian course, and help us with ease to overcome all those vain impediments, which the world, the flesh and the devil throw in our way. Nothing shall be able to separate us from our end, or turn us out of the right way to it, if we keep our eye intent upon it, and have it in our view all the way of our Christian walk. For indeed the excellence of it is so transcendent, that nothing of this world can stand together with it, or shine in its light, any more than a feeble star can shine in the presence of the mid-day sun. The greater light swallows up the less; we must lose the one before we can be dazzled with the other; we must intermit the view of our chief good, before any other can appear considerable enough to tempt us.

◆9. And now we are got into the right way, there is no better means of fixing ourselves there, than to keep toward the middle of it, pretty far within the lines, so as not to tread upon the edges: not to go to the outside of what is lawful, but rather to set ourselves in all our actions at the greatest distance from sin, by abstaining from all the appearances and beginnings of it. But chiefly from the beginnings. The full accomplishments of wickedness we have a horror of. But we have not the same dread of the beginnings, and of the things that have a tendency to gross crimes. So we are easily persuaded to begin; and when we have once made an entrance, the progress grows easier and easier. For the next degree being but a degree beyond it, carries as little horror in it as the first; and so the next to that, being a degree farther, carries the like appearance: and so the rest that follow, we measuring every degree not (as we should do) by all the preceding ones which it contains, but only by the last, which it immediately exceeds, considering it only as a degree farther than that, and so as a small thing, till by degrees we slide unawares into the commission of those sins, which looked frightful, and would have *choaked* us in the lump, but being thus taken by *piece-meal* are easily swallowed.

◆ point "8." skipped in text.

*10. And no wonder, since the first liberties we take, the first approaches we make to any sin, inflame our passions, raise our appetites, which were before quiet, and increase our desires of the forbidden object. So that our talk is now harder than it was at first, and we might much easier have forborn the whole, beginning and all, than forbear making a further progress, when we have once begun. And why should we make our duty more difficult and painful than it is? Therefore the wisest way is, not to begin; that being true of all sin, which *Solomon* observes of strife, *The beginning of it is as when one letteth out water*, which is easily prevented from running at first, but being once let out, the passage grows more open, and the stream more difficult to command. Therefore, says he, *Leave off contention before it be meddled with, i. e.* Do not meddle with it at all, it being much easier to have nothing to do with it, than to govern yourself in it. They that once begin, are insensibly carried to do what at first they never designed, and then vainly complain, that God did not preserve them from falling, when they placed their own feet on slippery ground.

11. To conclude: if we will be truly wise, let us set the gospel and example of Christ before us, and endeavour to be as wise in our generation, as the men of this world are in theirs, to be as diligent in pursuing our true and great end, as they are in pursuing their false and little ones. They are intent upon the *present*, and sollicitous to provide for the short *future* of an uncertain life. Let us be intent upon providing for that future life, which will soon be present, and never past. For this purpose we should retire as much as we can conveniently from the world, and have as little to do with it; we should lay aside every weight, and every incumbrance, and not be *troubled about many things*, that we may the more quietly and entirely attend upon the one thing needful. Not that I plead for a hermit's solitude, not understanding the agreement of such a state with human nature, nor what authority men have thus to bury themselves alive, and to excommunicate themselves from human society. But so much of solitude as disengages us from the affairs and incumbrances of the world, and places us out of the noise, hurry and bustle of it, and out of the way of its temptations, must certainly be of vastly great advantage to a truly Christian life. Being much abroad may teach us to know *the world*; but retirement only can teach us to know *ourselves*. For to know ourselves, we must converse much with ourselves. Let us therefore *retire*, and when we are alone, let us remember, that we are not alone, for God is with us. And while we think and act as in his presence, solitude has all the safety of company, without the temptations and interruptions. And here let us think much of eternity, and of our nearness to it, of the future judgment, and the two final sentences of that day, of the glorious things that are spoken of the city of God, and the unspeakable misery of being for ever banished from his presence; and lastly, of the thoughts which we shall have of all these things when we come to die. Every man is wise *then*, and has a right sense of things; let us endeavour to have the same *now*, as we shall then wish we had, which is the sum of all Christian prudence.



N I C O D E M U S :

Or, A TREATISE on the FEAR of MAN.

Written in *German* by *Augustus Herman Franck.*

To all ministers and teachers in churches and schools, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost:

Dearly beloved brethren,

GIVE me leave, who am the least of all the servants of Jesus Christ, for the love wherewith God hath loved us in his Son, to dedicate to you the following treatise. For though I be the meanest member in the spiritual body of Christ, (if so much may be allowed me) yet am I thereby made partaker of the life, spirit, and power residing in him as our ever-blessed head. If there be any thing herein conformable to the mind of our great Shepherd, and proceeding from the energy of his Spirit, why should it not be readily received; and if, after a true spiritual trial thereof, you find any thing faulty or imperfect, commend it to the mercy of our great Shepherd, to correct in me, by the gracious influence of his Spirit.

I do not offer this as a piece of great learning. Indeed, the plain truth of my God, set forth in its natural lustre, and the least communication of his power affecting the heart, is infinitely more valuable to me, than all the learning of this world. And my only boasting in the Lord is this, that I have betaken myself to that school wherein the highest wisdom is; to know Jesus Christ and him crucified. And though I, who have scarce learned the first elements thereof, have the boldness to repeat this my lesson in the hearing of all, yet ought it not to be deemed an effect of pride; but the love of my neighbour constraineth me.

My soul hath been many times grieved at the apparent corruption, as of men in general, so of our order in particular; and more especially when I saw that the fear of man is become the epidemical distemper of our teachers. When I reflect on the one hand, with what spirit, with what joy, with what undaunted courage and boldness the antient servants of God set aside all regard of man, and delivered as the ambassadors of the Lord, their message fully and plainly, tho' it exposed them to the evident hazard of their lives; and on the other, how gently and softly we go about it now, and how little we manifest the truth to the conscience of every man: when I, moreover, consider, how much they suffered with Christ their Lord, for the sake of their testimony; and how the most of us take care to preach so smoothly, as not to incur the least shadow of their sufferings, the difference between us and them [◆](#)appears so exceeding great, that I [▲](#)can not but be astonished at it.

[◆](#) “appeared” replaced with “appears” per Errata

[▲](#) “could” replaced with “can” per Errata

Brethren, I speak with plainness and simplicity. When our Lord and Master was in the world, he was so far from desiring the riches, honours, or pleasures of it, that he was indeed the poorest and most despised among men; entirely spending all the days of his humiliation, in procuring our salvation. And 'tis he that tells us, *Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple*. We therefore ought to be so many shining lights, by our hearty denial of all the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world; and by employing our lives entirely, in the assistance of our neighbours. But, if, on the contrary, we seek worldly things, then we depart from our glorious pattern; neither is there any thing that doth more effectually deprive us of the blessing of God upon our calling. For sure it is, the more we are concerned for honour, profit, or ease, the less shall we be concerned to promote the good of our neighbour. And as long as our minds are not wholly conformable to the mind of our great Shepherd, it is impossible he should be well pleased with us; for *he trieth the hearts and reins*. On the contrary, did we desire nothing in the world, we should not fear it.

*Did we duly consider, that there is a day before us, when we must give account to the great Bishop of our souls, whether, according to his example, we have had nothing else in our eye but the salvation of mankind; should we not apply ourselves to our duty with another kind of fervour than we have hitherto done? Should we not more effectually clear ourselves from all suspicion of either fearing or desiring any thing in this world? Should we not be more earnest to admonish every one in particular? Should we not wrestle more in our prayers for them? Should we not, as soon as any good desire appeared in any, more readily lend him our helping hand, that the spark of grace might be blown up into a flame? Should not our outward conversation be more holy, and consequently more edifying? Verily, my brethren, I fear we have reason to be ashamed, when we read what one saith, “A Christian ought to be so enkindled and all-flaming with divine love, and, both inwardly and outwardly, so conformable to God, that whenever any one came to him, he might hear nothing from him but God: and his heart and mind ought to be fixed on him by burning love, and so be ready in all things faithfully to obey his will, that such as visited him, though with cold and lukewarm hearts, might be heated, and set on fire by him: as we see cold and dead coals are kindled, when they are put to glowing ones.”

I have opened my mouth, my brethren, and address you with the simplicity of a child, and am very willing to appear mean in your eyes; only despise not the truth, which is not mine, but my Lord's and Saviour's. I am not ashamed to acknowledge, that *I count not myself to have apprehended, or to be already perfect*. But this I say, (my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, which also the righteous Judge will testify for me at the great day) that since I have found grace in the eyes of my Lord to perceive my own misery, and the narrow way to escape from it, all my thoughts and endeavours have been bent, in the faithfulness of my heart, to continue therein, to pursue it more eagerly day by day, and, as far as possible, to direct all men to it. I neither despise nor envy any of you that are of the same function with me. Nay, I know many among you to whom I think myself unworthy to do the meanest service. But I know many likewise, whose conversation is not at all conformable to the pattern Christ hath set us. And for these I heartily pray, that God would shew them the things that belong to their everlasting peace. Neither is my heart in the least incensed against them that most unjustly slander and reproach me: but I compassionate them, since we must all one day appear before the same judge. For my part, I cannot call black white; nor take him for a follower of Christ, and a pattern of his flock, in whom I find nothing of the mind that was in Christ.

If any thing hath been vouchsafed to me, it is this, (wherein I heartily rejoice) that I have been made, tho' in a very low degree, partaker of the sufferings of Christ. And it is the greatest comfort to me, that the men of this world speak all manner of evil of me falsely, loading me with censures and accusations, the groundlessness whereof the Lord will discover at that day.

*Let us all, my brethren, think of this great day, and so even our accounts against it, that we may then appear with joy and confidence: let us cast away all care, but this only. Let us drop all unprofitable contest; and, with united hands, carry on the work of the Lord, being heartily glad to see his glory advanced, be it by ourselves or others. And I beseech God, from the bottom of my heart, to influence you all with a rich measure of his holy Spirit, to sanctify you to himself, and to pour his transcendent blessing upon all your planting and watering. The spirit of love and of truth keep all your hearts, and lead them into the fellowship of Jesus Christ, who alone is able to give that true peace, which the world cannot give.

AUGUST. HERM. FRANCK.

October 26, 1731.

CHAPTER I.

Of the nature and causes of the fear of man.

1. **T**HE fear of man, in things pertaining to God, is a most heinous vice, and a kind of idolatry, whereby we think, speak, or do some evil, or decline thinking, speaking, or doing some good, out of some sort of consideration of men, or apprehension of their displeasure. Now the more there is of this fear still cleaving to believers, the more dangerous is the condition of their souls.

The causes hereof are either internal or external. The internal are chiefly these:

1. Unbelief, which is the root of all vices.

2. The love of the world, and the things of the world, and the want of self-denial; which makes us fear men would prejudice us in our reputation, estate, or ease, if we simply followed the word of God.

3. False humility, which is swayed more by the authority of men, than by the word of God, and prompts us to refer all things to the judgment of others, as understanding them better than ourselves.

4. An eager desire of visible success in all our undertakings; whereas we ought to rest satisfied with an inward victory; that is, with having kept a good conscience toward God.

5. Want of experience in the ways of God, which makes us hesitate in difficult cases, and indisposes the soul to rely upon God, fearing lest he should let us fail or miscarry in them, or that it would be presumption and tempting of God, to cast ourselves wholly upon him. This proceeds from our not having sufficiently learned, how dear they are to God that entirely trust in him: and what powerful assistance he affords, to accomplish his own work in them.

6. Neglect of prayer, which not only prevents our obtaining a full conquest over the fear of man, but likewise drives us down further into the stream of hypocrisy.

The external causes are chiefly these:

1. The tyranny of men in power, who, under pretence of preserving the public peace, fetter the consciences both of teachers and hearers.

*2. The forwardness of our universities in dubbing of heretics: for they no sooner perceive any breakings forth of true Christianity, but they are sure, out of their great zeal, to cast a slur upon it, by giving it an ill name.

3. The examples and specious reasonings of those, who are bound down by the fear of man.

4. Wife and children, that by their importunate way of arguing and unbelieving tattle and clamour, weary out, and overcome many.

5. The esteem we have already gained in the world. Those especially who are in any eminent post, find it hard to give up their darling reputation, and suffer reproach with the people of God.

6. Intimacy with the children of this world, particularly with the great and honourable men, who, under pretence of hearty love and kindness, are always cautioning us not to venture too far.

*Lastly, The neglect of frequent conversation with true believers, who walk in the power of faith.

C H A P T E R II.

Of the signs and effects of the fear of man.

1. **A** FEARFUL man is not easily convinced of the truth, and tho' it be laid before him with the clearest evidence, yet he starts many doubts and scruples about it, lest, if he should confess it too roundly, he should be hated, persecuted, or reputed a heretic.

2. He is never so busy in starting objections, as in cases that most tend to the glory of God.

*3. When he is convinced of the truth, he will not confess it before men; or if he do, 'tis only among the lovers of truth. But before the enemies thereof, he conceals or denies it, or talks so dubiously about it, as to leave them uncertain whether he believes it or no; at least he takes care so to order his words, as to be able always to give them a handsome turn, and so be able to come off without trouble. If he lives in a place where truth is professed, he owns it open mouth'd; but if he comes to another place, he finds many difficulties in the point, so that he resolves to halt between both, and leave it undetermined.

4. When he finds he cannot avoid owning the truth, yet he takes care so to limit and pinch it, that it may appear tolerable even to the enemies of truth.

5. A fearful man will at [◆]last break out into an avowed confession of truth; but it is when he finds himself well backed with human authority; that is, when a person of unspotted reputation, and great learning, hath asserted the same before him. Accordingly he is more careful to arm himself with a fine train of human testimonies, than with the word of God itself; and thinks he has a right so to do, because he sees that the chearful confessors of truth have sometimes stopped [♣]the mouths of their shameless adversaries with such arguments.

◆ “least” replaced with “last” per Errata

♣ duplicate word “the” removed

6. When some good work is to be done, he doth not undertake it with a simple reliance on the living God: but when he finds good patrons on his side, he at last sets about it. Yet when he sees the storm arise, and the waves beat, he gives way and so loses all he had gained.

7. He always finds something to blame in the behaviour of faithful labourers. Sometimes he fears they go too far. Sometimes, finding nothing to tax in the thing itself, he blames the manner of doing it. When he finds nothing else to cavil at, he cries, the work is not well timed: thus he always sees some fault; tho’, indeed, there is none but his own want of faith.

8. He is very apt to believe any false reports against the faithful children of God; and, because his own heart fails, he is very forward in warning them to take heed to themselves; thus by his prudence, damping and stifling the chearfulness of their faith.

9. He does not love that a minister should make too plain and particular an application of his sermons, or shew too great earnestness in his function, or profession of Christianity.

10. A fearful man is easily moved to envy; especially when he sees those that are young acting chearfully in faith; and cries, “That is none of his business, but must be left to those of more knowledge and experience.”

11. He either himself exposes as presumptuous, stubborn, self-conceited, proud and pharisaical, those who, with a free and child-like spirit, break thro' all opposition: or, at least, sits on the bench when they are thus condemned, and consents to the unjust sentence pronounced against them.

12. A fearful minister reproves common people boldly; but when he is to speak to great and honourable persons, his mouth is gagged.

*13. The pulpit is a fearful preacher's strong hold; but when he is to speak face to face, and to bear witness to the truth, by saying, *Thou art the man*; then he is very supple and complaisant.

14. When he hears profane, loose, or foolish men talking, he holds his tongue; and when it comes from great men, he graces it with a smile.

15. Above all things, a fearful man, cannot abide to be singular.

16. Sometimes he desires to do something to the glory of God; but he soon confronts the thought with "What will people say?" And then fairly drops it.

17. He cautiously shuns frequent and familiar conversation with the members of Christ that are despised by the world. Or, if he be willing to converse with them by night and in secret, yet he cares not to appear with them in public. He rather appoints some certain place to meet them, where it may not be taken notice of.

18. A fearful preacher makes it his business in his public discourses, to bring in something against enthusiasm and fanaticism; and then he thinks he may venture to speak the truth; which is true enough. For the world takes it for granted, that he means it as they apprehend it, that is, as spoken against those on whom they falsely bestow those names.

19. A fearful man rejoiceth for a time, while the light of truth shines upon him; but as soon as he is called to account for it, he is sore afraid, makes many excuses, and by all manner of shifts and evasions, endeavours to extricate himself, and to get rid of the suspicion of it.

20. Instead of reprovng his neighbour, he says, "God is so merciful, that he does not doubt but he will himself reclaim him in due time."

21. When he is to press the inward truth of Christianity, he says, "It is too high for them:" if he is to enforce any thing of outward behaviour, he accounts it a little thing; or else says, "We must not begin at outward things."

CHAPTER III.

Of the mischiefs caused by the fear of man.

1. **M**ANY thousands of souls are thereby kept back from a true conversion: because they dare not suffer the knowledge of the truth to shine upon them in its full strength, but hold it imprisoned, as it were, by manifold shifts and pretences.

2. Many who are already converted are hereby hindered from growth in holiness, as they deprive themselves of many opportunities (which they greatly need) to strengthen and edify themselves in God; for this fear makes them avoid the conversation of those who are most able to build them up in the faith, and run into many other sins against the dictates of their own conscience.

Again, as a free and ready confession of the truth, highly advances a man in faith and love; so the denying or hiding it, keeps him quite down, and hinders him from attaining the power of the spirit. Many know not what the reason is, why they advance so slowly in spiritual growth. It is plainly this, the fear of man lurking within, eats out the vigour and activity of the life of grace. God, 'tis certain, does infinitely abound in mercy, and would willingly every day pour out new blessings upon us. But a fearful man is not receptive of them. He doth not act in singleness of heart. He dares not trust God, and God therefore cannot fill him with the fulness of his graces.

◆ inserted word “out” per Errata

3. When ministers in particular, are unable to overcome the fear of man, they grow dejected and heartless in the discharge of their function, and scarce know themselves what or how they ought to speak. They become listless in all their performances: so that the most excellent gifts which God has bestowed upon them, become altogether fruitless; and what good might have been done is either never attempted, or left unfinished. Indeed it cannot be expected that any one enslaved to this fear, should ever, by his cold endeavours, throughly reform any abuse of long continuance. The fear of man is always for maintaining old customs: and while every one is afraid of innovation, abuses are authorized more and more, and all things proceed from bad to worse.

And though there were two or more such ministers in the same place, they will perform nothing worthy of their calling; nay the one hindereth the other from the faithful discharge of his pastoral duty: yea, it would be better for many to have for their fellow-labourer, one that was openly wicked, who might perhaps, by his enormities, more readily force the truth from them, than a timorous *Nicodemus*, who by shunning it himself, teaches them to shun the light.

And such as the minister is, such are commonly the hearers. If he therefore be afraid, how will his hearers be ever excited to a true chearfulness of faith? And those of them, who, by the grace of God, are freed from this base bondage, can never have any confidence in their teacher, till he is disengaged from that servile spirit. Many ministers wonder why the true children of God have so little confidence in them: not considering this plain reason of it, that their flock never saw in them the least proof of a good shepherd, who readily exposes himself to any sufferings, yea, *lays down his life for his sheep*.

Such servants as these God will not fail in due time, to crown with success. He will manifest his glory in them, and make bare his arm before them. But there is nothing of all this, where unbelief has gained admittance, and where the honour due to God from and before all men is not undauntedly rendered to him. For a fearful man trusts God no farther than his own poor reason carries him. When any thing crosses that, he presently giveth way; and therefore wanting the courage of a lively faith, he can never behold the glory of God.

4. When the well-wishers to religion see those who know the truth, or at least ought to do so, backward in owning it, they are not a little encouraged to play the hypocrite themselves, instead of freely and boldly avowing their master. And it often happens, that by the fearfulness of one eminent man, thousands are infected with the spirit of hypocrisy and dissimulation.

5. On the other hand, when the adversaries of the truth, see them that love it, shun the light, it strengthens them in their bad cause; concluding, that if they were in the right, they would have no need to fear. And as, if you resist the devil, he will flee from you; so the reverse is full as true. The more you fear, and give way to the devil and his instruments, the more will they pursue and press upon you.

6. In a word, the fear of man is the general bane both of city and country. Our superiors would appoint good ministers and magistrates; but they fear displeasing this or the other man, or set of men. They who should speak when a wicked minister is ordained, or officer recommended, hold their [♦](#)tongues through fear. In the courts of judicature, this fear prevents justice, condemns the innocent, clears the guilty, bereaves widows and orphans of their right, and leaves the injured and oppressed without remedy. And what does it profit a man who is himself a slave to this fear, that he is sensible of the general corruption? It only exposes him to the more pain. Being unwilling to break either with the world or God, he is looked upon as an unfaithful steward by both; and he endures far more trouble and anxiety, than the breaking through with a ready presence of faith would have cost him. He finds no joyful, filial assurance in prayer. The word of God has no relish with him. He never attains to the true communion of saints; and when he should comfort and strengthen others, by exhorting them in the power of God, he rather drives them to fear, and quenches the Holy Spirit in them. Thus he goes on without any spiritual experience, contenting himself with the bare letter and shadows of Christianity, and a few sounding words; but being in the mean time void of soul and life, of spirit and power, and so falling at last into a state of carnal security, he carries others also along with him, often to the utter denying the truth, and precipitating himself into final destruction.

[♦](#) “hands” replaced with “tongues” per Errata

CHAPTER IV.

Of the excuses that are usually made for the fear of man.

AS soon as we begin with true humility to acknowledge the fear of man as a great and most heinous evil, and accordingly to watch and pray, and strive against it, there is hope we may overcome: but there are very few who will acknowledge it; the very most, when charged therewith, labour to hide it with various excuses; some of which are so specious, that they blind the eyes of many, so that they approve their conduct, and praise their saying.

1. “Should I act thus, I should soon be called to an account for it?” Well, but should this hinder a faithful servant from executing his master’s orders with all sincerity? “But I shall be put to charges and trouble, nay perhaps be turned out of my livelihood?” Perhaps not; God is well able to protect thee. But if trouble do overtake thee, still have faith in God, and thou shalt be no loser for his sake. God is a faithful Lord and Master. Be it only thy care to be a faithful servant. Whatever thou lovest in his cause, he will restore it to thee an hundred fold. Happy art thou when thou sufferest for conscience sake. Though man cast thee off, God will take thee up. But if thou art unwilling to lose thy place for the sake of a good conscience, it is plain thou servest thy belly, and not God.

