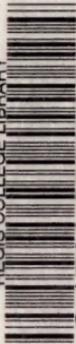


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MEDITATIONS OF A
MARTYR
BEING THE
SOLILOQUIES
OR
DOCUMENTS OF
CHRISTIAN PERFECTION
OF THE VENERABLE
FRANCIS HEATH, O.S.F.

1674

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15 Julii 1912.

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INTRODUCTION

THE *Documents of Christian Perfection* were originally written and published in Latin in 1651. They had already been translated into several other languages before an English rendering appeared in 1674. This edition was published at Douay, and contained also an epitome of the author's life from which the following outline is principally drawn.

Henry Heath was born, a Protestant, in 1599, at Peterborough in Northamptonshire, and was educated at Benet College, Cambridge. During the five years he spent at the University he showed remarkable ability in all branches of learning, with a distinct preference for religious subjects; and after taking his degree was made librarian of his college. In this office he was enabled to pursue his reading to greater length, and so was gradually led to perceive the inadequacy of the foundation of the Protestant religion. He therefore determined to study both sides of the question, choosing the works of Cardinal Bellarmine and Dr. Whitaker for the purpose. In order to judge the better between them he devoted himself to the study of the Fathers, whence he discovered that whereas Cardinal Bellarmine's quotations were correct and intact, those of Dr. Whitaker were at times false and mutilated. This naturally inclined him to Catholicism, and henceforth he threw himself wholeheartedly into the study of the

Catholic religion, inducing at the same time four of his fellow-students to join him in his studies. Fired with zeal for the Faith he preached its truths publicly, while denouncing the errors of Protestantism, and so great was his success in preaching and controversy, that the principals of the College determined to coerce him either by imprisonment or ignominious expulsion.

On learning of their intention he set out for London, determining to seek the aid of the Spanish Ambassador, to whom all needy Catholics used to resort. Here he was refused assistance ; he fared no better at the house of Mr. Jerningham, a well-known Catholic, who indeed suspected the fugitive as a spy. Being thus denied human help, he remembered having read of the Catholic devotion to our Blessed Lady, and turning to the Mother of Sorrows besought her aid. He vowed perpetual service to her if she would take pity on him ; and here began that devotion to the Mother of God which was to dominate the whole of his life from that time onwards. Scarcely had he finished praying when he met Mr. Jerningham, who now accosted him kindly. After listening to his story, Mr. Jerningham took him to Rev. George Muscott, who heard his confession and received him into the Church.

Through the assistance of Mr. Muscott and Mr. Jerningham he was sent to the English College at Douay, which was at that time under the rectorship of Dr. Kellison. While at the English College he happened to meet two Brothers of a community of English Recollects lately established at Douay, and feeling that in the life of these friars was to be found the literal observance of Christ's commands, he resolved to become a Franciscan. With the advice of his confessor he took the habit in 1624 with the name of Paul of St. Magdalen. His time

as a novice was spent in deep study and much prayer ; we read that he used to guard himself against sloth by often recalling the words of St. Gregory, "Not to advance is to fall back," and that he preserved his humility by repeating St. Francis's own admonition, "Come, brothers, let us begin."

Father Heath's profession took place after a year's novitiate. He was now set to study theology, in which holy science he showed such thorough mastery that Dr. Poletius, the Regius Professor in the University of Douay, is reported to have said : "I have never in my life heard any one more learned than he." His papers on moral theology which he left behind were pronounced faultless. In due course he was elected Vicar of the College, which office included those of Master of the Scholastics and Lecturer on Moral Theology. Later he became Lecturer on Scholastic Theology, and finally occupied the highest theological chair. He also held the offices of Immediate Superior or Guardian, *Custos Custodum* and Vice-Provincial.

Although F. Heath was now greatly occupied with his studies and the cares of office, he never remitted his customary works of charity, and used to spend whole days visiting the sick and instructing the ignorant, having particular care for heretics. Moreover he was always in choir when the rule demanded, and despite his high position, with its consequent power of dispensation, he never allowed himself the least respite from the full observance of the rule : in fact he voluntarily added many other austerities, such as sleeping on the bare ground, wearing an iron chain round his body, and frequently administering the discipline. His prayer, too, was long and fervent, and we are told that on one occasion, when a contagious disease had broken out

among the community, and he himself felt the first symptoms upon him, he prayed with his arms outstretched for half an hour, at the end of which time, though utterly exhausted, he was restored to health. His devotion to our Blessed Lady was one of the characteristics of his religious life. In every difficulty and sorrow he turned to the Mother of God and implored her aid, as he had done at the beginning of his conversion. He went to her when food was scarce and the community almost starving, and through her intercession the hearts of the citizens were moved to compassion, so that the friars were given leave to beg from door to door. When controversy had failed to shake his father, whose conversion he greatly desired, he prayed to our Lady, and the reconciliation was brought about. To her he owed his humility, self-denial and perseverance in religion; and before he left for England he composed a beautiful prayer to her in the form of a letter, in which he thanked her for all her assistance, ascribing every success to her intercession.

The one great desire of the holy man's life was to die for the Faith. While still at Douay he used to write to priests who were awaiting martyrdom, encouraging them and lamenting that he was not worthy to share their hardships for Christ's sake. "How great is my unhappiness," he wrote to F. Colman, his personal friend, then under sentence, "that I am not permitted to come to you, that I might be a partaker of your chains."

It was not until nineteen years after F. Heath's first arrival at Douay that his wish was granted, and he returned to England to die. Having altered his habit so that it resembled the dress of a common sailor—for he would not accept the secular clothes that

were offered him—he set sail from Dunkirk. On board he was offered money and assistance by a German nobleman, but, true to his vow of poverty, he refused everything except enough money to pay for his voyage. On arriving in England he walked barefooted from Dover to London, and having no money sought shelter for a few minutes in the doorway of one of the houses ; but before long the owner, having returned, sent for a constable, who searched the priest and found some papers written in defence of the Church concealed in his hat. He was immediately arrested and lodged in the prison known as the Counter.

Next day F. Heath was brought before the mayor, and the usual interrogatory was gone through. With great skill he defended his Faith and fearlessly proclaimed his priesthood, saying that he had come to England to save souls, as Christ Himself came from heaven for that purpose. After this he was taken before a Committee of Parliament and finally appeared before the judges of the session. Here as elsewhere he was more than a match for his opponents, and so utterly did he confound them with his answers and questions that they at length forbade him to speak, and straightway proceeded to pass sentence of death on him. During the time that elapsed between the trial and execution a great number of people, Catholic and Protestant, came to see F. Heath in prison. It is said that no less than forty ministers came to dispute with him, all of whom went away defeated, affirming that they had never met a more learned man. Many Protestants were converted by the holy man, while Catholics flocked to him to obtain his blessing and, if possible, some relic.

When the day of F. Heath's death arrived he asked the executioners if he might be tied to the horses'

tails and be dragged to the scaffold in this manner instead of being placed on a hurdle as was customary. His request was refused. On the road to Tyburn he continually sang hymns and antiphons and made frequent ejaculatory prayers; at times he was interrupted by the Protestant minister, but his replies were so much to the point that an officer, hearing his minister so completely refuted, struck him on the mouth and told him to go to school.

When F. Heath had mounted the scaffold he turned to the people and addressed them, saying that the Church had always been persecuted, but had remained immovable while the heresies of her persecutors had become extinct. He had come to England to preach the Catholic religion, and for this cause alone he was about to be put to death; then clasping his hands he remained motionless in silent prayer for nearly half an hour. At length raising his arms above his head he cried out aloud, "Jesus, convert England! Jesus, have mercy on this country! O England, turn thyself to the Lord thy God." The ladder was then removed and he was left hanging in the air, his hands still uplifted, until he died. After he had been cut down his head was placed on London Bridge, and his quarters on the gates of the city. The date of his execution was April 17, 1643.¹ Such is a brief account of the saintly author of these Documents.

The text of this edition is taken directly from that published at Douay in 1674: the spelling and punctuation alone have been changed and obvious printer's errors corrected, otherwise the text remains exactly as in the original. This is the first time that the work

¹ The original title-page gives the date of the martyr's execution as April 11th, but this is evidently a printer's error.

has been modernized, though a reprint of the Douay text by Dolman appeared in 1844. We are indebted for the transcription to Miss Aimée Sewell.

It is hoped that this little book will find many readers, for its words are not tempered with the softness and spirit of tolerance of the present day, but are the outspoken cry of one who had to fight and die for the Faith we love. Both in spirit and form the book recalls in a remarkable manner the *Imitation*, and it needs but a cursory glance at the following pages to bring home to us how different are our modern notions of serving God from those of the days when it was a crime to be a Catholic. Such works as these will still serve their purpose, if they help to keep alive among the Catholics of to-day the spirit of fortitude and fidelity which marked their forefathers.

JOSEPH WARREN.

St. Edmund's College, Ware.

June 21, 1912.

For fuller and further details the reader is referred to : Mrs. Hope, *Franciscan Martyrs in England* (London : Burns & Oates) ; Fr. Thaddeus, *The Franciscans in England* (London : Art & Book Company, 1898) ; J. M. Stone, *Faithful unto Death* (London : Kegan Paul, 1892) ; Fr. Angelo a S. Francisco, *Cerlamen Seraphicum* (reprint ; Quaracchi, 1885) ; Bishop Challoner, *Memoirs of Missionary Priests* ; J. B. Wainewright in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. vii. (London & New York, 1910) ; T. Cooper in *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. xxv. (London : Smith, Elder & Co., 1892).

SOLILOQUIES
OR
THE DOCUMENTS
OF
CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

Of the venerable and famous Father PAUL, OF ST. MAGDALEN, formerly Guardian of the ENGLISH COLLEGE of ST. BONAVENTURE, of the SERAPHICK ORDER of the Fryers minors AT DOUAY. CROWNED WITH MARTYRDOM AT LONDON, April 11th, 1643

FAITHFULLY TRANSLATED OUT OF THE 6TH AND
LAST LATINE EDITION

AT *Douay* IN THE YEAR 1674

Permissu Superiorum

SOLILOQUIES, OR
THE DOCUMENTS OF
CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

CHAPTER I

Of the Observance of the Law and the
Necessity of a Good Life

1. *Not every one who shall say unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do the will of My Father shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven.*¹ Many talk and boast great things; but few do things that are truly good. God respects not words, but the sincere works of a pure heart.

2. It is a great grace of God to govern well the tongue, that it exceed not in scandalous speeches, that it defile not the purity of the heart with vain discourse. Why then do we vindicate ourselves with big words? Why do we sharpen our tongues against our weak neighbour, with whom we are consorts in this pilgrimage of misery?

Let our good works speak for us; they will render us acceptable unto God; they will secure us against the tongues of others and all sorts of evil.

3. Thou seest then what it is our Redeemer expects

¹ Matt. vii. 21.

from thee, what is the wholesome lesson He gives thee, to what exercise, to what studies He invites thee : to wit, that thou descend to the bottom of thy heart and there lay the foundation of good works, that thou prefer the will of God before the desires of thine own will, that thou seek not thyself but only attend to the glory of thy Redeemer, that with humility thou everywhere expect thy cross, and thereon always offer thyself a true sacrifice unto God. It is not sufficient to know God ; but thou must truly amend thy life, that thou mayst begin to please God. It is not sufficient to read much, or to converse much with devout men ; but thou must truly be crucified with Christ if thou wilt experience in thyself the sweetness of Christ.

4. How then shall those enter the kingdom of Heaven, which is a kingdom of peace, a kingdom of unspeakable holiness, who rather choose to live under the most vile servitude of a carnal life than to procure the purity of a sincere conscience by a diligent resistance of sin ? when as^t if they truly loved God they would fear nothing in the world more than to be forsaken of God or to be repelled from the hope of eternal life. How shall they ever hope to inhabit that celestial city where the triumph of all the saints is celebrated for their most noble victories, who, content with this miserable life, never desire to pass out of the most sordid filth of this world, seeing no impure or unclean thing is admitted within the confines of that city ? How shall those pass through the fire of trial, through the strait gate, by the flaming sword which God hath set to guard the way of Paradise, who will suffer nothing for God ; when notwithstanding by that means Christ would bring them to perfection, and instruct them in the true way of divine

Whereas.

love? If Christ received not His glory, but having first humbled Himself to take upon Him my cross, how shall I hope to find Christ but by my patient bearing of His Cross?

5. If then there be no way to attain unto a true fellowship with Jesus but by absolute submitting myself unto the Cross, let all human calamities rush upon me; that so by the Cross I may truly enjoy Jesus. For I had rather at my death be consoled with that one word Jesus, than to be found with all the favours of this vain world without Him. How will they abide the sentence of the Judge, the terror of death, the piercing sting of an enraged conscience, who pronounce no sentence of penance against themselves here, who live as if they were never to pass out of this life, who suffer not their inward man to go out of the prison of passions and natural vanities? What will these miserable wretches (never enough to be bewailed) say, what will they do, when they shall perceive the direful stroke of death and judgement now close at hand? Then they will wish that they had preferred the humble obedience of Christ before all the treasures of pride; and will lament that they have so foolishly neglected the present time of grace.

6. Then all those will lament who have contemned to learn the true knowledge of God. I call that the true knowledge of God whereby we not so much know God in our understanding as acknowledge Him in our works and actions; whereby we stoutly resist vice and sin, which are against God, whereby we depress and vilify ourselves as truly frail, truly abject, truly unworthy of all good, and with our whole heart adhere to God alone as worthy of all glory.

7. Then will the wicked lament who now slightly

esteem the Passion of Christ and His bitter Cross borne for them, who rather desire solace in their affection to temporal goods than in the sweet fellowship of Christ, never thinking how vain, how infirm the consolation of all temporal things is, how base, how inconstant are all human affections, with how honest soever motives of virtue and sanctity they pretended to be induced to them. These will then beyond all time lament with unprofitable sorrow who will not suffer themselves to lament here while the time is granted wherein sorrow is profitable ; who will not here bear a temporal cross that they be able hereafter to avoid the cross of eternal misery ; who seek not so much a good as a pleasant life, a life spun out in length though encumbered with vices.

8. Well, thou, O thou disciple of Christ, for love of whom Christ wholly delivered up Himself that He might wholly unite thee to Him with an inseparable bond of charity, let no occasion slip thee whereby thou mayest increase thy merit before Him who will afford thee daily opportunity of exercising thy virtue out of mere love of thy good. If thou thinkest it consists not with thy dignity to subject thyself unto His yoke, how much more inconsistent with thy dignity will it be to submit thyself unto the most base yoke of sin, and that after death thou be thrust into the most loathsome infernal dungeon ?

9. He is not most worthy who is [most] exalted by the favour of men, but he who is most adorned with merits before God. Thou canst not be made truly acceptable unto God, nor climb unto the true height of virtue, if thou labour not much to overcome thyself and willingly suffer thyself to be debased for the love of God ; thou canst not long shun the snares of thine

enemies which way soever thou turn thyself, wheresoever thou livest, unless thou turn thine arms against thy own flesh that thou mayest wholly have God for thy guide, who will make the way of virtue sweet unto thee. Nor wilt thou find the light of a good life if thou as yet affect the darkness of an ill one ; nor wilt thou shake off the cruel tyranny of sin if thou yet cherish the root of self-love in thyself ; nor wilt thou find in thyself the fruit of good works if thou respect the favour of men in thy endeavours ; nor shalt thou be long faultless if thou neglect thyself to observe faults in others.

10. Therefore it is thy best course always to propose unto thyself thine own unworthiness, as if thou hadst hitherto done no good thing, nor were to be preferred before the worst of men ; that thou repute thyself placed here as in a place of continual trial ; that, tired with no labours, no humiliations, thou approve thyself a true soldier of Jesus Christ. For by how much the more willingly thou shalt serve Christ, by so much the more plentifully shall His grace be increased in thee who shall carry thee safe through all thine enemies ; by so much the nearer will God be unto thee who will replenish thy mind with true peace ; by so much the greater will thy exaltation be in heaven, where thou shalt be delighted beyond measure to have suffered such things for Christ.

CHAPTER II

Of the Merits and Fruit of a Good Life

1. *He that shall overcome shall possess these things, and I will be unto him a God, and he shall be to Me a son.*¹ Then art thou truly a conqueror, then, My son, when thou triumphest over thyself, when acknowledging thy own infirmity thou totally deliver up thyself unto My rule and custody, subjecting thyself unto My discipline whereby I use to make trial of the sincerity of My children. For thou canst not live without combats, how provident soever, yea how holy soever, thou art ; for I know how hurtful it would be unto thy soul for thee to enjoy much a vain complacence of mind, and how profitable it is that being habituated to labour thou firmly persevere in My love. Why then dost thou seek to be freed from thy yoke, when neither I thy Redeemer nor any other of My servants have overcome without a yoke ? But by how much the more holy and dear unto Me they were, by so much the more humbly have they delivered up themselves to suffer for Me. If thou hadst no occasion to suffer for Me thou couldst never attain unto My delights wherewith I refresh My friends in time of tribulation ; nor canst thou enter My kingdom if thou go any other way than I have gone before thee.

2. Believe Me, it is not My cross but thine own which

¹ Apoc. xxi. 7.

so disquiets thy mind. My cross consists in a sweet exercise of virtue ; in this sign alone have all My servants overcome : thine own cross is thine own will and thy depraved affection of thyself ; if thou hadst not these thou wouldst not feel a cross. This is the grievous cross which oppresses vicious men, and although through blindness of mind they are not always sensible of its bitterness, yet are they never truly freed from its misery, by reason they cherish and always bear with them this cross, whilst they give way unto natural passions ; and whilst they desire to defend themselves from one trouble they precipitate themselves into a thousand other more grievous troubles. Fly therefore thyself, as the fuel of all evil, bend strongly thy will under My yoke ; then thou shalt not perceive the heaviness of the cross, but the sweetness of virtue ; then will I truly be a God unto thee, that is most sweet, most lovely ; and thou shalt be unto Me a son that is truly acceptable, and heir of My kingdom.

3. Suffer then faithfully for the small space of this short life, since that no affliction can always last, nor can extend itself farther than I shall see good. Think of the lives of My servants, with how much humility, with how much fervour they have delivered up their souls unto all manner of abjections for My sake, with how much affection of poverty and contempt of the world they flourished, so that it may shame thee to read their examples and to be found hitherto so cold in My love ; with how much constancy of mind they persevered against all occasions for My Name's sake, neither drawn from Me by the sharpness of adversity or by the deluding fallacies of prosperity ; with how much meekness, with how much demission of mind, they in all places regarded Me their Lord, refusing to

recede from their wonted fervour for any prosperity of this life ; and how great remuneration of their labours, filled full, heaped up and running over, they have now received, for that they sustained such things for My love. For neither shall they ever again return unto any worldly miseries of soul or body, because they remained thankful unto Me here in the middle of all miseries ; nor shall they ever again feel the affliction of want nor the intemperance of the air, nor any weariness of body or debility of spirit ; because here being instructed by documents of human frailty, they burned with a fervent desire of heavenly life, knowing that this world was not a place of perpetual abode, nor true felicity to be found in so frail a life ; nor shall they ever again suffer loss of goods, persecutions of men, or temptation of the Devil, because now they have received that rest from all things for which they laboured so hard.

4. Read continually the lives of the Saints which I have given thee for an example, not so much that thou mayst know their actions as that thou mayst break the hardness of thy heart by their fervour ; for they were so enflamed with love of Me that they thought nothing troublesome, nothing hard whereby they might render themselves acceptable unto Me ; their riches were not in gold or silver, but in the possession of virtues which they earnestly begged of Me daily ; their books were no other than My Passion and My will ; they were so absolutely resigned unto Me that I could do with them whatsoever pleased Me. And yet they complained that they were unprofitable servants and unthankful, thinking all labours and humiliations were to be esteemed as nothing for the love of Me.

5. Why then dost thou take it ill that I leave thee not to the desires of thy own will, when I certainly know

that thou canst not be made truly humble nor truly acceptable unto Me if I break not thy perverse nature by these exercises of adversity, that thou mayst humbly fly unto Me and by little and little accustom thyself to bear My burden? Take therefore a manly courage, for thou hast many combats yet to perform before thou finish this life; nor is there any room for flight or tergiversation, since it is decreed that none shall come to Heaven but by an humble denying of himself and taking up his cross.

6. I will not that thou desire a long or short life; but convert thy whole soul to serve Me purely, and live so at the present that thou be not troubled whether to live or die for the future. I will that thou be always ready to bear My hand, but I will not that thou desire of Me peculiar afflictions, or that thou attempt to extend thyself to things too sublime; for thou knowest not thine own frailty, and how unable thou art, if pressed by any great occasion. Therefore undertake what thou mayst constantly persevere in unto the end, and leave those peculiar things unto Me, because I know better what is most agreeable to thy salvation. Many while they are in health do attempt great things, but when they become infirm they lay aside all their ardour; many live holily in a cloister, but conversing out of a cloister they lead a worldly life; many begin well, and after a little labour shamefully return to seek themselves. These deserve not to be called My servants, because they will only serve Me at some certain time or place. See therefore that at all times thou behave thyself diligently towards Me, and if thy power fail let thy will be always good, and thy mind devout towards Me; for I exact nothing but what with My grace thou mayst perform, nor do I tempt any man above his strength.

CHAPTER III

Of the Miseries of an Ill Life and the Utility of Religion

1. It is great prudence to behave thyself warily and considerately in all thy actions, lest by giving way unto the frailty of nature and thy own judgement thou throw thyself into great inconveniences ; therefore never do anything rashly whereunto thou art inclined by self-love or led by thy passions, however expedient it may seem to thy carnal judgement. For many great sins and grievous disorders are often admitted through slight occasions by a rash pursuit of a man's own opinion ; neither is it fit presently to do all that may be done, nor presently to tell all truths ; but we ought to consider the infirmities of those with whom we have to do, and to observe the opportunity of those things which we determine to do. It is also necessary that we bear many things (although incommodious unto us) with humility for God's sake, lest whilst we desire to shun a lesser we unawares fall into greater evils.

2. There is great care to be taken touching thy conversation, for men see not what is within, but use to judge by what appears outwardly. By a devout and humble behaviour the spirits of others are pacified and excited to seek God, by the sweet odour of good examples. And as thou bearest with the defects of

others so will others also bear with thine ; but one of a proud and turbulent behaviour begets sundry suspicions, nor knows any place for peace either in himself or others. Be careful that thou keep a strict guard upon thy passions and inclinations, so that thou suffer not thyself to be so averse to any man in this life, be he never so wicked ; but that thou labour for God's sake to return to a reconciliation, seeing divine grace and eternal happiness are not less possible unto him than unto thee. Neither do thou so join thy affection to any human person, how perfect soever, that thou canst not part with that affection without trouble of mind ; since nothing in the world is more frail and inconstant than a man's heart, nor hast thou any man now thy friend who may not presently be made thine enemy. Never give way unto any vanity or levity of mind, how prosperously soever things succeed with thee, since thou knowest not how soon thou art to be deprived of this sensible quiet ; nor ever suffer any sadness or dejection to reign over thee, although thou perceive many natural frailties in thyself, but proceed so that nevertheless thou always expect infirmities. Nor is it a sign of the less divine grace that sometimes thou be oppressed with unquietness of heart, since God gives it oftentimes to the most holy men that they may crave His assistance with the greater humility ; and that by valiant striving against themselves they may approve themselves His faithful soldiers.

3. With all diligence decline occasions of sin ; for that man is soon perverted when the species of ill objects are permitted to enter. Neither now nor at any time consent to the flatteries of thy concupiscence, since divine grace is lost no less by this than by any other occasion, and the sword of eternal vengeance brandished

over thy head. Nor knowest thou whether God will afterwards admit thee to true repentance, nor whether thou shalt receive strength to overcome thine enemies, since sin once admitted always draws with it the greatest force to sinning.