2. “But I have a wife and children to take care of.” Hear then what thy Lord saith unto thee, “He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than me, is not worthy of me.” True it is, that he who provideth not for his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an Infidel. But God’s honour must not suffer one jot under pretence of providing for thy family. Thou mayest not, on that pretence, go out of the way of the commandment, to the right hand or to the left. Thou must neither do less or more, than if thou hadst none, only learn what that meaneth, *Seek ye the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

*3. “But we must not pull down sufferings upon our own heads, or wilfully run into them:” Neither must thou be afraid of suffering: as long as this flinching from the cross is in thee, thy faith is not right. When a good thing cannot be done without suffering, thou art absolutely bound to take it up. ’Tis better to suffer all things, than to have an evil conscience. Trouble not thyself, but do thou heartily the will of God. He will not lay upon thee more than thou art able to bear. Thou representest things to thyself worse than indeed they are. Thou art afraid of men: but glorify the Lord God in thy heart, and they will be afraid of thee.

4. “Why, we do what we can.” Thou canst not do any thing of thyself; Christ alone doth all that is good in and by thee. But who can boast that he does as much as the Spirit of Christ enables him to do? He that weighs all things well, must needs acknowledge, he cannot answer to God for the many things he hath omitted, which he might have overcome by the power of faith, and which will appear in judgment against him. At the beginning very little appears possible; but if we go on boldly relying upon God, we shall find ourselves supported in doing greater things, yea, able to do *all things through Christ who strengtheneth us*.

5. “If such as are leading men, who ought to be foremost in all good undertakings, would but break the ice, we would readily follow them; but we don’t care to be the first beginners, as if we were better than them.” Do as a servant that carries the torch before his master, and yet does not think himself better than his master. The kingdom of God did not come first to the men of the first rank, or to them who made the greatest figure in the world. When thou art to receive thy reward, wilt thou refuse to receive it, till thy superior be paid first? In the kingdom of God there must be no dispute about precedency. Let not therefore the unbelief of others keep thee back in thy race; knowing this, that if thou art convinced of the truth, and yet actest not according to thy conviction, God will certainly punish thy disobedience, though thou shouldst appeal to the pope or emperor.

*6. “But I am no minister, I have no business to take care of men’s souls.” No! Art thou not a Christian (though not a minister) and is it not the business, the bounden duty of every Christian, to endeavour to bring his neighbour back into the right way, whenever he sees him wandering in vice and delusion? Is not every Christian one anointed with the Spirit of Christ; who, consequently, is bound to tread in his steps, by making his whole life one continued endeavour to save all men from the wrath to come? Thou mayest not, indeed, take upon thee to administer the sacraments, to cast out of the church, or receive the penitent into it again; these are the peculiar offices of those who are so called of God as was *Aaron*: but thou must, at the peril of thy salvation, follow the example of Christ as well as they. Thou, as well as they, must observe the laws of God; especially that of doing good unto all men. Spiritual good above all; since it is not to ministers alone, but to all men that he hath said, *Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.*

*7. “However we must use prudence.” True; but there are two sorts of it: one, that is from above, the other from beneath. The former of these is unproveable, and a most precious gift of the Most High. But that which is from beneath hath the appearance indeed of wisdom, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. Where the fear of the Lord is not continually before the eyes, there the foundation of it is already laid. Where faith is weak, there she raises herself; when love grows cold, then she is strong. She informs us how to please God, without displeasing the world; to follow Christ, and yet avoid the cross. As long as the kingdom of God consists in words only she cannot utter all that she has to say. But when it is to be demonstrated in power, then she has recourse to many evasions, and cautions others (out of hearty goodwill) not to venture too far. Then she jumbles light and darkness together; she shifts and turns every way to keep the cross from her shoulders. She swims with the stream, and cares not to converse with those who suffer reproach for Christ’s sake. She keeps on indeed the appearance of godliness as long as possible, and yet holdeth her tongue where the children of God are condemned; nay, sometimes joins in pronouncing their sentence. She does much evil that good may come of it. But who is able to describe all the face of this horrible monster, which is come up out of the bottomless pit? ’Tis true, we must use prudence; but consider well which sort of prudence thou wilt use. Yea, set thyself before this glass, ◆that thou mayest know by which of these thou hast squared thy life and actions hitherto.

◆ inserted the word “that” per Errata

*8. “But we must stay a little; another time may do better: we may do more good by a little delay.” Where has God given thee leave to delay till the next moment, what may be done at this? To let slip an opportunity, in order to reserve thyself for some more favourable time? St. *Paul* bids us *redeem the time*, or (more exactly according to the *Greek*) buy up every opportunity, *i. e.* lay hold of it, as soon as ever it offers. Reserving thyself for a more convenient season, proceeds purely from false prudence. This reserve accustoms thee to hypocrisy; it continually strengthens the fear from which it flows, and will hinder thee from ever meeting with an opportunity to exert the true power of faith.

9. “To undertake a thing, without being able to effect it, does more hurt than good; therefore ’tis better not to begin.” Thou dost well to compute the charge of building before thou beginnest to build the tower. But whence wilt thou procure the charge? From thy own ability? No; that never can reach it. Begin thy work with full reliance upon God, and draw thy supplies from almighty goodness and wisdom; and, by this means, thou wilt be enabled to accomplish, at his cost, the work once begun.

*Or if God, for holy reasons, should not prosper thy endeavours, it will be a comfort to thee, that thou hast done thy part; and thy conscience will be more easy, than if thou hadst distrusted God, and so never set about it. Perhaps he trieth thee hereby, and though it has not succeeded now, it may at another time. Perhaps thy very endeavours may stir up many to an imitation of thy zeal. But if thou shouldst be disappointed in all thy good purposes, shouldst thou conclude, that thy work of love had been in vain? Examine thyself, whether thy desire of open success in all things, be not the effect of pride lurking within? Be thou satisfied with the inward victory, a true Christian can never be deprived of; which consists in thy continuing unwearied in the patience of hope.

10. “But we can’t do all at once.” Thou unprofitable servant, shouldst thou therefore bury thy talent in a napkin, and do nothing at all? Thou knowest not what thou canst do, or rather, what God can do by thee. If thou wilt but lay aside the fear of man, and set out boldly in his strength, God is able to do for and by thee exceeding abundantly, above all that thou canst ask or think.

11. “However, we ought to go fair and softly to work, and to do what good we can, considerately and by degrees.” Ay, this is something indeed, —If we could but persuade the devil to go fair and softly too! But alas! *he walketh about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*. What hast thou then to do, but to *resist him stedfast in the faith*, and to press on in the power of the Holy Ghost? The devil laughs at all thy fair and softly: give him but time, and he will not lose a moment. And the blood of those whom thy softness hath destroyed, will God require at thy hands.

12. "But an edge too sharp is easily turned." If thou wouldest infer hence, that we should not contend earnestly for the faith; that it is not always good to be zealously affected in a good thing; or that we may sometimes hide our zeal, wink at the faults of our neighbours, or otherwise dissemble with them: this is all false prudence; this is directly contrary to the cross of Christ. It is but just that we shew love and meekness towards all men; especially when we declare to them the overflowing kindness of God. But at the same time we must use all possible earnestness, lest our love be made a cloak for wickedness. And whenever we do not, unbelief and the fear of man are at the bottom of our hearts; however we labour by these specious words to excuse our being neither hot nor cold.

13. "But it is visible what great disorders arise when people are too forward." 'Tis very possible that young and unexperienced Christians, may at first make false steps. And this mote in their eye, you presently discern; nay, and perhaps triumph over them. Take heed to thyself: we ought to bear with the faults of beginners, with great gentleness and compassionate love: and if we think ourselves more knowing than they, to set them right in the spirit of meekness. But God looks not on things with thy eyes. There is a vast difference between one that is still spiritually dead, and one that has recovered life from God, tho' he is still weak and encompass'd with infirmity. Thou who art stronger, draw not back because he is weak. Break thou thyself thro' those impediments, which he could not: and shew others by thy example, how to serve God with more purity and wisdom.

14. "By too open a declaration, we may hinder a great deal of good that otherwise might be done; nay, over-turn all: whereas, by a prudent concealing of ourselves, we may do a great deal of service." This is nothing but another piece of false prudence: for tho' 'tis true that an understanding man finds a time for silence as well as for speaking; yet a true Christian ought to trust in God, that he will so far bless the good he aims at, as that no other good undertaking will be hindered by it. If thou hast not this stedfast confidence in God, the devil will be sure to delude thee at pleasure; always representing such phantoms, as will make thee let go what thou hast in thy hand, to catch at a shadow.

'Tis matter of wonder that there are many who, tho' they can't name so much as one man whom they have really converted to God, yet will not in any one particular vigorously break thro' opposition, "for fear of overturning all." All! why thou hast never yet built up any thing, which can be overthrown. But if God hath done some good by thee already, then I doubt not but he will do more. "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life." "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee," is his promise to thee and all his servants. And with this promise every true servant of God may bid defiance to all the world. Remember, "to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin." Let us but follow this rule with singleness of heart, and resign to God the care of what is to come. For no good can ever be better advanced, than when one wedge drives another; and we daily grow more bold, in heartily promoting the cause of Christ, and the good of his church.

*15. "But we must have a care of getting an ill name; for then we should do no good at all." This is the grand excuse for the fear of man, and it is the bottom of almost all the rest. This is what the men of prudence never fail to urge in their defence: and in this they suppose themselves impregnable. "If I get an ill name, I can do no good." Hast thou learnt this in the word of God? Hath Christ taught thee thus? Saith he not, *Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company; yea when they shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.—Behold your reward is great in heaven; for in like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. Wo unto you when all men shall speak well of you: for so did their fathers to the false prophets.* To persuade men therefore that the reproach of Christ is an hindrance to the course of the gospel, is a true fetch of the devil's, by which he endeavours to make void the cross of Christ: whereas, on the contrary, every one of us must certainly believe that he can do nothing at all to the purpose, as long as he refuses to wear this badge of Christ.

“Yes; thou thinkest in thy heart, by my being reserved, and not exposing myself, some may be won.” Thou wilt only make hypocrites like thyself; men that are vainly puffed up by a little knowledge, and yet ashamed of Christ and his word, and unwilling to suffer any persecution for the cross of Christ. But if once thou canst resolve, with unshaken presence of mind, to break loose from the bondage of fearfulness, and thus to evidence thy faith, by taking on thee the reproach of Christ, then *others waxing confident by thy sufferings, will be the more emboldened to speak without fear.*

*“But we must not expose ourselves: we must not suffer ourselves to be made fools of by others.” We must not, I grant, do any thing which is foolish, *i. e.* contrary to God’s word. But it is the devil’s suggestion, that we should expose ourselves by directing our actions precisely according to it. Here it is, that St. *Paul’s* caution will do us great service, *Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.* Is it not a shame, when the Lord of glory was taken for a madman, and one possessed by the devil, for thee to be highly esteemed of the world? By this thou givest evidence against thyself, that thou dost not belong to Christ; that thou knowest not the dignity of his cross; and how then wilt thou be able to rejoice with him? It neither can nor must be otherwise. Thou must be looked upon as a fool in the world, if thou wilt be a disciple of Christ. It will not fail thee an hair’s breadth. High and low, teachers and hearers, must alike be censured by the world, when once they earnestly turn themselves to God. For as soon as they cease to be conformed to the fashionable ways of the world, the world is immediately offended, and begins to scoff and rail, charging them with fanaticism, singularity, pharisaical hypocrisy, and what not? Loading them with a thousand lies and calumnies. And he that is afraid of this reproach from the world, must continue an hypocrite as long as he lives.

16. “Yet tho’ we must not be conformed to the world, we must *become all things to all men,*” as St. *Paul* testifies of himself he did, “*that by all means he might gain some.*” St. *Paul* gave sufficient proof of his being an undaunted workman, to whom God had given not the spirit of fear, but the spirit of power; but what hast thou to shew for thyself? Worldly minded men can become all to all too: but from another principle, by other means, and for quite another end. Canst thou express the bold alacrity of St. *Paul*, who was not afraid to withstand St. *Peter* himself to the face, when the fear of man had made him play the hypocrite, *so that others also were carried away by his dissimulation?* It is certainly a great piece of wisdom, so to become weak with the weak, as not to lose any thing of our own strength; so to become all to all, as to stand free from all manner of hypocrisy. Examine then thyself, whether the serpent, with his prudence, hath not perverted thy mind from the simplicity in Christ. There is no cloak that more plausibly covers the fear of man than this: therefore look to it, that above all things thou dispatch this enemy.

Neither excuse thy conforming to the world in rich cloaths, banquets, dancing, plays, and the like, by saying, “I take no delight in these trifles; but I submit to them, that I may have the more power over them that do.” This is one of the fruits of our modern religion, raised on maxims of state-policy: but if we bring it to the test, it is altogether inconsistent with *the truth, as it is in Jesus*. “But you are for taking away the abuse of these things, and letting the use remain.” The true children of God, who are crucified to the world, can’t find the least true use in them. When they would avoid or prevent any evil, or do any good, either to their own souls, or their neighbours, they have no need of the devil’s rattles, but fly to their God, and commit their whole cause to his direction. They rest themselves, while they use only such measures as he directs, in full confidence that he will do what is best; and they enjoy even the necessary refreshments of their bodies for no other end, but to spend the strength received thereby, in humble acknowledgment and child-like thankfulness, and to renew the vigour of their soul and body for the service of their neighbours.

CHAPTER V.

Of the means whereby we may be delivered from the fear of man.

1. **T**HE first and most necessary of all means is, a constant and earnest endeavour to free ourselves from the most dangerous deceitfulness of our own hearts. Nothing is a more fatal hindrance of a man's salvation, than the false conceit that he is already a Christian, and so has no more need of laying the foundation of repentance, or of the first conversion to God.

There is no error which it is more difficult to remove than this, especially in a minister; who, having undertaken to shew others the way to heaven, presupposes that he is himself therein. And because he sees but little difference between himself and his hearers, and knows nothing of a saving change of heart, he by wholesale takes them all for Christians; and, like a blind Pharisee, reproveth nothing but outward vices. His own inward part being not yet cleansed, he cannot awaken others out of their slumber, and bring them over from their false, imaginary faith, to a true, living one, working by love. And by means of these unconverted preachers, destitute of all experimental knowledge of spiritual things, whole parishes, cities and countries, are countenanced in their carnal security.

Now, when God is pleased to send forth faithful witnesses of his truth, to awaken men out of their spiritual slumber, then is the devil most busy to second this security with the fear of man; one fearing this, another that, so that both together choak the truth of God in the heart. The best advice that can be given to a man in this case is, that he thoroughly search into his own condition, according to the tenour of the word of God, that he may not be deluded with vain hopes. By this means he may come to a full assurance of the state of his soul, and feel the Spirit of God witnessing with his spirit, that he is a child of God: but till he will thus search into the bottom of his heart, he cannot be freed from this fear. Nor will he be able to make a right use of any means at all that may be offered him: for without the power of the Holy Ghost, which till then he cannot have, a man will never get so far as to eye God only in all his actions; and till he does this, it is impossible he should discharge his duty without the fear of man.

2. As the want of self-denial is one of the chief causes of the fear of man, it will be absolutely necessary, in order to the subduing of it, to labour after a true self-denying frame of spirit: for as long as we fear the loss of our ease, or goods, or honour, or greatness in the world, so long we shall be loth, by a close following the steps of our Lord, to incur the displeasure of men; till therefore a man *renounceth himself, he cannot be his disciple*. But when once we seek no honour, but what cometh from God, nor any pleasure, but that of doing his will, we shall find it easy to confess the truth, with undauntedness, both in word and deed.

Let him then, who will come after Christ, *deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow him*. And he that begins to be a proficient in this, will find the fear of man vanishing of itself: for why do we fear men? For no other reason, but because we are afraid of the cross. And why do we fear the cross? Because we understand not the infinite good that lies hid in it. Because we apprehend not, that, since the fall, whatever is really good, must spring up under the cross.

3. And that we may never be weary of bearing it, or faint in our minds, we should frequently and deeply meditate on the vanity, and even nothingness of this world, this idle dream, this vanishing shadow; on the nothingness of man himself, a worm, a vapour, a leaf driven by the wind; even in his best estate, *walking in a vain shew, and disquieting himself in vain*; on the glorious Majesty of the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, and the unspeakable joys that are at his right-hand for evermore; on the several degrees of that glory, which shall be proportioned to our several degrees of obedience: and in particular, on the mighty rewards annexed to the denial of ourselves, and chearful taking up our cross.

4. The servants of Christ find this also a sure means to conquer, when they are assaulted by the fear of man, to enter immediately into deep meditation on the bitter passion of our Lord. This is the antidote which St. Peter prescribes, *beloved, think it not strange, concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are made partakers of the sufferings of Christ*. Ephesians iv. 12.—And so St. Paul, *Consider him, that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself. And again, We always bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of him also might be made manifest in our mortal body*.

◆ “Belovloved” replaced with “beloved”

This is the true apostolical mind, which few apprehend: but those who do apprehend and obtain it, tread in the same steps, and declare themselves servants of the living God in true chearfulness of faith. They are not afraid *of the terror of men, but sanctify the Lord God in their hearts*: having determined *to know and regard nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*.

5. Add to this, the consideration of those faithful champions of Christ, mentioned in the scriptures, as well as other histories. This was the way St. *Paul* took to encourage them that were weak in faith, in the 11th chapter of his epistle to the *Hebrews*; which being an excellent abstract of the whole Old Testament, ought to be more especially pondered by us, and applied for the support of our faith, in all outward and inward temptations. The histories likewise of the primitive, as well as later martyrs, were they more attentively considered, would contribute much toward our attaining a true boldness of faith, so necessary for our Christian warfare.

But chiefly (I repeat it again) *Look ye unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.* Consider him, (or as the Greek word properly signifies) make a comparison, between what Christ hath suffered, and what ye suffer. Consider what proportion there is between the two: for sure it is, if you will be his followers, you must be ever determined and prepared to *resist even unto blood, striving against sin.*

This it was that so powerfully inspired St. *Paul* to expose himself to all manner of sufferings, For the mark he always had in his eye was, *To know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.* And St. *Peter*, from the same ground, saith, *If when you do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps.* Christ himself also giveth us the same instructions: *Remember the word which I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.* Wherefore, if any man would in good earnest be rid of the fear of man, let him eye continually the example and image of Christ; and know assuredly, he cannot be happier than when he cometh up to the nearest conformity with his suffering, crucified Lord. If his love be sincere, it will kindle in his heart an ardent desire to be like unto him: and this desire will dispel all the fear of man; because it makes the cross, which is so bitter to the flesh, delightful to the spirit; so that it can no more hinder his drinking gladly *the cup which his father hath given him.*

Nay, St. Paul assures us, that a man not only overcomes thereby, but that he is *more than conqueror*; intimating, that by this victory he gains an inconceivable advantage over all the sufferings that can befall him for the gospel's sake. *Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword: nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors.* Nor does he stop here, but expresses the undaunted cheerfulness of his heart yet more emphatically; *I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God.* Let us, dear brethren, in like manner, press on in spirit into the living and powerful fellowship of Jesus Christ: so that we may *live no more, but he may live in us; and the life which we now live in the flesh, we may live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us.* Thus all fear will soon vanish out of our heart, and the joyful Spirit of Christ will fill up the room it had there, and make us grow in strength, comfort and encourage us in all our combats, and afford us a continual train of victories.

6. Let us then apply ourselves to God in earnest prayer, that he would be pleased to vouchsafe us this spirit, even *the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.* This is not of us, but the free gift of God; which gift he is most ready to impart to those who heartily pray for it. Let us then ask, that we may receive: and more especially at such times, when we are called to act any thing that requires some exerting of the power of faith, let us have a care to do nothing according to our own fancy, but, in the first place, lay it open before God in prayer, and then set upon it, armed with the whole armour of God.

7. Now, as Jesus Christ is he that can most certainly deliver us from all fear of man; so none can teach us better than he himself, by what means we must fight against it. And this he hath carefully done, especially in the latter part of his state of humiliation, leaving his disciples, in his farewell discourse to them, St. *John* 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 chapters) a most effectual medicine against it. Now the chief point insisted on herein is, his promise of sending the Holy Ghost to his disciples; whom also he calls the Comforter, because he drives away all fear of man out of the heart, filling and overflowing the same (which bare reason cannot do) with a stream of life and power.

Therefore, let him that would be a follower of Christ in truth, read and consider this with due application: and then with full assurance accept of and rely upon this his promise: and with filial freedom and confidence pray to Christ to make it good unto him. And verily if we do bear reproach for his name's sake, *the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon us*. And since Christ himself is so near to them who suffer for his sake, that thereby they become habitations of God, upon which the glory of God resteth, yea, which are filled with the Spirit of glory and of God; should we not, when tempted to fear man, be strongly moved thereby, to resist the temptation with all our might, and stedfastly to believe that the power of God will be perfected in our weakness? And what a comfort it is, that the Spirit himself *helpeth our infirmities? Yea, and maketh intercession for us with groans that cannot be uttered?* That is, most powerfully, and in a manner altogether inconceivable by human reason: he being our continual advocate in heaven, and in the council of the Holy Trinity, bequeathed to us by Christ, as long as we continue orphans in this world. Nay, Christ himself, who is at the right hand of God, ever maketh intercession for us. O that we were thoroughly sensible of the joy and readiness lodged in the heart of God, to support all those who, seeking all their help from him alone, rely wholly on his paternal goodness! How easily then should we get rid of the fear of man, and even blush for shame, that we had ever been diverted by it from any good undertaking!

*8. But all these means will nothing avail, if we consult in any thing with flesh and blood, or with other fearful men. As ever therefore we desire to be made free, we must either wholly forsake these persons, and avoid all conversation with them, or at least, use it so far as absolute necessity requires with the utmost caution and circumspection. Many have undertaken a good thing in readiness of faith, but while they did not set about it immediately, without conferring with flesh and blood, but first asked the advice of this and another friend, they gave over the design, and stifled the gift of God that was in them. Indeed it is not to be expressed how many useful designs are by this means hindered and laid aside. Doubtless, we ought not to rely too much on our own prudence, or to slight the advice of experienced men: but we must beware too of the other extreme, of *being tossed about with every wind of doctrine*: for it is a good thing that the heart be established; which stability is obtained by faith, but is easily lost again by the fearful talk of those that have little faith.

9. On the contrary, let us confer with the holy apostles, and observe the unusual earnestness wherewith they labour to free every one that nameth the name of Christ, from the fear of man. Would you know with what weapons they armed themselves against it, *as good soldiers of Jesus Christ*? Why they *took unto them the whole armour of God, and so were able to withstand in the evil day*. And thus may you gain the victory, which you will never be able to obtain by human weapons, such as wit and learning.

10. Indeed, not only the writings of the apostles; not only all holy writ, from the beginning thereof to the end; but heaven and earth, yea, and all the creatures of God would assist us, would we consider them with a believing heart. Doth not our Saviour, to reproach our idle fear, send us even to the sparrows for better information? *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father*? Nay, he directs us to the very hairs of our head, saying, *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered*. Elsewhere, he takes the grass of the field to witness against our little faith: and all this to expose our horrible unbelief, and to represent to us in a clear light, that a man by faith becomes the most glorious, and by unbelief the most base and miserable of all creatures.

11. Stand fast therefore, as becomes those to whom are made all those glorious declarations; *ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people*; which plainly alludes to *Exodus xix. 3–4.* where we find these emphatic expressions of God; *ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles wings, and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people. For all the earth is mine: and ye shall be a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.*

Now, not only *Israel* after the flesh, but all the people of God, have a right to lay claim to, and comfort themselves with all these his glorious promises. And to what purpose did he make them? Was it not to assure all his servants, that none, how powerful soever, should be able to hurt them, as long as they continue faithful in his covenant? Nor is it possible for the whole world to hurt one that entirely relies on his promises. For he who trusts in God, doth by this faith so unite himself to the power of the living God, that thereby he becomes much stronger than the whole world, whether visible or invisible.

This precious promise of God, concerning the royal priesthood of his saints, was confirmed and sealed by the death and blood of the Son of God. *Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth, hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.* Let every Christian then demonstrate himself to be one of these royal priests, by breaking through all difficulties, in true chearfulness of faith, which he is willing to give to all, without respect of persons: by fighting manfully the battles of the Lord, and pressing on for the prize of his high calling.

Let every one that hath by baptism begun to renounce the devil and all his works, entirely dedicate himself to the service of the Lord of hosts: *Let him deeply consider, with how high and holy a majesty, with how great a monarch (*who indeed, is the only potentate*) he hath entrusted his soul and body; and no more *fear them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul*. Let him think with himself how secure he is under the protection of so great a King. *He dwelleth in the secret of the Most High; he abideth in the shadow of the Almighty*. But let him also duly consider, that he is not to fight this combat by his own strength; but that the captain of the Lord's hosts, delivering his own sword to him, will arm him with his own power, and say unto him, as he did unto Joshua, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong, and of good courage; be not afraid; neither be thou dismayed: for ◆the Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest*.

◆ duplicate word "the" removed

In fine, renew thyself in the daily spirit of thy mind, and draw life and nourishment from the word of God. Stir up thyself in prayer, and strengthen thyself with the company of other faithful Christians: since, *where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is Christ in the midst of them*. Thou oughtest to *stir up the gift of God*, the child-like, chearful spirit always, and without intermission, even as a fire, by constant blowing is kept up to a flame. Press towards higher degrees of faith, by pondering the promises of God, and continually exercising thy love to thy neighbour, with all singleness of heart, to the uttermost of thy power, wherever God giveth thee opportunity. For nothing conduces more to the increase of faith, than a continual exercise of it.

And if a man know himself to be naturally bashful and fearful, let him with the greater earnestness assault this enemy, and labour to keep a conscience void of offence, lest his natural fearfulness grow upon him. Let him have a care, in the beginning, not to make himself the slave of other men, especially of them that are in high places; but behave himself always as a faithful servant of God, in all discretion and humility. Or, if he has at first fallen short, let him the more now encourage himself in God, to obey him henceforth rather than man; not suffering himself to be any more shaken either by force or subtilty. He ought to lift up his head in the power of Christ, though under the hardest combat; and to make the glory of God his whole and sole end, in all he does, or leaves undone. Blessed is he that thus standeth his ground in all combats and assaults; he shall go from faith to faith, from strength to strength, and finally overcome all things with Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

Of Christian discretion.

1. **A**S flesh and blood is commonly inclined either to exceed or fall short in matters of duty; so it is easy, while we avoid the fear of man, to run into presumption, rashness, and inconsiderateness. Therefore it is necessary that we be continually on our guard, that so our boldness may be ever tempered by wisdom; that wisdom I mean which cometh from above, and is called by St. *Luke*, *the wisdom of the just*. And so St. *Paul* stiles it the spirit of a sound mind: *God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*. For indeed one spirit works all this in man; and through him again in others; making him not only discharge his duty with undaunted courage, and giving him a pure desire to promote nothing but the glory of God, and the good of his neighbour, but enabling him also, in all his doings and sufferings, to behave with divine prudence and wisdom. And *if any lack this wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him*. It shall surely be given him, who continually keeps a watchful eye over his own spirit; who is ever humbling himself in the sight of God; and, like a helpless infant, praying to God for discretion and understanding, and taking the word of God for his constant counsellor.

2. Where this foundation is laid, we need not fear any hurt from the boldness of faith. And though perhaps, for want of experience, it may not always be exerted in due time and place, yet we are to take heed, as soon as we are sensible of it, not to be too much dejected for this imperfection; but to praise God, who therefore shews us our failings, that we may mend them, and who will himself supply what is yet behind. And whenever we observe such failings in others, we ought to be particularly cautious how we judge them. For God will not judge according to our, but according to his own mind; and *out of the mouths of babes and sucklings he hath often perfected praise*.

But hereby we do not in the least reflect upon any one, who, from a long experience in the ways of the Lord, doth, in the spirit of love, mind his brother of the failings, which have overtaken him in any of his actions. By this he doth not stifle any good that is in him, but rather prunes the good tree from its superfluous, irregular shoots, taking care of, and having an eye over it, that it may bring forth its fruit in due season.

3. And that we may be assured of so doing, we must, before all things, consider, that as there is no true faith, without repentance; so neither can there be any true boldness of faith, unless a man exercise himself daily in it. For the undauntedness of faith is no such groundless rashness, as is found in a wild soldier: but it is the fear of God, which having taken possession of the heart, expels the fear of man; and where the spirit of man is truly humbled, and broken under the mighty hand of God, there the Spirit of God dwells and exerts itself so gloriously, that there is no room for the flesh to boast. Let no man deceive himself. There is no true faith, without holiness of heart and life. Whatever is separate from this, cannot last long, be the appearance of it ever so glorious.

*4. Again, the true boldness of faith, is known, by its continually working by love. By faith a man is made a lord over all; but by love a servant of all. By faith he is a king; but by love a spiritual priest, ministering, not lording, in Christ's sanctuary. Now when a man doth not abide in love, but is swayed by anger, hatred, or the like, and perhaps breaking out in scoffing, railing, or bitterness, he must not pretend to boldness of faith: and though he may have had some ♦degree of it before, it is now corrupted and lost. Therefore in this case, a man ought first to humble himself before God, and when he is sincerely renewed in the spirit of his mind, then to press on again in the work of faith, the patience of hope, and the labour of love.

♦ “degreee” replaced with “degree”

5. To keep up this boldness, we must continue in prayer, and in child like communion with God; for by this the mind is best guarded from vain excursions, and inspired with meekness towards all men. And whoever, by humble, fervent, and constant prayer, labours after a stricter union with God, will not only be fortified against all precipitancy and hastiness of spirit, but also against tempting God; of which men of little faith are particularly careful to caution him.

6. Neither doth this boldness of faith at all interfere with the obedience which inferiors of every kind owe their respective superiors; only remembring, that we are never to pay any one so unlimited, blindfold an obedience, as to prefer the authority of man before the clear command of God.

This caution is highly necessary; there being but too many who think they act entirely in faith, when indeed they are only following their own fancy, without any warrant from the word of God. And this distemper is the more dangerous, the less remedy can be applied to cure it. For those that *walk in the light of the fire of their own kindling*, if they are advised to true humility, discretion, and obedience, are apt to suspect that it proceeds from a design of lording over their consciences; and that all the advice given them, is no better than the fruit of unbelief, and the fear of man. They think themselves happy that they do not adhere to men, without taking notice how deep they are enslaved to themselves. But he is truly wise who humbles himself more and more, and is always ready to submit to all men. For where humility is, the enemy finds no room for his most dangerous temptations.

7. Let us then continually join the exercise of daily repentance, the denial of ourselves and of our own wills, of true humility, obedience, submission, prayer, of the meekness and patience of Christ, of hearty love for our brethren, and compassion for their failings, and all other virtues that flow from the wisdom which cometh from above. Let us, I say, join and knit all these together with the chearful exercise of faith and trust in God. Let us excite one another, with comfortable words, to cast  off all fear of man. Wheresoever God hath wrought a good will, let us take heed of damping it in any of the least members of Christ; but let us cherish it by the word of the gospel, and by the rules of true Christian discretion, keep it within such bounds, as may bring it to a fuller and more substantial maturity.

 “of” replaced with “off”

CHAPTER VII.

Of the good which arises from the boldness of faith, conquering the fear of man.

1. **T**HE eleventh chapter to the *Hebrews* lays an ample foundation for reflections on the glorious effects of faith, and on that power of God which hath at all times so exerted itself in true believers: but here it will be necessary to bid you take heed of making God changeable, by saying with the unbelieving world, “This indeed has been done formerly, but now miracles are ceased.” For by this false maxim, suggested from the bottomless pit, the highest dishonour is thrown upon the living God, all his promises are made void, all the examples he hath set before our eyes are absolutely useless and impertinent; yea, and all his calls and allurements to an active faith, are rendered null and insignificant. And whereas, in truth, we have none to blame but ourselves, for not treading in the same footsteps of faith, in which the saints of old walked; and consequently, for not seeing the glory of God as they did, we hereby cast all the blame upon God, and the difference of times: whereas the difference, in reality, lies not in the times, but in the persons.

For though it cannot be said, that every believer now must do the very same works that were done by *Abraham* or *Moses*, yet ought every one to “*follow the faith*” of these holy men, and to exert the same with full power and energy, in that state and condition wherein God hath placed him, and in those circumstances that daily offer; and in so doing he may be fully assured, that he (as well as they) shall see the glory of God. And with such a heart and mind are the scriptures to be read, and the examples and glorious effects of faith to be considered, that so we may receive strength and holy boldness, more nearly to unite ourselves with God, and to enjoy his infinite love and faithfulness in a more ample and abundant manner.

2. Now because faith, though it be so high and precious a gift of God, is not commonly esteemed according to its dignity, it is the more needful to observe, what the scripture throughout teacheth, that all the good which was ever wrought in the world by man, was done by faith; whereby men are so united to God, that “*all things are possible*” to them. Wherefore it is highly necessary, with all plainness and earnestness, to represent, not only to the world, but to the children of God too, that faith is something far more glorious than reason can conceive or express; for till a man is sensible of this, he is utterly unable to comprehend what an inestimable treasure it brings with it. But when once he comes to know that it is the substance ὑπόστασις, the ground and bottom of things hoped for, whereon, as an immoveable foundation, all the inconceivable goods we hope for, do rest; and an ◆ ἔλεγχος, or convincing evidence and testimony of the Spirit, which assures us beyond all doubt of things not seen: I say, where faith is thus known and felt in a man’s heart, then he sees the advantage of that faith which overcometh all fear of man, and is of so large a compass, as to contain all, and more than all we can ask or think.

◆ “ἔλεγχος” replaced with “ἔλεγχος”

For then he discovers, that it is faith which delivers a man from all evil of soul or body; and on the other hand, puts him in possession of sovereign bliss, and fills him with the fulness of God; yea, and that whenever (either in the Old or New Testament) he would perform any thing great and glorious, he hath always employed those whom faith had set free from the slavish fear of man. A single man, setting aside the fear of flesh and blood, and going forth in the name of the living God, hath frequently saved a whole nation. And what was more remarkable in the apostles, at their beginning to preach the gospel, than their great boldness; at which the high-priest, scribes, and elders stood amazed? And for this reason they are set before us as examples; teaching, by the victory of their faith, to confess Christ before all men without fear, and bear his cross, that we may partake of his glory.

Reflections upon the conduct of

HUMAN LIFE;

With reference to learning and knowledge.

Extracted from Mr. NORRIS.

The P R E F A C E.

SINCE *the great happiness or misery of human life depends wholly upon the right or wrong conduct of it, he that shall point out any of its irregularities or mistakes, is a universal friend, a promoter of the public happiness. And the more severe his censure is, provided it be just, the more serviceable it may be.*

Especially, if the irregularities he points out are not only important, frequent and inveterate, but such as lie secret and unobserved, and have all along passed under the notion of excellencies. He that reflects upon such misconducts as these, obliges by his discovery as well as reproof.

This consideration has occasioned the following reflections upon the study of learning and knowledge; the greatest faults of which, by a kind of unaccountable superstition are canonized ◆for virtues.

◆ inserted word "for" per Errata

The truth is, the light that divulges other miscarriages will be sure to hide these. For beside that they are visible only to a few (since none can judge of the faults of the learned without learning) those few that do discern them, have seldom ingenuity enough to acknowledge them. For either they are so proud as not to be willing to own themselves to have been so long under a mistake; or so ill-natured that they don't care others should be directed to a better way than they themselves have travelled in.

In the following reflections I have endeavoured to mark out some of these less observed misconducts, wherewith I myself have been too long imposed on, and which after all my conviction (so deep are the impressions of early prejudice) I can hardly yet find power to correct. For education is the great bias of human life, and there is this double witchcraft in it, that 'tis a long time before a man can see any thing amiss in a way he is used to, and when he does, 'tis not very easy to change it.

I can easily divine how these reflections will be received by some of the rigid votaries of old learning. But if they are of service here and there to an ingenuous and unenslaved spirit, I shall not much regard the magisterial censures of those, whose great and long study has had no better effect upon them, than to make them too wise for conviction.

The First REFLECTION.

Wherein the general conduct of human life is taxed, for placing learning in such things as are little or nothing perfective of the understanding.

1. **A**S there are two faculties in man, understanding and will; so there is a double conduit of human life, intellectual and moral. The moral conduit of men has been continually exposed, ever since preaching and writing have been in the world. But it has fared otherwise with the intellectual, which stands not so fair a mark, nor has been so often his. Not that it is really less faulty, but because its faultiness is less notorious, lies further in, and must be drawn forth into view by a chain of consequences, which few have either discernment enough to make, or patience enough to attend to.

2. The chief irregularities of it are three, respecting the end, the means, and the degree of affection.

First, The placing learning in such things as are little or nothing perfective of the understanding.

Secondly, The undue and irregular method of prosecuting what is really perfective of it; and

Thirdly, The too importunate pursuit of knowledge in general.

3. First, Men generally place learning in such things as are little or nothing perfective of the understanding. This, I confess, is a severe charge, as it fastens an imputation of folly upon the learned order: and not only so, but in that very thing wherein they think their wisdom consists. Learned men do indeed often, not only own but affect ignorance in things beside their profession. But to censure them as defective in that one thing they pretend to, to make that their blind side where they think they see clearest, to maintain, that they are not only not really knowing, but that generally they don't so much as know what true knowledge is; this is so high a charge, that even those who may be convinced of the truth, will scarce forgive the boldness, of it.

4. That the truth of it may appear, I shall first briefly observe, what knowledge is perfective of the understanding, and then shew, that the generality of the world place learning in that which is not so.

5. And, first, I grant the knowledge of all those truths is perfective of the understanding, which are the matter of those arts and sciences, that are built upon stable and immoveable foundations, such as divinity, metaphysics, geometry, together with those unchangeable rules and measures of reason and consequence, which lead us to all other knowledge, and are the subject of that art we term logic. And accordingly I allow him to be a truly learned and knowing man, who has furnished his mind with bright and clear ideas, lodged them orderly and regularly in his head, and settled the relations and consequences of one to another. He that is able to think clearly (for so much a man knows, as he understands distinctly, and no more) to judge truly and solidly, and to reason dependently and consequentially.

6. But this is not the measure which the ◆generality of the world has thought fit to proceed by. Learning is generally placed in a sort of knowledge, widely different from this. The world does not esteem him a learned man, whose learning has cleared his understanding, who is arrived at distinctness of conception, and is a thorough master of notion and discourse. No, it will cost great pains, great labour of mind, and closeness of thinking to attain to this. This therefore must not be learning, but something else must, that is easier to be attained, though little or nothing perfective of the understanding. And in such knowledge it is generally placed.

◆ “gerality” replaced with “generality”

*7. For, first, It is reckoned a notable point of learning to understand variety of languages. This alone gives a man a title to learning, without one grain of sense; and on the other side, let a man be an angel for notion and discourse, yet unless he can express the same thought in variety of words, he may go for a rational, but will by no means be esteemed a learned man. Now is it not a strange thing, that so much stress should be laid on so very a trifle? For what am I the better for being able to tell, what 'tis a-clock in twenty languages? What does this signify to the perfection of my understanding? Words are purely in order to sense: and are therefore of no farther value, than as they help either to learn or to communicate it. Therefore, to affect them for themselves, is to turn the means into the end, than which nothing is more absurd. And yet this vain piece of pedantry has prevailed all the world over, and with some to that degree, that they have confounded ideas with words, and have made all science to terminate in the latter. Thus Mr. *Hobbes* makes reason to be nothing else, but "*Sequela Nominum*, a well-ordered train of words." Never certainly was a plainer argument of the great degeneracy of mankind. And tho' all the multipliers of tongues are not comprehended under this latter charge, yet it may concern them to consider, how great a folly it must be to place learning in that, which is one of the greatest curses upon earth, and which shall utterly cease in heaven.

*8. Again, it passes for an extraordinary part of learning to understand history: that is, in other words, to know what a company of silly creatures called men, have been doing for almost these six thousand years. Now, what is my understanding the perfecter for this? I deny not, that there are some matters of fact, as the more remarkable turns of ecclesiastical history, and the greater revolutions of the civil world, which are of moment to be known; because, by discovering to us the conduct of divine providence, they supply us with occasions of acknowledging and adoring the wisdom and goodness of God. Neither do I deny, that there are many other historical passages, which may be of moment to be known; tho' not as perfective of our understanding, but as touching our interest. And so it may be of moment to me to know, the clock has struck one, if I have made an assignation at that time; but sure the bare naked theory of the clock's having struck one, will add but little to my intellectual perfection. The most trivial matter of fact in the world is worth knowing, if I have any concern depending upon it: and the greatest without that, is utterly insignificant. So that 'tis not from perfecting of our understanding, but from the relation they have to our interest, that these things deserve to be known.

*9. I would desire the great magnifiers of history only to answer me this one question. Suppose such and such matters of fact, in the knowing which they perhaps glory more, than the actors themselves did in the doing them, had never been done? Suppose *Fabius* had never weathered out *Hannibal* by delays, nor *Cyrus* took *Babylon* by draining the river into the ditches: what diminution would this have been to the perfection of their understanding? They cannot say it would have been any. And why then should the knowing them now they are done, be reckoned an addition to it? And yet we find it is so, and that men study these things, not only for their use, (that we allow) but for their mere theory, placing learning in such history as has nothing to commend it, but only that it tells you, such and such things were done. Of this impertinent sort is the greatest part of the *Roman* and *Grecian* history: which, had not the world voted it for learning, would no more concern a man to know, than that a bird has dropt a feather upon the *Pyrenean* mountains.

10. Again, it passes for a notable piece of learning to understand chronology: to be able to adjust the intervals and distances of time, when such a man flourished, when such an action was done, and the like. Now I deny not, but it may concern some to know these things, who have any interest depending upon it. It may concern some to know, for instance, that there is a twofold date of the victory at *Actium*, the one reckoned from the fight there, the other from the taking of *Alexandria*. But however useful it may be to know this, yet certainly as to any intellectual perfection that accrues by it, it must needs be a very unedifying stuffage of the head; altho' 'tis so generally accounted a great accomplishment and enrichment of it.

*11. There are many other things which the humour of the world has turned up for learning, which ignorance will never be the better for, and which wisdom does not need. Thus 'tis counted learning to have tumbled over a multitude of books, especially if great ones, and old ones, and obscure ones; but most of all, if manuscripts, the recovery of one of which is reckoned so much added to *the common-wealth of learning*, as they call it. Hence a *well-read* man signifies the very same as a *learned* man in most men's dictionaries: and by *well-read* they don't mean one that has *read well*, that has cleared and improved his understanding by his reading, but only one that has *read much*, tho' perhaps he has puzzled and confounded his notions by doing so. Thus again, it goes for learning, to be acquainted with men's opinions, especially of the ancients; to know what this or that philosopher held, what this or that author says, tho' perhaps he says nothing but what is either absurd, or obviously true. What, for instance, can be more absurd; than that fancy of *Empedocles*, that there are two semicircles compassing the earth betwixt them, one of fire, the other of air; and that the former makes day, and the latter night? And yet to know this is learning! What can be more obviously true, than that grave doctrine of *Aristotle*, that privation must go before the introduction of the form in all generation? Or, that a thing must lose one form, before it can take another? And yet 'tis learning to know that he taught this! To know the thing is nothing: but to know that *Aristotle* taught it, that is learning! Nay farther, tho' I am able to demonstrate the circulation of the blood, or the motion of the earth, yet I shall not be admitted into the order of the learned, unless I am able to tell, that *Copernicus* discovered the one, and *Harvey* the other. So much more learned an atchievment it is, to know opinions than things! And accordingly those are reckoned the most learned authors, who have given the greatest specimens of this kind of knowledge. Thus *Picus Mirandula* is more admired for his examination of the doctrine of the Pagans, than any of them were for what they delivered.

12. Now what an unreasonable imposition is this, that tho' a man can think and write like an angel himself, yet he must not be accounted a man of learning, unless he can tell what every whimsical writer hath said before him? And how hard will it fall upon those, whose lot is to breathe in the last ages of the world, who must be accountable for all the whims and extravagancies of so many centuries? And yet this is made so great a part of learning, that the learning of most men lies in books rather than in things. And among authors, where one writes upon things, there are twenty write upon books. Nay, some carry this humour so far, that 'tis thought learning to know the very title of books and their editions, with the time and place when and where they were printed. And many there are who value themselves not a little on this mechanical faculty, tho' they know no more of what is in them, than they do of what is written in the rolls of destiny.