4. How miserable then are those who so grossly dote, whilst they slight the uncertain time of this present life ! Nor would they fall into so great misery and servitude of sin if they would humbly fly to the protection of Christ, if they would fortify themselves with the virtue of His grace and Passion ; they would not make so frequent shipwreck, so sad loss of grace, if they would by divine assistance diligently divert their minds from the rocks of temptations. They would not be so dry in spiritual things if they had not their sense and desires estranged from God ; if they would respect those things which are necessary, and would not entangle themselves with impertinent worldly affairs. They would not be so prone to vice, so given up to sensuality, so apt to suffer, if they would not too much indulge their carnal nature ; if they would valiantly provoke themselves to the warfare of Christ. For the cross of Christ is not grievous but to those who fear it, who fly from it ; and if thou fly from it by how much the farther thou depart from it by so much the more averse and grievous wilt thou find it unto thee. They would not be so hateful unto God, so scandalous unto their neighbours, nor so unsupportably burdensome unto themselves, if they would study to break themselves of vicious customs ; if they would subject their sensual nature to right reason, and their weak reason to the rule of the divine will. For Christ Himself would support them that they should never fall into the infernal pit, if they would humbly follow Christ against the violence of

their own opinion ; but because through pride and a vain blindness of heart they depart from God, therefore they fall into the abyss of all miseries both in the life present and in that to come ; their way is stony, and at the end thereof darkness, Hell, and punishment.

CHAPTER IV

Of the Comparison of a Good and an Evil Life

1. If thou desire to be delivered from the miseries of an ill life thou must firmly propound this to thyself ; that as often as thou perceivest thyself disjoined from God, or that Christ begins to become unpleasant unto thee, thou presently humbly acknowledge thy fault ; for it may then be most certainly concluded that thou art grown faulty and that thou hast neglected the custody of thy heart. As often as thou feelest thyself troubled through frailty of nature in the embracing of Christ, then presently thou must descend into the closet of thy heart ; that by humble supplication thou mayst obtain from God true light, whereby thou mayst satisfy all men by thy good example, and mayst procure a reconciliation unto thy offended Redeemer by thy sincere amendment of life. Then the incursions of the enemy are more warily to be observed, lest in the future he be again permitted entrance ; then thou must pray more fervently, walk more humbly, yea thy flesh itself is to be treated more hardly, if thou wilt not again be wounded by the darts of its passions ; then are the windows of thy senses to be kept shut more diligently, lest the vanities of the creatures enter and administer fuel to corrupt nature ; then the Passion of Christ, then the charity of thy Redeemer, are more

sincerely to be meditated on, that by fervent contemplation thereof thou block up all passes against the enemy. For whatsoever progress thou hast made in age, learning, or honour, amongst men, thou shalt not at all therefore be more acceptable unto God, if thou study not by the integrity of thy conversation in all things to please Him. For God is not as man that He may be attracted with the vanities of the world, who only respects the purity of the heart in all His servants.

2. Attend therefore seriously unto all thy ways, unto all thy words and thoughts, as if thou sawest Christ thy Lord present ; and what thou art ashamed to do before men presume not to do before Him. Behave thyself as if thou didst esteem every hour and moment utterly lost wherein thou didst not perform some good, as if thy mind were always on thy end ; considering what a difficult journey, how cruel enemies, how dangerous encounters, are proposed unto thee through the whole space of this life ; as if thou everywhere sawest Him crucified that so thou mayest always prepare thyself with the greater fortitude unto His obedience. Alas ! thou art never able to think enough of the vanity of the world, the loathsomeness of sin, the frailty of this miserable life, after which an unchangeable eternity will follow. Harken to Christ, now saying unto thee, *Thou fool, this night shall they take away thy soul* ; and then whose shall those things be which thou hast gathered ?

He truly is said to be a fool who, being possessed with a drowsiness during the night of this life, weigheth not the horrors of the eternal night ; then it shall not be demanded how great thou wert amongst men, but how little, how vile, thou wert in thy own esteem, how submit to undertake the humble life of Christ, how

prompt, how diligent to please God. Then it shall not be regarded how much thou knewest, but how well thou livest, and with how eminent examples thou didst adorn thy knowledge. Then shall the difference appear between good men, who like true Hebrews have withstood the Egyptian temptations of this world, and wicked men, who like worms of the earth have desired only earthly things ; then shall the penance of St. John Baptist be preferred before the luxury of Herod, the sores of Lazarus before the purple robes of Dives, the humility of St. Francis before the pride of Lucifer ; for if these worldlings found true felicity in these transitory things, why are they left so naked and despicable by all men at the time of their death ? Then shall those wise virgins be admitted into the kingdom who have adorned their lamps with the oil of true charity ; and all those foolish souls which are not enlightened with the fire of divine love shall be cast out into utter darkness.

3. He is not therefore most blessed who doth most licentiously enjoy his own lusts, but he that doth most absolutely subdue himself that he may persevere in good purposes against the depraved desires of his nature. He is not most happy who hath passed most years in this life, but he that hath wisely applied his whole industry to his eternal profit. He is not most secure who is subject to the fewest occasions of suffering, but he that embraceth all things with true submission, as from the hand of God Himself. Remember that these vile temporal things are not to be possessed [for] ever ; and by how much the more are they hurtful, and by how much the more we despise them, by so much the more are they serviceable unto us. Remember that above all things the care of thine

own soul is to be had before thine eyes, whatsoever chanceth to become of these external things; and that it is impertinent to have respect unto other men's actions when thou hast as yet many things to correct in thyself. Remember that thou art not a citizen but a pilgrim in this world, and that now or never is the time of gaining thy heavenly inheritance. Remember always that thou art a sinner, that thou hast much want of grace and virtue, that upon all occasions thou mayst undergo thy burden with some profit.

4. Have no respect therefore to the words of men, nor unto their lives, for many simple and good men, through unskilfulness of speaking, say things inconvenient, and many wicked men draw others after them and make them partakers of their worldliness. Believe not suddenly all things which thou hearest to be true, nor easily report what thou hearest from others; respect not the ill which thou shalt see in others, but diligently correct all the ill which thou shalt observe in thyself. Desire not presently to change the place where thou livest, nor thy superior whom thou servest, because that thou canst not have thine own will; for many whilst they seek new places find new and greater miseries, and whilst they cannot bear their crosses unawares run headlong upon many more grievous ones. Keep thy mind quiet from other men's actions as much as possibly thou canst, and valiantly provoke thyself to suffer more daily for Christ's sake; then shalt thou in all places the more freely attend unto God, and in all things find the true peace of Christ.

CHAPTER V

Of True Sorrow for Sin, and of Penance

1. Thy war in this life is not against other men, but altogether against thyself that thou mayst mortify thy vain passion for My sake, and mayst humbly do true penance for thy sins whereby thou hast offended Me. To which purpose I frequently permit thee to be exercised by others ; because thou hast, as yet, many enormities which must be corrected before thou canst become truly pleasing unto Me. Neither wouldst thou know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in things of the smallest consequence, if I were not thy continual instructor ; nor wert thou able to endure the time of adversity, if I by My strength did not alleviate thy burden ; nor wouldst thou find peace within, nor merit without, nor grace from above, nor safety beneath from thy deadly enemies if I thy Redeemer did not commiserate thy frailty and take perpetual care of thee. I will not therefore that thou ever depart out of that way of humility and penance which I have taught thee. Yea, how faultless soever thou seemest before unto thyself, or to be preferred before others, have no respect unto that, but think how thou mayst walk more humbly before Me ; since thou deservedst to be infinitely more depressed than ever thou art able to depress thyself if I should show the rigour of justice against thee.

2. Never regard the suspicious and vain apprehensions of thine own fantasy, that so thou mayst walk before Me with a settled tranquillity of mind ; for no man in the world were able to hurt thee if thou wouldst only seek Me and not thyself, nor wouldst thou care what others could do against thee if thou wouldst commit thy whole safeguard unto Me alone. Why therefore dost thou vainly trouble thyself with what others say or do, which a wise man would let pass as ridiculous ? When thou hast so many frailties in thyself for which thou art never able to make full satisfaction, why dost thou check others ? Why dost thou desire to shame and confound others, who so often deserve shame and confusion for thy innumerable sins, whereby thou hast most grievously offended Me thy Creator ?

3. O my God, with what tears, with what penance, with what humiliation of myself, shall I appease Thy wrath which I have so often provoked to my own destruction ! What have I done, what have I deserved, what have I lost, when by my wicked actions and impure thoughts I have driven Thee, my chief and only good, out of my mind ! What a friend, what a father, how merciful, how gracious a God have I forsaken when I have averted myself from the mediation of Thy justice ! How foolishly have I behaved myself, how unfaithfully have I dealt with Thee, as often as I sought to be delivered from Thy Cross, from Thy saving rod ! O my most sweet Redeemer, how different is my purity from Thy purity, my constancy from Thy immutability, my justice from Thy integrity, my devotion from Thy charity, my patience from Thy longanimity, my zeal from Thy holiness, my gratitude from Thy mercy ! Woe is me ! with what groans should I study to wipe away the loathsomeness of all my vices if my

heart were truly enkindled with the fire of Thy love ! How little pleasure had I taken in this worldly conversation with men whereby I yet daily admit many failings, although I have not yet made sufficient satisfaction for my former defects ! How modest, how pure, how exemplary had my life been, had all my powers been fully subject unto Thy will ; had I firmly fastened all my blind passions and vain affections into Thy Cross ; had I rendered myself dead unto this deceitful world and perfectly buried in Thy wounds !

4. I know, O Lord, that Thou hast agreed to detain me so long in this prison of continual affliction, because now after much pride and vanity Thou dost expect a change of my wicked life and an humble acknowledgement of my own unworthiness, that so Thou mayst dispose me to a desire of Thee and of Thy eternal salvation ; that Thou desirest to make peace with me, that so Thou mayst always have my spirit in Thy holy custody ; that Thou desirest my body, my soul, and whole substance may bear the seal of Thine own image ; that being so made freely conformable unto Thee I may in all things be governed by the conduct of Thy Holy Spirit.

5. Come, therefore, unto Me thy Redeemer, poor soul, in all thy afflictions and necessities, since without Me thou canst nowhere find true rest ; forsake the crowds of men and return into thyself that thou mayst see the difference between worldly pleasures and My consolations. How much doth it afflict Me (thinkest thou) that thou shouldst repel Me from thy heart after so many labours and crosses whereby I would have adopted thee for my spouse and friend, after so many difficult seekings of thee whereby I desired to reduce thee into the true way of life, out of which thou hadst

strayed in pursuing thy blind inclinations? Thou canst not offer Me a more grateful oblation than by humble contrition for thy time lost, to return unto Me; for then dost thou relieve My infirmities when truly as a little one thou criest unto Me, that thou mayst find My strength in thy weakness; then dost thou refresh My weariness when for My honour thou fightest earnestly against thyself; then dost thou free Me from the bond of My enemies when thou bindest thy will and whole soul in My obedience; then dost thou deliver Me out of the power of Pilate when thou sufferest My grace freely to possess thy mind; then dost thou take Me from the Cross when by true humility and patience thou showest thyself crucified unto the world; then art thou truly acceptable unto Me when, from a detestation of sin, thou beginnest to serve Me in newness of life, absolutely conforming thy will unto Mine. Then shall neither death nor hell prevail against thee when thou fully subjectest thyself unto My domination, that My hand may work all things according to My good pleasure, for nothing in the world pleaseth Me more than when I see thee striving valiantly with faithful fervour and constant proficiency; for as the death of a sinner is grievous unto Me, so nothing is more pleasing unto Me than that My Passion be not frustrated of its effect in the salvation of souls.

CHAPTER VI

Of the Confidence of a Penitent and the Remission of Sins

1. *Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will ease you.*¹ This is the property, this is the office of Jesus, to comfort the afflicted, to receive the penitent, to relieve the oppressed, to help the infirm, to cherish those that mourn, to assist those that strive, to give Himself to those that overcome, and to aid all those that call upon Him faithfully. For when I forsake Jesus then is labour grievous, then the cross is heavy, then my strength becomes weakness, then do I find grief and afflictions, then do I feel burdens upon burdens that are insupportable; because none but Jesus can make the burdens of this life light. But when I withdraw myself from the molestation of this world that I may recreate my mind with the memory of the heavenly rest which all the citizens of that happy kingdom now fully enjoy, whereof even the only memory is sufficient to abate all the troubles of this journey; when I firmly purpose to return unto God, to fly unto pardon, to arise unto life, voluntarily calling all worldly vanities out of my mind, for God's sake; when I bewail my sins, when I humbly accuse myself before Him; then the memory of Jesus and His Passion

¹ Matt. xi. 28.

becomes sweet unto me, then do I drive away fear, then do I lay aside sloth, then do I cast away lukewarmness, then do I go on consistently, because I certainly know that a penitent sinner cannot be repelled, since Jesus died only to seek sinners ; then do I boldly cry out, Sweet Jesus, where art Thou whom my soul seeketh ? When I sit as a dove mourning by the fountains of waters, thinking and revolving how short, how frail this life is ; how vain the comforts, how frequent the tribulations of the world, how little zeal there is towards God, how slender devotion, how manifold disquiets amongst men, how long, how bitter my separation is from the safety of my eternal mansion, and that for my sins it is not yet permitted that I should presently fly thither to my rest ; then my prayer grows fervent, then my tears flow, my very heartstrings melting like wax out of a desire to find my Redeemer ; then Jesus draws near that He may accompany the desolate, that He may hear him that groans, that He may refresh a thirsting soul with good things. Then He knocks, then He speaks words full of sweetness, then He holds forth His hand that He may help one that fainteth, then He preserveth my soul out of the snare and my feet from falling, that I may praise Him in the land of the living.

2. Thou seest therefore of how great a good thou deprivest thyself whilst through a vain lukewarmness thou drawest not near unto Jesus ; thou canst never get out of the snare of sin, nor have true peace as long as thou suspectest His bounty, as long as thou forsakest not thyself fully for love of Him. Thou art deceived if thou think the way of Jesus difficult or dangerous, for the true love of Jesus neither begetteth trouble, nor bringeth distraction, nor feeleth hardships, nor refuseth

labours, nor seeketh any other thing before Jesus crucified. If sometimes He permit thee to be afflicted, trust still in Him, and without delay recur unto Him ; for He doth this that thou mayst seek Him the more fervently and mayst only thirst after Him in Himself. Neither wouldst thou sincerely discern the vanity of the world, nor the frailty of sensible consolations, nor the continual dangers of thy soul living here amongst her enemies, if thou wert not weaned from these human desires with the wormwood of tribulation.

3. Every day firmly purpose diligently to persist in such and such good intentions, to bear simply for God's sake the troubles of such persons or such labours, and as often as thou findest thyself wanting in any virtue make haste presently unto Jesus, and so cheerfully address thyself to thy business ; nor ever cease until thou obtain it, for by these small exercises thou wilt by degrees attain to greater, and at length it will become most pleasant unto thee to bear anything for God's sake. Forsake not thy appointed devotions for any perturbation of mind, unless thou art constrained to change them for some more meritorious works ; if thou art sometimes deficient in any one virtue let not that diminish thy fervour but presently study how to diminish that defect by thy example in other virtues ; for the mind doth easily revert unto a laxitude, yea after many labours, if it be not always restrained by continual exercises from its own inclinations. Deal confidently with Jesus in all things, although sometimes thou seemest plainly rejected by Him ; for by how much the more importunately thou runnest after Jesus by so much the more will the love of Jesus be enkindled in thee, by so much the more strong, the more apt, wilt thou become unto all good, and the

more free wilt thou be made from all worldly tumults. For those who are true sons of Christ abhor nothing that may be grateful unto Him, prefer nothing unto His love, fly no sufferings for Him; He is above all sweet, above all things dear unto them, they cheerfully resign all things that His will may be always fulfilled in them.

4. O how happy were it with thee and at how great peace in every respect wouldst thou be, if that powerful Jesus kept the cover of thy house! For thou canst not here be secure, nor shalt thou ever here be without enemies by whom thou shalt be provoked unto combat; but there is great comfort propounded unto thee in His words who says unto thee: "I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him and glorify him"; as if He should say, Let not My servant be afraid how much soever he be oppressed by others, how much soever the pit of temptations and afflictions may open its mouth against him; let him not decline My will nor presume upon his own strength, nor forsake his good purposes, and let him humbly with his whole heart commit the rest to Me; for although sometimes he be not sensible of My consolation, yet then do I discern all things and dispose of all things according to My will; then am I near unto him by My grace and My protection, I will deliver him and glorify him.

5. O how sweet a thing were it to fly unto the Cross of Christ, if we would hear Christ speaking in us, if all that is in us were subject unto Him, so that His virtue possessed every corner of our heart! How quiet, how secure should we be from the troubles of this life, from the terrors of future judgement and infernal punishment, wherewith wicked men are often tormented by an inward sting of conscience from which no worldly solace can free them! How sweet were it to be

with God, to think of God, and every way to obey His voice, if we had God alone and not human favours before our eyes, if His grace were suffered to flourish in us, and that we would not rely upon the frail strength of our own wisdom! For he that desireth to attain the true familiarity of God and a stable peace of mind, ought simply to offer up his whole affection unto God ; because as God gives us not His grace by constraint but gratis, so He doth infuse it more abundantly where the mind doth more humbly desire to be subject unto Him.

CHAPTER VII

Of the Excitation of Fervour and True Obedience

1. *My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said unto me daily: Where is thy God?*¹ Yea, and so ought always my tears to be unto me, both day and night, both at home and abroad, whilst this wandering in exile severs me from Thy love ; whilst I am annoyed with the impurity of these senses whereby the purity of Thy contemplation is hindered, whilst I sustain the load of so many defects, so many anxieties, so many unquiet passions, wherewith I cannot perfectly elevate my mind unto Thee ; whilst I see my own many and great infirmities whereby I so often offend Thee, so soon grow weary of well-doing, so little weigh my own great wants, so coldly, so negligently tend to my true and eternal end ; whilst Thou who art my only good, my whole strength, and whole treasure art so alienated from my heart, while I suffer Thy example, Thy wounds, Thy benefits, Thy holy counsels so lightly to pass out of my mind, when notwithstanding I have every hour need of Thee that Thy living grace may defend me from evil.

2. Ah, my God, I have hitherto done nothing ! I have neglected much, profited nothing ; I now acknowledge my fault, I now humbly beg mercy, I now open my

¹ Psa. xli. 4.

miseries before Thy presence. Alas! I have spent time enough vainly, I have been silent long enough, have far enough departed from Thee; it is now time to lay aside childish customs, and to think seriously of Thy service. Now I will return unto Thee, now do I offer up my whole spirit, my whole soul, upon the altar of Thy most holy Cross, now do I prostrate my face upon the earth before Thee. Lord Jesus, pardon me, and make my heart for ever hereafter to burn with an unquenchable fire of Thy love.

3. If thou wilt be truly Mine, and cherish My love in thee I will daily take care of thee, and will teach thee those things which are profitable and necessary for thy soul. Many cry earnestly after Me when adversity pincheth them and their desires are not satisfied; but they cannot find Me because they seek not My love but themselves and their own worldly desires. Many spend their time in hearing and enquiring what others do, what is said of themselves and others, whereby they may please their own foolish affections with other men's impertinent stories; these things are altogether vain and inconsistent with true fervour of spirit. I will not have thee trouble thyself with what doth not concern thee, that thou mayst keep thy mind pure for Me alone.

4. It much hindereth thy proficiency that thou givest way unto thy passions to master thy reason; that thou soon givest credit unto thy own apprehensions before thou knowest how thou oughtest to behave thyself according to the rules of charity. When therefore any occasion occurreth, first consider with thyself what thou oughtest to do before thou give an answer, for perhaps there will be no need to use any answer, and by serious consideration the violence of passion may be appeased.

5. Beware lest when I give thee a sweetness of devotion

thou begin to lay aside thy filial reverence towards Me, lest perchance never thinking of the inconstancy and frailty of nature, thou be not armed for a temptation which may shortly befall thee ; but always keep thy heart so between strong hopes and humble fear that howsoever I shall dispose of thee I may always find thee subject unto Me. Wonder not that thou dost not always find the same fervour, for I know well what is good for thy soul. When I touch thy heart with the virtue of My spirit then make haste modestly to raise thyself unto Me, but when I leave thee to thine own hardness of heart then contemplate thine own infirmity without My strength ; then by reading or prayer prepare thyself to an internal conversation, where at length thou shalt find Me. Then must thou offer violence unto thy heart and body that thou mayst strive, not coldly but ardently, to return unto Me. Nor care thou much though thou arrive not to the contemplation of higher secrets ; for the simple idiot who serves Me humbly may profit himself more before Me than he that feeds his mind with the contemplation of the highest mysteries.

6. Sometimes thy coolness ariseth from too much tiring or oppressing of sensible nature, and then thou must deal more mildly with it, as with thy feeble beast ; then convenient rest, then favourable licence, is to be allowed, lest while for the present time thou afford it not what is necessary, thou find thy beast infirm and unfit for thy use for all future time. Sometimes also it proceedeth from outward trouble, or from My secret providence whereby I leave thee in this thy dryness, that from thence thou mayst learn to cleave more closely to Me, since thou art so unable to persist without My grace. Sometimes, finally, it ariseth from a looseness of the flesh and an immoderate affection of sensible things ;

then the weapons of penance, then the spurs of devotion are to be resumed, for the flesh doth not willingly offer itself to tread My paths unless it be compelled by force not to adhere to its sordid affections ; then My humility, My patience, My charity wherewith I redeemed thee are to be ruminated, that so by degrees thou mayst raise thyself up unto a sincere love of Me ; then holy histories, then famous examples are to be looked over, wherewith My servants both formerly have and at present do daily adorn My Church. Thou seest what novices, what fools, how abject they make themselves unto this world for My sake ; because by this means they find I am the most simply to be beloved, and because they can never be satiated with love of Me. The world thinks them fools and forsaken of God because they fly temporal pleasures, and because they patiently bear unjust miseries ; but they most wisely pass their time, and as My special friends are to be advanced to the height of My glory.

7. How then dost thou yet live securely serving the desires of the flesh, whereas if thou hadst My spirit within thee thou wouldst be ashamed to be subject unto these irrational passions ? but how much the more and greater infirmities thou didst feel, by so much the more laboriously wouldst thou strive, until thou wert healed of those infirmities. It is not sufficient for thee to pour out many prayers or to propose many corporal penances to thyself (although these will help well to the attaining true fervour), for under these may be hidden a proud mind, and a private love of thy own will ; but thou must simply go to the root itself, that so all presumption and self-will being cast away thou simply leave thyself wholly unto Me, and learn either to increase or moderate thy zeal as true charity and My

spirit shall require. It would not a little help thee if after thy interior conversation thou wouldst not presently pour out thyself upon exterior things, but wouldst yet relieve thy mind in My presence ; for a frequent inward breathing renders the worst of virtue easy and offers remedy against vain distractions and occasions of offending. Why shouldst thou be so dry, so cold, in My service, but because a true love of Me is not enkindled in thee, and thou convertest thyself unto human consolations, and those depress thy mind that it cannot fly after Me ?