13. From this placing of learning in the knowledge of books, proceeds that ridiculous vanity of multiplying quotations, which is also reckoned another piece of learning, tho' they are used so impertinently, that there can be no other end in them, but to shew, that the author has read such a book. And yet it is no such convincing evidence of that neither. It being neither new nor difficult, for a man that is resolved upon it, to quote such authors as he never read nor saw. And were it not too odious a truth, I could name several of those author-mongers who pass for men of shrewd learning.

14. These and many other such things (for 'twere endless to reckon up all) are by the majority of the world voted for learning, and in these we spend our education, our study and our time, tho' they are no way perfective of our understanding. So that in short, the charge of this reflection amounts to thus much, that learning is generally placed in the knowledge of such things, as the intellectual perfection of man is little or nothing concerned in.

The Second REFLECTION.

Wherein the general conduct of human life is taxed for using undue and irregular methods, in prosecuting what is really perfective of the understanding.

1. **I**N the preceding reflection the conduct of human life was censured, for placing learning in what is not perfective of the understanding. In the present, it is charged with pursuing what is so, in an undue and irregular manner. The other was an error about the end; this is an error about the means: which are the two hinges upon which all prudence and imprudence turn.

*2. That the truth of this charge may appear, we are first to determine, what is the right method of prosecuting that learning, which is really perfective of understanding. And this, no doubt, must be an application to him, *from whom every good and perfect gift descendeth*. This is the right and the only right method of enquiry after that truth which is perfective of our understanding. For God is the region of truth, and *in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. This is that great and universal oracle lodged in every man's breast, whereof the ancient *Urim and Thummim* was an expressive emblem. This we all may and must consult, if we would enrich our minds with such knowledge as is perfective of the understanding. This is the true method of being truly wise. And it is no other method than what we are advised to, by the substantial wisdom of God. *Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither. I am the light of the world: he that follows me, or (as the word more properly signifies) he that keepeth company with me, walketh not in darkness.*

3. There are three ways of doing this; the first is, by attention; the second, by purity of heart and life; the third, by prayer. The first, attention, *Malebranche* calls the natural prayer of the soul to God for farther illumination. For indeed it is a silent address and application of the soul to the fountain of light and truth; 'tis an interrogation of the divine oracle, the eternal word of God, and a patient waiting upon him for an answer. 'Tis in a word, an act of intellectual devotion to the Father of Lights, and such as if unfolded, bespeaks him in the words of the royal supplicant, *Give me wisdom that sitteth by thy throne!*

*4. This is the same with thinking or meditating; and as it is the first, so it is the directest and most compendious method of science. For this is to go directly to the spring-head, to the lucid fountain of good. 'Tis to fix the eye of the mind upon the intellectual sun, which must needs be the most ready way to be enlightened. The more heedfully we [◆](#)attend to this, we shall not only discover the more, but also more clearly see what we do discover. So a man that calls only a short careless glance upon the milky way, sees only a confused whiteness. But when he fixes his eye upon it, with steadiness and delay of application, he begins to discern it more distinctly, and a new star every moment rises under his inspection: and still the harder he looks, the more he discerns, 'till he is satiated with the brightness and multitude of light.

[◆](#) "attain" replaced with "attend" per Errata

5. This was the method of the inventors of arts and sciences: they made their way by mere dint of thinking. This is the method that has been used ever since, by the greatest improvers of them; such as *Bacon, Boyle, Harvey, Malebranche, &c.* And we may safely prophesy, if ever any extraordinary advancement be made in them hereafter, it will be done by thinking.

6. The second way is, by purity of heart and life: for as vice not only proceeds from ignorance, but also causes it, by besotting and clouding the understanding, so purity not only proceeds from knowledge, but also produces it, making the soul see more clearly and distinctly. And the same method is recommended in scripture, *Wisdom*, says the wise man, *will not enter into a polluted spirit*. So the angel to *Daniel*, *Many shall be purified and made white, and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand*. To this purpose too, is that of our Lord, above repeated; *He that followeth me, walketh not in darkness*; the purity of his heart is a light to his understanding.

7. But to represent this more clearly; there are two ways whereby purity of heart serves to the acquirement of knowledge; by natural efficacy, and by the divine blessing. And first, by natural efficacy, either by clearing the medium, or by assisting the faculty. As to the former, we are assured, not only that the soul now sees through a medium, and that this medium is the body, but likewise that the grossness of this medium hinders the sight of the soul. Whence it follows, that whatever helps this medium, helps the sight of the soul. And this purity does; especially that eminent part of it which consists in chastity and temperance. For first, it composes the passions, especially that of lust, by that the animal spirits, and by that the blood. For the motion of the passions ferments the spirits, and the fermentation of the spirits agitates the blood, and by that agitation raises all the feculent and drossy parts of it, and makes it like a troubled fountain, thick and muddy. And therefore it is, that men in any passion can't reason so clearly, as when they are in more quiet and silence of spirit. But by purity all this disturbance is allayed, the passions are becalmed, the spirits fixed, the fountain of the blood cleared up, and so all the inner part of the glass, through which we see, becomes more bright and transparent, more apt to transmit the rays of light to the soul, which consequently sees more clearly through it.

8. But this is not all: for purity clears the outward part of the glass too. First by consequence, because the finer the spirits and blood are, the finer will be the threads of the outward veil also. Then more directly; because temperance refines and subtilizes the texture of the body, and diminishes its bulk and grossness, and unloads the soul of a good part of that burthen, which not only presses down her aspirations, but also hinders her sight.

*9. And as purity thus clears the medium, so it also assists the faculty. And that by the same general way, by composing the passions, which otherwise not only trouble and thicken the medium, but also divide and disperse the faculty. For the more things a man desires, the more he will be engaged to think on; and the more he thinks on at once, the more languid and confused will his conceptions be. But purity, by composing the passions, contracts the desires, and by contracting these, it contracts also the thoughts; whereby a man is reduced to a greater unity, simplicity and recollection of mind; and having but few thoughts to divide him, is the better able to think clearly.

10. Purity of heart serves to the acquirement of knowledge, secondly, by the divine blessing. It invites not only the Holy Spirit, but also the Father and the Son, even the whole Godhead, to come and dwell in the soul. This we are assured of from our Lord's own mouth: *He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.* And again, *If a man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* The chaste and good soul shall not only be loved by God, but be also of his council and privacy. This is the beloved disciple, who has the privilege to lean upon the bosom of his Lord, and to be admitted to his most secret communications. And therefore says the psalmist, *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.* And of Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, who refused to defile themselves with the king's meat, it is said, *That God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom.*

11. The third and last way of consulting God is by prayer. This also is a method which the scripture advises us to. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to every man liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* And this we know was the method whereby the wisest of men obtained his unparalleled wisdom. For as wisdom was his choice, so the method of his seeking and gaining it was by prayer.

12. Thus have I designed, and by scripture and reason proved, what is the right method of prosecuting that truth which is perfective of the understanding. And now I think there needs not many words to shew, that as learning is commonly placed in what is not perfective of it, so what is so, is generally prosecuted by undue methods. For whereas the first method of acquiring it is by attention or thinking, this is generally so little regarded, that few men think less, for the most part, than they who are engaged in the professed study of knowledge. This they don't reckon any part of study, nor any progress in the stage of learning, but only a graver way of being idle. 'Tis then only they study, when they are hanging their heads over an old musty folio, and stuffing their memories with grey sentences and venerable sayings. And thus they spend their time and their pains, and having scrambled through a company of books (most of which perhaps were written to as little purpose as they are read) they think themselves learned men, and the world is too often of their opinion, tho' they have not made themselves master of any sense or notion, nor are able to demonstrate one single truth upon solid principles, and in a consequential process.

13. And this is the method not only of those who misplace learning, but also of the most of those who place it right. Even these do not generally think for it, but read for it; seek it not in their souls, but in books. I deny not that reading is one way to knowledge; but then 'tis only by accident, as it is a help to thinking. And therefore thinking is the only thing to be regarded even in reading; for reading, as such, is nothing. And then we read to most purpose, when we are thereby most enabled to think. So that thinking is the immediate end of reading, as understanding is of thinking. And yet this method is generally so much inverted, that the main stress is laid upon reading. Nothing but *read, read*, as long as eyes and spectacles will hold; no matter whether the head be *clear*, so it be but *full*.

14. Again, whereas purity of heart and life is another method of attaining true knowledge, 'tis a sad as well as just observation, that this is not only neglected by those who sit down contentedly in ignorance, but also by the generality of those few that addict themselves to the improvement of their minds. Nay, these, in proportion to their number, seem more guilty in this respect than the others, and nothing is so common, as to see men of famed learning, who are yet very corrupt in their tempers and lives. Whence some have fancied learning an enemy to religion, and cried up ignorance as the mother of devotion. And tho' their conclusion be notoriously absurd, yet it must be owned, the ground on which they build it is too true. Men famed for learning are often as infamous for living; and many that study hard to furnish their heads, are yet very negligent in purifying their hearts: not considering, that there is a moral as well as a natural communication between them; and that they are concerned to be pure in heart and life, not only upon the common account in order to happiness hereafter, but even in order to their own particular end here.

15. Then, lastly, whereas another method of learning is prayer; the generality of students do not apply themselves to this at all. Pray indeed ('tis to be hoped) they do for other things which they think lie more out of their reach; but as for learning, they think they can compass this well enough by their own industry, and the help of good books, without being beholden to the assistance of heaven. But did they attentively consider, that God is truth, 'tis not to be imagined they would be so indifferent in using prayer, or any of the preceding methods of consulting God for his own light.

The Third REFLECTION.

Wherein the general conduct of human life is taxed with too importunate a pursuit of knowledge in general.

1. **H**AVING past the two first stages of our intellectual conduct, that of the end ◆and that of the means, and reflected on the irregularities of each, I come now to the third and last, which consists not in the choice of the object, or of the method to it, but in the degree of affection wherewith it is prosecuted. And this part of our conduct is as irregular and faulty, if not more so, than either of the former: and the fault of it is, a too importunate pursuit of knowledge in general.

◆ duplicate word "and" removed

2. This charge is of a larger extent than either of the preceding: those concerning such only, as either misplace the object, or mistake the method of learning. But not only they who err in the placing of learning, or in the way to it, but even they who are right in both come under this censure; they all agree in pursuing it too importunately.

3. In order to make out the truth of this charge it will be necessary first to consider, how far it becomes man to employ himself in the prosecution of knowledge; and then it will be easy to determine, whether our general pursuit of it be immoderate or no. Now for the determination of the former, let us observe the present state of man, the posture wherein he now stands.

4. And, First, The utmost knowledge man can arrive at in this world, by his utmost endeavours, is very inconsiderable.

*God indeed has given us reason enough to distinguish us from the brute creation, and we may improve it so far, as to distinguish ourselves from one another: and so one man may deserve to be called learned and knowing, in comparison of another that is less so. But absolutely speaking, the most that any or all of us either know or can know, is of little consideration. What we know of God is but little; for as the apostle says, *We see through a glass darkly*: what we know of ourselves perhaps is less, and what we know of the world about us, is not much. “We have seen but a few of God’s works,” and we understand yet fewer. There are almost an infinite number of things which we never so much as thought of: and of most things we conceive very darkly and uncertainly; and there is not one thing from the greatest to the least, which we do or can understand thoroughly. Those that apply their whole study to any one thing, can never come to the end of that; for not only every science, but every particular of each has its unmeasurable depths and recesses. ’Tis confest by a great enquirer into the nature of *antimony* (as ’tis related by Mr. *Boyle*) “That ’tis impossible for one man to understand thoroughly that single mineral only.” And if a man can’t understand *all* of so *little*, how little must he understand of all? Suppose farther, that all the knowledge of all the learned were put together, it would weigh but light. For what one art or science is there, that is brought to any tolerable perfection? And if the common stock be so little, how small a pittance is it that must fall to every particular man’s share? And where is that man, who after all his poring and studying, is able to answer all the questions, I will not say which God put to *Job*, but which may be asked him by the next idiot he meets?

5. ’Tis superfluous, as well as endless, to display the particulars of our ignorance; though indeed, when all accounts are cast up, that will be found to be our best knowledge. This only in general, our life is so short, our progress in learning so slow, and learning itself so long and tedious, and what we do or can know so very little, that the sceptics had much more reason to conclude from the disability of our faculties, and the slightness of our attainments, than from the uncertainty and instability of truth, that there is no knowledge.

*6. But, Secondly, If it were possible for us to attain a considerable measure of knowledge, yet our life is so short and so encumbered, that we could make but little of the enjoyment of it. All the morning of our days is spent in the preliminaries of learning, in mastering words and terms of art, wherein there is nothing but toil and drudgery. And before we can taste any of the fruits of the tree of knowledge, before we can relish what is rational, our sun is got into the meridian, and then it presently begins to decline, and our learning with it. Our light, our strength, and our time make haste to consume; nothing increases now but the shadows, that is, our ignorance and darkness of mind; and while we consider and look about us, the sun sets, and all is concluded in the dark shadow of death. But often the sun is intercepted by a cloud before it sets, and we live backward again, grow weak and childish, silly and forgetful, and unlearn faster than we learned. Or if it chance to shine bright to the last, then we grow too wise for ourselves, and reject the greatest part of what we had learned before, as idle and insignificant.

*7. Thirdly, There is no necessity of being so wonderfully learned and knowing here. 'Tis neither necessary, as enjoined by God, nor as a means to any considerable end. We can be good and we can be happy without it. And lest any advantages in our after-state should be alledged, this makes it more unnecessary than any consideration besides. For though we are never so unlearned now, yet if we know enough to do our duty, we shall in a short time arrive at such a degree of knowledge as is requisite to our supreme perfection, to which our present learning cannot add, and which our present ignorance will not diminish. Perhaps not immediately upon our discharge from the body, though even then there must be a vast enlargement of our understanding; but doubtless, when we are admitted to the vision of God, we shall then commence instantaneously wise and learned, and be fully possess of the tree of knowledge, as well as of the tree of life. For then that glass, through which we now see darkly, shall be laid aside, and the field of truth shall be clearly displayed before us. And though even then there shall be degrees of knowledge, yet the variety of this dispensation shall not proceed by the degree of our knowledge in this life, but by another measure. For,

8. Fourthly, Though there is no necessity of our being so learned and knowing, yet there is of our being good and virtuous. This is necessary, both, as commanded by God, and as a means of our final perfection. And besides, 'tis necessary now, there being no other opportunity for it. If we don't know here, we may know hereafter, and infallibly shall, if we are but good here. But if we are not good here, we shall neither be good, happy, nor knowing hereafter. The *main* opportunity for knowledge is *after* life; the *only* opportunity of being good is now: and if we take care to improve this, we are secure of the other; but if this is neglected, all is lost. This therefore is indispensably necessary; and 'tis the only thing that is so: and 'tis necessary now; necessary not only to our happiness in general, but also to our intellectual happiness in particular. For,

9. Lastly, Thus stands the case between God and man. Man was made in a state of innocence and perfection, in perfect favour and communion with God, his true good, and in a capacity so to continue. From this excellent state he wilfully fell, and by his fall so disabled himself, that he could not by his own strength repent, and so provoked God, that though he could have repented, yet he could not have been pardoned, without satisfaction made to the divine justice. This satisfaction man was not able to make, nor any other creature for him. Whereupon God in great mercy ordained a mediator, his own Son, God and man, between himself and his lapsed creature; who by the sacrifice of himself should effect two things, answerable to the double necessity of man: first, make repentance available, which otherwise would not have been so; and, secondly, merit grace for him, that he might be able to repent. And this is what is meant by the restoration or redemption of man, which thus far is universal and unconditional.

10. But still, notwithstanding all that this Mediator hath done for him, man is only so far *restored*, as to be put into a pardonable reconcilable state: he is yet only in a capacity or possibility of pardon and reconciliation, which is then, and then only, reduced to act, when he truly believes, *i. e.* with such a faith as is productive of all inward and outward holiness; *with* which he may, *without* which he cannot be saved, notwithstanding Christ hath died to save him. For the design of his death was not to make holiness *unnecessary*, but to make it *available*: not to procure a privilege of being saved *without* it, but that we might be saved *with* it. If this qualification be wanting, we shall be so far from being any thing advantaged from the redemption purchased by our Mediator, that we shall be accountable for it, to the great aggravation both of our guilt and misery. It therefore highly concerns man to improve with all diligence this great and only opportunity, of adorning his mind with all Christian perfections; since *with* these, he may be happy, in all his capacities, and *without* them, he shall not only fall into a state of unutterable misery, but be also accountable for the possibility he had of escaping it, for perversely neglecting so great salvation, so glorious an opportunity of being saved.

11. These things being premised concerning the present state of man: First, That he can know but very little; Secondly, That the enjoyment of that little in a short and encumbered life, is by no means answerable to the labour of acquiring it; Thirdly, That there is no necessity of such a deal of learning and knowledge, either as to this world or the next, and that ere long he shall have his fill of knowledge in the beatific vision, one glance whereof shall instruct him more than an eternal poring on books, and *undistinguish* the greatest doctor from the most ignorant peasant; Fourthly, That there is an absolute necessity of his being holy, this being the condition not only of his happiness in general, but also of the accomplishment of his understanding in particular: and that now is the only opportunity for it: Lastly, That the attainment of happiness upon this condition, was the purchase of his Saviour's death, who has also merited grace for his assistance in the performance of it; which if he neglect, he shall not only miss of happiness, but also be answerable for so dear an opportunity of gaining it: from these premises, it will, I think, follow with no less than mathematical evidence.

12. First, That knowledge is not the thing for which God designed man in this station, nor consequently the end of his bestowing upon him those intellectual powers which he has.

Secondly, That the end for which God did design man in this station, and the reason why he bestowed those powers upon him was, that he might so serve him here, as to be rewarded with perfect knowledge hereafter: And, Thirdly, That the principal care and concern of man, both for his own interest, and out of compliance with the design of God, ought to be, to live a Christian life, to accomplish the moral part of his nature, to subdue his passions, to wean himself from the love of the world, to study purity of heart and life, in one word, “To perfect holiness in the fear and love of God.” And in particular, that he ought to pursue knowledge no farther than as ’tis conducive to virtue.

*13. This therefore is the measure to be always observed, in our prosecution of knowledge. We are to study only, that we may be good, and consequently to prosecute such knowledge only as has an aptness to make us so, that which the apostle calls, *The truth which is after godliness*. Whatever knowledge we prosecute beside this, or further than ’tis conducive to this end, though it be, absolutely considered, never so excellent and perfective of our understanding, yet with respect to the present posture and station of man, ’tis a culpable curiosity, an unaccountable vanity, and only a more solemn and laborious way of being idle and impertinent.

14. And this will be found, if well examined, to be nothing different from the censure of the wise preacher, *I gave my heart to know wisdom*, says he, *and I perceived, that this also is vanity and vexation of spirit*. Not that he now first applied himself to the study of wisdom. No, he had been inspired with that before, and by the help of it had discovered the vanity of all other things. But that wisdom which saw thro' all other things, did not as yet perceive the vanity of itself. He therefore now gave his heart to *know* wisdom, that is, to reflect upon it, and to consider whether this might be excepted from his general censure, and struck out of the scroll of vanities. And upon deep reflection, he found that it could not, and that even this also was as much a vanity as any of the rest. Not that this proposition is to be understood absolutely, but with respect to the present posture of man. Neither can it be understood of all knowledge even in this life; some knowledge being necessary to qualify him for happiness in the next. It must therefore be understood of all that knowledge, which contributes not to that great end. So that with these two necessary limitations, the sense of it is plainly this, that to man in this present juncture, all knowledge which does not contribute to the interest of his after-state, is vanity and vexation of spirit.

*15. For to what purpose should we study so much, since after all we can know so little? Since our life is as much too short for enjoying that little knowledge we *have*, as for compassing what we would *have*; and withal, since there lies no manner of obligation or necessity upon us to do thus? But (which is what I would most of all inculcate) to what purpose imaginable should we be so vehement in the pursuit of learning, of any learning but what is of use to the conduct of life, considering these two things, First, That 'tis but to stay a little while, and we shall have all that knowledge gratis, which we so unsuccessfully drudge for here, to the neglect of more important exercises; and, Secondly, That there is such an absolute necessity of being good, and that this short uncertain life is the only time for it, which if neglected, this great work must be undone for ever. Upon the former consideration, this studious bookish humour, is like laying out a great sum of money, to purchase an estate which, after one week, dropping life will of course fall into hand. Upon the latter, 'tis as if a man that was riding post upon business of life and death, should, as he passes through a wood, stand still to listen to the singing of a nightingale, and so forget the only business of his journey.

16. 'Tis most certain, the cases here supposed are as great instances of folly as can well be conceived. And yet (however it comes to pass that we are not sensible of it,) 'tis equally certain that we do the very same, that we are too much concerned in the application; and that to most of us it may be truly said, *Thou art the man!*

17. For what difference is there between him who now labours and toils for that knowledge, which in a little time he shall be easily and fully possessed of, and him that dearly buys an estate, which would otherwise come to him after a short interval? Only this; that he who buys the estate, though he might have spared his money, however gets what he laid it out for. His expence indeed was *needless*, but not in *vain*. Whereas he that drudges in the pursuit of knowledge, not only toils for that which in a short time he shall have, and in abundance, but which after all he can't compass, and so undergoes a *vain* as well as *needless* labour.

*18. Again, What difference is there between him, who when he is upon business of life and death, shall alight from his horse, and stand to hear a nightingale sing, and him who having an eternity of happiness to secure, and only this point of time to do it in, shall yet turn virtuoso, and set up for learning and curiosity? 'Tis true the nightingale sings well, and 'twere worth while to stand still and hear her, were I disengaged from more concerning affairs; but not when I am upon life and death. And so knowledge is an excellent thing, and would deserve my study and time, had I any to spare; but not when I have so great an interest as that of my final state depending upon the good use of it. My business *now* is not to be learned, but to be good.

*19. For is my life so long, am I so *over-stocked* with time, or is my depending interest so little, or so easily secured, that I can find leisure for unnecessary curiosities? Is this conduct agreeable to the present posture of man, whose entrance into this world, and whose whole stay in it is purely in order to another state? Or would any one imagine this to be the condition of man by such a conduct? Shall a prisoner, who has but a few days allowed him to make a preparation for his trial, spend that little opportunity in *cutting* and *carving*, and such like mechanical contrivances? Or would any one imagine such a man to be in such a condition, near a doubtful trial of life and death, whom coming into a prison he should find so employed? And yet is there any thing more absurd in this, than to have a man, who has so great a concern upon his hands, as the preparing for eternity, all busy and taken up with quadrants and telescopes, furnaces, syphons and air-pumps?

20. When we would expose any signal impertinence, we commonly illustrate it by the example of *Archimedes*; who was busy in making mathematical figures on the sands of *Syracuse*, while the city was stormed by *Marcellus*, and so, tho' particular orders were given for his safety, lost his life by his unseasonable study. Now, I confess there was absurdity enough in this instance, to consign it over to posterity: but had *Archimedes* been a Christian, I should have said, that the main of his impertinence did not lie *here*, in being mathematically employed when the enemy was taking the city, but in laying out his thoughts and time in so unconcerning a study, while he had no less a concern upon him, than the securing his eternal interest, which must be done now or never. Nothing certainly is an impertinence if this be not, to hunt after knowledge in such a juncture as this!

21. Many other proceedings in the conduct of life, are condemned as vanity and impertinence, though not half so inconsistent with the character of man, nor so disagreeable to his present posture. The pens of moral writers have been all along employed against them who spent their short and uncertain lives, which ought to be spent in pursuing an infinitely higher interest, in gaping up and down after honour and preferments, in long and frequent attendances at court, in raising families, in getting estates, and the like. These are condemned not only for their particular viciousness, as crimes of ambition and covetousness, but for what they have all in common, as they are misspendings of time, and unconcerning employments.

22. Now I would fain know, whether any of these be more expensive of our time, more remote from the main business of life, and consequently more impertinent, than to be busily employed in the niceties and curiosities of learning? And whether a man that loiters away six weeks in court-attendances, be not every whit as *accountably* employed, as he that spends the same time in solving a mathematical question, as Mr. *Des Cartes* in one of his epistles confesses himself to have done? Why should the prosecution of learning be the only thing excepted from the vanities and impertinences of life?

23. And yet so it is. All other unconcerning employments are cried down merely for being so, as not consistent with the present state of man, with the character he now bears. This alone is not content with the reputation of innocence, but stands for positive merit and excellence. To say a man is a lover of knowledge, and a diligent enquirer after truth, is thought almost as great an encomium as you can give him; and the time spent in the study, though in the search of the most impertinent truth, is reckoned almost as laudably employed as that in the chapel. 'Tis learning only that is allowed (so inconsistent with itself is human judgment) not only to divide, but to devour the greatest part of our short life; and that is the only thing which with credit and public allowance stands in competition with the study of virtue: nay, by the most is preferred before it, who had rather be accounted learned than pious.

*24. But is not this a strange competition? We confess that knowledge is a glorious excellence. Yet rectitude of will is a far greater excellence than brightness of understanding: and to be good, is a more glorious perfection than to be wise and knowing, this being if not the only, certainly the principal difference between an angel and a devil. 'Tis *far better*, to use the expression of Mr. *Poiret*, *like an infant without much reasoning, to love much, than like the devil, to reason much without love.*

25. But suppose knowledge were a more glorious excellence than it is; suppose it were a greater perfection than virtue; yet still this competition would be utterly against reason; since we can't have the former now *in any measure*, and shall have it hereafter *without measure*: but the latter we may have *now* (for we may *love much* tho' we cannot *know much*) and can't have it *hereafter*. Now the question is, whether we ought to be more ◆solicitous for that intellectual perfection, which we can't have *here* and shall have *hereafter*; or that moral perfection, which we may have *here*, and cannot have *hereafter*? And I think we need not consult an oracle, or conjure up a spirit, to be resolved.

◆ "solicitous" replaced with "sollicitous" for consistency

*26. This consideration alone is sufficient to justify the measure we have prescribed for our intellectual conduct, that we ought to prosecute knowledge no farther than as it conduces to virtue: and consequently, that whenever we study to any other purpose, or in any other degree than this, we are unaccountably, impertinently, I may add, sinfully employed. For this is the whole of man, *To fear God and keep his commandments*, the whole of man in this station particularly, and consequently this ought to be the scope of all his studies and endeavours.

27. And accordingly it is observable, that the scripture, whenever it makes mention of wisdom, with any mark of commendation, always means by it either religion itself, or such knowledge as has a direct influence upon it. Remarkable to this purpose is the 28th chapter of *Job*; where having run thro' several instances of natural knowledge, he adds, *But where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?* As much as to say, that in none of the other things mentioned, did consist the wisdom of man. Then it follows, *Man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me, and the sea saith, It is not in me.* Not in the depths of learning, nor in the recesses of speculation, *Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living. Destruction and death say we have heard of the fame thereof with our ears:* as much as to say, that after this life, and then only, unless perhaps about the hour of death, men begin to have a true sense and lively relish of this wisdom. But in the mean time, *God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof.* And unto man he said, *Behold, the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding!* To man he said: had it been to another creature, suppose an angel, in a state of security and confirmation, he would perhaps have recommended for wisdom the study of nature, and the arcana of philosophy. But having to do with man, a probationary, unfixed creature, that shall be either happy or miserable eternally, according as he demeans himself, in this short time of trial, the only wisdom he advises to such a creature in such a station, is to study religion and a good life.

28. From authority let us descend to example: and two I would particularly recommend, of men both eminently wise and learned; I mean *Moses* and *St. Paul*. The latter professedly declares, *I determine to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified*. And the former complaining of the gross ignorance of his people, breaks out into this passionate wish. *O that they were wise! that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!*

29. *Moses* had been bred a scholar as well as a courtier, and was well instructed in all the secrets of philosophy. And besides the advantages of *Pharaoh's* court, he had God himself for his tutor; he had conversed personally with his maker, and therefore must needs be supposed to know what was true wisdom. But he does not make it consist in courtly education, or the mysteries of philosophy; but in considering our latter end. He wishes that his people were wise; and to this end does not wish, that they were as well-bred, or as learned as himself, but only that they understood this, this one thing, that they would consider their latter end. This he makes the summary and abstract of all wisdom. Not unlike *Plato*, who defines philosophy, *the theory of death*.

30. And here, if a short digression may be dispensed with, I would observe, how much *Plato* is in the right, and what an excellent part of wisdom it is, to consider death seriously. To make this distinctly appear, I shall shew first, that the consideration of death is the most proper exercise for a wise man, and secondly, that it is the most compendious way of making him wise that is not so.

31. First, It is the most proper exercise for a wise man. Wisdom consists in a due estimation of things; which then are duly estimated, when they are rated, both as they are in themselves, and as they are in relation to us. If they are great and extraordinary in themselves, they deserve to be considered for their own sakes; if they nearly relate to us, they deserve to be considered for ours. And on both these accounts, death and its consequences, are highly deserving a wise man's thoughts.

32. For, first, they are in themselves great and extraordinary transactions, and as such, deserve the attentive consideration, even of a stander by, of any other indifferent being, suppose an angel; even though he were no otherwise concerned in it, than as 'tis a great event, a noble and wonderful scene of providence. On this single account, death is as fit a subject for the contemplation of a wise man, as any in nature.

33. Or if there be within the sphere of nature, things of a greater appearance, yet there is none wherein man is so nearly concerned. Since on this depends his eternal happiness or ruin. Nothing deserves so much to be considered by him, whether therefore we regard the greatness of the thing itself, or its greatness with respect to us, the consideration of death is as proper an exercise as a wise man can be employed in.

34. And as 'tis so fit an employment for him that is wise already, so, secondly, it is the most compendious way of making him wise that is not so. For all wisdom is in order to happiness; and to be truly wise, is to be wise unto salvation. Whatever knowledge contributes not to this, is quite besides the mark. It is, as the apostle calls it, *Science falsely so called*. The knowledge itself is vain, and the study of it impertinent.

35. Now the only way to happiness is a good life; and consequently all wisdom being in order to happiness, that is the true, and the only true wisdom, that serves to the promoting it. That therefore is the most compendious way of making a man wise, which soonest makes him good. And nothing does this so soon and so well, as the serious and habitual consideration of death. And therefore says the wise man, *remember death and corruption, and keep the commandments*: The shortest compendium of holy living that ever was given. As if he had said, many are the admonitions of wise and good men, for the moral conduct of life. But would you have a short and infalible direction? Remember death and corruption. Do but remember this, and forget all other rules if you *will*, and your duty if you *can*.

36. And what is here remarked by one wise man, is consented to by all. Hence that common practice among the antients, of placing sepulchres in their gardens, and of using that celebrated motto, *Memento mori*. Hence that modern as well as antient custom, of putting emblems of mortality in churches and other public places: by all which is implied, that the consideration of death is the greatest security of a good life. Indeed what other considerations do by parts, this does at a blow. It at once defeats the world, the flesh, and the devil. For how can the world captivate him, who seriously considers that he is a stranger in it, and shall shortly leave it? How can the flesh insnare him, who has his sepulchre in his eye, and reflects on the cold lodging he shall have there? And how can the devil prevail on him, who remembers that he shall die, and then enter on an ◆unchangeable state of happiness or misery, according as he has either resisted, or yielded to his temptations? Of so vast consequence is the constant thinking upon death, above all other, even practical meditation: and so great reason had *Moses* for placing the wisdom of man in the consideration of his latter end.

◆ “unchangable” replaced with “unchangeable” for consistency

*37. But to return. I now persuade myself, that from the character of man, and his present circumstances, as well as from divine authority, it evidently appears, that however natural our desire of knowledge is, this appetite is to be governed, as well as those that are sensual; that we ought to indulge it only so far, as may tend to the conducting our lives, and the fitting us for that happiness which God hath promised, not to the learned, but to the good: and that if it be gratified to any other purpose, or in any other measure than this, our curiosity is impertinent, our study immoderate, and the tree of knowledge still a forbidden plant.

38. And now having stated the measure of our affection to, and enquiry after learning and knowledge, it remains to be considered, how much 'tis observed in the general conduct of our studies. 'Tis plain, it is not observed at all. For these two things are notorious: First, That very little of what is generally studied, has any tendency to living *well* here or happily hereafter. And, Secondly, That these very studies which have no religious influence upon life, do yet devour the greatest part of it. The best and most of our time is devoted to dry learning; this we make the course of our study, the rest is only by the by. And 'tis well if what is practical or devotional, can find us at leisure upon a broken piece of a Sunday or holiday. The main current of our life runs in studies of another nature, that don't so much as glance one kind [♦](#)aspect upon good living. Nay, 'tis well if some of them don't hinder it. I am sure so great and so good a man as St. *Austin* thought so, who speaking of the institution and discipline of his youth, has these remarkable words, "*I learnt in those things many useful words; but the same might have been learnt in matters that are not vain: and that indeed is the safe way, wherein children ought to be trained up. But wo unto thee thou torrent of custom! Who is able to resist thee! How long will it be before thou art dried up? How long wilt thou roll along the sons of Eve, into a great and formidable sea, which they can hardly pass over? Have I not, in obedience to thee, read of Jupiter thundring and fornicating at the same time? And yet, O thou hellish torrent, the sons of men are still tossed in thee, and are invited by rewards to learn these things! The pretence indeed is, that this is the way to learn words, and to get eloquence and the art of persuasion. As if we might not have known these words, Golden Shower, lap, the temple of heaven, without reading of Jupiter's being made a precedent for whoring? This immorality does not at all help the learning of the words: but the words greatly encourage the committing the immorality. Not that I find fault with the words themselves; they are pure and choice vessels: but with that wine of error, which in them is handed and commended to us by our sottish teachers. And yet unless we drank of it, we were beaten, nor had we any sober judge to appeal to. And yet, I, O my God, in whose presence I now securely make this recollection, willingly learnt these things, and like a wretch delighted in them, and for this I was called a good, hopeful boy.*" By this you may see what the judgment of this holy and venerable person was in his private retirements, and at the most serious intervals of his life, concerning the general course of those studies,

which draw out the first runnings of our age, and which are of so great credit and authority in the world, as to go under the name of ingenious and liberal education. You see he not only disapproves them, but reckons them among those sins and irregularities of his youth, whereof he thought himself obliged to make a particular confession in this his great penitential.

◆ removed the word “of” per Errata

39. And here let me not be thought immodest, if upon great consideration and full conviction, I presume to tax the management of our publick schools. Many miscarriages I might note, but I shall concern myself only with those, which the principles here laid down lead me to consider. And these we may comprehend under two general heads of complaint.

I. That they take up so much of our time.

II. That they teach us such frivolous and unprofitable things as they do.

In relation to the first, I can't with any patience reflect, that out of so short a time as that of human life, consisting, it may be of 50 or 60 years (for where one lives longer, hundreds come short) 19 or 20 shall be spent between the dictionary and the lexicon, in hammering out a little *Latin* and *Greek*, and in learning a company of poetical fictions and fantastick stories. Were these things worth knowing, yet 'tis barbarous and inhuman, to make people spend so much of their little stock of time upon them. This is to *make a cure* of human ignorance, and to deal with the infirmities of the mind, as some ill surgeons do with the wounds of the body. If one were to judge of the life of man by the proportion of it spent at school, one would think the *Antidiluvian* mark were not yet out, and that we had a prospect of at least 900 or 1000 years before us. The truth is, 'tis an intolerable abuse it should be so; and were the age as wise as it pretends to be, it would never suffer it: especially considering what late examples we have had of more compendious methods beyond the seas. It does not become me to project a scheme of school-discipline; I leave this to abler heads. Only in the mean time I may venture to say, that the common way is a very great tax upon human life; so large a portion of which can very ill be spared, to be lavished away in the first elements of learning.

*But the greatest complaint against these seminaries is, the frivolousness of the things they teach. Not only the spending so much time on the things they teach is blame-worthy, but their teaching such things at all. Setting opinion and fancy aside, what real improvement is it to the mind of a rational creature, to be overlaid with words and phrases, and to be full charged with poetical stories and dreams? How many excellent and useful things might be learnt, while boys are *thumbing* and *murdering Hesiod* and *Homer*, which ♠ then they do not understand, and which when they do, they will throw by and despise? And that justly too: for of what signification is such stuff as this, to the accomplishment of a reasonable soul? What improvement can it be to my understanding, to know the amours of *Pyramus* and *Thisbe*, or of *Hero* and *Leander*? Do men retain any value for these things, when they grow up, or endeavour to preserve the memory of them? And why must poor boys ♠ be condemned to the drudgery of learning what when they are men they must and will unlearn? Why must they be forced with so great expence of time and labour, to learn ♣ such things as are of no standing use? So ♥ far from that, they are dangerous, as well as unprofitable. For I appeal to the common sense and experience of mankind, whether it be not dangerous in the highest degree, to entertain the gay catching fancies of boys, with the amorous scenes of the poets? Whether it be safe, to season their green imaginations with such images as are there painted to the life? Is not this rather the direct way to corrupt them, to sow in their tender minds the seeds of impurity, to increase their inbred propensities to evil, and lay a standing foundation for debauchery? Let any man but consider human nature as it comes down to us from *Adam*, and tell me whether he thinks a boy is fit to be trusted with *Ovid*? I do not understand upon what principle, either of prudence or piety, such books as these should be read by any; but least of all by boys, whose soft minds are so susceptible of any ill impression. Far better were it they should continue ignorant, than that their understandings should be accomplished at the hazard of their morals; upon which such studies as these can derive no very wholesome influence. And yet to these our youth is dedicated, and in these some of us employ our riper years, and when we die, this very thing makes one part of our funeral eulogy, that we were so diligent and indefatigable in our studies, and so inquisitive in the search of knowledge, perhaps that we procured an early interment by it; when, according to the principles before

laid down, we were as impertinently, though not so innocently employed all the while, as if we had been so long picking straws in *Bedlam*.

♦ “when” replaced with “then” per Errata

♠ inserted word “be” per Errata

♣ “luch” replaced with “such”

♥ inserted “far from” per Errata

40. The sum of all this is: the measure of prosecuting learning and knowledge, is their usefulness to a good life. Consequently, all prosecution of them beyond or beside this end, is impertinent and immoderate. But such is the general prosecution of learning and knowledge, as is plain by appealing to the general conduct of study. It evidently follows, that the intellectual conduct of human life is justly chargeable with an immoderate and impertinent pursuit of knowledge.

The C O N C L U S I O N .

TO what a narrow compass, by virtue of the preceding reflections, are these three things reduced, which use to take up so large a room, *viz.* Learning itself, the method of learning, and the desire and prosecution of learning? These indeed are great retrenchments, but such as are just and necessary to the regulation of our intellectual conduct.

And now who can forbear making these two observations, 1. That this bookish humour, which every where so prevails, is one of the spiritual diseases of mankind, one of the most malignant relics of original depravation: it carrying in it the very stamp and signature of *Adam's* transgression, which owed its birth to an inordinate desire of knowledge, 2. That those who have eyes, may in great measure spare them, and they who have not, should not much lament the want of them, upon account of learning.

For my own part, I am so thoroughly convinced of the certainty of the principles here laid down, that I look upon myself as not only under a particular obligation, but almost a necessity of conducting my studies by them. The last of which has left such a deep impression upon me, that I now intend to follow the advice of the Heathen, (*Marcus Antoninus*, as I remember) ♦ Τὴν τῶν Βιβλίων δίψαν ῥῖψον. *Rid thyself of the thirst after books*; and to study nothing at all but what serves to the advancement of piety and a good life.

♦ “Τὴν τῶν Βιβλίων δίψαυ ρίψον” replaced with “Τὴν τῶν Βιβλίων δίψαν ῥῖψον”

I have now spent about 13 years in the most celebrated university in the world; in pursuing both such learning as the *academical* standard requires, and as my private genius inclined me to. But in truth, when I think on my past intellectual conduct, I am as little satisfied with it as with my moral; being very conscious, that the greatest part of my time has been employed in unconcerning curiosities, such as derive no degree of moral influence upon the soul that contemplates them.

But I have now a very different apprehension of things, and intend to spend my uncertain remainder of time, in studying only what makes for the moral improvement of my mind, and regulation of my life: being not able to give an account, upon any rational and consistent principles, why I should study any thing else.

*More particularly, I shall apply myself to read such books as are rather persuasive than instructive; such as warm, kindle, and enlarge the affections, and awaken the divine sense in the soul; as being convinced by every day's experience, that I have more need of heat than of light. Though were I for more light, still I think this would prove the best method of illumination, and that when all is done the love of God is the best light of the soul. *A man may indeed have knowledge without love; but he that loves, though he want sciences humanly acquired, yet he will know more than human wisdom can teach him, because he has that master within him who teacheth man knowledge.*



THE
L I F E O F G O D

In the S O U L of M A N.

Mistakes about religion.

1. I CANNOT speak of religion, but I must lament, that among so many pretenders to it, so few understand what it means; some placing it in the understanding, in orthodox notions and opinions; and all the account they can give of their religion is, that they are of this, or the other persuasion, and have joined themselves to one of those many sects whereinto Christendom is most unhappily divided: others place it in a constant course of external duties, and a model of performances; if they live peaceably with their neighbours, keep a temperate diet, observe the returns of worship, frequenting the church, or their closet, and sometimes extend their hands to the relief of the poor, they think they have sufficiently acquitted themselves: others again put all religion in rapturous heats, and all they aim at is, to pray with passion, and to be affected with those kind and melting expressions wherewith they court their Saviour, till they persuade themselves that they are mightily in love with him. Thus are these things, which have any resemblance of piety, and, at best, are but means for obtaining it, or particular exercises of it, frequently mistaken for the whole of religion; nay, sometimes wickedness and vice pretend to that name. I speak not now of those gross impieties wherewith the Heathens were wont to worship their gods: there are but too many Christians, who would consecrate their vices, and hallow their corrupt affections; whose rugged humour and sullen pride, must pass for Christian severity; whose fierce wrath, and bitter rage against their enemies, must be called holy zeal; whose petulancy towards their superiors, or rebellion against their governors, must have the name of Christian courage and resolution.

What religion is.

2. But certainly religion is quite another thing; and they who are acquainted with it, will entertain far different thoughts, and disdain all those shadows of it. They know, by experience, that true religion is an union of the soul with God; a real participation of the divine nature; or, in the apostle's phrase, *Christ formed within us*. Briefly, I know not how the nature of religion can be more fully expressed, than by calling it a *divine life*; and, under these terms, I shall discourse of it, shewing first, how it is called a *life*, and then how it is termed *divine*.

Its permanency and stability.

3. I choose to express it by the name of *life*, first, because of its permanency and stability. Religion is not a sudden start or passion; tho' it transport a man to extraordinary performances. There are few but have convictions of the necessity of doing something for the salvation of their souls, which may push them forwards some steps with a great deal of haste; but anon, they flag and give over; they did shoot forth, fresh and high, but are quickly withered, because they had no root in themselves. These sudden fits may be compared to the convulsive motions of bodies newly beheaded; which, however violent and impetuous, can be of no long continuance: whereas the motions of holy souls are constant and regular, proceeding from a permanent and lively principle. It is true this divine life continueth not always in the same strength and vigour, yet it is not extinguished; nor are holy men abandoned to the power of those corrupt affections, which sway the rest of the world.

Its freedom and unconstrainedness.

4. Again, religion may be termed *life*, because it is an inward, free, and self-moving principle; and those who have it, are not acted only by external motives, driven merely by threatnings, nor bribed by promises, nor constrained by laws; but are powerfully inclined to that which is good, and delight in the performance of it. The love which a pious man bears to God, and goodness, is not so much by virtue of a command enjoining it as by a new nature prompting him to it; nor doth he pay his devotions as a tribute, to appease the divine justice; but these religious exercises are the proper emanations of the divine life, the natural employments of a new-born soul. He prays, and gives thanks, and repents not only because these things are commanded, but because he is sensible of his wants, and of the divine goodness, and of the folly and misery of a sinful life. His charity is not forced, nor his alms extorted from him; his love makes him willing to give, and, though there were no outward obligations, his *heart would devise liberal things*. Injustice, or intemperance, and all other vices, are as contrary to his temper, as the basest actions to the most generous spirit: so that I may well say with St. John, *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*¹ Though religious persons do much eye the law of God, and have a great regard unto it, yet it is not so much the sanction of the law, as its purity and goodness, which prevail with them. They account it excellent and desirable in itself; and that in keeping of it there is great reward. And that divine love wherewith they are acted, makes them become a law unto themselves.

Quis legem det amantibus?

Major est amor lex ipse sibi.

Who shall prescribe a law to those that love?

Love's a more powerful law, which doth them move.

¹ 1 John iii. 9.