8. Begin therefore now anew whilst the present time awaits thee, as if thou hadst before thee a thing of the greatest moment ; that thou mayst prepare for Me a fit place in thy mind. Be not troubled about other men's lives, since many things may be found amongst men which rather afford matter of lamentation than imitation ; but think what all men ought to be, how holy, how modest their conversation ought to be, that they may be made worthy of My grace. Whensoever thou shalt observe in one or other any good action, propound always to follow that, and when thou shalt perceive any ill, study diligently to decline it ; nor let it suffice that thou think or mean well, but use thy endeavour that thou do all well, and then at length shalt thou find the sweetness of true fervour.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the Desire of the Heavenly City and of the True Bliss in Heaven

1. O blessed habitation of the celestial city, daily sought with so many weeping sighs, with so many devout penances of the faithful ! Who, with a perfect judgement concerning the slippery pleasures of this miserable world, would not plainly despise them, and with the whole affection of his heart desire to be ascribed to thy most noble society ; where true fulness, incomparable security, endless felicity are possessed ; where eternal rest without any disturbance, unchangeable concord without any dissension, and immeasurable fruition of all goods without the least variation, is found ! With what fervour, with how much longanimity, with how great detestation of sin and all worldly vanities, ought we to tend to Thy unspeakable profession ? Who would not willingly lose his blood, his life, that he may be made partaker of Thy endless felicity ? Who would not go through fire and water, through rocks and crosses bearing with joy the ills of all men, to Thee, who dost abound with an affluence of all things desirable which neither beget satiety nor admit hunger, nor suffer the affection to stray farther ?

2. Why therefore do we not accustom ourselves here

unto Thy exercises, unto Thy songs, unto the most refulgent manners of Thy citizens, that by the familiar and sweet remembrance of them we may assuage the miseries of this tumultuous life? Why do we fly from a holy desire of Thee, from Thy wholesome laws and counsels, yet sticking in the filth of this vile life when all our felicity is to be expected in the only fruition of Thee, and no defiled or unclean thing can ever enter within Thy limits?

3. No wicked thing, nothing estranged from God, or contrary to the spirit of Christ, shall enter there; because that is the kingdom which Christ purchased with His own blood for His sheep which with true meekness obey His voice, that after the tempestuous winter of the world they may there be recreated under a canopy of eternal refreshment. No carnal thing that is delighted in the sink of obscene filthiness shall attain to that holy of holies where the blessed souls are arrived after divers penances, passing through the portals of true contrition until they penetrated unto the most inward tabernacle of unchangeable consummation. No abject person, none addicted unto sloth, shall climb unto that most renowned mountain of everlasting life, where the most noble crucified champions, after their great warfare, their glorious works, have obtained a most pleasant refreshment and ease from their labours. Nothing that is vain, nothing that is proud, nothing void of the splendour of true humility shall inhabit that holy new Jerusalem, whither God has decreed His people shall pass through a long desert of humiliations, that being armed with the impenetrable shield of virtue they may, with true constancy of mind hasten into their heavenly country. In fine, nothing that is not governed by the fear of God, that is not

attracted by the love of Christ, that is not affected with hatred of sin, shall be admitted unto the joys of that most delicious paradise. For there is an inheritance prepared from the foundations of the world for the true and only children of God, who, as often as they find themselves to have declined from true charity, do endeavour with humble compunction of spirit to return unto God, that so they may be admitted anew unto His divine grace.

4. There shall be an end of all the sorrow where-with the poor servants of Christ are daily oppressed amidst the various storms of this their human conversation, whilst they conform not themselves unto the manners and vices of the wicked. For as Christ and the Devil are extremely opposite, so the servants of Christ and the servants of the Devil walk contrary ways ; and as the wicked pass from their foolish joy unto perpetual mourning, so the just pass from their saving tears unto infinite and never-fading joys.

5. O how happy will they then think themselves that with so great courage, with so great simplicity they have bowed their necks under the sweet yoke of Christ, following His most profitable admonitions against all the force of perverse nature ! that they have preferred the simple love of Jesus, the observance of justice, the imitation of the saints before all human vanities ! that they delivered up unto Christ their hearts to be governed, their senses to be regulated, their souls to be instructed ; neglecting the care and solicitude of all other things in respect of His faithful service ! With how great jubilee shall they rejoice that they were not here left to their own arbitrament, but that they were deprived of their own affections for Christ, that they courageously endured the warfare of

the Lord, the yoke of Christ, the race of virtue and goodness. How sweet, how pleasing will it be unto them then to think on what they have sustained in the world for God, whilst they shall sit in their tabernacles of peace considering with themselves ; We valiantly suffered these injuries from wicked men, these evils, these afflictions befel us, whilst we had our mind on Jesus and offered our whole affection unto Him ; there were we tormented on our tender flesh, were vilified with unjust reproaches, were tried with various tribulations ; there have we passed a difficult journey, sharp cold, hard labour for Jesus, there have we wept bitterly, sighed daily, watched attentively, whilst we remembered Sion, and we sang its songs in a strange land ; now hath He brought us forth through the paths of justice unto the port of eternal rest, that we may offer up unto Him *a sacrifice of praise, declaring all His wonderful works.*¹ For then shall the blessed souls take wings as eagles, wings of never-decaying virtue, wings of burning love, wherewith they shall mount unto the feet of Jesus, to the bosom of the Bridegroom, to the wounds of Him that was crucified, from whose sight before they were separated by so long and so sad an exile. Then shall be granted a perfect entrance into the fountain of charity, into the torrent of grace, into the abyss of all delight which infinitely doth rejoice the city of God ; for because they here with their most intimate affection night and day sought Jesus in all things, therefore there shall they arrive to the most intimate love of Jesus.

6. How fully therefore shall all those citizens be satisfied after their temporal discommodities, after their few combats, how excellently ; how nobly have

¹ Psa. cxv. 17.

they acted their parts here that they should now merit to be advanced unto so great a height of felicity ! Here they felt the harshness of virtue, there shall they be abundantly filled with all manner of sweetness ; here they found an obscure knowledge, an infirm love, a decaying fortitude ; there shall they know clearly, melt with love, and triumph without end ; for the soul shall there no more seek neither the world, nor the flesh, nor itself, nor anything else but God ; and so God only shall rest in it, and all that is in it (as a drop of water swallowed up in a sea of wine) shall fully pass into Him.

7. Here although it were grievous to the flesh to be restrained from their own liberty, yet being endued with strength from above they voluntarily offered themselves unto the discipline of the Cross, that so they might be enabled unto many hardships wherein the love of God required their industry. Now, from the full possession of God they are endowed with so great immunity, with so much dilatation of heart, that they can never be farther oppressed with any diminution of virtue, with any coolness of devotion, with any fear of death, with any danger of sinning, or burden of depraved affections ; they shall never farther sustain any adversity or feel any trouble, because they have now received an end of all their trials. Here they walked in rags of poverty and contempt, not willing to be reputed honourable in the world ; there they shall be clothed in royal robes of supreme eminency where-with they shall appear more splendid than the shining sun itself. Here they macerated themselves with continuous castigations of devotion and penance, leaving no time for vanity and sloth ; but bending their whole study how they might find efficacious means to

subdue the flesh, they scarce gave it rest by day or refreshment by night, neither ease after labour nor peace after victory, so warily observing, so fervently resisting, so happily subduing all its affections that the power of the enemy was everywhere overthrown, everywhere frustrate of their desires ; there shall they now cease from all war, from all anxiety concerning any enemies whatsoever, they shall change their swords into palms and their bucklers of penitential rigour into the well-sounding harps of perpetual exaltation ; there they shall proceed with joy and triumph, with jubilee as secure conquerors, throwing their crowns before Jesus, saying : Thou art worthy, O omnipotent Jesus, to receive all honour, power, and glory, for that Thou as a faithful safeguard hast brought us through our cruel enemies, through various tribulations, through difficult conflicts ; Thou hast showed the hardness of temptation, Thou hast given us to drink the wholesome wine of compunction, but now Thou hast caused us to rejoice for the time past, for the days of old wherein we saw evil, and we shall be with Thee day and night unto all eternity, and our joy shall none take from us.

8. Here they shunned rest, abhorred peace with the world because they knew themselves passengers, and therefore thought they ought not to rest in the tempestuous sea of this world ; here they urged themselves to go on, compelled themselves unto virtue ; they laboured hard against sin, turned every stone that they might go after Christ ; lest they should suffer their time to pass unprofitably, and lest the sluggish inclinations of nature should by little and little recover force. Here they crept upon the earth as abject worms, not to be looked upon for any outward appearance or excel-

lence, seeking nothing amongst men but to be conformable unto their crucified Redeemer; Him they loved with their whole heart so sincerely, so fervently did they serve Him, that they laid aside all care of themselves, so that they felt His love burning within them; not being able to endure that their sordid flesh should in any measure wax proud or oppose itself unto the works of salvation.

9. But what salvations, what embraces, what eulogies of honour do they there receive from Christ Himself and all His Saints, as His principal friends who neither favoured the world nor themselves that Christ alone might be endeared unto them! There, despised humility will outshine all kingly ornaments, simple contempt of a man's self will incomparably be preferred before all human wisdom, the sincere love of Jesus will most amply be recompensed with the most pleasant fruition of Jesus Himself. There they shall receive for mourning joy, for ashes crowns, for sackcloth purple, for every humiliation unspeakable exaltation. Here they incline themselves to accept with patience all men's actions, as well good as bad; there by how much the more troubles they have undergone for God's sake, by so much the nearer shall they sit unto Christ in the kingdom of His glory. O most happy citizens, now at rest from all afflictions of this miserable pilgrimage! O most worthy men, truly men and not foolish children, running after every vanity of heart, truly noble, truly valiant, who are adorned with so many ensigns of divine nobility!

10. Here they rendered themselves abject and little in the eyes of the world, that they might become truly great and high in the sight of Christ, in all things minding His presence, and seeking above all things

how they might become acceptable unto Him alone. To Him they resigned the custody of their senses, the obedience of their will, the bridle of their judgement, the whole affection of their hearts, the whole force of their body ; they made all that was in them serve at His beck. Neither did they trust in their own wit, nor boast their experience, nor did they (though after long labours) attribute anything unto themselves ; but humbly grounded all on the virtue of Christ, by continual elevation of mind, craving His assistance in all things, and constantly ruminating His words and examples as the true book of life and perfection.

¶ 11. Here they lived as deaf and dead unto the unquiet tumults of worldly solicitude, content with the meanest things only to supply their necessities, and refusing the more delicate carnal superfluities, that so they might the more diligently attend the business of their soul. They were replenished with so great fortitude, so great integrity of spirit by their continual chastisement of rebellious nature, that they avoided no groans, no conflicts, whereby they might defend themselves from being defiled with sin, might remain in the grace of Christ. Here they sought to purge away all corruption of their senses and passions, and to put off the whole old natural man, that, as being truly crucified, they might enjoy the happy society of Christ ; there their infirmity shall be changed into strength, their corruption into purity, their age into an everlasting youth ; they shall receive new eyes which shall be delighted with the true beauty of heavenly objects, new ears which shall never more be delighted with the hurtful discourses of men but with the most joyful triumphs of the martyrs and all the Saints, new hearts which shall never again be separated from God by any temptations,

by any molestations, by any distracting thoughts. They shall receive there solace of their affliction, the treasure of their devotion, the reward of their labour, the manifestation of their faith, the end of their hope, the fulfilling of their charity ; they shall receive the crown of their conflicts, the rest of their penance, whereby they shall never again return unto repentance ; the Lord will give them eternal rest, and perpetual light shall shine upon them ; Christ shall then openly testify how pleasing it was unto Him that men should so humbly forsake themselves for Him.

12. O blessed inhabitants of that most happy country, ye have now finished your whole probation, ye have now received firm admission, ye have now passed all ways of danger, ye have now conquered all inconstancy of human frailty ! Now with infinite advantage have ye received the end of all your temptations, whereby you were tried as gold in the furnace ; now no farther fearing the contempt of the proud, nor the fury of tyrants, nor the calumny of fools, nor the fraud of deceivers, nor the suggestions of the flesh or the Devil, nor the troubles of the world or of men ! Ye have now finished the day of labour, the night of affliction, the time of temptation, ye have found the light of true glory, the true sun of justice, the stars of perpetual splendour, amongst whom you shall also shine without any danger of farther darkness. For whilst ye lived in this world you had this in your desires that Christ might reign in you, and that He alone might be glorified in all your labours, and by this means you fled all pleasure in worldly vanity ; for ye would not give way unto the foolish affections of nature, but you used all diligence for this, that you might conform your lives unto the life of Christ, inasmuch as human frailty per-

mitted. Ye made Christ the end of all things which you undertook, seeking no other comfort than that you might always offer your hearts and souls unto Him, by true and pure love. Now what ye have long desired 'tis come to pass, for Christ will now with full dominion reign in your souls, and ye will have all His glory and magnificence shining on you ; He will govern you, He will feed you and possess you as His truly beloved, and for all your works will replenish you with so great sweetness that ye shall never be able to pass the bounds of joy.

13. Alas, unhappy we who yet live here in the land of iniquity ! Receding so far from your glorious examples, miserable and mad men that we are, to whom after so many deceits, so many dangers, in this vain world 'tis yet delightful ; we yet desire to prolong this base and vile life, men that are out of their wits and foolish children who refuse the most precious jewels, that they may have worthless stones and straws ! How often have we been wearied with the heavy burden of sin, and notwithstanding we yet seek not true rest ; how grievously have we been weakened by the ill humours of our sensual passions, and nevertheless we yet foolishly refuse perfect health ; how seldom are we free from either external or internal troubles, and notwithstanding we depart not yet from the cause of all perturbation, which is the love of this present life : we yet cherish the vile flesh and its stubborn inclinations, which do either utterly take away or greatly weaken our desire to true felicity, for the mind cannot go two contrary ways at once. He therefore that is affected with an inordinate love of himself and of this world, it may most certainly be concluded that the sincere love of God or of Heaven is not in him.

CHAPTER IX

A Prayer for the Reconciliation of the Soul and the Free Conversion thereof

O most sweet Jesus, I desire from the bottom of my heart to return unto Thee, being now at length wearied with the heavy burden of my manifold miseries and daily offences. I now confess openly, unto my own shame and confusion, and to the magnifying of Thine infinite mercy, that I have hitherto led a life replenished with all sorts of uncleanness, with all impurity and vanity, being worthy to suffer the injuries of all men and other creatures, and utterly unworthy that Thou shouldst ever admit my soul into favour with Thyself or any of Thy friends.

I dare not, sweet Jesus, appear openly in Thy sight, considering with myself Thy grievous labours and innumerable crosses whereby Thou wouldst redeem me unto the right way ; when I cordially remember Thy power, my own weakness, Thy majesty and my vileness, Thy clemency and my ingratitude, Thy Deity and my nullity, and yet my most unworthy pride and rashness, Thy benefits and my unprofitableness, the sacraments of Thy grace and my impenitency, Thy wounds and my sins, whereby I as yet crucify, afflict, and persecute Thee, my most gracious Redeemer ! Thou daily showest me Thy light, Thy charity, Thy patience ; Thou affordest me

the examples of other Thy servants, who in body and mind, night and day, never cease to praise Thee ; so many are the penances, so many the virtues, so many the devotions which they daily offer upon Thy altar, and I as yet abide in the impurity of my vices. Thou seekest me and I hide myself, Thou followest me and I fly from Thee, Thou callest unto me and I hold my peace, Thou abidest with me and I murmur, Thou dost chastise me and I become the more obdurate, Thou bringest my sins unto my memory and I regard them not, although I am absolutely the most miserable and vilest amongst all men.

I beseech Thee, O Lord Jesus, hide not Thy singular mercy from so great a sinner, pierce powerfully and deeply my heart with the lance of Thy Passion ; that I may be able truly to humble myself before Thee for all my vileness. Let Thy pity heal what my iniquity hath grievously enfeebled, and let Thy holy grace work true life in my soul, that I may now at length before my death be able perfectly to return unto Thee, and to be truly admitted with the rest of Thy friends to a reconciliation by Thy infinite mercy, who art my true God and my Lord for ever and ever.

CHAPTER X

Of the Rules of Working a Perfect Reconciliation

1. Most dear son, because thou art very infirm and soon departest from the purposes which thou makest for My sake, nor canst find true justice without My direction and assistance ; therefore will I plainly teach thee, if thou wilt hear Me, those things which please Me most, and wherein I will use thy service, that I may perfect My will and goodness in thy heart, and whereby also thou mayst always direct thy conscience with true profit before Me, and convert all the forces of thy soul in a perfect reconciliation unto Me. The first foundation of all is, that thou sincerely acknowledge Me thy Lord and Redeemer, cherishing My fear and reverence in thy mind, as a dutiful son always yielding Me submission of thy soul and body, in all things which I shall require of thee ; that thou often, with fervour of mind, meditate in My Passion and the afflictions which I sustained for thy salvation, because I left them unto thee as a true incentive of all love and virtue ; that thou use continual diligence against all vices, against all the corrupt passions of thy soul and devilish temptations of the flesh for My honour's sake ; that thou humbly obey My words as if thou as yet sawest Me speaking unto thee in them ; that thou always have

My counsels at hand, as if thy whole life consisted in the observation of them ; that thou always esteem My honour thy comfort, My injuries thy afflictions, My Cross thy treasure, My love thy delight ; and always study to imitate My examples by true patience and abandoning thine own will.

2. The second fundamental is that thou prosecute My mother Mary and other My Saints with simple reverence, humbly recommending thy whole life, all thy affairs, all thy afflictions and infirmities unto their faithful protection, esteeming thyself happy that I have vouchsafed thee the patronage of such who have singularly proved the miseries and dangers of this life, and are therefore led by a deep compassion of their brethren yet living in the world sincerely to recommend unto Me the souls of such as recur unto them. I will not that thou ever forsake them, but that thou frequently read their examples, that thou fervently thirst after their felicity, that thou simply imitate their lives ; with whom also I would have thee contract an intimate familiarity, for they with singular affection do desire thy salvation.

3. The third fundamental is, that thou never think thou canst satisfy Me according to My justice unless I should deal mercifully with thee, for the infinite sins wherewith thou hast offended Me thy God ; I will therefore that thou often think upon the wickedness and frailty of thy life, how vain, how inconstant thou art without My grace, and that thou wouldst daily incur innumerable hazards of thy soul without My protection, by reason of thy innate perverseness of nature and thy defect of judgement to discern what is fit to be done when any temptation invades thee ; how thou oughtest to punish thyself and be confounded, and how un-

worthy thou wert of any favour or countenance if thou wert to be judged according to thy own vileness. Exercise continually thy mind with these things ; not that thou mayst at all give way unto dejection or scrupulous pusillanimity, but mayst convert thyself unto Me by saving repentance, and that thou insist not any longer on thy own affections or conveniency, but that thou fervently apply thyself unto all humility, esteeming thyself of no worth nor able to do any good thing without Me ; for by this means thou wilt eschew presumption and vain complacence both in word and deed, thou wilt likewise bend thyself to bear My Cross, and will in all things be resigned and subject unto Me. I will that every day thou begin anew (since true perfection consists not so much in thy present fervour as in an uniform and constant course of life whereby thou continually dost adhere unto Me), that so thou mayest be a daily proficient¹ ; but upon greater days prepare thyself with peculiar devotion, that so thou mayst then find greater grace, and spend the following days with constant zeal in My service. And when it shall happen that thou slip or stray from Me, then forsake men and study with humble confession to return unto Me. To this purpose have I left thee all My sacraments and the helps of My Church ; that by thy devout behaviour thou mayst by these and other means of grace obtain the salvation of thy soul.

4. To these three foundations add also this fourth ; that thou use all possible diligence concerning thy conversation with thy neighbour, for many think it sufficient that they recur frequently and call fervently upon Me, and that they attentively meditate upon Me and My benefits, but willingly exempt themselves from

¹ *Proficient* here in the literal sense of one who is advancing.

labours and exercises of virtue ; neither will they bear any accidents nor the infirmities of their neighbours for My sake, and so they become proud and vain and altogether unapt to bear My Cross. But I say unto thee that thou wilt never be perfect nor conformable unto My will unless thou manfully mortify thyself, that against thy own will thou mayst humbly and quietly bear the burdens of others for My sake. I will not therefore that thou despise any in their words or actions, nor that thou respect their defects or their persons, but that thou reverence Me who created and redeemed both thee and them. Always consider attentively the weakness of thy own judgement and the pravity of thy own will, that so thou mayst cheerfully relinquish thyself and all things for My sake ; neither despise thou the poor nor flatter the rich nor oppress the weak, nor take part with the proud ; nor be thou distracted by any scandals ; but, as much as thou art able, imitate the examples of the humble and those that love Me. Labour to bear with the defects of all men (reputing thyself of all men the most deficient), that so at the last thou mayst with them merit My mercy. I will not that thou frequent the conversation of such as may deprave thy manners, whether they be men or women ; but always think how miserable thou art as often as thy judgement is obscured with the mist of temptations or of depraved passions, and how studiously the Devil seeks such occasions that he may draw thee into his net ; for I have paid a most infinite price for thy soul, and therefore thou dost grievously afflict Me when thou hearkenest more unto the flesh and thine own vile nature than unto My counsels.

5. The fifth is that by all means thou avoid sadness and dejection of mind as much as thou canst, casting

thy whole care and hope upon Me who only sustain thee in mind and body, daily offering Myself and all My creatures unto thy service. Never let thy heart fail, never recede from good enterprises, for I that have taken upon Me thy whole protection know well the weakness of thy power and the strength of My grace, not only to the resisting sinful motions but also to constant enduring any difficulties, any repugnancies of nature, for My honour. Thou seest that sometimes thou dost remain in My love unconquered and unmoved amidst the greatest temptations, because by My special help I am present with thee that thou mayst perceive nothing is impossible in respect of My grace ; but at other times, upon the least occasion, thou art greatly perplexed, because then I suffer thee to see how little thou canst do of thyself without My assistance. Sometimes without the slightest motive thou art inflamed with most fervent devotion, because then I am with thee, sweetly and silently making thee to feel My presence ; but at other times thy perplexity and dryness is not taken away by the strongest motives of devotion, because then I come to teach thee what thou art continually to expect in this life, that thou mayst always be prepared for the cross without which thou canst not long continue ; and that thou mayst humbly resign thyself unto Me in all things, whether I give or withdraw My sweetness. It is I that inspire thee with prudence that thou mayst warily eschew future dangers, who (unawares unto thee), so compose thy words and actions as I see it most conduceth unto My honour ; I privately teach thee when thou oughtest to speak, when it befits thee to be silent, when thou oughtest humbly to suffer, and when valiantly to resist, when it behoves thee to show thyself prompt and

flexible, and when cautious and backward. Strive therefore valiantly, persevere faithfully, commit thyself unto Me confidently, for I want no power to protect thee against thine enemies, nor can any temptation hurt thee when My hand guards thee. Show thyself always cheerful and courteous towards thy neighbour, although sometimes thou suffer evil from him, for by this means thou shalt never be overcome of evil, but shalt always overcome and triumph by thy good example ; even as I was never wanting unto man in any offices of piety or mercy, although I had received innumerable evils at their hand. Beware that upon no occasion (if it be possible) thou ever offend thy brother, nor ever wrong him in his body, his mind, his goods, or his honour, even as thou thyself wouldst not be wronged by others ; for thou wouldst walk with much merit and great peace of conscience amongst men if thou would simply regard Me in all things and repose thy whole trust in Me alone.

6. Let the sixth be this, that in all thy works thou seek Me thy Lord only for Myself, and not for any human profit, or for any sensible sweetness of devotion ; for sometimes thou wilt be left without any manner of consolation, either external and human or internal and spiritual, that thou mayst understand how vain, how frivolous it is to hope in these sensible things, and that thou mayst learn how necessary it is that thou become truly naked before thou canst be perfectly united unto Me, and before thou canst rest truly established in My love. Whatsoever therefore befalls thee, whatsoever thou art forced to suffer, ever have this before thine eyes, that thou be always faithful unto Me, and that thou never depart from My will for any worldly respect, for thou mayst most confidently be assured that I will

not leave my servant in affliction, but will quickly return and drive all clouds of sorrow from his heart. When any man simply delivers his heart unto Me I so mould it unto My love that I presently make him strongly to resist vice ; then is all worldly favour contemned as vile, and My glory alone is sought in all things, then humility and abjection are sweet for My sake, then compunction is frequent, then the affection unto sin appears hateful, and to suffer for My Name's sake is reputed the highest dignity. Study therefore to keep thy heart unto Me alone, as the proper temple of My habitation, that thou mayst diligently root out all hateful imaginations and all other roots of evil ; for I will continually try thee, now with the violence of temptation, then with the bitterness of affliction, that I may see what thou wilt do or suffer for love of Me. Prepare therefore thy soul unto temptation, that thou mayst abide constant in My love amidst all adversity, and mayst receive assistance from My hand in the time of trial.