5. In a word, what our blessed Saviour said of himself, is, in some measure, applicable to his followers, that it is their *meat and drink to do their Father's will*.¹ And as the natural appetite is carried out towards food, though we should not reflect on the necessity of it; so are they carried, with a natural and unforced propension toward that which is good and commendable. It is true, external motives are of great use to stir up this inward principle, especially in its infancy; when 'tis often so languid, that the man himself can scarce discern it, hardly being able to move one step forward, but when he is pushed by his hopes, or his fears; by the pressure of an affliction, or the sense of a mercy; by the authority of the law, or the persuasion of others: yet, if such a person be conscientious and uniform in his obedience, and earnestly groaning under the sense of his dulness, these are the first motions of the divine life; which, though it be faint and weak, will surely be cherished by the influences of heaven, and grow unto greater maturity. But he who is utterly destitute of this inward principle, and contents himself with those performances whereunto he is prompted by education or custom, or the fear of hell, can no more be accounted a religious person, than a puppet can be called a man. This forced and artificial religion is commonly heavy and languid, like the motion of a weight forced upward. It is scant and niggardly, especially in those duties which do violence to mens inclinations; for those slavish spirits will be sure to do no more than is absolutely required; 'tis a law that compels them, and they will be loth to go beyond what it stints them to; nay, they will ever be putting such glosses on it, as may leave them the greatest liberty. Whereas the spirit of true religion is frank and liberal, far from such peevish and narrow reckonings; and he who hath given up himself entirely unto God, will never think he doth too much for him.

¹ John iv. 34.

Religion a divine principle.

6. By this time, I hope, it appears, that religion is, with reason, termed *a life*, or vital principle; and that we are to distinguish betwixt it, and that obedience which is constrained, and depends upon external causes. I come next to give an account why I term it *a divine life*: and so it may be called, not only in regard of its fountain and original, having God for its author, and being wrought in the souls of men, by the power of his Holy Spirit; but also in regard of its nature, religion being a resemblance of the divine perfections, the image of the Almighty shining in the soul of man: nay, it is a real participation of his nature, it is a beam of the eternal light, a drop of that infinite ocean of goodness; and they who are endued with it, may be said to have *God dwelling in their souls, and Christ formed within them*.

What the natural life is.

7. Before I descend to a more particular consideration of this, it will be fit to speak a little of that natural or animal life which prevails in those who are strangers to the other: and by this I understand nothing else, but our inclination and propension towards those things, which are pleasing to nature; or self-love issuing forth, and spreading itself into as many branches as men have several appetites and inclinations. The root and foundation of the animal life I reckon to be sense, as it is opposed to faith, and importeth our perception of things, that are either grateful or troublesome to us. Now these animal affections, as they are implanted in us by nature, are not vicious or blameable; nay, they are instances of the wisdom of the Creator, furnishing his creatures with such appetites as tend to the preservation and welfare of their lives. These are instead of a law to the brute beasts, whereby they are directed towards the ends for which they were made. But man, being made for higher purposes, becomes criminal when he is transported by the inclinations of this lower life, to neglect the more noble designs of his creation. Our natural affections are not wholly to be destroyed, but to be over-ruled by a more excellent principle: and the difference betwixt a religious and wicked man is, that in the one the divine life bears sway; in the other the animal prevails.

The different tendencies of the natural life.

8. But it is strange to observe to what different courses this natural principle carries those who are guided by it, according to the divers circumstances that concur with it to determine them. And the not considering this, frequently occasions dangerous mistakes, making men think well of themselves, by reason of that seeming difference which is betwixt them and others. Whereas their actions all the while flow from one and the same original. If we consider the natural temper of men, we find some airy, frolicksome, and light, which makes their behaviour extravagant and ridiculous; whereas others are serious and severe, and their whole carriage gains them reverence and esteem. Some are of a rugged, and morose temper, and can neither be pleased themselves, nor endure that others should be so; while others have a sweetness in their natures, and find the greatest pleasure in the endearments of society, and the mutual complacency of friends. And it is well that nature hath provided this complectional tenderness, to supply the defect of true charity in the world, and to incline men to do something for one anothers welfare. Again, in regard of education, some have never been taught to follow any other rules, than those of pleasure or advantage; but others are enured to observe the strictest rules of decency and honour.

9. In fine, it is no small difference in the deportment of mere natural men that arises from the strength or weakness of their judgment. Intemperance and lust, injustice and oppression, and all those other impieties which abound in the world, are the effect of the *animal life* when it is neither over-powered by religion, nor governed by natural reason? But if it once take hold of reason, and get judgment to be of its party, it will disdain gross vice, and spring up unto fair imitations of virtue. But this is not all: this natural principle, by the help of reason, may take a higher flight, and come nigher to religion. It may incline a man to the diligent study of divine truths: for why should not these, as well as other speculations, be grateful to inquisitive minds? It may make men zealous in maintaining and propagating such opinions as they have espoused. It may make them delight to hear and compose excellent discourses about the matters of religion; for eloquence is very pleasant, whatever be the subject; nay, some it may dispose to a kind of devotion. The glorious things that are spoken of heaven; the similitudes made use of in scripture, of crowns and scepters, and rivers of pleasure, may affect a man's fancy, and make him wish to be there, tho' he neither understand nor desire those spiritual pleasures which are shadowed forth by them: and when such a person believes that Christ has purchased those glorious things for him, he may feel a kind of tenderness and affection, and imagine he is mightily enamoured with him; and yet all the while continue a stranger to the holy temper and spirit of the blessed Jesus.

10. To conclude, there is nothing proper to make a man's life pleasant, or himself eminent in the world; but *this* natural principle, assisted by reason, may prompt him to it. And though I do not condemn these things in themselves; yet it concerns us nearly to know their nature, both that we may keep within bounds, and that we may learn never to value ourselves on the account of such attainments, nor lay the stress of religion upon our natural appetites or performances.

Wherein the divine life doth consist.

11. It is now time to return to the consideration of that *divine life*, that *life which is hid with Christ in God*, and therefore hath no glorious shew or appearance in the world, but to the natural man seems mean and insipid. As the animal life consists in that narrow love which is terminated on a man's self, and in his propension to those things that are pleasing to nature; so the divine life stands in an universal affection, and in the mastery over our natural inclinations. The root of the divine life is faith; the chief branches are, love to God, charity to man, purity and humility; for (as an excellent person observed) however these names be common and vulgar, yet do they carry such a mighty sense, that the tongue of man or angel can pronounce nothing more weighty or excellent. Faith hath the same place in the divine life, which sense hath in the natural; being indeed a kind of sense, or feeling persuasion of spiritual things: it extends itself unto all divine truths; but in our lapsed estate, it hath a peculiar relation to the declarations of God's mercy to sinners thro' a Mediator; and therefore, receiving its denomination from that principal object, is ordinarily termed *faith in Jesus Christ*.

12. The love of God is such a delightful sense of God's love to us, as makes the soul resign itself wholly to him, desiring above all things to please him, and delighting in nothing so much as in communion with him, and being ready to do or suffer any thing for his sake. A soul thus possessed with divine love, must needs be enlarged towards all mankind in sincere affection, because of the relation they have to God, being his creatures, and having something of his image stamped upon them. And this is that *charity* I named as the second branch of religion, and under which all the parts of justice, all the duties we owe to our neighbour, are eminently comprehended. For he who doth truly love all the world, will be nearly concerned in the interest of every one, and so far from wronging any person that he will resent any evil that befalls others, as if it happened to himself.

13. By *purity*, I understand such a disposition of mind, as makes a man despise and abstain from all pleasures of sense or fancy, which either are sinful in themselves, or tend to extinguish or lessen our relish of more divine and intellectual pleasures. It doth also infer a resoluteness to undergo all those hardships he may meet with in the performance of his duty; so that not only charity and temperance, but also Christian courage and magnanimity, may come under this head.

14. *Humility* imports a deep sense of our inward and outward sins, and of our utter helplessness; which is always accompanied with a profound submission to the will of God, and deadness to the applause of men.

These are the highest perfections that men are capable of, the foundation of heaven laid in the soul; and he who hath attained them, needs not desire to pry into the hidden rolls of God's decrees, to know what is determined about his everlasting condition, but he may find a copy of God's thoughts concerning him written in his own breast. Those beginnings of happiness which he feels in the conformity of the powers of his soul to the nature of God, are a sure pledge that his felicity shall be perfected, and continued to all eternity. And it is not without reason that one said, *I had rather see the real impressions of a godlike nature upon my own soul, than have a vision from heaven, or an angel sent to tell me, that my name was enrolled in the book of life.*

Religion better understood by actions than by words.

15. When we have said all we can, the secret mysteries of a divine life can never be sufficiently expressed: nor can they be truly understood but by those that have a sense and relish of spiritual things. *There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth this understanding.* The power and life of religion may be better expressed in actions than in words: And therefore we may take the best measure of those gracious endowments, from the deportment of those in whom they reside; especially from the holy life of our blessed Saviour, a main part of whose business in this world was to teach by his practice what he required of others, and to make his own conversation an exact resemblance of those unparalleled rules which he prescribed: so that if ever true goodness was visible to mortal eyes, it was when his presence beautified this lower world.

Divine love exemplified in our Saviour; his diligence in doing God's will; and his patience in bearing it.

16. That devout affection wherewith his blessed soul constantly burned towards his heavenly Father, expressed itself in an entire resignation to his will. It was his *very meat, to do the will, and finish the work of him that sent him*. This was the exercise of his childhood, and the constant employment of his riper age. He spared no pains while he was about his Father's business; but took such satisfaction in the performance of it, that, when being faint and weary with his journey, he rested on *Jacob's well*, and intreated water of the *Samaritan* woman; the success of his conference with her, and the accession that was made to the kingdom of God, filled his mind with such delight, as seemed to redound to his very body, refreshing his spirits, and making him forget his thirst, and refuse the meat which he had sent his disciples to buy. Nor was he less patient and submissive in suffering the will of God, than diligent in doing of it. He endured the sharpest afflictions, and extremest miseries that ever were inflicted on any mortal, without a repining thought, or discontented word. For though he was far from a stupid insensibility, and had as quick a sense of pain as other men, and the deepest apprehension of what he was to suffer in his soul, (as his *bloody sweat*, and the *sore amazement and sorrow* which he professed, do abundantly declare) yet did he intirely submit to that severe dispensation of providence, and willingly acquiesced in it.

His constant devotion.

17. Another instance of his love to God, was his delight in conversing with him by prayer; which made him frequently retire from the world, and spend whole nights in that heavenly exercise; though he had no sins to confess, and but few secular interests to pray for: which, alas! are almost the only things that are wont to drive us to our devotions. Nay, we may say his whole life was prayer, a constant course of communion with God. If the sacrifice was not always offering, yet was the fire still kept alive. Nor was he ever surprized with that dulness of spirit which we must many times wrestle with, before we can be fit for the exercise of devotion.

His charity to men.

18. In the second place I shall speak of love towards all men; but he who would express it must transcribe the history of the gospel: for scarce any thing is recorded to have been done or spoken by him, which was not designed for the good of some one or other. All his miraculous works were instances of his goodness, as well as his power, and they benefited those on whom they were wrought, as well as amazed the beholders. His charity was not confined to his kindred, or relations; nor was all his kindness swallowed up in the endearments of that peculiar friendship which he carried toward the beloved disciple. But every one was his *friend* who obeyed his *holy commands*, John xv. 4. and *Whosoever did the will of his Father*, the same was to him as *his brother, and sister, and mother*.

19. Never was any unwelcome to him, who came with an honest intention; nor did he deny any request, which tended to the good of those that asked it: So that what was spoken of the *Roman Emperor*, whom, for his goodness, they called the *darling of mankind*, was really performed by him, that never any departed from him with a heavy countenance, except that rich youth, *Mark x.* who was sorry to hear that the kingdom of heaven stood at so high a rate, and that he could not save his soul and his money too. The ingenuity that appeared in his first address, had already procured some kindness for him; for it is said, *And Jesus beholding him, loved him*. But must he for his sake cut out a new way to heaven, and alter the nature of things; which makes it impossible that a covetous man should be happy?

His meekness.

20. And what shall I speak of his meekness, who could encounter the monstrous ingratitude of that miscreant who betrayed him, in no harsher terms than these, *Judas betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss*? What further evidence could we desire of his fervent and unbounded charity, than that he willingly laid down his life for his most bitter enemies, and mingling his prayers with his blood, besought the Father that his death might not be laid to their charge, but might become the means of eternal life, to those very persons who procured it.

His purity.

21. The third branch of the divine life is *purity*, a neglect of worldly enjoyments and accommodations, and a resolute enduring of all such troubles as we meet with in the doing of our duty. Now surely if ever any person was wholly dead to all the pleasures of the natural life, it was the blessed Jesus; who seldom tasted them when they came in his way, but never stept out of his road to seek them. Though he allowed others the comforts of wedlock, and honoured marriage with his presence, yet he chose the severity of a virgin life: and though he supplied the want of wine with a miracle, yet he would not work one for the relief of his own hunger in the wilderness. So gracious was he in allowing others such gratifications, as himself thought good to abstain from, and supplying not only their pressing necessities, but also their less considerable wants. We many times hear of our Saviour's sighs, and groans, and tears, but never that he laughed, so that through his whole life he answered that character given of him by the prophet, *A man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs*. Nor were the troubles of his life other than matters of choice: for never did there any appear on the stage of the world with greater advantages to have raised himself to the highest secular felicity. He who could bring together such a prodigious number of fishes into his disciples net, and at another time receive that tribute from a fish which he was to pay to the temple, might easily have made himself the richest person in the world; nay, without any money, he could have maintained an army powerful enough to have jostled *Cæsar* out of his throne, having oftner than once fed several thousands with a few loaves and small fishes: but to shew how small esteem he had of all the enjoyments in the world, he chose to live in so poor and mean a condition, that *though the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, yet he, who was Lord of all things, had not where to lay his head*. He did not frequent the courts of princes, nor affect the acquaintance of great ones; but being reputed the son of a carpenter, he had fishermen, and other such poor people, for his companions, and lived at such a rate as suited with the meanness of that condition.

His humility.

22. And thus I am brought unawares to speak of his *humility*, the last branch of the divine life, wherein he was a most eminent pattern to us, that we might *learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart*. I shall not now speak of that infinite condescension of the eternal Son of God, in taking our nature upon him; but only reflect on his lowly deportment while he was in the world. He had none of those sins and imperfections, which may justly humble the best of men; yet he was so entirely swallowed up with a deep sense of the infinite perfections of God, that he appeared as nothing in his own eyes, I mean so far as he was a creature. He considered those eminent perfections which shined in his blessed soul as not his own, but the gifts of God; and therefore assumed nothing to himself for them, but with the profoundest humility renounced all pretences to them. Hence did he refuse that ordinary compellation of *good Master*, from one, who, it seems, was ignorant of his divinity: *Why callest thou me good? There is none good but God only*. As if he had said, “The goodness of any creature (and such only thou takest me to be) is not worthy to be named or taken notice of; it is God alone who is originally and essentially good.” He never made use of his miraculous power for vanity or ostentation: he would not gratify the curiosity of the *Jews* with a sign from heaven, some prodigious appearance in the air; nor would he follow the advice of his countrymen and kindred, who would have had all his great works performed in the eyes of the world, for gaining him the greater fame. When his charity had prompted him to the relief of the miserable, his humility made him many times enjoin the concealment of the miracle; and when the glory of God, and the design for which he came into the world, required the publication of them, he ascribed the honour of all to his Father, telling them, *That of himself he was able to do nothing*.

23. I cannot insist on all the instances of humility in his deportment towards men; his withdrawing himself when they would have made him a king; his subjection, not only to his blessed Mother, but to her husband, during his younger years, and his submission to all the indignities and affronts which his rude and malicious enemies put upon him: the history of his holy life, recorded by those who conversed with him, is full of such passages as these; and indeed the serious and attentive study of it, is the best way to get right measures of humility, and all the other parts of religion, which I have been endeavouring to describe.

Let me here subjoin a prayer that may be proper when one, who had formerly entertained some false notions of religion, begins to discover what it is.

A P R A Y E R.

*I*nfinite and eternal Majesty, author and fountain of being and blessedness, how little do we poor sinful creatures know of thee, or the way to serve and please thee? We talk of religion, and pretend unto it; but alas! How few are there that know what it means? How easily do we mistake the affections of our nature, for those divine graces which alone are acceptable in thy sight? It may justly grieve me to consider, that I should have wandered so long, and contented myself so often with vain shadows of religion; yet I cannot but acknowledge and adore thy goodness, who hast been pleased, in some measure, to open mine eyes, and let me see what it is at which I ought to aim. I rejoice to consider what mighty improvements my nature is capable of and what a divine temper doth shine in those whom thou causest to approach thee. Blessed be thine infinite mercy, who sentest thine own Son to dwell among men, and instruct them by his example, as well as his laws, giving them a perfect pattern of what they ought to be. O that the holy life of the blessed Jesus may be always in my thoughts, till I receive a deep sense and impression of those graces that shined so eminently in him; and let me never rest, till that new and divine nature prevail in my soul, and Christ be formed within me.

The excellency and advantage of Religion.

1. **A**ND now, having discovered the nature of true religion, let us fix our meditations a little on the excellency and advantages of it. But what words can express that inward satisfaction, those hidden pleasures, which can never be rightly understood, but by those who feel them? *A stranger intermeddleth not with their joy*¹. Holiness is the right temper, the vigorous and healthful constitution of the soul: its faculties had formerly been enfeebled and disordered, so that they could not exercise their natural functions; it had wearied itself with endless tossings and rollings, and was never able to find any rest. Now that distemper being removed, it feels itself well; there is a due harmony in its faculties, and a sprightly vigour possesseth every part: the understanding can discern what is good, and the will can cleave unto it; the affections are not tied to the motions of sense, and the influence of external objects; but are stirred by more divine impressions, are touched with a sense of invisible things.

¹ Proverbs xiv. 10.

The excellency of divine love.

2. Let us descend into a nearer view of religion, in the several branches of it named before. Let us consider that love wherewith holy souls are united to God, that we may see what excellency is involved in it. Love is that powerful passion, by which all the faculties of the soul are determined, and on which both its perfection and happiness depend. The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love. He who loveth mean and sordid things, doth thereby become base and vile; but a noble and well placed affection advances the spirit to a conformity with the perfections which it loves. The images of these frequently present to the mind, and, by a secret energy, insinuate into the very constitution of the soul, and mould and fashion it unto their own likeness. Hence we see how easily lovers or friends slide into the imitation of the persons whom they affect; and how, even before they are aware, they begin to resemble them, not only in the more considerable instances of their deportment, but also in their voice and gesture, and that which we call their mein and air: and certainly we should as well transcribe the inward beauties of the soul, if they were the object and motive of our love. But as all the creatures we converse with have their mixture and alloy, we are always in hazard to be corrupted by placing our affection on them: passion easily blinds our eyes, so that we first approve, and then imitate the things that are blameable in them. The true way to improve and ennoble our souls, is by fixing our love on the divine perfections, that we may have them always before us, and derive an impression of them on ourselves; and *beholding, with open face, the glory of the Lord, may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory.* He who hath raised his eyes towards that uncreated beauty and goodness, and fixed his affection there, is quite of another spirit, of a more excellent and heroic temper than the rest of the world; and cannot but infinitely disdain all mean and unworthy things, will not entertain any low or base thoughts, which might disparage his high and noble pretensions. Love is the greatest and most excellent thing we are masters of; and therefore it is folly and baseness to bestow it unworthily. It is indeed the only thing we can call our own; other things may be taken from us by violence, but none can ravish our love. Is any thing else be counted ours, by giving our love, we give all, so far as we make over our hearts and wills, by which we possess our other enjoyments. It is not possible to refuse him any thing, to whom, by love, we have given ourselves; nay, since it is the privilege of gifts, to receive their value from the mind of the giver, and not

to be measured by the event, but by the desire, he who loveth, may, in some sense, be said not only to bestow all that he hath, but all things else which may make the beloved person happy; since he doth heartily wish them, and would really give them, if they were in his power. Certainly therefore love is the worthiest present we can offer unto God, and it is extremely debased when we bestow it another way.

3. When this affection is misplaced, it doth often vent itself in such expressions, as point at its proper object. The blasphemous terms of adoration, wherein men sometimes express their passion, are the language of that affection which was designed for God; as he who is accustomed to speak to some great person, doth perhaps unawares accost another with those titles he was wont to give him: But certainly that passion which accounteth its object a Deity, ought to be bestowed on him who really is so; those unlimited submissions, which debase the soul, is directed to any other, will exalt and ennoble it, when placed here. Those chains and cords of love, are infinitely more glorious than liberty itself; this slavery is more noble than all the empires in the world.

The advantages of divine love.

4. Again, as divine love advances and elevates the soul, so it is that alone which can make it happy. The highest pleasures, the most substantial delights, that human nature is capable of, are those which arise from a well-placed and successful affection. That which imbitters love, and makes it ordinarily a very troublesome passion, is the placing it on those who have not worth enough to deserve it, or gratitude to requite it, or whose absence may deprive us of their converse, or their miseries occasion our trouble. To all these evils are they exposed, whose chief affection is placed on creatures; but the love of God delivers us from them all.

The worth of the object.

5. First, Love must needs be full of disquietude, when there is not excellency in the object to answer the vastness of its capacity: So violent a passion cannot but torment the spirit when it finds not wherewith to satisfy its cravings; and indeed so large and unbounded is its nature: that it must be extremely straitened, when confined to any creature: nothing below an infinite good can afford it room to stretch itself, and exert its vigour and activity. What is a little skin-deep beauty, or some small degrees of goodness, to satisfy a passion which was made for God? No wonder lovers do so hardly suffer any rival, and do not desire that others should approve their passion by imitating it: They know the scantiness of the good which they love, that it cannot suffice two, being in effect too little for one. Hence love, *which is strong as death, occasioneth jealousy, which is cruel as the grave; the coals whereof are coals of fire, which hath a most violent flame.*

6. But divine love hath no mixture of this gall. When once the soul is fixed on that supreme good, it finds so much goodness, as doth not only satisfy its affection, but overpower it too: It finds all its love to be too languid for such an object, and is only sorry that it can command no more: It wishes for the flames of a *Seraph*, and longs for the time when it shall be wholly dissolved in love. And because it can do so little itself, it desires the assistance of the whole creation, that angels and men would concur with it in the admiration and love of these infinite perfections.

The certainty to be beloved again.