7. Let the seventh be that thou chiefly shun fruitless loss of thy time, since nothing is more hurt[ful] unto the soul, nothing makes the race of this life and My yoke burdensome, but indulging unto carnal sloth and the affections of a man's own will. I will, therefore, that thou study daily to accomplish those things which belong unto thy state and vocation, that the Devil find thee not at leisure for him. It is necessary that thou use moderate rest and refreshment of thy weak body, that so thy spirit being relieved thou mayst cheerfully return with new force to bear My burden ; but desire not to stay long amongst throngs of men where thou mayst soon forget thine own end and My Passion, nor give way unto the sloth of thy natural affection which will quickly bring thee unto a neglect of My will and

thine own salvation. I will that thou utterly forsake thyself and all things else for Me, whether temporal or spiritual, yea, thy very private devotions, when I call thee from them unto other things, that thou mayst simply do My will ; for it is not how great his works are, nor how intense his sensible fervour is, that renders a man acceptable unto Me, but My grace and My power, whereby thou humbly sufferest thyself to be led hither and thither as with My bridle. Nor think thou that devotion lost, for it is not lost but purified and completed, when, (leaving thine own will), it is changed for My sake. Ever retain Me in thy mind, who only do sanctify thy conversation, that by good example thou mayst glorify Me amongst men wheresoever thou livest ; that My fear may restrain thee from evil, that My love may render the burden of this frail life light unto thee, that My grace may make all thy works acceptable unto My Father, that the memory of Me may mitigate all thy afflictions and adversities. For I have appointed every man a certain space of time in this world, that he may pass through many labours and trials of humility before he attain unto true rest, that he may always remember himself to be a poor pilgrim that hath need of great patience and fortitude to bear all the discommodities of this journey ; yet am I never wanting unto any of My servants in the time of trial, but as I permit them to be for a while afflicted, so after, I use to return again unto them, and delight them a hundred times more than if they never had suffered affliction for Me.

8. Let the eighth be that thou think no man so deadly an enemy unto thee as thyself and thine own flesh, from whence all wickedness and misery continually proceedeth. Apply, therefore, all care that thou mayst thoroughly overcome thyself as often as

thou perceivest thyself prone unto evil, or averse unto virtue ; direct all thy endeavours, all thy practice, unto this, that thou subject the vain and irrational desires of the flesh unto My grace. Never suffer thy mind to forsake its inward peace for any adversity, neither addict thyself to hearken unto such things as may either overthrow thy good purposes or hinder thy charity towards Me or thy neighbour. Thou wilt daily find many enticements to wickedness, and thou hast very little power of thyself to resist occasions of evil ; how diligently therefore oughtest thou to watch over thyself ! With how great humility, with how frequent prayer doth it behove thee to fly unto Me who alone am able to preserve thee from evil, and I never shut My breast against thy prayer. It is true that I sometimes forsake thee for a time, because I judge it expedient that thou mayst be sensible of thy own vanity, and be converted unto Me with the more ardent love ; but I never cease to promote the salvation of thy soul, which was always dearer unto Me than the whole world. Always retain this in thy mind, that thou mayst render thyself faithful towards Me, as unto thy true Lord and supreme Master, and then will I give thee My spirit, which shall confirm thy heart and keep it pure in My love, that thou neither sink under carnality nor affect any other felicity than only to serve Me, nor be ever dejected with the blast of temporal adversity ; then will I be thy shepherd that I may conduct thee securely against all the fury of the internal wolves which always seek to devour thy soul ; then will I be thy refuge, thy consolation, thy perfection against all sorts of evils ; then will I heal thy infirmities and restore thee into the true liberty of My sons ; then will I draw thee from the vain desires of this miserable world that thou

mayst be truly inflamed with a desire of an eternal and unchangeable union with Me in heaven. There thou shalt never more be grieved by occasions of sin, nor shalt thou ever more complain of My absence, because thou shalt always keep Me in full possession ; but thou canst not arrive thither before that with many labours and trials thou hast finished this life. Go on, therefore, valiantly, but also behave thyself warily in all things, lest relying upon thine own judgement thou hinder My grace. I will therefore that as a true son thou humbly obey the precepts of thy Father, and imitate the constancy and virtue of other My servants ; that thou abide in My house with submiss humility, with sincere charity, with invincible patience, with discreet zeal, with holy conversation ; that thou always persist in a sincere acknowledgement of thine own vileness, how much soever thou hast profited in virtue, that so My grace may ebb and flow in thee, without any let^r of pride or worldly vanity.

^r Hindrance.

CHAPTER XI

Three Rules for such as desire Proficiency

I will propose unto thee three rules whereby a certain servant of Mine profited greatly and became most acceptable unto Me.

1. First, he most firmly resolved joyfully to embrace all manner of troubles and adversities, (proceeding either from other men or from any other cause), in honour of My most bitter Passion, having no respect unto the defects of those from whom he suffered, not regarding what they were or what they said or did, but exercising his whole mind in this ; how he might become more conformable unto Me, and how he might correct his own frailties in himself, placing the whole treasure of his soul in this, that he might humbly bear labours and troubles and all sorts of contempt from men, for My sake. And so he only burned with a desire and love of Me, absolutely despising the vanities of this life, remaining always prompt and cheerful in My service, being fully subjected and resigned unto My will howsoever I should dispose of him ; when other vain men were daily afflicted with innumerable perturbations of mind by reason they sought their own commodity and their own desires.

2. Secondly, he resolved with himself, as often as he should perceive any difficulty or repugnance of

nature unto any exercise of virtue, that he would neglect no labour until he obtained the victory over himself ; that whatsoever good he was possibly able to effect he might accomplish it readily and willingly without hesitation for any men, whether neighbours or strangers, friends or foes, great or small, according to the opportunity of time or place, as if he had made himself a mere servant or vassal of all creatures for My sake. He suffered no suspicions or aversions against any to remain in his heart, nor vain sadness or worldly levity to reign in him, not seeking honour or reputation from men but wholly bending himself to the humble bearing of burdens and the most laborious exercises, although others received the whole honour of those exercises and he felt nothing but abjection and contempt amongst men. He reputed no man in the world for an enemy or adverse unto him, but esteemed all men, whether they were beneficial or hurtful, good or bad, given for the profit and advantage of his soul ; nor would he see defects in any other but himself, thinking that other men's offences proceeded from infirmity or ignorance, and so ought justly to be excused or pitied ; or if he discerned any man acting with a depraved will he yet thought he was to be pitied, because that soul was deprived of My grace, without which neither he nor any other could persist in good, and so esteemed himself only vile and a sinner given for the use and service of all men for My sake ; nor cared he nor sought for anything besides Me, being always prepared for all things for My sake.

3. The third was that he never suffered his soul to be so fixed or settled upon the affection of anything besides Me, how dear or necessary soever it seemed unto him, but that he could endure to be bereft thereof without

any, or at least without great trouble or distraction of mind, esteeming himself and all worldly creatures most vain things, whereof he must necessarily at some time be deprived, and which rather hinder than promote the soul's true happiness ; and he studied always so to behave himself as a man truly mortified, having neither soul nor body, nor will nor judgement, nor anything else in this world or about the affairs thereof besides crosses and afflictions, which he always expected and thankfully received for My sake. So he seriously, quietly, constantly, and daily profited ; reputed it frivolous and foolish to be so deprived of the inward peace of his soul and the comfort of My presence for the preservation of himself or any other outward thing, or vanity to waste his time about other men's actions, which he knew was granted him only so to fulfil the pilgrimage of this miserable life, that in the end he may find a happy passage out of this vain world. By these three rules he governed his whole life, being fully subjected, fully resigned unto Me in all things ; not so much valuing either men or women, riches or honours, outward consolations of temporal things, nor yet inward consolations of spiritual things, but that he would willingly suffer himself to be despoiled of all for My sake. And he was perfectly dear, wholly consecrated, unto Me, offering unto Me all the glory and honour of all things which he had or did ; and I ruled him with full power because he had nothing left in himself besides Me.

CHAPTER XII

Of the Beginning of True Repentance

A Prayer

1. O Lord most holy, most gracious, most merciful, Thou hast appointed the day of this life for a day of reconciliation and propitiation, that miserable sinners may return unto peace with Thee ; I will therefore by Thy grace enter into the closet of my heart, I will shut up all the gates of my soul that neither the world nor any other thing may enter which may draw me from the foot of Thy Cross ; I will lay open before Thee all my grievances, all my miseries and necessities, the grievous afflictions, the difficult temptations, the troublesome ways that I have passed, even from my mother's womb ; I will clothe myself with the hair-cloth of humility and abjection, lamenting and bewailing my continual and innumerable iniquities whereby I have cast out Thy love from my heart, because I know Thou art a fountain of grace and mercy which can never be drawn dry. Nor have I any other to whom I can fly besides Thee, who alone art my God and my protector, who alone canst help and comfort me in all my afflictions ; help me therefore, O my God, that I may thoroughly convert my miserable soul unto Thee before the day of Thy wrath come wherein I shall be no longer permitted to repent.

2. Ah, sweet Jesus! all the contrition, all the devotion my soul is able to produce is as nothing, because I have most grievously offended Thee, so gracious, so bountiful a Lord; I have most wickedly provoked Thee, my conductor, my Redeemer, by my daily sins and vanities. Ah, how foolishly have I neglected Thy clemency! how ungratefully have I contemned thy wholesome corrections! how vainly have I nourished my pride against Thee! how fruitlessly have I addicted myself to the sensual love of myself and of the world! how negligently have I regarded myself and my ways before Thee and my neighbours! how far have I departed from the examples of Thy life and Passion!

3. Both living and dying Thou hast extended unto me the arms of Thy mercy, that so by all means Thou mightest draw me unto the way of truth and mightest graciously receive my soul returning unto Thee; Thou through Thy infinite Passion hast deferred Thine anger, to try if so by Thy love Thou mightest move me unto good and prevent my destruction; Thou wert contented to be at peace with me although I was always rebellious and most injurious unto Thee; Thou wouldst have me become Thy son, Thy friend, Thy spouse, Thy heir, that Thou mightest make me partaker of all Thy goods hereafter, and mightest make all Thy residence and habitation in my mind at the present. Thou hast omitted no labours, no crosses, no humiliations, that so Thou mightest bring me out of the sink of sin, and mightest render my heart in all things acceptable and conformable unto Thee. Thou wouldst be my Jesus, my protector, my provider, that I might place my whole hope, my whole care, my whole affection upon Thee alone, and so might be exempted from all care and trouble of this frail world.

4. What shall I do unto Thee, O my God? What shall I say, whither shall I turn myself? Thou confoundest me with Thy charity, Thou hast overcome me with Thy longanimity, Thou hast swallowed me up in Thy bounty; I have not anything to say, I have not anything to return but my poor infirm soul. Woe is me that I have not sooner known Thee, that I have not more earnestly sought Thee, that I have approached Thee so late, so coolly, that I have not yet lost the viciousness of my nature, that I have not cleansed the pollution of my flesh, that I have not cured the blindness of my soul, that I have not bewailed my innumerable sins, that I have not changed my depraved manners according to Thy will, that I have not hitherto loved Thee, my gracious Redeemer who art infinitely above all things to be beloved! Whither shall I now turn myself? who will any longer endure me, since I have neglected Thee my merciful Redeemer, whom the very irrational creatures so faithfully serve and obey?

5. Therefore will I be always weeping, always lamenting, although mine eyes fail me by reason of tears and my bowels be poured upon the earth through contrition; I will not suffer Thee to rest, I will not cease to cry unto Thee, although Thou kill me; until Thou extendest unto me Thy mercy, until Thou enkindle within me Thy love, and consume all my sins with the fire of Thy charity. For whom have I in heaven, whom on earth, at home or abroad, besides Thee? My wounds are grievous, mine enemies strong, my infirmity is more than I am able to express; I stand in need of Thy grace and mercy, my necessity is so great that it brooks no longer delay, no more repulse; I will not therefore depart from Thy feet whatsoever Thou dost unto me, unless Thou first look upon me. I

beseech Thee therefore, O most sweet Jesus, remember Thine infinite mercies, that now at length Thou mayst work my soul's perfect conversion unto Thee ; let Thy victorious power make me truly Thy captive, let Thy might defend me from the persecutions of my enemies, let Thy mercy pardon all my offences, let Thine illumination rectify my heart in the way of holiness, let Thy charity wholly inflame my mind with love of Thee, let Thy grace cure all my vices and infirmities, let Thy hand preserve me for the future from all vile passions and levity. Be Thou my only sweetness that may inebriate me, my fulness which may delight me, my life which may revive me, my God and my all that may strengthen me ; that I may sing Thy mercies through my whole life and find a secure refuge against all temptations under the wings of Thy protection.

CHAPTER XIII

Of Repentance not to be Deferred

1. *There is joy in heaven for one sinner that repenteth.*¹ All that thou oughtest ever to have before thine eyes in this world consists in this, that thou think with thyself what and how miserable thou art of thyself, whitherto thou tendest, where thou shalt shortly be after the small time of this frail life ; that this complacence and vain human friendship often deceives thee, and when all is done will wholly forsake thee in the end ; that not this earth but heaven is thy place, where is thy rest and eternal inheritance, where is Jesus thy beloved, after whom thou dost so earnestly cry, where is the assembly of all the Saints, thy powerful patrons, thy faithful friends, who have trodden the same way of the Cross wherein thou walkest, who desire nothing but to have thee made a comfort of their eternal felicity, infinitely rejoicing in thy continual progress.

2. Study therefore seriously not so much to prolong this life as to make it acceptable unto Thy Creator ; that thou mayst always think of the end wherefore thou wert created, of the charity whereby thou wert redeemed, of the innumerable benefits of God wherewith thou art encompassed on every side, and how humbly

¹ Luke xv. 7, 10.

and devoutly it behoves thee to walk that thou mayst become a true friend of Jesus.

3. Love Him truly and procure His honour daily in all things which thou doest or sufferest, that as often as thou shalt find vain nature resisting thou presently apply the spurs of fervour ; then urge earnestly, then reprove thyself strongly, saying : Ah, wretch, what dost thou ? When wilt thou forsake these vanities ? When wilt thou learn true wisdom, that thou mayst acknowledge the levity of worldly friendship and labour to procure thy soul's true felicity ? When wilt thou lay aside this folly and consider thine infirmities, that thou mayst manfully strive against thyself and thy vices ? When wilt thou attentively weigh the hateful-ness of sin, the sweetness of virtue, the desirableness of affection, if thou continually adhere unto thy vain desires, if thou endeavour to bear nothing for Jesus, if thou yet neglect thine own salvation and the love of God ?

4. For then art thou repugnant unto God and His Saints when thou followest thine evil customs, when thou neglectest to grieve for thy sins and unworthiness, when thou sufferest not Jesus to rule in thy mind ; but when thou shalt return unto Christ by humble repentance, sincerely undertaking amendment of life, then shalt thou find a new law, new sweetness, a new mind, that thou mayst cheerfully proceed in true newness of life ; then will God draw near unto thee, then He may inflame thy devotion already begun with His sweet invitation, and may efficaciously kindle thy whole affection with the fire of His love. Then shall thy conscience receive the kiss of peace when Jesus shall exhibit Himself present in thy mind, then shalt thou receive the robe of charity, the shoes of promptitude,

the shield of fortitude, the ring of fidelity, the garment of all purity, that thou mayst begin a conversation pleasing unto God ; then shall be prepared the fatted calf of infinite spiritual sweetness, that Jesus may make His supper in thy soul ; then shall there be great joy, solemn exultation with a voice resounding the divine praise through the whole heavenly City ; that thou art returned from death unto life, from darkness unto light, from hell unto celestial glory, from the slavery of the Devil unto the sweet obedience of thy eternal Father.

5. It is not fit to defer the business of salvation from day to day, for as repentance is made sweet by often striving, so by how much the seldomer thou comest unto the conflict of repentance, by so much the less apt wilt thou find divers obstacles, strong temptations, terrible enemies, the world deceitfully alluring thee, the Devil fiercely fighting against thee, thy flesh frail, thy will slothful, thy appetite rebellious, thy passions unbridled, thy nature froward, and the immoderate affection of thyself, earnestly instigating thee against goodness. These will lift up their hands against thee, because thou invadest their borders and dominions, and strivest to rescue thy soul from their captivity ; but be not therefore afraid, for there are more for us whilst we fight God's cause than for those ; with them is the arm of flesh, with us is the God of all majesty who fighteth for us.

6. Begin therefore without farther delay, regard the end, attend the crown, see the glorious ensign of the Cross, the sight whereof is terrible unto all the enemies of Christ ; let Jesus be every moment thy hope, thy perfection, thy meditation ; then shall not thy foot be removed nor thy good purposes diminished, for thou shalt suddenly find invincible strength, desired sweet-

ness, unexpected fervour, incomparable peace, happy victory.

7. Be not therefore troubled if the burden of penance sometimes seems grievous unto thee, for hitherto thou hast been in very ill case, yielding so much unto thy natural concupiscence that now must of necessity with so much labour strive against thyself. But think for whom thou strivest, against whom thou labourest ; thou strivest for God, thou labourest against the powers of hell, thou sufferest for Christ and for the eternal felicity of thy soul. Penance seems hard because thou hast not as yet overcome thyself, and because as yet flourisheth not in thee the perfect love of Jesus, against whom thou hast innumerable ways sinned, nor canst thou ever suffer enough for offending Him.

8. What dost thou get by these worldly trifles for which thou art daily so solicitous, being so addicted to novelties, so affected with fair shows, so loose to sensuality, so greedy of things that are dear and precious ? What will these things avail thee towards the salvation of thy soul, towards the overcoming of the Devil, the taming of thy flesh, or the obtaining divine grace and true felicity ? Thou thinkest thou shalt gain some great matter by these temporal things ; but how long thinkest thou to enjoy them when every moment they prepare themselves for flight, and in the end whether thou wilt or no, thou art to be despoiled of them all ?

9. Forsake therefore these vanities, assume a good courage, a manly spirit, an undaunted zeal ; that thou mayst humbly follow Christ thy leader. Say now without farther delay : Here will I begin to pacify my God, here will I commence my journey, that I may leave this miserable conversation of men, and may now at length find the favour of my Creator ; here will I mourn, here

will I denounce war against myself, that I may be able to redeem the time I have formerly lost ; now will I recur unto my crucified Lord, and will confirm my covenant with Him. I will say unto Him : Most sweet Jesus, I have sinned against heaven and against Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son ; for now the gate of mercy is open, the finding of Jesus is easy, the victory over sin is possible, the rigour of divine justice flexible, pardon for all thy wickedness committed is to be obtained. If thou now neglect these things thou wilt too late hereafter lament thy negligence ; thou knowest not how frail thy condition is, how soon thou shalt be deprived of all means of doing good ; what day, what disease, what anguish, may take from thee this temporal life, so that neither by the fervour of prayer, nor by the humility of repentance, nor by the undergoing of any labour, thou shalt be able any more to incline God towards thee.

10. Whilst therefore thou enjoyest the time present, as a wise merchant provide for the eternal good of thy soul. Now thou hast plentiful helps, excellent motives, apt occasions whereby thou mayst carry thy cross after Christ, whereby thou mayst perfect thy sluggish nature with profitable exercises, and mayst accomplish innumerable merits and satisfactions for thy sins ; now hast thou time, now sufficient opportunity to prevent the speedy approach of death, to examine thy conscience before Christ, and by an humble confession to bewail all thy wickedness before Him. Now the weather is favourable, now the day of salvation, now Christ openeth unto thee all the treasures of His mercy ; He patiently sustaineth thee, He graciously calleth thee, He proposeth examples of fervour in others, He continually extendeth His bounty unto thee

that He may unite thy soul unto Himself in perfect love. Who will therefore hereafter excuse thy neglect if amongst so many treasures of divine grace thou labour not (whilst there is time) to relieve thy poor soul?

11. Thou shalt not find anything rewarded in heaven but the works of true devotion which the Saints have done for Christ's sake whilst they lived in this world, nor anything punished in hell but the vices and evils which wicked men have committed in the present life; nor shalt thou find anything which the Devil doth so studiously impugn as virtuous purposes; nor is there any which doth so disperse the forces of hell as the perpetual guard and mortification of themselves which the noble penitents have valiantly performed for Christ's sake.

12. Moreover all rests on the time present; either salvation or perdition, either endless felicity or an eternity of infinite misery. How great madness therefore is it to depart from the obedience of Christ, from the exercise of virtue, from the wholesome way of penance, when it is so little that is required, and the reward so great which shall be rendered hereafter; the affliction so short, the consolation so lasting, the labour so small, the rest so great, the fight so necessary, the victory so glorious? Expect not therefore another time when thou mayst now work the salvation of thy soul; begin with a good will to walk more cautiously, to subject thyself unto the yoke of the Cross more humbly, to observe thy rebellious flesh and the inclinations thereof more strictly. Now great things may be done if thou use diligence, now mayst thou achieve the friendship of God, the remission of sins, the quiet of conscience, the confusion of the Devil, if with true

valour thou wilt war against thyself ; now virtue is of great esteem, now mayst thou gain eternal treasure for thy soul in heaven, if thou cherish in thy heart the love of God and sincerely offer up thy whole heart unto Him.

13. Many complain and are terrified with the burden of penance, because they are yet novices and children in the way of God ; they have not yet taken the wings of true fervour, they as yet crawl in the dunghill of their own affections which do not willingly suffer themselves to be deprived of their liberty ; but if Christ would truly enter into thy soul thou wouldst acknowledge that this carnal liberty were not to be called a liberty, but a miserable servitude and deprivation of true liberty ; thou wouldst see how easy and how pleasant it were to forsake not only external things, but even thine own will and thy life, for God.

14. Labour therefore above all things that Christ be admitted into thy soul, seek a convenient place for groans and prayers where thou mayst unfeignedly open unto Him thy whole desire, and mayst endeavour, inasmuch as thou art able, to stir up in thyself a sincere affection of Him. Hide not from Him thine infirmities, but fully discover all thy vileness and necessity, that thou mayst wholly offer up thyself into His arms, and thy heart may be always united unto Him in perfect love ; for the sweetness of Jesus doth so refresh the soul that it is not sensible of hardships, abhors not bitterness, flies not labours, forsakes not the Cross, but with a pleasing embrace joyfully undergoes it. The love of Jesus is as a strong fire, the more it is knocked the more it kindles, as a sweet herb, the more it is trodden upon, the more abundantly is its odour perceived ; if it hath power it makes no delays but

willingly undertakes any work for Christ's sake ; if it wants power at least it will show its good will that it may always offer unto God all that it hath ; if it can do great things it addresseth itself unto great things ; if it be able to do but little yet those little things are much esteemed and acceptable unto God, because they proceed out of love. If it hath occasion to communicate itself unto its neighbours it seeks not men, but respecteth in men and in all creatures the glory of Christ. When it is not conversant in outward things then it sweetly resteth in God its fountain ; nor can it be bound with the fetters of any certain particular devotion, but maketh all its devotion and virtue serve the will of Christ.

15. There is a necessity that we must all bear the cross, whether willingly or unwillingly ; if the cross be received without love it becomes truly a cross, if it be borne with love it is not found a cross but a secure relief. It is therefore the love of Jesus alone which satisfieth the mind, keepeth the conscience pure, maketh virtue sweet, driveth away sadness, overcometh difficulties, begetteth solid joy, which introduceth God and all good things into the soul, is pleasing unto all, strong and stable in all things, because it is Jesus Himself that worketh all things in those who cherish in themselves the true love of Him. The love of God maketh obedience light, humility lovely, patience sweet, penance easy, it causeth the whole man to be above that he may easily eschew these snares of the world and the Devil ; it maketh hard hearts to melt in contrition, because where God is truly loved, that cannot be loved whereby God is offended, because true love endeavoureth to assimilate the lover unto the beloved.

16. Take heed nevertheless, poor soul, how thou

beginnest and how thou proceedest in the way of penance, for I will that thou always nourish thy fervour towards Me ; but I will moreover that with true humility thou entirely leave thyself unto My dispose, lest by pursuing thine own will and private self-affections, thou cast thyself into many dangers and after a while thou begin to cool in My love. Beware lest thou pride thyself in any corporal or external austerity, how much so ever thou exceed others therein, for what do I care for thy penance if thou dost it that thou mayst be preferred unto others, and not purely that thou mayst satisfy Me for thy sins, or that thou mayst suppress thy sensual affections that so thou mayst the better attend unto My passion and unto good works. Never therefore magnify any penance which thou undertakest for Me, since thy merit and proficiency is not measured according unto thy strength but according unto My grace and thy humble denial of thyself ; nor can any austerity at all profit thee, but inasmuch as it conferreth unto the inflaming thy heart in My love, unto the increasing of humility in the inward man, unto the contempt of thyself, and unto the cherishing of true charity with thy neighbours.

17. See that thou constantly persevere in what thou hast once well begun, not respecting the greatness of the work, but the simplicity of thine intention ; that always and in all things, whether prosperous or adverse, thou have Me before thine eyes, and if the strength of thy body fail, then let the desire of thy mind be increased to the sustaining of My will in all things. For I will be present with thee if I find thee faithful after a few trials, I will afford thee living water and heavenly bread whereby thou shalt receive true strength to seek Me ; I will cause My spirit to rest upon the

waters of thy soul that it may make thee fruitful in sincere contrition, that thou mayst cheerfully prosecute the expiation of thy sins, and mayst be drawn after Me by a firm love ; I will water thee with the dew of heaven and with the morning and evening rain of My devotion that thy affection towards Me may always flourish, more and more ; that neither the difficulty of penance may move thee, nor the blasts of temptations may diminish thy vigour, that thou mayst be a holy root, a beloved vine, a tree of My good pleasure and will.

18. Thou seest how many famous examples I have given thee of My saints who have served Me here, how great things they have done for the salvation of their souls, how great things they have suffered that they might attain unto My rest ; how many labours, how many watchings, how many fasts, how many grievous macerations of the flesh, how many contempts, how many molestations of others, how many combats, both within and without, by day and by night, they have borne for My sake ; as also with what tears and prayers they have almost continually offered themselves daily unto Me, that at length they might find Me in My glory. All these things have I wrought in them by My love, which rendered them stronger to persevere than all their adversaries were to impugn them ; I strengthened them being weak, I comforted them being sorrowful, I reduced them going astray, I stirred them up when they fainted, I relieved them being oppressed ; I always help them striving with My seasonable aid, and now have I most amply crowned their victories. I was all in all with them, and therefore they neither cared for this world nor feared its hatred, nor ever forsook My Cross, desiring to be led whither so ever I would ;

rejoicing above all things that I was honoured in the works either of themselves or others.

19. I will therefore that thou be continually conversant in the lives and works of My Saints, stoutly embracing My Cross which with so much labour I bore for thee inclining thyself by their readiness to proceed in My obedience, loving their solitude, contemplating with great veneration their constancy, aspiring with thy whole heart unto their victories, and always fortifying thyself with their assistances, that thou mayst not sink under the temptations of this life ; but, prosecuting ¹ My Mother Mary with an especial reverence and love, with all humility professing thyself her son, let their zeal inflame thy coldness, let their humility confound thy vanity, let their austerity move thy looseness, let their modesty break thy untamed passions, let their continual plaints and fervent penances convert thy sloth into true devotion.

20. When My love waxeth cool in thee, then withdraw thyself from men, and by the more thinking upon Me acquire more fervour ; when a temptation ariseth against thee then hasten unto prayer and other spiritual weapons, lest yielding unto natural passions thou too take ² seek remedy ; but above all things endeavour to humble thyself unto My will, for thou canst not please Me whatever corporal punishments or whatsoever austerity thou dost embrace, if thou join not true humility and submission of thy judgement with thy fervour, so that thou prefer not thyself before others, but always keep in mind thine own infirmities, that thou

¹ Following.

² The original text is corrupt here. For "thou too take seek remedy," the reading probably should be "thou too late seek remedy."

take bodily penance to no other end than that thou mayst bewail thy defects and with perfect humility mayst subject thy soul unto Me. For I never chose such as were proud or presumed themselves for My servants, but the abject and poor in spirit who made themselves little ones and fools for the Kingdom of God ; I have made them to triumph over the world and the Devil, whilst all the fraud and force of hell could not withdraw them from Me ; I made them strong as lions and wise as serpents with the wisdom of My spirit, that they might maintain My Name before princes and the whole world. I drew them as silly [†] sheep whither I would with My grace, because in all things My love prevailed with them ; and therefore they seldom cared to go abroad [and] were contented with few words slighting the conversation of men, unless it were that they might convert them unto Me by their words or examples. Seeing they saw not, hearing they did not hear, living they lived not in this world, because their souls continually rested in My bosom. In such am I glorified, because their weakness exalteth My strength, that by them I may confound the vain world, and by their examples may reduce miserable sinners unto their understanding ; since that I desire by all means to procure the salvation of all men.

[†] Innocent.

CHAPTER XIV

Of the Perseverance of a Penitent

1. It is not sufficient for thee that thou lay open the wounds of thy conscience by confession, and that thou be admitted unto the favour of Christ through compunction of heart ; but remember that thou art now returned unto Christ as unto thy true Lord, and that thou oughtest for the future to serve Him as a faithful servant in all integrity of life, and as much as in thee lies to conform thy conversation unto His. Propose therefore firmly from henceforth to choose a new life, new manners, new exercises, and new conversation, whereby thou mayst please God unto the end ; and so to guard, not only thy outward conversation but also thy soul itself and all its inclinations and passions, with the Cross of Christ ; so to govern them by His grace, so to adorn them by His example, that no more thou but Christ may be thought to live in thee.

2. For as it is the highest nobility of the soul to depart from the vileness of a carnal life, so is it the greatest baseness of a man to be subjected to sinful desires, nor can there be a greater damage in the world than the damage which a soul incurs by forsaking her God in whom all her good and her whole happiness consists. Unto how vile and unhappy a master dost thou therefore submit thyself, whilst forsaking Christ

thou deliverest thyself unto the most sordid slavery of sin ; not a little grief nor some small devotion are sufficient to cast out the old man and perfectly to put on the new. But by how much the longer thou hast been accustomed and addicted into the old man, by so much the sharper and longer a conflict must thou undertake against him ; and by how much the more eager delight thou hast offended thy Creator, with so much the more ardent zeal must thou defend His honour against the Devil and all wickedness for the future.

3. Arise therefore cheerfully, go on boldly, proceed sincerely, bethinking thyself that as yet there remains a great journey, a hard conflict, before thou canst obtain a full triumph over thyself. Let no dejection or vain sloth detain thee. Thou didst profess in thy reconciliation that hereafter thou wouldst be an enemy of sin, a servant of Christ, a soldier of repentance, an adversary of hell, a passenger of heaven, a spouse of thy Redeemer, a consecrated temple of the Holy Ghost ; thou hast received grace, thou art restored unto liberty, thou hast confessed thine iniquity ; how therefore wilt thou return unto thy vomit without grievous displeasing of thy heavenly Father ? Hear thy Lord and thy Judge earnestly warning thee, *Behold thou art made whole : sin no more, lest some worse thing happen unto thee.*¹

4. O my most sweet Jesus, besides whom there remaineth unto me no helper, with my whole heart I desire to be totally conjoined unto Thee, and never to depart from the example of Thy most holy life ; but Thou, who dost comprehend all things by Thy knowledge, knowest well my innumerable infirmities whereby I am daily led out of the path of virtue ; how soon I fail when Thou withdrawest Thy presence, how cool I am

¹ John v. 14.

of myself even unto things which would be more profitable unto me, how slothful unto watchings, how slow to sing Thy praises, how frail to bear incommodities, how fervent to have prosperous and pleasant times, how fickle in my purposes, how inconsiderate in my words, how rash in my actions whereby I often scandalize my neighbour, how inconstant in good, how propense unto evil, how backward unto labour and other good exercises whereby I ought to work out the salvation of my soul ; and how vainly I am distracted with a liking of those things which I do, how small soever they be, how inclined unto worldly things, how unapt unto spiritual things, how prompt unto the liberty of the flesh and vain recreations of the body, wherein I frequently exceed whilst I am constrained to relieve the necessities of frail nature ; how unable to suffer slights and contempts of others when notwithstanding I certainly know and acknowledge myself to be the most vile and abject among men ; how inordinate in my passions, how wandering in my senses, how unmortified in the vain affection of myself, not taking compassion of the infirmities of others as I require that they should relieve me in all my necessities ; how unwary in my inward thoughts which continually wander hither and thither about impertinences, producing divers disquiets of mind and rash judgements of other men's actions which concern me not. By these and infinite other defects as well of soul as of body am I continually detained. How therefore shall I be able always to behave myself according unto Thy will, unless Thy grace and special protection be always with me and make Thy way plain before mine eyes ?

5. All these things are most true, but I would have thee know that My grace, if thou hinder it not, is suf-

ficient against all evils, either to preserve thee from evil or to afford thee strength that thou be not overcome of evil ; and if sometimes through thine own frailty thou admit some failings, yet My grace will cause thee to rise from those failings with the greater fruit, and to observe thyself afterwards with a much more diligent custody ; for no man is able to say or conceive at how great a price I procured thy redemption, that I might deliver thee from the grievous burden of sin, and confer true light to govern all thy affairs according to My will ; with how great humility I depressed Myself that I might lift thee up, who wert in the bottom of hell, into the favour of My Father ; what watchings, what weariness, how many persecutions, how many blasphemies I meekly sustained that I might heal all thine infirmities and faults by My Passion, that I might make all the afflictions and adversities of this world sweet unto thee, and might reduce thee unto a true integrity of life ! What have I not done, what have I not suffered ? sparing neither My flesh nor blood, My body nor soul for love of thee, that I might thoroughly convert thy heart and soul unto My love.

6. Be not therefore disturbed, nor fear the face of those that trouble thee ; I am that I am, and I will protect thee under the shadow of My hand ; commit confidently all thy necessities unto Me, fly diligently all occasions of sin, regard warily all thy steps, then will I encompass thee with Mine assistance that thou mayst no more recede from My grace nor mayst ever be perverted by worldly vanities. Sign thyself therefore courageously with the sign of the Cross, that thou mayst valiantly fight with Me against the enemy ; beat thy obdurate breast that thou mayst strike the death-wound of true contrition against sin ; bend thy knees humbly, lift up

thy hands fervently, that without delay thou mayst begin to prostrate thyself and all thy frowardness ; bow down thy head, cast up thine eyes, pour out thy heart in tears, prosecute with endless hatred thy past sins, that so thou mayst utterly cast thine enemy out of the camp and keep all the parts of thy soul locked against him. For thou must never desert from battle in this life ; for although thou thyself perceivest not the hidden infirmities of thy nature, yet thy spiritual enemies know well all thy frailties, with what temptations thou art most easily overcome, by what occasions, by what assaults thy soul is soonest separated from Me.

7. Pause therefore, weigh seriously whither thou goest, with whom thou livest, amidst what dangers thou art conversant ; firmly determine for the future to seek Me alone in all things, observe thy time more diligently that thou mayst govern thy senses ; bridle thy tongue, beat down thy lust, cast out of thy mind the avarice of temporal things, subdue thy passions, debel^r thy pride, put to flight thy sloth, and in fine most humbly subject thy whole self unto My Cross, that so thy heart may be thoroughly converted unto Me, and that thou mayst no more return unto the vain pleasures of Egypt ; and so at length shalt thou attain unto the desired land, a city flowing with milk and honey.

8. After the victory once attained think not that thou art presently made secure as if now nothing more remained to be done, for by how much the more perfectly thou hast hitherto lived, by so much the more diligent thou as yet oughtest to be, that thou mayst show thyself the more thankful unto so gracious a God who hath chosen thee for His son, and hath adorned thee with the ornaments of virtue and His grace. Earnestly deplore

^r Overcome,

therefore not only thy greater but also thy very venial sins, yea and the vicious inclinations and customs of thy nature, that so thou mayst obtain a perfect conjunction with thy God ; for although these lighter sins may not be unto death, yet they much weaken the fervour of the soul and bring divers impurities and burdensome disquiets unto the conscience, whilst they render the Cross of Christ so difficult. These infirmities are dangerous and greatly dispose unto death ; nor canst thou be made perfectly whole if thou strive not with a valiant mind against them. What doth it avail thee to have done many good things if now after thy good deeds thou return unto thy former corruption, if now thou lay aside thy fervour, if thou art ensnared with the defects of others ? How great favour with God and honour with thy neighbours wouldst thou gain, if thou wouldst always remain within thyself and not be distracted about other men's business which concern not thy progress ?

9. Fall therefore to the business courageously ; let this be thy care, this thy labour, diligently to guard thyself. If thou sayst thou hast hitherto lived well, alas, poor wretch ! how long will this good life last if thou once recede from thy good undertaking ? Thou canst not be without imperfections how perfectly soever thou framest this life ; how much less therefore wilt thou avoid imperfections, yea, and grievous sins, if thou once forsake the way of perfection ? The most glorious Angels created in great holiness and perfection fell from heaven into the depth of hell ; why therefore dost thou vainly presume, who canst not withstand thine enemies one moment if a divine hand did not support thee ? Walk therefore humbly, strive constantly, persevere faithfully ; be not solicitous concerning other things

which belong not unto thee, but consider thyself within and without, by night and by day. For thou certainly seest in thy heart thine own defects, but thou canst not know the consciences of others; and although thou mayst see their present frailties, yet thou canst not now foresee what they will be hereafter before God. Let pass therefore all these vanities so thou save thy soul; this is the supreme and only work of all works which thou oughtest always to bear in mind. Neither can any true virtue be gained without much labour and great divine grace; thou wouldst do foolishly therefore if thou shouldst slight it, being once gotten.

CHAPTER XV

Instruction for a Converted Soul

1. The foundation of thy future progress is to be placed in a true humiliation of thyself, that thou mayst obey Christ as thy true Lord in all things, whether He call thee unto labour or unto rest, although thou be inclined unto the contrary in thine own judgement and will ; for how much the more thou studiest the perfect denial of thyself, by so much the more shalt thou find thyself disposed unto every example of virtue, by so much the more easily shalt thou bear thy cross, and by so much the higher shalt thou climb unto a perfect union with Christ thy beloved Bridegroom. Thou canst not so soon make thy conversion unto God perfect ; but by how much the longer thou deferrest it, by so much the greater difficulty thou wilt always find, and the more occasions will easily occur whereby thou mayst be hindered from good. Neither is true perfection so easily acquired ; but by earnest striving thy strength by little and little increaseth, and the bitter Cross of Christ is at length made sweet.

2. Let it not suffice thee to be sorry for, and to confess, thy former sins, but study to embrace in all things all good counsels, whereby thou mayst profit in the love of Jesus ; for by how much the more strictly thou appliest thyself unto good, by so much the more

remote thou art from the danger of sin, by so much the more clearly shalt thou contemplate the light of eternal verity, and the more easily shalt thou arrive unto true tranquillity of spirit. When there shall occur any work to be done repugnant unto nature, cease not to bend thyself unto it until thou hast broken the rebellion of nature ; and if the thing to be done be conformable unto nature, do it not for vain complacence of nature, but for the only love of Jesus Christ. For the love of Jesus, as the fire, converts all things into itself, nor doth it ever rest until it ascend upwards and remain in God, its centre.

3. Thou canst not use one only rule in all things, and therefore it behoveth thee to behave thyself wisely, and frequently to recommend thyself unto Christ ; for neither is fortitude to be shown where the meekness of charity is required, nor is humility too strictly to be retained when for the honour of Christ thou art to be called unto other employments ; neither doth immodest mirth or excessive sadness agree with virtue ; neither doth brotherly love suffer thee always to be silent, nor yet doth it become a religious man to be too profuse in words. So therefore are all things to be prudently tempered that thou mayst make one virtue serve unto another, as the occasion of charity or the honour of Christ shall require. Always think thyself frail and not able to proceed safely in the exercises of perfection without the special assistance of Christ ; be therefore never dejected, nor give over thy fight against thyself, but keep Christ, thy captain, before thine eyes, whose only hand can sustain thee against all evils.

4. God may be served many ways, but thou canst not embrace all at once ; it is therefore expedient

that thou choose some certainty, that so thou mayst spend thy time fruitfully without any wavering of mind. But having fulfilled works, ascribe nothing presumptuously unto thyself, but with perfect gratitude return all unto God, always acknowledging His gifts and thine own unworthiness ; that so thou mayst avoid all vain opinion of thine own strength and mayst use the more caution in all thy actions, despising no man be he never so weak, but reputed thyself as the weakest and most despicable of all men, since thou hast so many hidden frailties and vanities that thou deservest not to be esteemed by any creature.

5. Wheresoever thou art, leave not easily accustomed devotions, lest by degrees thou become cool, since thou mayst have God everywhere present ; and serve not the multitudes of men but for God's sake. Things happen not always according unto thy desire, not that God neglecteth thy prayers, but that thou mayst learn fully and wholly to subject thyself unto God ; but believe certainly He will deny thee nothing expedient for the spiritual good of thy soul if thou recommend thyself unto Him by fervent prayer, and bend thy whole mind to co-operate with His grace.

6. And although thou art now less esteemed amongst men than formerly, be not thereby moved to quit the observance of virtue, because the judgements of men are for the most part vain, and easily overcome by constancy in virtue and good example. It is a sign of great vanity that a man dedicated unto God should suffer his affection to be inordinately fixed upon any creature, for now he will be transported into an extremity of affection, then will he decline unto an extremity of hatred and aversion ; now, whilst all things succeed prosperously he will show fervour, then when the wind

is turned he lets himself loose to levity and passions. Many imprudently through a false pretence of the divine glory raise divers tumults and grievous scandals amongst their brethren, because they do not moderate their passionate zeal with discretion, and because they will not submit their judgements for God's sake. Above all things therefore keep this ever in mind, that thou must not adhere unto thine own judgement nor unto thine own will, but that thou must cut off even thy most inward affections and most secret desires of thy heart, before thou canst attain unto perfect peace and the firm love of Jesus.

7. If thou desire to drive away temptations, to overcome thy passions, and to keep thy conscience pure from sin, be frequent in prayer and diligent in the guard of thy mind and senses, let the love of Jesus alone govern thee in all things ; then wilt thou willingly abide with Jesus, and to thy power wilt strive against thyself. The love of Jesus is stronger than the whole world, which made feeble women contemn worldly vanities, and with more than manly courage to fly after Christ crucified ; it made those that were addicted unto liberty to embrace solitude, the rich that were affected with the world to love poverty, the most grievous sinners to return unto a zealous detestation of sin ; it maketh the Cross sweet and Him that was crucified lovely, and whatsoever hardships tolerable for God's sake.

CHAPTER XVI

Of the Exercises of a Convert

1. Deal seriously, remember the end wherefore thou art created, whom thou servest, what thou seekest, whither thy journey tendeth ; thou art the creature of God, the workmanship of His hands, thou art frail, weak, miserable, and above all most miserable if thou live without God. Arise therefore cheerfully, set forward effectually, let no day pass without some fruit ; for it behoves not a servant of God to loiter in the way of righteousness, to whom the service of God and the love of virtue ought always to be in chief esteem. How much soever thou dost torment and afflict thyself about outward things, thou must of necessity at length leave all unto God, in whose hand are placed all the ways of men, whose judgements no man is able to penetrate. Return therefore unto thyself, stay there, rest there, courageously do what is to be done, and carefully avoid what is to be avoided ; demean thyself towards all men, even thine inferiors, modestly, humbly, peaceably. When thou undertakest any work, first of all commend thyself unto God, that with a pure intention thou mayst seek the honour of God alone, and not the vain breath of human favour ; and when thou shalt be called unto other affairs, presently leaving the former, betake thyself unto them with the same sincerity. Let the love of

God move thee unto all things ; let the Passion of Christ mitigate thy afflictions, let the glory of heaven wholly possess thy mind, and whether thou be called unto things harsh or pleasing, whether unto the bitterness of the Cross or unto the joys of eternal consolation, always expect Jesus inwardly, saying unto thee : Come My son, follow My example. Thou wilt often find thy nature rebelling against goodness ; yield not then unto the sluggishness of nature, nor unto thy carnal judgement, but take courage, call Jesus unto thine aid, urge, provoke thyself effectually, for having once obtained the victory thou wilt presently find thyself the more prompt unto greater things.

2. The Devil, being a spirit filled with the greatest malice against man, often proposeth divers phantasms which carry away the mind with them, although it seem to resist them ; thou canst not therefore better deal against these phantasies than if thou contemn them as frivolous and vain, and convert thy mind unto other things. Sometimes read, sometimes take in hand thy accustomed exercises ; that so by the variety of employment thy burden may be alleviated, and the Devil may retire with confusion, who is never more tormented than when he perceives himself to be discovered. Nor can he in the least measure hurt thee if thou dost not deliberately and voluntarily consent unto him. If thou canst not utterly extirpate thine inward inclinations, yet mortify them so that thou be not governed by them but mayst govern them as thou wilt, nor even use them unless they be expedient to the progress of thy soul. So let sadness not detain thee but as it conduceth unto contrition and sorrow for thy sins. Let no passions move thee unless with full dominion thou apply them unto zeal of the divine

honour ; but violence of passions is highly to be eschewed, because it blindeth true reason, and that is easily reputed for zeal which proceedeth from inordinate passion.

3. In the choir sing cheerfully, at divine worship attend reverently, in all company demean thyself brotherly ; despise the persons of none, but decline as much as thou canst their ill examples ; be humble but not burdensome, bashful but not pusillanimous, prompt but not rash ; do nothing unadvisedly, but in lighter matters be not slack or dilatory. Sometimes by thy sweetness of conversation, sometimes by thy exercises of virtue, sometimes by the fragrancy of thy devotion, sometimes by the splendour of thy humility and unconquered patience, render thyself acceptable unto all men. But affect not the creature in itself, and as much as thou canst preserve thyself from all their familiarity ; for thou wilt hear many things amongst men whereby perchance thou wilt not be much edified ; some things also are lawfully done amongst good men, which notwithstanding seem unto thee undecent,¹ because thou dost not understand their reasons. If thou shouldst with the greatest anxiety study to draw unto thyself the affection of man, what wouldst thou then gain in the end but a frail creature, a useless worm, which thou canst not always enjoy, no, nor enjoy one moment with the satisfaction of conscience ; since true happiness is not placed in the vain favour of men or women, but in chaste conversation, in fervent repentance, in a valiant conquest of thyself, and an humble carrying of the Cross after Jesus.

4. Let nothing therefore possess thine affection besides God ; nay, affect not bodily labours, nor

¹ Unfitting.

spiritual exercises, nor virtues themselves, how specious soever, for themselves ; but direct all things unto God, that thou mayst in all things seek God only ; love Him only that at last thou mayst fully enjoy Him in eternal felicity.