7. Again, love is accompanied with trouble, when it misses a suitable return of affection. Love is the most valuable thing we can bestow, and by giving it, we in effect give all that we have: and therefore it must needs be afflicting, to find so great a gift despised; that the present which one hath made of his whole heart cannot obtain any return. Perfect love is a kind of wandering out of ourselves; it is a sort of voluntary death, wherein the lover dies to himself, and all his own interests; not thinking of them, nor caring for them; and minding nothing but how he may please the party whom he loves. Thus he is quite undone, unless he meets with reciprocal affection; he neglects himself, and the other hath no regard to him: But if he be beloved, he is revived, as it were, and liveth in the soul and care of the person whom he loves. And now he begins to mind his own concerns, not so much because they are his, as because the beloved is pleased to own an interest in them; he becomes dear unto himself, because he is so unto the other.

8. And herein the divine lover hath unspeakably the advantage, having placed his affection on him whose nature is love, whose goodness is as infinite as his being; whose mercy prevented us, when we were his enemies, therefore cannot chuse but embrace us, when we are become his friends. It is impossible that God should deny his love to a soul devoted to him, and which desires nothing so much as to please him. He cannot disdain his own image, nor the heart on which it is engraven. Love is all the tribute which we can pay him, and it is the sacrifice which he will not despise.

The presence of the beloved person.

9. Another thing which disturbs the pleasure of love, and renders it a miserable and unquiet passion, is absence from those we love. It is not without a sensible affliction that friends part, tho' for some little time: But if death have made the separation, as some time or other it must, this occasions a grief scarce to be parallel'd by all the misfortunes of human life. But, O how happy are those who have placed their love on him, who can never be absent from them! They need but open their eyes, and they shall every where behold the traces of his presence and glory, and converse with him whom their soul loveth; and this makes the darkest prison, or wildest desert, not only supportable, but delightful to them.

The divine love makes us partake of an infinite happiness.

10. In fine, a lover is miserable, if the person whom he loveth be so. They who have made an exchange of hearts by love, get thereby an interest in one another's happiness and misery; and this makes love a troublesome passion, when placed on earth. The most fortunate person hath grief enough to mar the tranquillity of his friend: and it is hard to hold out, when we are attacked on all hands, and suffer not only in our own person, but in another's: But if God be the object of our love, we share in an infinite happiness. We rejoice to behold the glory of God, and receive comfort and pleasure from all the praises wherewith men and angels extol him. It delights us beyond expression to consider, that the Beloved of our souls is infinitely happy in himself, and that all his enemies cannot shake or unsettle his throne: *That our God is in the heavens, and doth whatever pleaseth him.*

Behold, on what sure foundations his happiness is built, whose soul is possessed with divine love, whose will is transformed into the will of God, and whose sole desire is, that his Maker should be pleased! O the peace, the rest, the satisfaction, that attendeth such a temper of mind!

He that loveth God finds sweetness in every dispensation.

11. What an infinite pleasure must it needs be, thus as it were to lose ourselves in him; and, being swallowed up in the overcoming sense of his goodness, to offer ourselves a living sacrifice, always ascending unto him in flames of love? Never doth a soul know what solid joy is, till it give itself up unto the author of its being, and feel itself become a devoted thing; and can say, from an inward sense and feeling, *My Beloved is mine, and I am his*: I am content to be any thing for him, and care not for myself, but that I may serve him. A person moulded into this temper, finds pleasure in all the dispensations of providence: temporal enjoyments have another relish, when he tastes the divine goodness in them, and considers them as tokens of love sent by his dearest Lord and Maker: and chastisements hereby lose their sting; the rod, as well as the staff, comfort him: he rejoices, that though God does not the will of such a worthless creature as himself, yet he accomplishes his own designs; which are infinitely more holy and wise.

The duties of religion are delightful to him.

12. The exercises of religion, which to others are insipid, yield the highest pleasure to souls possessed with divine love: they rejoice when they are called to *go up to the house of the Lord*, that they may *see his power and his glory, as they have formerly seen it in his sanctuary*¹. They never think themselves so happy, as when, having retired from the world, they have placed themselves in the presence of God, and entertain communion with him: they delight to adore his perfections, and recount his favours; and to protest their affection to him, and tell him a thousand times that they love him; to lay out their troubles or wants before him, and disburthen their hearts in his bosom. Repentance itself is a delightful exercise, when it floweth from the principle of love. There is a secret sweetness which accompanies those tears of remorse, those meltings of a soul returning unto God, and lamenting its former unkindness.

¹ Psalms lxiii. 2.

13. The severities of a holy life, and that constant watch which we are obliged to keep over our hearts and ways, are troublesome to those who are only ruled by an external law, and have no law in their minds inclining them to their duty. But where divine love possesseth the soul, it stands as centinel to keep out every thing that may offend the Beloved. It complieth chearfully, not only with explicit commands, but with the most secret notices of the Beloved's pleasure; and is ingenious in discovering what will be most grateful and acceptable unto him. It makes mortification and self-denial change their harsh and dreadful names, and become easy, sweet and delightful things.

The excellency of charity.

14. The next branch of the divine life is *universal love* to man. The excellency of this grace will be easily acknowledged; for what can be more noble than a heart enlarged to embrace the whole world? Whose wishes and designs are levelled at the welfare of the universe, which considereth every man's interest as its own? He, who loveth his neighbour as himself, can never entertain any base or injurious thought, or be wanting in any expressions of bounty. He had rather suffer a thousand wrongs, than be guilty of one; and never accounts himself happy, but when some one or other hath been benefited by him. The malice or ingratitude of men is not able to resist his love. He overlooks their injuries, and pities their folly, and overcomes their evil with good; and never designs any other revenge against his most bitter and malicious enemies, than to put all the obligations he can upon them, whether they will or not. This inward goodness and benignity of spirit reflects a sweetness and serenity upon the very countenance, and makes it amiable and lovely: it inspires the soul with a noble resolution and courage, and makes it capable of enterprising and effecting the highest things: those heroic actions which we are wont to read with admiration, have, for the most part, been the effects of the love of one's country, or of particular friendships; and certainly a more extensive affection must be much more powerful and efficacious.

The pleasure that attends it.

15. Again, as *charity* flows from an excellent temper, so it is accompanied with the greatest satisfaction. It delights the soul to feel itself thus enlarged; to be delivered from those disquieting passions, malice, hatred, and envy; and to become gentle, sweet, and benign. Had I my choice of all things for my present felicity, I would pitch upon this, to have my heart possessed with the greatest kindness and affection towards all men. I am sure this would make me partake in all the happiness of others, their inward endowments, and outward prosperity. And though I should frequently meet with occasions of grief, yet there is a sweetness in commiseration, which makes it infinitely more desirable than a stupid insensibility. And the consideration of that infinite goodness and wisdom, which govern the world, might repress any excessive trouble for particular calamities that happen in it. Certainly, next to the love of God, that ardent affection wherewith blessed souls embrace one another, is justly to be reckoned as the greatest felicity of those regions above. And did it universally prevail in the world, it would anticipate that blessedness, and make us taste the joys of heaven upon earth.

The excellency of purity.

16. A third branch of religion is *purity*; a contempt of sensual pleasures, and resoluteness to undergo those troubles and pains we may meet with in the performance of our duty. Now, the naming of this may suffice to recommend it as a most excellent quality. There is no slavery so base, as that whereby a man becomes a drudge to his own lusts. Never can that person be capable of any thing noble, who is sunk in the gross pleasures of sense, or bewitched with the airy gratifications of fancy. But the religious soul is of a more sublime and divine temper. It knows it was made for higher things, and scorns to step aside one foot out of the ways of holiness, for obtaining any of these.

The delight it affords.

17. And this *purity* is accompanied with a great deal of pleasure. Whatsoever defiles the soul disturbs it too. All impure delights have a sting in them, and leave smart and trouble behind them. Excess and intemperance, and all inordinate lusts, are so much enemies to the health of the body, and the interests of this present life, that a little consideration might oblige any rational man to forbear them on that very score. And if the religious person go higher, and do not only abstain from noxious pleasures, but neglect those that are innocent, this is not to be looked upon as any uneasy restraint, but as the effect of better choice: his mind is so taken up with sublime delights, that he cannot be concerned in these. Any person that is engaged in a violent affection, will easily forget his ordinary gratification; will be little curious about his diet, or his bodily ease, or the divertisements he was wont to delight in. No wonder then, if souls, overpowered with divine love, despise inferior pleasures, and be almost ready to grudge the body its necessary attendance for the common accommodations of life, judging all these impertinent to their main happiness, and those higher enjoyments they are pursuing. As for the hardships they may meet with, they rejoice in them, as opportunities to testify their affection: and since they are able to do so little for God, they are glad of the honour to suffer for him.

The excellency of humility.

18. The last branch of religion is *humility*; and however, to vulgar eyes, this may appear a despicable quality, yet, really, the soul of man is not capable of a higher and more noble endowment. It is a silly ignorance that begets pride; but humility arises from a nearer acquaintance with excellent things, which keeps men from doating on trifles, or admiring themselves because of some petty attainments.

I know not what thoughts people may have of *humility*, but I see almost every person pretending to it, and shunning such expressions and actions as may make them be accounted arrogant and presumptuous; so that those who are most desirous of praise, are loth to commend themselves. What are all those compliments and modes of civility so [♦](#)frequent in our ordinary converse, but so many protestations of the esteem of others, and the low thoughts we have of ourselves? And must not humility be an excellent endowment, when the very shadows of it are so necessary a part of good breeding?

[♦](#) “frequently” replaced with “frequent” per Errata

The pleasure and sweetness of an humble temper.

19. Again, this grace is accompanied with a great deal of happiness. The proud person is a trouble to all that converse with him, but most of all to himself. Every thing is enough to vex him; but scarce any thing sufficient to please him. But the humble person hath the advantage when he is despised, that none can think more meanly of him than he doth of himself; and as he is less affected with injuries, so he is less obnoxious to them. *Contention, which cometh of pride*, betrays a man into a thousand [♦](#)inconveniences, which those of a meek and lowly temper seldom meet with. True humility begets veneration among wise men, whilst pride defeateth its own design, and depriveth a man of that honour it makes him pretend to.

[♦](#) “inconvenices” replaced with “inconveniences”

20. And the exercises of humility which relate to God, are accompanied with the greatest satisfaction. It is impossible to express the delight which religious persons feel in the lowest prostrations of their soul before God; when having a deep sense of the divine Majesty, they sink (if I may so speak) to the bottom of their beings, and vanish and disappear in the presence of God, by a serious and affectionate acknowledgement of their own nothingness; when they understand the full sense of the psalmist's exclamation, *Lord, what is man?* And can utter it with the same affection. Never did any haughty person receive the praises of men with so much pleasure as the humble renounce them, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.*

21. Thus I have spoken something of the excellencies and advantages of religion in its several branches. Let us acquaint ourselves with it, and experience will teach us more than all that ever hath been spoken or written concerning it. If we may suppose the soul to be already awakened unto some longing desires after so great a blessedness, it will be good to give them vent, and suffer them to issue forth in some such aspirations as these.

A P R A Y E R.

GOOD God! what a mighty felicity is this to which we are called? How graciously hast thou joined our duty and happiness together, and prescribed that for our work, the performance whereof is a great reward? And shall such silly worms be advanced to so great a height? Wilt thou allow us to raise our eyes to thee? Wilt thou admit and accept our affection? Shall we receive the impression, of thy divine excellencies, by beholding and admiring them, and partake of thy infinite blessedness and glory, by loving thee, and rejoicing in them? O the happiness of those souls that are disintangled from every narrow good; whose understandings are enlightened by the holy Spirit, and their wills enlarged to the extent of thine; who love thee above all things, and all mankind for thy sake! I am persuaded, O God, I am persuaded, that I can never be happy, till my corrupt affections be mortified, and the pride and vanity of my spirit subdued, and till I come seriously to despise the world, and think nothing of myself. But O when shall it once be? O when wilt thou come unto me, and satisfy my soul with thy likeness, making me holy as thou art holy, even in all manner of conversation? Hast thou given me a prospect of so great a felicity, and wilt thou not bring me unto it? Hast thou excited these desires in my soul, and wilt thou not also satisfy them? O teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God; thy Spirit is good, lead me unto the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake, and perfect that which concerneth me. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever, forsake not the work of thine own hands.

The despondent thoughts of some newly awakened to a right sense of things.

1. I HAVE hitherto considered wherein true religion consists, and how desirable a thing it is; but when one sees how infinitely distant he is from it, he may perhaps be ready to despond; he may sit down in sadness, and bemoan himself, and say, in the [anguish](#) of his spirit, “They are happy indeed whose souls enjoy the divine life, who are thus renewed in the spirit of their minds; but alas! I am quite of another constitution. If outward observances could have done, I might have hoped to acquit myself: but since nothing but a new nature can serve, what am I able to do? I could give all my goods to the poor, but cannot command that love, without which this would profit me nothing. This gift of God cannot be purchased with money¹. If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned². I could pine my body; but I cannot starve my corruptions, nor wean my affections from earthly things. I am many times convinced of my own vileness; but this rather begets discontent in me, than true humility; and though I should come to think meanly of myself, yet I cannot endure that others should think so too. In a word, when I reflect on my most specious attainments, I have reason to suspect that they are all but the effects of nature; and sin is so powerful and so deeply rooted in me, that I can never hope to be delivered from it. I may toss and turn as a door on the hinges, but can never get clear off; so that all the advantage I can draw from the discovery of religion, is but to see, at a huge distance, that felicity which I am not able to reach; like a man in a shipwreck, who discerns the land, and envies the happiness of those there, but cannot himself get ashore.”

[anguish](#) replaced with “anguish”

¹ Acts viii. 20.

² Canticles viii. 7.

The unreasonableness of these fears.

2. These, or such-like thoughts, may arise in the minds of those who begin to conceive the nature and excellency of religion. They have spied the land, and seen that it is exceeding good, that it floweth with milk and honey; but they find they have the children of *Anak* to grapple with, powerful corruptions to overcome, and they fear they shall never prevail against them. But why should we give way to such discouraging suggestions? Why should we entertain such unreasonable fears, which damp our spirits and weaken our hands, and augment the difficulties of our way? Let us encourage ourselves with those mighty aids we are to expect in this spiritual warfare; for greater is he that is for us, than all that can rise up against us. *The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Let us be strong in the Lord, and the power of his might;* for he it is that shall *tread down our enemies*. God hath a tender regard to the souls of men, and is infinitely willing to promote their welfare. He hath condescended to our weakness, and declared with an oath, that he hath no pleasure in our destruction. There is no such thing as despite in the bosom of that ever blessed being, whose name and nature is love. He created us at first in a happy condition, and now when we are fallen from it, *he hath laid help upon one that is mighty to save*¹, hath committed the care of our souls to no meaner a person than the eternal Son of his love. It is he that is the captain of our salvation, and what enemies can be too strong for us, when we are fighting under his banner? Did not the Son of God come down from the bosom of his Father, and pitch his tabernacle amongst men, that he might recover them to the divine life, and restore the image of God in their souls? All the mighty works he performed, all the afflictions he sustained, had this for their scope and design: for this did he labour and toil; for this did he bleed and die. *He was with child, he was in pain, and hath he brought forth nothing but wind*²? *Hath he wrought no deliverance in the earth? Shall he not see of the travail of his soul*³? Certainly it is impossible that this great contrivance of heaven should prove abortive, that such a mighty undertaking should miscarry. It hath already been effectual for the salvation of many thousands, who were once as far from the kingdom of heaven as we. And our *high priest continueth for ever, and is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him*⁴. He is tender and compassionate; he knoweth our infirmities, and had experience of our temptations. *A bruised reed will he not break, and smoking flax will he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory*⁵. He hath sent out his Holy

Spirit, whose sweet but powerful breathings are still moving up and down in the world, to quicken the souls of men, and awaken them unto the sense and feeling of those divine things for which they were made. He is ready to assist such weak and languishing creatures as we are, in our essays towards holiness. And when once it hath taken hold of a soul, and kindled in it the smallest spark of divine love, will he not preserve and cherish, and bring it forth into a flame, which many waters shall not quench⁶. Whenever this day begins to dawn, and *the day-star to rise in their heart*⁷, it will dispel the powers of darkness, and make ignorance and folly, and all corrupt affections, flee away as fast before it as the shades of night, when the sun cometh out of his chambers. *For the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day*⁸. *They shall go on from strength to strength, till every one of them appear before God in Sion*⁹.

¹ Psalms lxxxix. 19.

² Isaiah xxvi. 18.

³ Isaiah liii. 11.

⁴ Hebrews vii. 24, 25.

⁵ Matthew xii. 29.

⁶ Canticles viii. 7.

⁷ 2 Peter i. 19.

⁸ Proverbs iv. 18.

⁹ Psalms lxxxiv. 7.

3. Why should we think it impossible that true goodness and universal love should come to sway and prevail in our souls? Is not this their primitive condition, as they came out of the hands of their maker? Sin and corruption are but usurpers; and though they have long kept the possession, yet *from the beginning it was not so*. That inordinate self-love which one would think were interwoven with our nature, is nevertheless of foreign extraction, and had no place at all in the state of integrity. We have still so much reason left as to condemn it. Our understandings are easily convinced that we ought to be wholly devoted to him from whom we have our being, and to love him infinitely more than ourselves, who is infinitely better than we. And our wills would readily comply with this, if they were not disordered and out of tune. And is not he who made our souls able to mend them again? Shall we not be able, by his assistance, to vanquish and expel those violent intruders, *and turn unto flight the armies of the aliens*¹.

¹ Hebrews xi. 34.

4. No sooner shall we take up arms in this holy war, but we shall have all the saints on earth, and all the angels in heaven engaged on our side. The holy church throughout the world is daily interceding with God for the success of all such endeavours. And doubtless those heavenly hosts above, are nearly concerned in the interests of religion, and infinitely desirous to see the divine life prevailing in this inferior world, and that the will of God may be done by us on earth, as it is done by them in heaven. May we not then encourage ourselves, as the prophet did his servant, when he shewed him the horses and chariots of fire, *Fear not, for they that be with us, are more than they that are against us*¹?

¹ 2 Kings vi. 16, 17.

We must do what we can, and depend on the divine assistance.

5. Away then with all desponding thoughts. To undertake vigorously, and rely confidently on the divine assistance, is more than half the conquest: *Let us arise and be doing, and the Lord will be with us*¹. It is true, religion in the souls of men is the immediate work of God, and all our natural endeavours can neither produce it alone, nor merit those supernatural aids by which it must be wrought. The Holy Ghost must come upon us, and the power of the Highest overshadow us, before that holy thing can be begotten, and Christ formed in us. But yet we must not expect that this work should be done without any endeavours of our own; we must not lie loitering in the ditch, and wait till omnipotence pull us thence; no, no, we must bestir ourselves, and actuate these powers which we have already received. We must put forth ourselves to our utmost capacities, and then *our labour shall not be vain in the Lord*². All the art and industry of man cannot form the smallest herb, or make a stalk of corn to grow in the field. It is the energy of nature, and the influences of heaven, which produce this effect. It is God *who causeth the grass to grow, and herb for the service of man*³; and yet nobody will say that the labours of the husbandman are useless or unnecessary. So likewise the human soul is immediately created by God; it is he who both formeth and enliveneth the child, and yet he hath appointed the marriage-bed as the ordinary means for the propagation of mankind: and so, though there must intervene a stroke of omnipotence to effect this mighty change in our souls; yet ought we to do what we can, that we may be more ready to receive the seeds of grace and the dew of heaven. It is true, God hath been found of some who sought him not; he hath cast himself in their way who were quite out of his; he hath laid hold upon them, and stopt their course on a sudden; for so was St. *Paul* converted in his journey to *Damascus*. But certainly this is not God's ordinary method of dealing with men: though he hath not tied himself to means, yet he hath tied us to the use of them; and we have never more reason to expect the divine assistance, than when we are doing our utmost endeavours. It shall therefore be my next work to shew what course we may take for attaining that blessed temper I have described.

¹ 1 Chronicles xxii. 16.

² 1 Corinthians xv. 58.

³ Psalms civ. 14.

We must shun all manner of sin.

6. Now if we desire to have our souls moulded to this holy frame, and have Christ formed in our hearts, we must carefully avoid all sinful practices. There can be no treaty of peace, till we lay down these weapons of rebellion wherewith we fight against heaven; nor can we expect to have our distempers cured, if we be daily feeding on poison. Every wilful sin gives a mortal wound to the soul, and puts it at a greater distance from God. And we can never hope to have our hearts purified from corrupt affections, till our hands are cleansed from vicious actions.

We must know what things are sinful.

7. And, first, Let us inform ourselves well what those sins are from which we ought to abstain. And here we must not take our measures from the maxims of the world, or the practices of those whom in charity, we account good men. Most people have very light apprehensions of these things, and are not sensible of any fault, unless it be gross. And those who are more serious, many times allow themselves too great latitude. Alas! how much pride, and vanity, and passion; how much weakness and folly doth every day show itself in their converse and behaviour! It may be they are humbled for it, and striving against it, but the progress is so small, and their failings so many, that we had need to chuse an exacter pattern. Every one of us must answer for himself, and the practice of others will never warrant and secure us. It is the highest folly to regulate our actions by any other standard, than that by which they must be judged. If ever therefore we would *cleanse our way*, it must be *by taking heed thereto according to the word of God*¹. And that *word which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow*², will certainly discover many things to be sinful, which pass for very innocent in the eyes of the world. Let us therefore imitate the psalmist, who saith, *Concerning the works of men, by the words of thy lips, I have kept myself from the path of the destroyer*³. Let us acquaint ourselves well with the holy laws of our religion: let us consider the discourses of our blessed Saviour, (especially that divine sermon on the mount) and the writings of his holy apostles; where an unbiassed mind may clearly discern those bounds by which our actions ought to be confined: and then let us never look upon any sin as light and inconsiderable, but be fully persuaded, that the smallest is infinitely heinous in the sight of God, and prejudicial to the souls of men: and that if we had the right sense of things, we should be as deeply affected with the least irregularities, as now we are with the greatest crimes.

¹ Psalms cxix. 9.

² Hebrews iv. 12.

³ Psalms xvii. 4.

We must resist temptations.

8. Among those things which we discover to be sinful, there will be some to which, through our nature, or long custom, we are so wedded, that it will be like cutting of the right-hand, or pulling out the right-eye, to abandon them. But must we therefore sit down and wait till all difficulties be over, and every temptation be gone? This were to imitate the fool in the poet, who stood the whole day at the river-side, till all the water should run by. We must not indulge our inclinations, as we do little children, till they grow weary of the thing they are unwilling to let go. We must not continue our sinful practices, in hopes that the divine grace will one day over-power us.