CHAPTER XVII

Of the True Progress of a Soul

1. Then art thou most near unto God when thou becomest most vile unto thyself and most remote from the world, when, with a pure mind, with a pure heart, with a steadfast devotion, thou labourest to preserve God's presence. Behave not thyself as an impudent servant, as a rude and untaught son ; as if with too much familiarity thou didst slight His majesty. Be thou neither dejected through too much fear, nor yet lay aside all fear through presumption, but always esteem thyself a frail creature, liable to various dangers, unless the divine grace protect thee. Be humble and confident, be patient and valiant, be importunate and resigned, always taking the lowest place amongst God's servants.

2. Whatsoever good work shall fall into thy hands to be done, accept it as committed to thee by God ; then apply thy hands, urge thy feet, attend thy proposed end, incline thy stubborn will, embrace with thy whole heart the Cross of Christ ; and when thou hast finished the work think not then thou mayst give thy mind to vanity and scurrility, but fit leisure being granted thee, then lift up thine eternal eye, then choose in solitude to seek Jesus, then prepare thy mind for contrition, and bewailing thine exile; then walk in the paths of the

flock, then feed thy heart near the shepherds' tents, then lift up thy mind and voice unto Jesus. Show me Thy face, sweet Jesus, let Thy voice sound continually in mine ears until the day of my enjoying Thee appear, and the night of mine iniquity draw to an end.

3. Be thou prompt unto labours, hardy unto mortifications, cheerful unto prayer; since in these and all things else thou ought to tend unto God as thy sole end. Bridle thy tongue concerning the defects of thy neighbour; for many whilst they imprudently desire to reprove the lighter defects of others, draw themselves and their neighbour into a thousand greater failings. A man that is truly humble thinks himself to be the cause of all the evils that befall him, and so doth easily pardon others when he thinks himself justly afflicted for his sins. Walk holily towards God, prudently towards men, sincerely with thine own conscience, and then God Himself will defend thy cause, that thou shalt not need to fear the malice of any man.

4. The warfare of this life is by so much the more difficult by how much greater the uncertainty and variety of occasions are, wherewith we must contend; for sometimes a temptation unto sin will invade thee, and then oughtest thou to be prepared that thou mayst valiantly defend the fort of thine heart, lest thine enemy's power get footing there; sometimes prosperity will seek to blind thee, then must thou have the greater caution, lest vain pleasures render the humble way of Christ contemptible; sometimes adversity will grievously oppress thee, then thou oughtest to be armed with good purposes and fervent devotion that thou mayst patiently follow thy crucified Lord. Sometimes lukewarmness will make thee slothful, anger will inflame thee against others, passion will disturb the

quiet of thy heart, and sordid luxury dispose thee unto uncleanness ; make none therefore truly intimate with thee but Christ, who only is able in all things to give thee victory. Let the door of thy heart be always open unto Him, observe His entrance, embrace His presence, hearken diligently unto His voice, implore His assistance and earnestly desire Him never to forsake thee ; He will dispel the darkness of thy mind, He will make clear the obscure way unto Heaven with the light of His word. When the Devil assaults thee He will provide weapons against him, He will by a secret impulse excite thy sleeping conscience, that it depart not out of the right way in the darksome shades of temptation, He will dispose thy good purposes, infuse into thee fervour, confirm thy strength, bring thy progress unto thy desired end ; He comprehendeth the wise, instructeth the ignorant who have never tasted the rudiments of human wisdom. Thou wilt find more progress in one month's conversing with Christ than in many ages frequenting vain conversation of the world.

5. When thou hast once begun well, recede not by any means from thy good enterprises, teach not others what thou wilt not teach thyself, nor think thou canst perfect others and nourish imperfections in thyself ; for by cherishing small defects thou wilt come by degrees unto greater, and being biassed by daily custom thou wilt not easily be reduced into the right path ; and often such as fall from a high degree of virtue tumble into the greater depth of Hell.

6. Thou seest therefore with how great humility the grace of Christ is always to be implored ; how necessary, how useful, how excelling in every good the presence of Christ is. Now run, now call, now cry

after Him, let Jesus always stick in thy lips, in thy heart and in thy works, and if no occasion of virtue occur thou mayst nevertheless inwardly exercise thyself; sometimes hanging down thy head as if thou heardest Jesus gently chiding thee, sometimes submitting thy back unto the rod of mortification as if thou feltest Jesus lovingly chastising thee, sometimes recur unto the spurs of virtue, sometimes unto apparitions of love, sometimes unto groans of repentance; but discover not thy private austerities unto men, that thou mayst keep them concealed unto God alone.

7. Many men grievously abuse the familiarity of God, whilst, not contented with His sweet conversation, they seek visions and other miracles, shewing presumption and vanity rather than the pure and sincere love of God. Walk humbly, therefore, as the most vile of sinners, how much soever thou hast profited in sanctity and virtue; for by how much the more thou hast profited, by so much the more wilt thou be assaulted by thine enemies, whence thou wilt still have so much the more need of divine grace and mercy. Never esteem thyself secure, never think thyself truly perfect, because thou knowest not how easily thou mayst fall when a temptation comes upon thee. Make Jesus therefore thy whole strength and confidence, stand firmly, recede not from Him, pray when thou shouldst pray, labour when thou shouldst labour, rest when thou shouldst rest; that neither thy prayer may hinder thy virtue, nor thy virtue extinguish, but cherish, thy devotion; that neither in prayer nor virtue thou seek aught but the pure will of God.

CHAPTER XVIII

Of a Good and Evil State

1. *My son, remember that in this life thou receivedst good things, therefore art thou now tormented.*¹ He is bidden to remember, being damned in Hell, because whilst he lived he neither exercised his memory or understanding concerning God and the salvation of his soul, because he totally sought transitory solace in the creatures and not the solace of good works, because he cast out of his mind the frailty of the present life, the rigour of divine justice, and the extreme misery of an evil life, because he dreamed he should obtain felicity by embracing carnal liberty, indulging his corrupt passions by subjecting all things to the lust of his own will. O sad and lamentable and too late remembrance ! for in the present life it would have been available to promote repentance, but in Hell neither doth it excite repentance nor admit any hope of salvation ; for because he would not tame the lustful flesh with labours and other virtuous exercises, therefore now void of all rest doth he serve under the tyranny of infernal furies.

2. O miserable servitude ! O consuming and devouring fire ! O life never sufficiently to be bewailed ! whilst he desires to forget and yet is forced, whether he will or not, to remember it. O how indiscreetly,

¹ Luke xvi. 25.

how foolishly did he pass this present life ! Whilst blinded with pride he despised true life, whilst he neither cared to assist or comfort his weak brother, how justly is all grace and mercy denied him now who would not relieve his afflicted neighbour that stood in need of help ! Because thou receivedst good things, therefore art thou now tormented ; thou art now tormented more than thou wert formerly delighted with these good things ; thou hadst before feigned solace, thou hast now real torments ; thou receivedst before vain joys, sensual pleasure, thou wert puffed up with pride, now art encompassed on all sides with distresses which no time shall ever bring to an end ; for thy voluptuousness shall be tormented with endless groans, thy gluttony with want, never to be relieved, thy pride in purple with burning fire, where thou shalt not find one drop of water to cool the tip of thy tongue. Before, thou receivedst good things, therefore art thou now tormented ; thou receivedst good things but didst use them ill, therefore art thou now deprived of those good things, and art tormented for the ill use of them. What happiness hast thou now obtained by that vain affectation of temporal goods which so many sins cleave to, so many vices wait upon, and so many evils follow ?

3. Vain therefore is their hope who seek not God, who serve not Christ, who care not to amend their faults whilst grace is vouchsafed ; for all things which this vain world doth possess cannot satisfy the eye of one man, for they are always thought small and insufficient even by those who have them in greatest abundance ; he that drinketh of this water shall thirst again. Why therefore are we deluded by these vain delights, since felicity cannot be found in them ? Why do we so

eagerly affect the present life that is stored with so many miseries? Why do we seek men and forsake God? Why do we cherish vain desires and neglect the time of contrition? Why do we follow the enticements of the flesh and are thereby driven from true delight and true peace of heart? These troubled waters, these impure waters, these unwholesome waters neither refresh the mind nor quiet the conscience, nor diminish the torments of hell fire; he that drinks of these shall thirst again, to wit with a most insatiable thirst in this life and an inconsolable thirst in the life to come. See therefore what thou dost, observe whither thou tendest; there is no other way under heaven wherein thou canst be saved but the way of virtue and taking up the cross, wherein thou humbly subjectest thyself unto the government of Christ.

4. Lazarus likewise in this life received evil things, therefore is he now comforted. To receive evil patiently seems a great evil unto a carnal man, but with God and a just man it is reputed a great good, when by temporal adversities the soul is rendered conformable unto Christ crucified, and is called back to a serious contemplation of its defects; that so it may be brought unto true life, sincere contrition, and a fruitful detestation of sin. Dives received good things and is buried in Hell, Lazarus received evil and is carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, that he may be honoured in Heaven. Oh, what is the end, what the reward, of a poor man, a man truly humble, and trusting in God alone! He sought no human glory, nor the liberty of his senses, nor the unsavoury delights of vain men; his divine virtue lay hid under a vile covering, he lay as a cripple, he was despised as base, the dogs also came and licked his sores; how despicable was he unto men,

how hateful in the esteem of the world, but how beloved was he unto the angels, how honourable in the sight of God!

5. Lazarus received evil, he received it not unwillingly nor by constraint as miserable worldlings bear their crosses, without comfort and without any fruit, but joyfully and voluntarily, which is a sign of a man loving God; for although he could not avoid those corporal infirmities, yet his good will accepting them humbly for God's sake transferred necessity into merit, and a cross sent by God into a voluntary sacrifice. Happy is that receiving of evil which is the cause of so much good! Who would not willingly receive whatsoever evil for Christ that he might gain the friendship of God, the inheritance of Heaven, true peace of conscience, and finally the possession of eternal felicity? Who would not with his whole soul despise the vanity of this world that he might obtain the sweetness of Christ, the victory of sin? What wise man would not endure evil here rather than come into infernal evils, rather than be made the enemy of God, the companion of devils, and the perpetual slave of sin?

6. Lazarus received evil for the short space of this life, therefore is he now comforted beyond all time; now is his beggary satiated at the sumptuous banquets of the Bridegroom and the Bride, his patience is recompensed with the comfort of most sweet society, his abjection and humble depression of himself for God's sake is elevated with the treasures of the whole Divinity, for he could not have been made so acceptable unto God if he had sought the vain glory of the world, the liberty of the flesh. Because therefore by following the way of virtue he so firmly adhered unto God, therefore now hath he found God, the fountain of all consolation and glory.

7. O how much have the most famous servants of God esteemed the humble way of virtue ! forsaking the greatest riches and the nearest friends and bidding farewell unto all worldly familiarity ; that so with a quiet heart and a pure mind they might render themselves acceptable unto God and more intimately unite themselves unto Christ, the example of all virtue ; how humbly, how cheerfully did they accept all labours imposed upon them ! not believing that there could a greater dignity befall them than to be humbled for Jesus. How eagerly did they run after Him, as fired tow casting forth flames of devotion on every side, which way soever the Holy Ghost impelled them ! sparing neither their body, their mind, nor their most unvaried affections and inclinations, that being so eased of the burden of their vices they might with more facility accommodate themselves unto the service of Jesus. How cautious did they eschew sin ! choosing rather to die a thousand times than grievously offend Him, like dutiful and well-instructed children, always regarding with the greatest reverence the majesty of their heavenly Father ; at such enmity with the flesh, so averse unto the world, so intent towards God, that they never thought themselves sufficiently poor and abject for Christ's sake. For so great vigour and fire had enkindled them within, that none is able to conceive with how firm a bond, how strong a love they were tied unto Christ.

8. Incline therefore the ears of thy mind as a wise disciple, that in all things thou mayst observe Jesus thy true Master ; love Him fervently, hear Him willingly, follow Him humbly, cry unto Him : O Jesus, what shall I do in so many straits, so many dangers ? forsake not, I beseech Thee, me Thy weak servant, who am

able to do nothing unless Thy omnipotent hand lead me. For Jesus Himself will by Himself reach thee more certainly, lead thee more securely than the whole world of such as excel in human wisdom ; for men produce bare words, but Jesus produceth loving speeches, flaming words, which inflame the bowels and convert the heart itself unto God.

9. Beware nevertheless lest thou be too much affected unto the sweetness of virtue and devotion, that thou mayst learn to embrace abundance with fear, and to suffer want with humility ; but as well in thy devotion as without it, propose unto thyself Jesus alone, since He alone is thy end and thy whole good. He will satiate thy mind, mitigate thy grief, ease thy affliction ; will strengthen thee unto the Cross, enlighten thy judgement, kindle thy affection, and instil the desire of a heavenly life into thy heart ; that He may make thee addicted unto virtue, acceptable unto God, familiar and truly conformable unto Himself.

CHAPTER XIX

Of the Misery of Man

1. *What is man that Thou shouldst magnify him ?*¹
The holy Prophet denies here that he knows what man is, or why he ought anyway to be esteemed by God ; for by how much the more holy a prophet he was, and by how much the more light he had received from God, by so much the more clearly did he see the vileness and meanness of human condition, by so much the more confidently did he reprove our blindness whilst we so vainly seek to be magnified amongst men, and ill endure small humiliations. Let it not therefore suffice thee that thou hearest these words and comprehendest in thy understanding His deep mysteries ; but proceed to the point, consider thyself, set thyself in the sight of God, as a most vile thing and altogether unworthy the least service of so great a Lord ; that so thou mayst the more clearly perceive thine own vileness and misery, and mayst at length with divine assistance arrive unto true repentance and amendment of life ; that thou mayst not so much desire to know what man is, as study in thy life and conversation to be a perfect man. For with how much sincerity oughtest thou to serve thy Creator, who hath made thee of most abject clay that He might bring thee unto supreme felicity ?

¹ Psa. viii. 5 ; Job vii. 17.

With how great love oughtest thou to adhere unto Him who hath vouchsafed thee so many benefits, as well natural as supernatural, that He might thereby dispose thee unto infinite benefits in His eternal kingdom? With how great humility shouldst thou subject thyself unto so great a Lord, who, when thou canst in no respect be compared unto Him more than the basest worms, yet mercifully accepteth thy small works as meritorious of eternal life? How cheerfully oughtest thou to bear thy cross for His sake who with so much longanimity hath borne with thee in thy sins that He might not for ever confound thee before thy conversion; who made thee more noble than the whole world that thou mightest set up thy rest in nothing but in Him; who hath vouchsafed thee the Angels themselves for a guard, and Saints for a spur and example of virtue; yea, and hath delivered up Himself for a full redemption and His Body and Blood for a living Food, that He might cleanse thy soul from sin and make thee a stronger to walk the true way of happiness?

2. What is man? So vain, so light, subject to so many changes, as a shadow which flieth and never remains in the same state; so stupid that after so many almost continual experiences of misery, he is yet so puffed up by any the least perception of prosperity as if he were now secured from all future danger; so stony that he can think upon the benefits of his Creator and yet be thereby no more moved with any devotion than a rock; so blind to the discerning of his own infirmities, so quick-sighted to observe the least defects of others, that scarce a day passeth without the violation of brotherly charity, when also most sad broils do often arise from foolish words which pass with the wind and would hurt nobody if they were borne with humility

and brotherly compassion ; so light as smoke, so vile as dust, so propense unto those things which endamage the soul, never considering that the Devil lays continual ambushes that he may strike him through at unawares with the sword of sin.

3. Ah, wretched man, what art thou, whence comest thou, whither tendest thou ? Thou comest from nought, thou tendest to nought, but that the divine mercy sustains thee in thy being ; and it seems so hard unto thee to serve so gracious a God on whom thy whole being and good depends ! O frail worm, O unprofitable dust ! What philosopher or divine can say what man is, when he contains in himself neither being, nor quality, nor quantity that can consist without the support of God ? What availeth it therefore with vain curiosity to exercise the understanding in those things which only waste time and bring no profit unto the soul ? What doth it avail me to have an eye or affection to those outward things, and not to have mine own vanity before mine eyes ? I had rather continually to bewail with tears mine own condition, than to search into other vain niceties without any fruit unto my soul. What doth it profit me that I abound with all worldly delights or suffer no adversities in this life, if in the end, when my own present being shall be turned unto dust, my soul be not admitted unto that true and immutable being ?

4. Thou canst not therefore use a better remedy against pride and vanity than often thinking how frail, how weak a creature thou art, especially when thou art moved with unquietness of mind or provocation to sin ; and although perchance at the present thou art not sensible of these things, yet so great is thy frailty that thou canst not long remain without these, or other as

great, evils. God makes thee daily see how variable all these worldly things wherewith thou art conversant are, that thou mayst be taught to turn thy whole affections unto the joys of heaven. He showeth thee how many inconveniences, how many dangers of sin thou art subject unto, by the inbred vanity of corrupt nature ; that so thou mayst forsake thyself as the fountain of all deficiency, and with thy whole heart follow God, the only permanent good. Amongst how many cares, how many miseries, how many dangers of soul and body thou hast been led through the whole course of thy life, wherein thou wouldst often have left eternal, yea, and thy temporal life, if the hand of God had not preserved thee, that thereby thou mayst learn that thou art wholly in the hand of God, and that thou canst not by any human help be safe if thou livest without God. Of what matter how vile, how loathsome thou art formed, that thou mayst not magnify thy carnal generation, but mayst study to be gathered unto the generations of saints ; with what nutriment thou hast been sustained all thy time, but with those frail nourishments which can never fully satiate thy appetite, that thou mayst thereby learn to bridle thy fond sensuality, and earnestly to desire eternal dainties ; how noisome, how deformed thou wouldst become if thou didst suffer the infirmities of other poor men, that thou mayst learn not to contemn the poor and weak, but contemplate in them thine own nakedness and infirmity.

5. How vain therefore is it for so short a space to enjoy the desire of thine own will, and not to desire that true happiness wherein we always possess true joys ! How foolish a thing is it long to possess this life, that is daily dying, and to neglect the future, which is only true life ! Ah, wretches that we are, who

desire to live an hour, a month, or some few years in this vale of misery, and care not to live eternally in all felicity! Alas, what is man, who so little considereth these things, who desireth to prolong, and not amend, this miserable life, obnoxious to so many disquiets! Man truly passeth away as a shadow, that is a shadow-like virtue; he treasureth up, and knows not for whom he shall gather these things. Return therefore seriously unto thyself, and never cease until thou find Jesus dwelling in thy heart; deliver absolutely unto Him whatever thou hast, and begin confidently to change thy life, not caring how thou mayst please men, but how thou mayst make a progress in thy soul before God. Then nothing will seem sweeter unto thee than mortification, whereby thou dost consecrate thy whole soul unto thy God; that without any cloud of passion, without any inconstancy of mind, without any depraved affection of thy will, thou mayst be wholly vacant unto Him; then thou wilt perceive what and how great man would be if he would serve his Creator, and with how infinite a loss and price he was redeemed, that he might climb unto a true sublimity. It is in vain, therefore, to protract many days, and to enjoy many favours in this miserable life, and not to profit in good works, which only can help the soul in the judgement of God. Vain therefore, and vanity of vanities, are all these things which conduce not unto the eternal salvation of the soul, how specious and sublime soever they appear.

CHAPTER XX

Of the Creation

1. Ah, miserable condition of human nature, which so soon recedeth from good, so easily cooleth from fervour, so lightly considereth the time to come and the last day whereon its eternal happiness or misery dependeth! What dost thou, what seekest thou, O Christian? When wilt thou serve thy Creator with a perfect heart, without thy continual wavering of mind, if thou dost not totally give up thyself unto Him with a profound humility? Make therefore an inward firm and hearty resolution with thy Creator, that thou wilt always have Him alone for thy God and King; that thou wilt always offer unto Him all affection, all submission, and resignation of thy will, that thou wilt always acknowledge thyself His poor creature, framed by Him and wholly placed in His hands, that thou never depart from Him, by whatsoever occasions of patience or virtue it shall please Him to try thy fidelity. For thou canst never behave thyself too submissively towards Him if thou seriously consider who and what and how great He is who converts His thoughts to the forming and creating of thee, when thou wert before of no being, value, or reputation; that thou mayst deliver thy heart unto no other, but mayst

absolutely acknowledge all that is in thee to be wholly His, and to be offered unto Him.

2. Thou shouldst never cease from purging thyself from thy worldly and vain inclinations for love of Him, if thou wouldst with a pure mind discern with how great a love He pursueth thee in an especial manner, exercising all His wisdom concerning thee with a most unspeakable and surprising care ; that thou mayst be built up unto no other use or service, but only unto the immediate obedience of His supreme majesty. Thou couldst never suffer the troubles of this worldly conversation with sufficient humility for His sake if thou wouldst seriously observe how much God hath humbled Himself, whilst He hath given Himself to thee for a father and provider ; and how abject and vile thou wouldst be without Him, seeing that thou dost still daily find how inconstant, how changeable thou art, scarce able to persist one whole hour in true peace ; so prone unto evil, so unapt unto good, so slack towards virtue, so eager to looseness, distracted in every good word with so many vain thoughts of the mind, always liable unto so many miseries, so many dangers, like a silly sheep which would often cast herself into the jaws of the wolves if she were not preserved by the care of the good shepherd.

3. With how great study oughtest thou always to turn the eye of thy mind unto Him, and to preserve thyself from every sordid and vain affection which may divert thy mind from Him ! since He hath made thee not only a member but also lord and prince of this so wonderful and beautiful universe, where thou seest all other, as well celestial as elementary creatures, immovably adhering unto the will and ordination of their Creator, hereby admonishing thee that God is firmly to

be sought in all things, since all things tend unto Him only, as to their end, infallibly acquiescing in the exercise of His will.

4. With how great order, with how great connection, are all things as well superior as inferior, joined in the universe! that thou, who art a little world, may be taught so to govern thy soul and body that thy body give not itself to sloth, nor nourish rebellion against thy soul, but may patiently undergo its burden; and the soul also may not subject itself unto its passions, nor yield unto wicked and sinful desires, but may always cherish in itself the fear and love of God, and use all diligence truly to conform itself unto its Creator.

5. How many wonderful, how many stupendous things are daily seen as well in the earth as in the sea, which do not less argue the infinite power than the immense Divine Wisdom whereby they are created! From whence thou seest how willingly, how cheerfully thou shouldst subject thyself unto so great a Lord; how humbly thou oughtest to obey Him, how consistently to give up thyself wholly unto Him who can so easily defend thee from all thine enemies by His infinite power, and so securely conduct thee in all thy difficulties and dangers by the immensity of His wisdom.

6. How great virtue is there in some stones, how much beauty and sweetness in small flowers, how great strength in some beasts, how great a presence, support, and conservation of God Himself is there in all the creatures, how vile soever, since an absolute spark of the Divinity lies hidden in them although thou canst not discern it with corporal eyes! If therefore these visible things do so delight men's senses, how much more ought thy Creator to attract thy whole mind unto

Him by His loveliness ; since He infinitely excelleth these creatures in beauty, strength and perfection. If also these sensible things are clothed with so much beauty for the sake of frail man, with how great beauty of virtue ought his soul to be adorned for God Himself ?

7. Lift up thine eyes frequently towards that supreme and celestial city, nor lift up only thine eyes, but frequently elevate thy mind thitherwards ; cry out, complain earnestly, of the fetters of sin, of the dark prison of this world, as often as thou hast prospect of that happy country, for that is the rest of thy labours, thy journey's end and thy so long expected treasures. What splendour, what glory is there, what joy is promised for all the evils which we have suffered here ! for if the external superficies of that city be beautified with the bright rays of so many stars, with how great splendour of virtues are its inward walls adorned for the presence of God and all the saints ? These are the lessons and instructions of the creatures whereby we are induced unto the knowledge and love of our Creator. We see on one side so many humiliations, so many infirmities, so many adversities, that from thence we may know that no creatures are our end, nor that we can at all rely upon them ; on the other side we discern so great height, so great beauty, so great delights, that by the finite good which we find in those things we may be excited to seek the infinite good of God.

8. How warily, how prudently oughtest thou to observe thy whole conversation, lest through vain complacence of worldly honour or the frivolous complaints of carnal nature, thou admit any coolness towards the Cross of Christ ; but as much as thou art able do thy duty daily towards God, since He hath

given thee a body with so many noble instruments of sight, hearing, and other senses. Not that thou shouldst abuse them by hurtful objects, but that by them thou mightest perceive whatsoever is convenient for thy soul itself to seek its God ; since He hath granted thee hands and feet and other members conducing to the fulfilling of any virtuous duties for God's and thine own sake ; so strong for labour, so useful and necessary for exercises of humility and charity whereby thy soul might profit in the ways of true life ; so composed, so artificial, that thou oughtest to be ashamed to defile them with sordid vice ; so ready, so apt to perform the tasks of penance, if thou hadst a soul fervent in the love of God and hatred of sin, which would diligently watch over the prudent government of thy body.

9. What joy, what glory will it be in the Resurrection, to see thy flesh which thou here hast so humbled for Christ's sake, so worn out with watchings, so macerated with fastings, there made pure as crystal and clear as the sun, never more to be defiled with the contagion of sin ! With how great love, with how great fervour, oughtest thou always to tend towards thy Creator ! since He hath made thee so excellent a creature, not only endued with life and senses lest thou shouldst let thyself loose to vain sensible pleasures, but hath also given thee a rational soul, a thing spiritual, immortal, divine, a thing created after God's own image for its wonderful excellence and dignity ; that thou mightest be able to observe the profound mysteries of divine wisdom as well in thyself as in other things, and by the understanding thereof thou mayst be inflamed unto the search of true happiness ; that thou mayst freely and prudently govern thyself in all things, and so with merit and honour mayst gain infinite bliss ; that thou mayst

exercise thyself in the contemplation of heavenly things, and so mayst with thy whole endeavour decline a wicked and sinful life, and mayst often refresh thyself with the sweetness of a heavenly life.

10. What dost thou therefore do as often as thou divertest thy soul from its true end by wicked desires? since it is not given thee but that by virtuous exercises thou mayst make thyself like God Himself, that thou mayst master the foolish passions of sensual nature, and with true liberty mayst proceed unto thine eternal end; that thou mayst be capable of divine grace whereby God Himself may dwell in thy heart sweetly inclining all thy powers according to His own good pleasure; and thou, as His true son, mayst always attend His presence, faithfully serving Him with true humility until He bring thee unto the secrets of His eternal possessions. How absurd therefore would it be to subject thy soul, being so noble, so sublime, unto the dominion of carnal things or unto the vain desires of the world, when all these worldly things are in no measure to be compared unto the nobility of thy soul? Thou seest how great affection thou bearest unto thy rotten body when thou wouldst not be deprived of one member thereof for all the world; with how great diligence therefore oughtest thou to regard thy soul, lest by evil manners thou make a loss of it, when in its eternal salvation thy whole happiness consists?

11. How willingly, how cheerfully oughtest thou to offer up thyself unto the will of thy Redeemer, saying unto Him with all lowliness of mind: Lord Jesus, behold I Thy servant, I Thy unworthy creature, absolutely cast myself at Thy feet that Thou mayst always so deal with me as it shall seem best unto Thine infinite majesty; humbly beseeching Thee that

Thou wouldst always reign in my heart and in my soul, that whatsoever I have may be wholly consecrated unto the use and service of Thy most holy Name. For no tongue is sufficient to express the benefits which thou hast received from Him, since they are a thousand thousand times greater than those which thou hast received from thy parents or any other thy friends.

12. With how great piety hath He supported thy infancy, by degrees increasing its strength and daily administering competent supply to its nutriment, that thou mayst always be mindful that He is thy true Father, who doth not then forsake thee when thou most needest His help ; and that there cannot be a greater ingratitude in the world than that by sin thou shouldst forsake so pious a Father. With how great providence, with how great wisdom, hath He hitherto preserved thee through the whole space of thy life unto this present day, amidst innumerable dangers both of soul and body, that thou mayst by no means doubt that all crosses which befall thee proceed from the hidden wisdom of God Himself for thy eternal good, how repugnant soever they may seem unto the good of thy sensual nature ; and that it is never better with thee than when thou forsakest these external vanities, remaining with God in true solitude of mind, since none careth for thee as He doth. With how great and unspeakable bounty doth He provide thee supernatural means whereby thy soul may attain unto infinite good and may fully rest therein, that thou mayst with thy whole heart thirst after these things, truly good, and mayst not regard those apparent worldly goods but only to relieve thy necessity ! With how great compassion, with how much patience hath He borne with thy continual defects and grievous sins ; that at length

returning unto thyself thou mayst humbly throw thyself into His hands and government, acknowledging from thy heart thy weakness, that thou canst do nothing at all without Him, and that thou justly oughtest to suffer any difficulties for love of Him who hath showed so great clemency towards thee when thou wert His enemy!

13. Alas! who nourisheth thee, who giveth thee growth, who sustaineth thee in thy being, who giveth thee strength when thou art weak? Who showeth thee the way of life when thou art so blind, who defends thee from being devoured by the Devil and Hell when thou art so wicked? Who affordeth thee air for breathing, the sun for thy comfort, clothing and other necessities for the support of life? Who produceth all thy operations when thou alone of thyself canst do nothing at all, but that good God who so applies His whole care and labour for thy good, more than any servant who had obliged himself unto thy continual service? These and infinite other benefits hath thy Creator done unto thee, that thou mayst never slacken in His love, nor ever give way unto the service of any other, either the world, the flesh, or the Devil. Begin therefore courageously to fight against thy vices, that thou mayst always keep thy mind pure for thy so bountiful God.

CHAPTER XXI

Of the Redemption

1. Many complain that the yoke of Christ is hard, and that they are too much depressed with His Cross ; but they therefore complain because the love of Christ is not as yet kindled in them, and because they understand not how great perfection, how great happiness, a soul obtains by an humble suffering for Christ ; since we clearly see that the true lovers of Christ do never more truly rejoice than when they honour Christ by their good examples and find His favour by the humble bearing of His Cross. If therefore thou desirest to attain unto true peace of heart prefer nothing at all before the daily consideration of the Passion and humiliation of thy Redeemer ; for by how much the more intimately thou dost embrace Him in thy heart, by so much the more lovely and sweet above all things wilt thou find Him, since no man is able to express how vehemently the love of Jesus draweth the hearts of His lovers unto Him, how sweetly He resteth in their memory amidst all their objections and afflictions ; how fervent, how meek, how humble, how sincere, how prompt, how joyful, how strong against sin, how invincible against the Devil, He maketh those that truly imitate Him, and with how much humility, with how great affection, they daily offer up themselves unto Him

now earnestly praying unto Him as their true God for their continual necessities, now with tears bewailing Him as their Redeemer and their whole good, crucified for them ; now humbly accusing themselves before Him as their supreme judge, being so inflamed with His so great love that they esteem nothing hard, nothing bitter which they undergo for His glory, how much soever it be repugnant unto flesh and blood.

2. Forsake all things therefore, that thou mayst come unto Jesus if thou desirest to come unto true salvation and to be defended from the face of all thine enemies ; for thou wilt find none so powerful to whom thou mayst recommend thy wants, to whom thou mayst lay open thine infirmities, and unto whom thou mayst recur in all dangers and adversities, as Jesus ; who exercised His power in thy redemption to such a degree, manifesting Himself to be truly God, that He bound the Devil and all the force of hell, so that they can no more hurt thee unless thou wilt thyself, and can no farther tempt thee than when and as far as it shall please Him, even thy Redeemer ; that thou mayst not be hurt thereby, but mayst continually increase thy merit by resisting, when if He had not taken thy part thou couldst not have been one moment secure but that the Devil might have drawn thee into hell.

3. Thou wilt find none so benign as Jesus, who out of His mere mercy would wash thee from thy sins in His own Blood, whereas thou deservedst no favour or mercy by reason of the innumerable spots and stains of sin, which thou hadst contracted ; that so He might build thee up a new man, and might reduce thee out of the state of desperation and perpetual malediction ; that thou mightest be no more a servant and slave unto sin, but mightest be made a storehouse of virtue and a

sanctified temple of the Holy Ghost. Thou wilt find none so affected with the love of thee and the desire of thy salvation as Jesus ; who was so far led with compassion of thee, that rather than thou shouldst lose the favour of His eternal Father, and not be reconciled unto Him, He would take upon Himself all those humiliations and afflictions which He suffered through His whole life and at the time of His death, that thou mightest escape the wrath of God, and through His grace mightest begin to serve Him in true humility. For by these humiliations He taught thee the way of the highest perfection, how thou oughtest to go to the root of all vice, never leaving off until thou hast cast the whole mass of corruption out of thy heart ; by which means also thy very will should change the affecting of itself into the affecting of God, acknowledging neither itself nor any creature to be worthy of its affection, since God only can truly satisfy it.

4. None had ever sought thee with so much labour, with so much diligence, when thou wert lost in sin, if Jesus had not sought thee ; for He omitted no labour, no affliction, neither during His tender infancy nor through the whole course of His life, that He might bring thee back into life when thou wert perishing. With how firm a love, therefore, oughtest thou to cleave unto Him, that thou mayst upon no occasion forsake Him again, although thou wert to follow Him through the briers and thorns, over the hedges and ditches, of temporal tribulation ; since they were thy vices and faults which caused Him to walk the same way !

5. None would have borne with thee with so great patience as thy Redeemer hath borne with thee, seeing thou art so vile, so frail, so worthless, if thou wert com-

pared unto God ; since thou hast so often delivered thyself up unto sin, forgetting His charity and labours, since thou hast used so great lightness, so great inconstancy in His service, whilst He yet suffers thee to live and enjoy His benefits, expecting that at length thou wouldst return unto Him with true humility. No tongue, no creature is sufficient to express how many favours, how great benefits thou hast received by Jesus ; for thou hadst not been predestinated unto glory, nor called unto grace, nor adopted a son, nor ordained unto heaven, nor hadst received peace of heart, or salvation of soul, or any fruit of thy body or of its operations, how much soever thou mightest in them have suffered the labours and miseries of this life, if Jesus were not thy God and thy Redeemer. Have always therefore a care of this, that according to thy power thou behave not thyself unworthily of so great a price, so great a mercy, such a Redeemer ; but preserve the liberty and dignity which thou hast received by the labours of Christ with thy whole endeavour against the Devil and all natural vice ; and this thou wilt effect by conforming thy life absolutely unto His example.

CHAPTER XXII

Of the Imitation of Christ

1. *So it behoved Christ to suffer and to enter into His glory;*¹ and so it behoveth thee to suffer, if thou wilt truly follow thy leader. Thy lesson, which thou always oughtest to study, consists in this ; that thou thoroughly deny thyself and that thou learn to suffer much for Christ. For all penance is troublesome in itself, but is gratefully received by fervent men for God's sake, because thereby merit is augmented and abundant satisfaction is made for their faults. We soon wax cool from our fervour of spirit when we are not tried by adversity ; for as long as it is in our power to enjoy good things we never think of doing penance, but we are presently carried away unto those good things, yea oftentimes before we can seriously judge whether they are fit for us or not. Wherefore a virtuous man, although he hath profited never so much, yet never thinks himself truly perfect ; for if he but a little refrain from the guard of his senses and passions, he will certainly find a rebellious enemy within himself, which before he thought not of. Keep therefore thy cross always in thy mind, in adversity recur unto the wounds of Christ, and in prosperity be mindful of temptation, which thou canst not long be without.

¹ Luke xxiv. 26.

2. It is a wonderful thing that men with so great delight tend unto things that are pleasant and are so hardly drawn unto things that are necessary for their eternal salvation. From hence our inordinate affections manifestly appear, that we very grievously resent the least injuries that are done us; but we judge those offences to be slight which others receive from us, and if we receive any evil we are willing to return it a hundredfold. We are quickly tired with doing good, unless we therein receive sensible pleasure, and the smallest occasions bring us disturbance; because we are not truly mortified with Christ, and because we attend not unto the right end of the work, but unto our own vain appetite; we have not respect unto the true Creator of all things who absolutely disposeth of all things, neither will we follow Him or hearken unto Him although He would work our good by crosses, and reduce us from our depraved affections wherewith we are continually molested, unto true rest. Alas, how few do truly imitate Christ, how few do truly regard His Passion! how fervent are we, as if we truly loved God, whilst all things proceed prosperously, and presently, by reason of any trouble with our neighbour or ourselves, we grow cool unto all goodness, because we are not girt unto the combat like true soldiers of Christ.

3. Christ would not that His life should be joined with sensual ease, but would want all human consolation, that He might lead us from sensual things unto spiritual, from earthly unto heavenly, from the unquiet distractions of worldly men unto a sincere tranquillity of mind. Which way soever thou shalt turn thyself, either unto the world, or unto men, or unto thyself, thou wilt never find true peace without the Cross,

because all these in time breed a loathing, and after a time will all certainly leave thee. Miserable are those who altogether apply themselves unto the care of their bodies, and regard not what their souls are afterwards to suffer, by the sentence of the Judge! Miserable are those who will know all things, and yet neglect themselves and never think of that one thing that is only necessary! Miserable are those who consume their whole time in friendships with men, and hereafter never find friendship with God! What will it avail us to have had the whole world at our will and not to amend our lives by true repentance for our sins whilst we have here time afforded us? All things are to be esteemed as nothing besides the finding of Christ alone and carefully to keep that way which He hath taught us unto the end; for this makes the conscience truly secure, but we shall be much ashamed in the end of things which are trifles.

4. He therefore that will be a hearty friend of Christ, let him always think of serving Him, let him never care what worldly prudence persuadeth; but let him always meditate what is most pleasing unto God, and not to carnal sense; for peace is not obtained by shunning of labour, but the greatest disquiet, since thereby the natural affections are strengthened, which distract the mind. And wheresoever and with whomsoever thou shalt be, thou wilt never be at rest because thou wilt always carry thine enemy with thee. The holy men of God had never found peace within themselves nor without themselves if they had not forsaken all things for Christ, and if they had not wholly converted themselves to forsake themselves for God.

5. He lives happily who desires not this life but that he may thoroughly repent for his sins, and so may

securely attain unto eternal life. He lives most miserably who perceives his time continually to pass and yet labours not to obtain the life to come. He walks happily who with true humility bewaileth his own sins and busieth not himself in examining the defects of others. He is most miserable who presently coveteth all things whereunto his sense is inclined, and taketh not up his cross, that he may follow Christ ; *for he that is not with Me is against Me, saith the Lord, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad.*¹

6. An unconstant man hath oftentimes sorrow upon sorrow ; now he desireth this, now that, yea, though he see it to be vain to pursue his own appetite ; and because he seeketh not true comfort, he is often void of all comfort. But a sincere man thinks all labour to be justly imposed upon him, because we can never render enough unto Christ for His infinite love towards us by any labour, by any suffering, by any humiliation, although we should lose our blood and life and all things which we possess, for love of Him.

7. He that in all things is governed by vain self-love is quickly driven from his purposes by every wind of temptation ; he is soon tired and distracted in divine things that hath not a heart purely to seek God, but he that desireth simply to go after Christ is not drawn by necessity but by devotion ; he is truly at liberty who perceiving his flesh rebelling against good presently says within himself : Now is the time to expel mine enemies, I will not cease until I have subdued them.

8. He deserveth not to be called the servant of Christ that performs his works that he may be magnified by men, and thinks not upon the innumerable benefits of his Creator, for whose sole honour all our works are to

¹ Luke xi. 23.

be done. He is not worthy to be numbered amongst Christians who sees daily how great things good men suffer for God's sake, and yet neither by the Passion of his Redeemer nor by the examples of others is incited unto virtue. He deserves to be banished human society who knows the sharpness of the Cross which the Son of God bore Himself for his soul's sake, and will not stir one foot for himself that he may procure the true friendship of God. In all thine affairs consider how voluntarily, how freely, without the least constraint, Christ shed His Blood for thee, yea, when thou wast His enemy and altogether unworthy of any mercy ; and with how great diligence thou oughtest to shun all occasions whereby thy soul may be separated from the most pure love of Him.

9. A man ought to please himself in nothing which this miserable world affords, because all our conversation with men is entangled with continual failings. Too much haste to speak hath often done great mischiefs, rash enterprizes have often produced the greatest damage. He that desireth human solace often deprives himself of divine consolation ; because the appetite being let loose unto small things, presently is strengthened to desire greater, and knows not how to mortify itself for God's sake. We wretched worms envy one another, vilifying the actions of others ; when, notwithstanding, we have so many defects that no man would be able to endure us if he knew our secret faults. Blessed is that man who in all things so behaveth himself as if he always saw God Himself present with him, and admits not that in himself which he condemns in others. Happy is the man who makes continual war against himself, until he comes to that pass that he can with equal joy endure adversity and prosperity, crosses and

pleasures. Happy is that man who cares not to know much of others, but hath always his own defects before his eyes, thinking none more vile than himself. Acknowledge thyself always a stranger in this world, as if thou didst hourly expect thy passage out of it ; for the love of the world and the love of God cannot stand together, neither doth that repentance please God whereby we will change our life for a day or a month only, and not for ever ; or which stands with an affection unto occasions of sin.

10. When a man sincerely turns himself unto God, then he discovers clearly that all those outward things which withdraw the mind from God are most vain ; then he perfectly sees into his own infirmities, and how great a vanity it is to despoil himself of divine grace and charity for the sake of any men ; then he manifestly perceives that that only is true pleasure which a man absolutely resigned hath when he utterly forsakes himself for God, and how hurtful unto the soul it is to give way unto his passions by fruitless troubles and impatience. None doth so confound the Devil as he to whom a temptation being offered, presently without delay begging divine aid manfully sets himself to resist ; and he who will be free from all disquiet ought deeply to imprint in himself the Passion of our Lord, that so he may truly conform himself unto his Redeemer. It is not sufficient to read of it often, and presently after reading to think of it no more, but so to study as all the Saints of God studied it, continually mortifying themselves until they found themselves wholly fit for heavenly contemplation ; for as much as a man dies unto himself so much doth he truly live unto God, and so much is he truly to be said to live, and no more.

11. We miserable creatures refuse to endure temporal penance, and fear not the punishments to be endured hereafter for our sins, which are infinitely more grievous. We hasten with all readiness unto vain corporal recreations, but when we return unto God we are wholly distracted, not regarding His divine majesty. This is the vanity of man's mind, that we observe with high esteem our own words and actions, never considering the continual sin which we commit; when notwithstanding we pass lightly by the merit of others and most attentively weigh their slightest evil, we are most apt to inquire after those which favour us, and we willingly in all things adhere unto those persons whom we most naturally affect. Alas, how vile should we appear unto ourselves if we could so clearly look into all our defects as God Himself looks into them! and yet we are in all things to be judged according to that most exact knowledge of God.

12. Now therefore do manfully, thou faithful soldier of Christ; there is a crown of life proposed unto thee wherein thou shalt rejoice unto eternity if thou now forsake thyself and suffer patiently for God's sake. Thou must relinquish thine own sense in many things and patiently bear many things that are displeasing if thou wilt have true peace with all men. A man truly pure easily passeth without dejection through all difficulties; for by humble suffering he loseth nothing, but augments his virtue and receives greater grace. As Christ submitted Himself unto men, humbly bearing those things which they imposed upon Him, so, if thou wilt be a true servant of Christ thou oughtest always to hold thyself as a man absolutely born unto labours, and that all the creatures justly ought to have dominion over thee for the innumerable injuries which thou hast

done unto thy Creator, and that thou art utterly unworthy to be called His servant. As He patiently suffered reproach, not opening His mouth when they spake evil against Him, so when thou findest thyself inwardly troubled for any man's words or actions, thou oughtest presently to take up against thyself the arms of the Cross; for by subduing thine own passions thou wilt provoke those men themselves not to break brotherly charity, and wilt procure thine own peace.

13. Finally, as He never ceased to labour for thee until He at last died upon the Cross, so oughtest thou to converse in this world that thou mayst be absolutely mortified unto all sensual appetites; that thou mayst not seek to do thine own will, nor to follow thine own judgement, for the smallest things pertinaciously affected do often grievously hinder our progress. Know certainly that none in the world can do thee any harm if thou hast not the fuel of evil within thyself; for if thou art good before God other men's ill words will not make thee worse, and if thou art ill their good words will never make thee better; if thou hadst not the fuel of trouble within thyself the whole world could not disturb thee. Study always therefore how thou mayst amend thyself by following thy Redeemer, ever sighing after virtue, for that is the whole dignity of thy soul. If thou hast great virtue thou hast a happy soul, if none thou hast a most miserable one.

CHAPTER XXIII

Twelve Rules of Perfection

The First Rule of Perfection.

In adversity, in prosperity, in the temptation of the flesh unto pride or envy or intemperance ; in the temptation of the world unto unlawful love of the creatures ; in the temptation of the Devil unto wicked actions ; in all things, let a man say thus : Blessed be God for that He maketh all things to serve me that I might serve Him alone. Adversity serves to humble me, prosperity serves me to proceed the more vigorously, temptations serve me to try my strength, my patience, or my humility ; that when I see my faults I may amend them, and when I see amendments I may give God thanks. Come therefore ye blessed temptations, blessed adversity, desolations, consolations ; ye are all blessed now unto me, being sent or permitted by my blessed God ; not to destroy but to serve me. And this is a great part of perfection, because it takes all things from God's hand, and makes a man bear all things equally ; in all things to merit, to vanquish, and overcome.

The Second Rule of Perfection.

Let him think that he hath in him only two principles, to wit the flesh and the Holy Ghost ; let him think

that the Holy Ghost remains within him as a judge or lawgiver, who every moment either writes or dictates within us some laws or rules whereby our sensual part is to be vanquished or humbled. And in all things whatsoever shall happen, let him say thus within himself : This is the rule of the Holy Ghost, this is the way, here my humility, my patience, my charity is to be exerted ; and after victory let him say : Lord, teach me always Thy righteousness that my heart swerve not unto wickedness. But whensoever he shall find the carnal part rebelling, let him presently use great violence to it, and never cease to afflict and effectually to contradict it, until it be quiet and appeased ; as, if it move unto pride, let him say unto it : Ah, Devil, I would now, and I seriously would, that thou wert dragged through all the streets of the world, that thou wert trodden on by man and beasts ! If it moveth him to envy his brother let him say unto it : I will effectually that thou always serve this brother, and that thou be by him contradicted in all things, and that thou beg forgiveness of him. If it move him unto gluttony let him say unto it : Open thy mouth, Devil, and I will cast in dung, and I effectually will that thou eat dung or any other filth. And let him never cease so violently to compel it unto those things against which it is chiefly inclined ; and so at length, with great ease and sweetness he will find all his actions to be regulated as it were by certain laws and rules of the Holy Ghost, and he will become as it were a counsellor and secretary of God.

The Third Rule of Perfection.

Let Him effectually purpose in all things to seek the contrary to the inclination of his own will, so that sin

follow not thereupon, and in all things which happen against his will let him presently recollect himself and recur unto his purpose and say thus : Blessed be God, now I have my will, and whatsoever can befall me I will not be troubled ; for nothing can fall out against my desire and expectation, because my will and desire is to accept those things which cross my own will. And so, after many acts, he will experience a great part of the bliss of heaven, by reason nothing can happen unto him that may grieve or trouble his mind.

The Fourth Rule of Perfection.