9. If the heinous nature of sin cannot affect us, at least we may be frightened by its dreadful consequences. That selfish principle which pusheth us forward to sinful pleasures, may make us loath to buy them at the rate of everlasting misery. Let us therefore accustom ourselves to consider seriously what a fearful thing it must be to offend that infinite Being, on whom we depend every moment; who needs but withdraw his mercies to make us miserable, or his assistance to make us nothing. Let us remember the shortness and uncertainty of our lives, and that after we have taken a few turns more in the world, and conversed a little longer amongst men, we must all go down to the dark and silent grave, and carry nothing along with us but anguish and regret for all our sinful enjoyments. What horror must then seize the guilty soul, to find itself naked and all alone before the impartial judge of the world, to render an exact account, not only of its more considerable transactions, but of every word that the tongue hath uttered, and the most secret thought that ever passed through the mind? Let us represent to ourselves the terrors of that dreadful day, when *the foundations of the earth shall be shaken, the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat*¹. The present frame of nature shall be dissolved, and our eyes shall behold the blessed Jesus, (who came once into the world in all humility to visit us, to purchase pardon for us, and beseech us to accept of it) now appearing in the majesty of his glory, and descending from heaven *in flaming fire, to take vengeance on those* that have despised his mercy. Then all the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and the counsels of the heart made manifest². Then those secret impurities and subtle frauds whereof the world did never suspect us, shall be exposed and laid open to public view; and many thousand actions which we never dreamed to be sinful, shall be charged home upon our consciences, with such evident convictions of guilt, that we shall neither be able to deny, or excuse them. Then shall all the angels in heaven, and all the saints that ever lived on the earth, approve that dreadful sentence which shall be passed on wicked men; and those who loved and esteemed them when in the world, shall look upon them with indignation and abhorrence.

¹ 2 Peter iii. 10.

² 1 Corinthians iv. 5.

10. 'Tis true, this is a melancholy subject; there is horror in the consideration of it: but sure it must be infinitely more dreadful to endure it; and such thoughts as these may be useful to fright us from the courses that would lead us thither. How fond soever we may be of sinful pleasures, we shall startle when pressed with that question, *Who can dwell with everlasting burnings*¹.

¹ Isaiah xxxiii. 14.

We must keep a constant watch over ourselves.

11. But it will not suffice to consider those things once and again, nor to form some resolutions of abandoning our sins, unless we maintain a constant guard, and be constantly watching against them. Sometimes the mind is awakened, and we resolve to reform: but alas! it presently falleth asleep, and we lose that prospect which we had, and then temptations take the advantage; they solicit us continually, and frequently engage our consent before we are aware. It is the folly and ruin of most people to live at adventure, seldom considering what they are about to say or do. If we would have our resolutions take effect, we must take heed unto our ways, set a watch before the door of our lips, and examine the motions that arise in our heart, whence they come, and whither they go; whether it be pride or passion, or any corrupt humour, that prompteth us to any design, and whether God will be pleased with it? And if we have no time for long reasonings, let us at least turn our eyes towards God, and place ourselves in his presence, to ask his leave and approbation for what we do. Let us consider ourselves under the all-seeing eye of that divine majesty, as in the midst of an infinite globe of light; which compasseth us about both behind and before, and pierceth to the inmost corners of our soul. The sense of the divine presence is a ready means, both to discover what is unlawful, and to restrain us from it. There are some things a person could make a shift to defend, and yet he dares not look God in the face, and adventure upon them. If we look unto him we shall be lightned; if we *set him always before us*, he will *guide us by his eye, and instruct us in the way wherein we ought to walk*.

We must often examine our actions.

12. This care and watchfulness over our actions, must be seconded by frequent and serious reflections upon them; not only that we may obtain the divine mercy; but that we may strengthen our resolutions, and learn to decline or resist temptations. It is an advice worthy of a Christian, though it first dropped from a Heathen pen, that before we betake ourselves to rest, we renew and examine all the passages of the day, that we may redress what we find to have been amiss, and make the shipwrecks of one day be as marks to direct our course in another. But, withal, we must not forget to implore the divine assistance, especially against those sins that most easily beset us: and though our hearts are not yet moulded into that spiritual frame, yet methinks such considerations as have been proposed may stir us up to some seriousness, and make our prayers against it as earnest, at least, as they are wont to be against other calamities; and I doubt not but God, who heareth the cry of the ravens, will have some regard even to such petitions as proceed from those natural passions which himself hath implanted in us.

It is fit to restrain ourselves in many lawful things.

13. Thus we are to make the first essay for recovering the divine life, by restraining the natural inclinations, that they break not out into sinful practices. But Christian prudence will teach us to abstain from gratifications that are not simply unlawful; and that not only that we may secure our innocence, which would be in continual hazard, if we should strain our liberty to the utmost point; but also that we may teach our appetites to obey, as prudent parents deal with their children, who cross their wills in many little things, to make them manageable in more considerable instances. He who would mortify the pride and vanity of his spirit, should stop his ears to the most deserved praises, and sometimes forbear his just vindication, from the censures and aspersions of others. He who would check a revengeful humour, would do well to deny himself the satisfaction of representing to others the injuries he hath sustained. And if we would so take heed to our ways, that we sin not with our tongue, we must accustom ourselves to solitude and silence. Thus we may make our appetites more moderate in their cravings, by accustoming them to frequent refusals; but it is not enough to have them under violence and restraint.

We must strive to put ourselves out of love with the world.

14. Our next essay must be to possess our minds with a deep persuasion of the vanity and emptiness of worldly enjoyments. This is an ordinary theme, but alas! how few understand and believe what they say? These notions float in our brains, and come sliding off our tongues, but we have no deep impression of them on our spirits. We feel not the truth which we pretend to believe. We can tell that all the glory and splendor, all the pleasures of the world, are vanity and nothing; and yet these nothings take up all our thoughts, and engross all our affections. Perhaps sometimes we resolve to be no longer deluded with them; but these thoughts seldom outlive the next temptation. And after we have been frustrated a thousand times, we must continually be repeating the experiment. The least difference of circumstances is enough to make us expect that satisfaction in one thing, which we missed in another. But had we once a real contempt of worldly things, this were a considerable advancement in our way. The soul of man is of a vigorous and active nature, and hath in it an unextinguishable thirst, an immaterial kind of fire, always catching at some object or other, in conjunction wherewith it thinks to be happy: and were it once rent from the world, it would search after some higher object, to satisfy its importunate cravings. The love of the world and the love of God, are like the scales of a balance, as the one falleth the other doth rise. It therefore nearly concerns us to be convinced of the emptiness and vanity of creature enjoyments. Let us seriously consider what our reason and faith, our own experience, and the observation of others suggest. Amidst all our pursuits and designs, let us stop and ask ourselves, for what end is this? At what do I aim? Can the gross pleasures of sense, or a heap of white or yellow earth, or the esteem of silly creatures like myself, satisfy an immortal soul? Have I not tried these things already? Will they have a higher relish, and yield me more contentment to-morrow than yesterday, or the next year than they did the last? There may be some little difference between that which I am now pursuing, and that which I enjoyed before: but sure my former enjoyments did shew as pleasant, and promise as fair before I attained them. Like the rainbow, they ◆looked very glorious at a distance, but when I approached, I found nothing but emptiness and vapour. O what a poor thing would the life of man be, if it were capable of no higher enjoyments!

◆ “look” replaced with “looked” per Errata

We must do those outward actions that are commanded.

15. When our inclinations towards worldly things are in some measure subdued, we must proceed conscientiously to perform those duties which religion [◆](#)requires. If we cannot get our inward dispositions presently changed, let us study at least to regulate our outward deportment: if our hearts be not yet inflamed with divine love, let us however [♣](#)own our allegiance to that infinite Majesty, by attending his service, and listening to his word; by speaking reverently of his name; and praising his goodness, and exhorting others to serve and obey him. If we want that charity, and those bowels of compassion which we ought to have towards our neighbours, yet must we not omit any occasion of doing them good. If our hearts be haughty and proud, we must nevertheless study a modest and humble deportment. These external performances are of little value in themselves, yet may they help us forward to better things. It is always good to be doing what we can, for then God is wont to assist our feeble endeavours. Nor need we fear the imputation of hypocrisy, though our actions thus somewhat out-run our affections, seeing they still proceed from a sense of our duty, and our design is not to appear better than we are, but that we may really become so.

[◆](#) “require” replaced with “requires” per Errata

[♣](#) “owe” replaced with “own” per Errata

We must endeavour to form internal acts of devotion, charity, &c.

16. Moreover, let us be often lifting up our hearts to God; and if we do not say that we love him above all things, let us at least acknowledge that it is our duty, and would be our happiness so to do. Let us lament the dishonour done him by sinful men, and applaud the praises that are given him by that glorious company above. Let us yield ourselves up to him a thousand times, to be governed by his laws, and disposed of at his pleasure: and though our stubborn heart start back, yet let us tell him we are convinced that his will is always just and good; and therefore desire him to do with us whatsoever he pleaseth, whether we will or not.

Thus should we exercise ourselves unto godliness: and when we are employing the powers that we have, the Spirit of God is wont to strike in, and elevate these acts of our soul beyond the pitch of nature, and give them a divine impression.

Consideration a great instrument of religion.

17. I shall mention but two other helps; and the first is, deep and serious consideration. *The assent which is ordinarily given to divine truths, is very faint and languid. Men are unwilling to quarrel with the religion of their country; but are seldom at the pains to consider what they profess to believe; and thence it is, that they have so little influence on their practice. Those *spiritless and paralytic thoughts* (as one rightly terms them) are not able to move the will, and direct the hand. We must therefore labour for a full persuasion of divine truths, a sense and feeling of spiritual things. Let us urge forward our spirits, and make them approach the invisible world, and fix our mind upon immaterial things, till we clearly perceive that these are no dreams; nay, that all things are dreams and shadows besides them. When we look about us, and behold the beauty and magnificence of this goodly frame, the order and harmony of the whole creation, let our thoughts from thence take their flight toward that omnipotent wisdom and goodness which did at first produce, and doth still uphold the same. When we reflect upon ourselves, let us consider that we are not a mere piece of organized matter, a curious and well contrived engine; that there is more in us than flesh, and blood, and bones, even a divine spark, capable to know, and love, and enjoy our Maker. And though it be now exceedingly clogged with its dull and lumpish companion; yet ere long it shall be delivered, and can subsist without the body, as well as that can do without the cloaths, which we throw off at our pleasure. Let us often withdraw our thoughts from this earth, this scene of misery, and folly, and sin, and raise them towards that glorious world; whose innocent and blessed inhabitants solace themselves eternally in the divine presence, and know no other passion, but an unmixed joy, and an unbounded love: and then consider how the blessed Son of God came down to this lower world to live among us, and die for us, that he might bring us to a portion of the same felicity; and think how he hath overcome the sharpness of death, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and is now set down on the *right-hand of the Majesty on high*¹; and yet is not the less mindful of us, but receiveth our prayers, and presenteth them unto his Father, and is daily visiting his church with the influences of his Spirit, as the sun reacheth us with his beams.

¹ Hebrews i. 3.

We should consider the excellency of the divine nature.

18. Let me further suggest some particular subjects of meditation. And first, if we would love God, let us consider the excellency of his nature, and his love and kindness towards us. It is little we know of the divine perfections; and yet that little may fill our souls with admiration and love. If it be the understanding that directs the affections, certainly the excellencies of the divine nature (the traces whereof we cannot but discover in every thing we behold) should not fail to engage our hearts. Shall we not be infinitely more transported with that almighty wisdom and goodness, which fills the universe, and displays itself in all the parts of the creation, which establisheth the frame of nature, and turneth the mighty wheels of providence, and keepeth the world from disorder and ruin, than with the faint rays of the same perfections which we meet with in our fellow creatures? Shall we doat on the scattered pieces of a rude and imperfect picture, and never be affected with the original beauty? This were an unaccountable stupidity and blindness. Whatever we find lovely in a friend, or in a saint, ought not to engross, but to elevate our affection: we should conclude with ourselves, that if there be so much sweetness in a drop, there must be infinitely more in the fountain. If there be so much splendor in a ray, what must the sun be in its glory?

19. Nor can we pretend the remoteness of the object, as if God were at too great a distance for our converse or love: *he is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being.*¹ We cannot open our eyes, but we must behold some footsteps of his glory; and we cannot turn them toward him, but we shall be sure to find his intent upon us, waiting as it were to catch a look, ready to entertain the most intimate communion with us. Let us therefore endeavour to raise our minds to the clearest conceptions of the divine nature. Let us consider all that his works declare, or his word discovers of him unto us; and let us especially contemplate that visible representation of him which was made in our own nature by his Son, who was *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,*² and who appeared in the world to discover at once what God is, and what we ought to be. Let us represent him unto our minds as we find him described in the gospel, and there we shall behold the perfections of the divine nature, tho' covered with the veil of human infirmities. And while we contemplate a Being, infinite in power, in wisdom, and goodness, the author and fountain of all perfections, let us pray that our eyes may affect our heart,³ and while we are musing the fire may burn.⁴

¹ Acts xvii. 27.

² Hebrews i. 3.

³ Lamentations iii. 51.

⁴ Psalms xxxix. 3.

We should meditate on his goodness and love.

20. Hereunto add the consideration of God's favour and goodwill towards us. Now as the word of God is full of the expressions of his love towards man, so all his works loudly proclaim it. He gave us our being, and by preserving us in it, doth renew the donation every moment. He hath placed us in a rich and well-furnished world, and liberally provided for all our necessities. He raineth down blessings from heaven upon us, and causeth the earth to bring forth our provision. He giveth us our food and raiment; and while we are spending the productions of one year, he is preparing for us against another. He sweetneth our lives with innumerable comforts, and gratifieth every faculty with suitable objects. The eye of his providence is always upon us, and he watcheth for our safety when we are fast asleep, neither minding him nor ourselves. But lest we should think these testimonies of his kindness less considerable, because they are the easy issues of his omnipotent power, and do not put him to any trouble or pain, he hath taken a more wonderful method to endear himself to us. He hath testified his affection to us, by suffering as well as by doing; and because he could not suffer in his own nature, he assumed ours. The eternal Son of God cloathed himself with the infirmities of our flesh, and left the company of those blessed spirits, who knew well how to love and adore him, that he might dwell among men, and wrestle with the obstinacy of that rebellious race to reduce them to their allegiance, and to offer himself up as a sacrifice for them. I remember one of the poets hath an ingenious fancy to express the passion wherewith he found himself overcome after a long resistance, *That the God of love had shot all his golden arrows at him, but could never pierce his heart, till at length he put himself into the bow, and darted himself straight into his breast.* Methinks this doth someway adumbrate God's method of dealing with men: he had long contended with a stubborn world, and thrown down many a blessing upon them; and when all his other gifts could not prevail, he at last made a gift of himself. The account which we have of our Saviour's life in the gospel doth all along present us with the story of his love. All the pains that he took, and the troubles that he endured, were the wonderful effects, and uncontrollable evidences of it. But, O that last, that dismal scene! Is it possible to remember it, and question his kindness, or deny him ours? Here, here it is we should fix our most serious thoughts, *that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and*

*height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God!*¹

¹ Ephesians iii. 17, 18, 19.

21. We ought also frequently to reflect on those particular tokens of love, which God hath bestowed on ourselves; how long he hath borne with our follies and sins, and waited to be gracious unto us; wrestling, as it were, with the stubbornness of our hearts, and essaying every method to reclaim us. We should keep a register in our minds of all the eminent blessings and deliverances we have met with; some whereof have been so conveyed, that we might clearly perceive they were not the issues of chance, but the gracious effects of the divine favour, and the signal returns of our prayers.

As a help to charity, we must remember that all men are nearly related to God.

22. If we would love all men, let us consider the relation wherein they stand to God, and the impresses of his image, which are stamped upon them. They are not only his creatures, the workmanship of his hands, but such of whom he taketh special care, and for whom he hath a very tender regard; having laid the designs of their happiness before the foundations of the world; and being willing to live and converse with them to all eternity. The meanest and most contemptible person whom we behold, is the offspring of heaven, one of the children of the Most High; and, however unworthy he may behave himself of that relation to God, so long as God hath not disowned himself by a final sentence, he will have us acknowledge him as one of his; and, as such, embrace him with a cordial affection. What a concern are we wont to have for those that any ways belong to the person whom we love? How gladly do we lay hold on every opportunity to gratify the child or servant of a friend? And sure our love towards God would as naturally spring forth in charity towards men, did we mind the interest that he is pleased to take in them; and consider that every soul is dearer to him than the material world; and that he did not account the blood of his Son too great a price for their redemption.

That they carry his image upon them.

23. Again, as all men stand in a near relation to God, so they have still so much of his image stamped on them, as may excite us to love them. In some this image is more conspicuous, and we can discern the lovely tracts of wisdom and goodness. And though, in others, it be miserably sullied and defaced, yet it is not altogether erased. Some lineaments still remain: all men are endowed with rational and immortal souls, with understandings and wills capable of the most excellent things. And if they be at present disordered and put out of tune by wickedness and folly, this may indeed move our compassion, but ought not to extinguish our love. When we see a person of a rugged humour and perverse disposition, full of malice and dissimulation, very foolish, and very proud, it is hard to fall in love with an object that presents itself unto us, under an idea so little grateful and lovely. But when we consider these evil qualities as the diseases of a soul, which in itself is capable of all that wisdom and goodness, wherewith the best of saints have ever been adorned, this will turn our aversion into pity, and make us behold him with such resentments, as we have when we look on a beautiful body that is mangled with wounds, or disfigured by some loathsome disease. And however we hate the vices we shall not cease to love the man.

Prayer another instrument of religion; the advantages of mental prayer.

24. There remains yet another help; and that is, fervent prayer. Holiness is the gift of God; indeed the greatest gift he doth bestow, or we are capable to receive, and he hath promised his Holy Spirit to those that ask it of him. In prayer we make the nearest approaches to God, and lie open to the influences of heaven: then it is that the sun of righteousness doth visit us with his directest rays, and dissipateth our darkness, and imprinteth his image on our souls. I cannot now insist on the advantages of this exercise, or the dispositions wherewith it ought to be performed; I shall only tell you, that as there is one sort of prayer, wherein we make use of the voice, which is necessary in public; and may sometimes have its advantage in private; and another wherein, though we utter no sound, yet we conceive the expressions, and form the words in our mind; so there is a third kind of prayer, wherein the soul takes a higher flight, and having collected all its forces, by long and serious meditation, it darteth itself (if I may so speak) towards God, in sighs and groans, and thoughts too big for expression.

This mental prayer is one of the most powerful instruments of the divine life; and it may be the apostle hath a peculiar respect unto it, when he saith, that *the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, making intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.*

The use of the holy sacrament.

25. I shall recommend but one more help; and that is, the conscientious use of that holy sacrament, which is peculiarly appointed to nourish and increase the spiritual life, when once it is begotten in the soul. All the instruments of religion meet together in this ordinance; and while we address ourselves to it, we are put to practise all the rules which were mentioned before. Then it is that we make the severest survey of our actions, and lay the strictest obligations on ourselves: then are our minds raised to the highest contempt of the world, and every grace doth exercise itself with the greatest activity and vigour. All the subjects of contemplation there present themselves unto us with the greatest advantage; and then, if ever, doth the soul make its most powerful sallies towards heaven, and assault it with a holy and acceptable force. And certainly the neglect, or careless performance of this duty, is one of the chief causes that be-dwarfs our religion, and make us continue of so low a size.

A P R A Y E R.

AND now, O most gracious God, Father and fountain of mercy, who hast blessed us with the knowledge of our happiness, and the way that leadeth unto it, excite in our souls such ardent desires after the one as may put us forth to the diligent prosecution of the other. Let us neither presume on our own strength, nor distrust thy assistance; but while we are doing our utmost endeavours, still depend on thee for success. Open our eyes, O God, and teach us out of thy law. Bless us with an exact and tender sense of our duty, and a knowledge to discern perverse things. O that our ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Then shall we not be ashamed when we have a respect unto all thy commandments. Possess our hearts with a generous and holy disdain of all those poor enjoyments which this world holdeth out to allure us, that they may never be able to inveigle our affections, or betray us to any sin. Turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou us in thy law. Fill our souls with such a deep sense of those great truths which thou hast revealed in the gospel, as may influence and regulate our whole conversation: so that the life which we henceforth live in the flesh, we may live through faith in the Son of God. O that the infinite perfections of thy blessed nature, and the astonishing expressions of thy goodness may overpower our hearts; that they may be constantly rising towards thee in flames of devout affection, and enlarging themselves in cordial love towards all the world for thy sake; and that we may cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in thy fear, without which we can never hope to behold and enjoy thee. Finally, O God, grant that the consideration of what thou art, and what we ourselves are, may both humble and lay us low before thee, and also stir up in us the strongest and most ardent aspirations towards thee. We desire to give up ourselves to the conduct of thy Holy Spirit: lead us in thy truth, and teach us, for thou art the God of our salvation. Guide us with thy counsel, and afterwards receive us unto glory; for the merits and intercession of thy blessed Son, our Saviour. Amen.

The End of the EIGHTH VOLUME.



E R R A T A, Volume VIII.

Page 47, line 5, replace [while](#)

Page 57, line 22, replace [bounds](#)

Page 95, line 24, replace [hast](#)

Page 111, line 11, replace [are](#)

Page 118, line 2, replace [heavy](#)

Page 130, line 6, replace [by](#)

Page 146, line 9, replace [Life. Men](#)

Page 147, line 14, replace [so even](#)

Page 148, line 27, replace [dele as](#)

Page 149, line 1, replace [as to](#)

Page 149, line 2, replace [dele as](#)

Page 151, line *antepenultimate*, replace [worthy of](#)

Page 169, line 18, replace [how the](#)

Page 190, line 8, replace [appears](#)

Page 190, line 9, replace [can](#)

Page 197, line 10, replace [last](#)

Page 201, line 12, replace eats out

Page 204, line 5, replace tongues

Page 210, line 8, replace that thou

Page 242, line 2, replace for virtues

Page 253, line *ultima*, replace attend

Page 282, line 24, replace dele of

Page 286, line 6, replace then

Page 286, line 16, replace boys be

Page 286, line 20, replace So far from that

Page 325, line 13, replace frequent

Page 344, line 16, replace looked

Page 344, line 26, replace requires.

Page 344, line 30, replace own our

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