Let him think that he is the creature of God, and number himself amongst the vilest creatures, as amongst stones, dirt, dung and worms, for neither he nor the noblest emperor is more to be compared unto God than any dunghill worm ; and let him think that himself and all the creatures were created for no other end but for the glory of God. After that let him endeavour to elevate his mind wholly towards God, and let him pass in a certain inflamed and violent manner out of himself, and above all things created unto God. And whensoever he doth contemplate the creatures, or apply them unto his use, as when he taketh meat and drink at the table, let him say thus : You also are the creatures of God, and we have all one end, our blessed God ; why do we stick here then in vile and sensual delight ? We are not created for this, nor unto any other created end ; come therefore, let us ascend unto God and bless Him with the Saints and Angels ; *O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him for ever.*¹

¹ Dan. iii. 57.

The Fifth Rule of Perfection.

Let him always arm himself with the meditation of Christ's Passion, and often think with himself: How much the more I shall suffer for Christ by so much the more shall I be pleasing unto God, like unto Christ, familiar unto all the Saints. And whensoever matter of suffering is given him, let him say with himself: Blessed be God who now gives me occasion to suffer something for the love of Him; O Lord Jesus, give me always matter of suffering, that my filthy carnal will may be subdued, all the devils may be put to confusion, and His Name may be blessed in all my actions. Let him think himself to be now upon the rack, let him think himself pierced unto the heart with nails, swords, daggers, that his head is battered with hammers, his feet and all his members torn by wild beasts, devoured by serpents and toads; let him think that he hath all the affliction that is in hell, purgatory, or the whole world, and let him endeavour with a heart fully resigned to bear all this for the love of God; using these words: My God and my all, woe is me that my Saviour is crucified; and let him often resolve, saying: I desire to continue these sufferings for ever for the love of God; I will them all with my whole heart.

The Sixth Rule of Perfection.

Ever to examine all his thoughts, words and actions, whether they be founded upon true humility, and if at any time he find any motions of pride, let him say thus: Be thou always accursed, thou proud Devil, I began not this work for thee, nor will I end it for thee. Let him always think that as much as he seeks of his own glory so much he loseth of the favour of God. He that is

very proud is very hateful unto God ; and so much any man is as he is esteemed by God, and no more. To value oneself at nothing and to esteem highly of others is true wisdom, which Christ came from heaven to teach us. Streams run not from an humble spring into high mountains, and grace flows not from humble Jesus into a proud heart. Let him often say thus with himself : O thou love of my heart, most sweet Jesus, give me this precious jewel of humility ! let me not be found in the devilish garment of pride, but grant that I may most deeply think on Thee, and always esteem myself as nothing, or if there be aught less than nothing.

The Seventh Rule of Perfection.

Let him attempt nothing at all which savours not of obedience and self-denial ; in all his actions let him think with himself that now he holds his own rule as some loathsome and filthy thing in his hands, and in all his actions, whatsoever he doth, let him cast himself at the feet of all the creatures, and say with himself : Lie there thou foul and loathsome flesh that has never spared me in tempting me, nor will I spare thee in being revenged. Let him think that as an ass he ought to bear anything without murmur or contradiction ; let him ever have this in his mind : Wherefore camest thou hither ? let him think that he is redeemed with the Blood of Christ, and that as often as he denieth himself by obedience so often doth he gather together some drops of that most precious Blood. And in all acts of obedience let him say thus with himself : Now do I gather a drop or two of Thy Blood, most sweet Jesus, that so precious Blood be not spilt ; let him also say thus : O why was not I a cross that I might bear my Lord in His Passion ! Or let him think that with

open eyes he entereth the wound of the sacred side of our Lord, and that he there seeth His heart inflamed, and joins his heart with the heart of Christ, and with entire resignation he says with himself, I esteem myself and all things else as dung that I may gain Christ Jesus. Or let him think the Cross of Christ to be hidden in some deep part of the earth, to wit near the centre, and let him think in every act of obedience that he diggeth the earth that he may come unto the Cross. But that he may know which way to come near unto the Cross, let him know that there are three steps whereby he may infallibly attain unto the infinite sweetness of the Cross; to wit by denying himself in all things, in obeying others for Christ's sake, and in having sincere charity towards all men. Whosoever shall walk by these steps shall see how pleasing the Lord is, and how great is the abundance of His sweetness. He may also exercise himself in these or the like meditations:—

1. He that patiently bears his burden carries Christ on his shoulders.

2. He that comforteth a disconsolate brother covers the wound of Jesus.

3. He that prayeth for another in his infirmities anointeth the wearied feet of Jesus with Mary Magdalene.

4. He that pacifieth one that is angry prepareth a bed for Jesus.

5. He that hinders idle discourse drives the flies from Jesus' table.

6. He that hinders detraction drives a black dog out of Jesus' house.

7. He that reads well at the table ministers wine to Jesus and His disciples.

8. He that reads ill at the table defiles Jesus His towel.

9. He that concealeth the infamy or scandal of his brother covereth the naked members of Christ.

10. He that prays, fasteth, and renounceth all things of his own, with the three Wise Men offereth unto Jesus his gold in poverty, his myrrh, that is his pleasure, in abstinence, frankincense and the sacrifice of his heart in prayer.

11. He that keepeth silence remains with Jesus in the wilderness.

12. He that prayeth for the dead weeps with Jesus at the sepulchre of Lazarus.

13. He that totally relinquisheth his own will beareth the Cross of Jesus unto Mount Calvary.

14. He that prays for his enemies plucks the spear out of Jesus' side.

15. He that forsaketh himself and all things sleepeth with Jesus upon the Cross.

16. He that keepeth his heart clean and quiet wrap-peth Jesus in a clean linen cloth.

17. He that ariseth from sin with a purpose of amendment riseth with Jesus from the sepulchre.

18. He that attendeth unto good meditations ascends with Jesus unto heaven.

19. He that suffereth tribulation drinks off the cup with Jesus in the Garden.

20. He that amends himself preacheth well unto others.

The highway unto Christ is to vanquish a man's self, to bear with defects, and not to seek carnal conveniency.

The Eighth Rule of Perfection.

In every work which he doth let him think that this act may be his last, and how great care and diligence he

would have about his last act, whereby he shall obtain either Heaven or Hell. So let him have the same care and diligence in this act which he now doth ; for who knoweth whether this act shall be his last ? Let him think that as often as he does any work with a fervent mind, all the Angels and Saints do rejoice, and moreover will study to assist and help him ; but as often as he is found cool or slothful the Spirit of God is made sad, and all the Angels and Saints of God are touched with grief and sorrow. If the flesh tempteth to remissness let him say unto it : Hold thy peace, ass, I ask not counsel of thee, but of God and His Saints ; for what hast thou, thy daily meat and drink, sleep and rest, which God of His mere bounty granteth thee, and hath not granted a thousand others ; better deserving ? for what hast thou thy members and gifts of nature but to labour ? And presently let him think himself in the sight of God, and all His Saints, and embracing in his arms the holy crucifix with an inflamed affection let him say : Lord, here I offer up myself in a perpetual sacrifice ; a contrite and humble heart O God despise not.

The Ninth Rule of Perfection.

Let him have God ever before his eyes, and let him study always to converse inwardly with God and His Saints, and suffer outward things to pass as they are. Let him think that the kingdom of Christ is within him, and that Christ and all the Saints reside there, as so many kings, talking and conversing with his soul. Let him study to forget the cares of all outward things, and let him always say : Be not solicitous O my soul ; Christ will provide for thee. If he be not fit for sublime speculations let him rest in the Passion of Christ, and repose in His sacred wounds. Let him always hide

himself within himself, and never carry himself forth to outward things. Such as every one is within, so doth he judge outwardly ; he ought to be clean within without any tangling of the creatures, and to have his heart pure towards God ; he ought never to release his mind from heavenly meditations, and amongst many cares to live, as it were, without any care, not after the manner of the slothful but by the prerogative of a free mind, adhering unto no creature. Let him often say : Let all that be accursed which would withdraw me from the presence of my God ; my God, when shall I hold Thee fast, when shall I enjoy Thee in my inmost bowels ?

The Tenth Rule of Perfection.

Let him have this always for a general rule ; that whatsoever happens in this life, if it savours not of the Cross of Christ, it will never leave him comfort or peace of conscience ; all carnal joy enters pleasingly, but in the end it biteth and destroyeth. He ought seldom to go abroad, to fly the sight of men or being seen ; the world passeth and the lusts thereof ; let him often say with himself : Why do you distract me, ye Babylonish toys ? What have you ever afforded me but trouble of conscience and grief of heart ? Ye gave comfort for a moment, but afterwards forced me to repent ; what can I see elsewhere which I see not here ? Behold Heaven and earth and all the elements, out of these are all things made ; this is a short and significant saying : Leave all things and thou shalt find all things. Let him always study to keep himself as it were crucified and dead, since he knows he must of necessity die ; let him think himself tied by the neck with a rope unto the foot of the Cross, and that all the creatures stand about him, ready to revenge their Creator upon him

for the manifold sins he hath committed ; and let him think that he must suffer somewhat from these for his gluttony, from these for his pride, from these for his envy ; and let him firmly purpose to suffer all with serious compunction of heart, deeply grieving that he hath sinned against his most loving and gracious heavenly Father ; and let him seriously say, *Father, I have sinned against Heaven and against Thee, and am unworthy to be called Thy son.*¹

The Eleventh Rule of Perfection.

Let him ever endeavour to suspect himself, calling to mind his former defects, and if he can find no new ones let him grieve for them. Let him never cease from a pious compunction of heart, let him often say with himself, *Woe is me, that the time of my sojourning is prolonged!*² My soul refuseth to be comforted because of this, that if I could fill the whole world with my tears yet should I never sufficiently bewail the foulness of my sin, and the grievousness of the Passion of my Lord Jesus Christ. Let him think himself like poor Job, full of ulcers and wounds, cast out from the company of men, laid upon a dunghill ; and so let him weep and bemoan his misery, saying, *Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, nor chastise me in Thy displeasure ; hasten unto mine aid, O Lord God of my salvation.*³ Or let him think himself as a beggar, full of all kinds of diseases, and that being set in the midst of Heaven, in the sight of all the Saints, he first speaks unto our Blessed Lady, saying : O my Blessed Mother, vouchsafe me but one small drop of thy tears which thou sheddest in all the sufferings of thy Son ; then let him speak unto the Martyrs, for one small drop of their blood, afterwards

¹ Luke xv. 18.

² Ps. cxix. 5.

³ Ps. xxxvii. 1, 23.

unto the Confessors and Virgins, but for one drachm of their purity ; then let him offer them all for his sins in the Blood of Jesus Christ.

The Twelfth Rule of Perfection.

Let him ever resolve with himself that the common acts of religion or devotion are not to be omitted, for any inconstancy or change of mind ; for as long as we live we are subject to mutability, yea, whether we will or not, we shall be sometimes joyful sometimes sorrowful, now peaceable then disturbed, now devout then without devotion ; but a wise man will govern the stars, nor heedeth he what he feels in himself, nor on which side the wind of inconstancy bloweth, but that his intention may arrive at a due and right end. Let him have this ever written in his heart, *Obedience is better than sacrifice* ;¹ and if at any time he find his own will to be inclined either unto too much liberty or too much austerity without obedience, let him presently offer violence thereunto and resolutely say : Accursed be that austerity or liberty which in the least manner savours of my own will. Nor let him omit his ordinary devotion for distractions or perturbations, for therein, with some labour and difficulty, more may be merited than if he had all sensible consolation.

¹ 1 Kings xv. 22.

CHAPTER XXIV

Two Rules of Humility

The First Rule of Humility.

1. For the obtaining of true solid real and profound humility, it is requisite that a man truly and really persuade himself to be the most vile of all the creatures of God, and the most grievous and pernicious sinner upon the earth ; and this he may persuade himself to by these demonstrations.

2. *The First Reason.* Amongst all God's creatures I have not so deadly, so cruel, so wicked an enemy as myself ; for all good creatures either desire my salvation, or serve me unto that end, and the evil, as the devils, seek not to damn me but as I myself promote assist and consent unto it. I am unto myself a secret inward and dissembling enemy ; others are open, external, and sufficiently known, they propose objects and means to choose evil, I myself add the inclinations and consent to commit evil. From hence it follows that I ought not to hold the very devils or any other creatures in so great hatred and detestation as I ought to abhor and condemn myself ; for they tempt me not without myself, I seduce myself both with and without others. I ought therefore always to have myself in the greatest contempt and hatred, above all other creatures.

The Second Reason. Either I judge myself to be the

greatest of sinners, or not ; if I so judge I have what I seek, if I judge not myself so I presently fall into pride by preferring myself unto others. But that judgement that is mixed with pride, is evil and vicious, therefore that is only right whereby I so judge myself the most grievous sinner ; also if I judge not myself the most grievous sinner by growing proud and preferring myself before others I commit a most abominable theft and sacrilege, by robbing God of His glory and ascribing it unto myself. For who discerneth me from another but God alone ? And he that so sins against God sins more grievously than any other sinners ; as a man adopted unto a royal palace, if he offend the king, his offence is more deeply resented than a thousand others which the multitude daily commit. By so growing proud therefore I am to be esteemed a most grievous sinner ; but if I grow not proud I prefer myself unto none, and so shall esteem myself the most grievous sinner.

4. *The Third Reason.* Christ our Lord would have Himself esteemed a most grievous malefactor, and to be reviled with the name of devil, and our holy father St. Francis always called himself the greatest of sinners ; how then ought I to esteem myself ?

5. The next way unto this profound humility is often to offer oneself unto the contempt and contradictions of others ; for from hence is bred a contempt of oneself. We ought also to have a simple and blind obedience, forsaking our own will and our own judgement, and adhering unto the will of another. But this humility hath these effects. First ; to be troubled or solicitous about nothing but about the love and contemplation of God and His Saints ; for humility that is truly generous suffers not a man in anything to seek himself ; he forsaketh his own will and judgement, he contemneth

honours, he thinks not himself worthy of any sensible consolations, nor to enjoy any of the creatures ; and so a man is quit of all solicitude of the creatures, and hath nothing else wherein to exercise himself but in loving, meditating and contemplating of God and heavenly things. Secondly ; hereby a man becomes as it were an emptied vessel, and void of all self-love ; and so is filled with the gifts and graces of God. Thirdly ; hereby a man is made a whip and scourge of the devils ; for a man truly humble is void of every creature and full of God, and so the devil equally trembles and fears to see an humble man as to see God ; yea, perchance he is more confounded to see himself overcome by a weak man than by an Infinite Majesty.

6. *The Fourth Reason.* Whosoever perceives himself with much care to profit in virtue, and that he is an example unto others in all good, may argue thus ; If here were now before mine eyes the greatest sinner of the whole world I would compare myself with him in this Manner : Let it be supposed that there be two soldiers, whereof the one hath a weak and impotent adversary, and he himself be well armed, but the other soldier hath scarce any arms and hath a most potent adversary ; if he that is well armed having a weak enemy be in the least measure foiled, his shame is greater than if the other soldier lose the whole victory. So I that have a feeble adversary and great abundance in God's assistance, in small sins offend more than another, worse provided, sins in greater.

7. Thus argued St. Francis ; I know myself to be the greatest of sinners, because if any other had so great abundance of aid from God he would serve God better than I ; and I am thus persuaded hereunto because if it be supposed that any other man hath a tractable nature

and many helps from God, by the rule of charity I am bound to judge the best, to wit, that such a man would not in the least offend God for a thousand worlds ; and if I judge otherwise my judgement is evil and vicious and against charity. But I know that I daily offend the Divine Majesty many ways, therefore am I bound to think myself the greatest sinner. By the same argument may a man be drawn unto so profound humility that he may prefer sticks and stones and any the vilest creatures before himself, to wit by arguing thus ; If God had given stones the use of reason and other helps which He has conferred upon me, the very stones would have served Him better than I have served Him ; therefore I ought to think that the very stones and all other creatures are to be preferred unto me. By the continual exercise of humility a man at length acquires a simple resignation of himself in all things ; to wit that in all things he forsake his own will ; he easily forsaketh his very natural inclination, whether it be inclined unto anger or unto melancholy, or whether it affect tedious outward devotions ; there is nothing which he doth not willingly leave, out of a full resignation of himself. If the command of his superior be that he should laugh, he will laugh, if that he should weep, he will weep ; from this resignation a man hath full power over himself, nor can anything seem difficult unto him. He fears not death, nor devils, nor any enemies, because he hath nothing at all left him which they can take away. Such an one may go every moment unto God, saying thus ; I am all my God's, and my God is all unto me, truly my God and my all, my love, my dove, my Jesus, and my all. For the obtaining of true humility a man ought joyfully to suffer all punishments, whether they come according to our expectation, or against it ; he ought

also to shun all consolations of the creatures, and to think himself unworthy of all joy and comfort.

8. That he may equally and joyfully suffer all punishments, he ought truly and sincerely to think himself the greatest and most wicked sinner of the whole world, and for the love of God whatsoever sins he sees in others he ought to punish in himself, either inwardly by solid purposes of suffering anything, or outwardly by corporal penances, so it be not against obedience. And this he may do if he would think with himself that he also had committed either the same or greater sins, if God by His sole goodness had not preserved him.

9. But that he may forsake all created consolations he ought to have a full and absolute resignation of himself, that he may say thus, Nothing is now left me but my God. This may also be done if he could be persuaded that he was not at all, that he was never born nor created, nor that there can any such thing (as he is) be found in nature, and that men think not that he is, but only feign to themselves a certain chimæra of his being. And when he can be so persuaded he will think himself to be nowhere, and so by forgetting himself will forget all consolations of the creatures. And when a man shall arrive at this, as often as he has recourse unto God he shall perceive a certain true transformation unto God, and in an unspeakable manner will be made one with God Himself ; for what can he think himself to be but one with God who thinks himself to be nothing at all with God ?

A Second Shorter Rule of Humility.

1. The Devil tempteth unto three degrees of pride ; unto complacency, that we be delighted in our actions, and this is a certain kind of vanity ; unto arrogance ;

unto contumacy. By contumacy we despise our superiors ; by arrogance our equals ; by too much complacence in our own actions we contemn our inferiors. Therefore it behoves a valiant soldier of Christ to have a threefold humility ; unto his superiors for the law of nature, unto his equals for the law of grace, unto his inferiors for the law of the Cross.

2. Sincere and profound humility may be obtained by four means, 1. by taking all occasions that occur of humiliation, 2. by seeking occasions if they occur not, 3. by taking the most difficult ways in occasions given, 4. by bearing so resolute and resigned a mind that thou givest a blind obedience unto all creatures. Thou shouldst ever exercise all these, and repute the omission of any one of them as a sign of some great ingratitude towards God.

CHAPTER XXV

The Law of the Cross

1. To seek no manner of consolation in his own actions.

The gloss ; not in meat, not in drink, not in sleep, not in clothing, not in recreation, not in meditation, not in divine offices, not on earth with the saints, nor in heaven with the Angels ; for the soul which serveth Christ for consolation, either corporal or spiritual, either of grace here or glory hereafter, cannot be said to be chaste noble and generous, but is servile unfaithful and adulterous, loving Christ for His glory not for Himself.

2. With the greatest joy and fervour to seek all occasions of afflicting his own will and contradicting his private inclinations.

The gloss ; for hereby a man obtains the highest liberty over himself, the highest resignation in all things, the highest familiarity with God and His Saints.

A SERAPHICAL WAY OF MEDITATING

To wit, the way which the Seraphim bless God and serve Him.

. *O the infinite plenitude of the goodness of God !* Let him say no more, but stir up his affection and join it unto God, often repeating the same words ; and let him

do this as long as he can, but when he finds himself to wax cool, let him proceed unto the second.

2. *My God and my all, why do I not more love Thee !* In the same manner as before.

3. *I hide my heart in Thy wounded Heart, my delight, my sweetness, my all !* In the same manner as before.

Afterwards let him make three ecstasies, saying nothing, and thinking nothing ; but let him drown his whole affection in God, and not suffer his understanding to think of any determinate thing ; and so by little and little he will be led to contemplate the unbounded and infinite being of God. And this is a very meritorious way.

A CHERUBIM-LIKE WAY OF MEDITATING

To wit, whereby the Cherubim always bless God.

The depth, O the infinite depth of God's judgements ! who knoweth he be to be saved or reprobate ? As before.

THE BOOK OF PREDESTINATION

O that men knew what it were to have lost God !

THE BOOK OF PREDICATION

O all ye works of the Lord bless ye the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him for ever ! Or thus : *Abyss, O abyss, the judgements of God are a great abyss !* Afterwards let him place himself above the sphere of all mutable things ; and being as it were in the state of eternity, let him say with great affection, *O eternity, O eternity, how little art thou thought of ! O eternity !*

AN ANGELICAL WAY OF MEDITATING

To wit, as the Angels always bless God.

1. *O how sweet a thing it is, if it could be done, to die a thousand times for the most sweet Jesus !*

2. *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready!* Or let the soul say, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done unto me according unto Thy word!*

3. *Hail O Cross, my only hope! O sweet wood, sweet nails, bearing so sweet a burden!* Then let him think that he doth most affectionately embrace the Cross in his arms, and let him entirely resign himself unto God at the foot thereof.

The Will of Father Paul Magdalen

1. When I began to contemplate my true end, which I ever ought above all things to bear in mind, I first thought how great my vileness and detestable unworthiness was, if I were to be called before my eternal Creator to answer unto my Judge ; insomuch that then, my most miserable vileness, by reason of the innumerable sins which I had committed, was most deeply fixed in my heart ; so that I thought I could never be esteemed vile enough although all the creatures in the world should tread me under their feet. And this I yet think and shall ever think to be so ; because I know myself to be most vile and that I ought to be esteemed so by all men.

2. Whilst I thought of mine own misery it presently came into my mind how great was the bounty, how great the pity, how great the mercy of my most sweet Saviour, that He would choose into His favour so abominable a creature, and vouchsafe to shed His precious Blood for me ; and to think of this is so sweet, so pleasing unto me that I can never be satiated with this meditation. I am never able to pour out tears sufficient to manifest my love towards Him, and I sorrow from my heart that I have offended so sweet a Master, so pious, so gentle, so gracious a Lord ; that I have not hitherto served Him as I ought, that I have done so little for His honour, since although by my own industry I had brought all the creatures with most

intimate affection to have adhered unto Him, it were to be reputed as nothing in comparison of the infinite love which He hath showed towards me.

3. From henceforth therefore I, Brother Paul Magdalen, a most unworthy sinner, firmly purpose as a pure infant always to live under the fatherly hand of my Redeemer; that I may in all things observe His most holy will, that I may be always faithful unto Him in fulfilling His good pleasure; nor will I ever undertake anything unless I have first recommended it unto my most sweet Saviour, that He may have the first place in all my words and actions, though never so small; humbly beseeching Him that He will always hold me in His hand as truly His little child, and when He shall see me wandering that He will vouchsafe with the wholesome rod of mortification to bring me back into the right path, wherein I may ever please Him.

4. Furthermore I also purpose to render myself truly dutiful and obedient unto Him, and whatsoever I shall discover in myself that may impede my duty I will never cease till I have cast it out, although it be never so repugnant unto my nature, although it would make me never so vile and abject before men; for I know that my felicity is to please Him. What therefore do I care how despicable soever I become, so I may gain His love?

5. Whilst I purposed these things I presently thought how unworthy a thing it were if I should behave myself like an ungrateful and unmannerly servant before so sweet and gracious a Master; that therefore I may testify my gratitude towards Him, I now firmly purpose to shun no crosses, no labours whereby I may procure His glory, and if I should be able to induce the whole

world to love Him, I resolve to do it, although I should preach unto them naked my whole life. For I certainly know that none can have the true love of Jesus Christ that can be silent in His praise or be ungrateful unto Him ; seeing all the Saints in heaven adhere unto Him with so great fervour that they would never be deprived of His love although they might obtain all other created felicity possible.

6. I most firmly therefore purpose with myself to have my Redeemer for my Master, and I will always live as His poor novice ; that I may always have Him in my presence, that I may perform all my duties as if they were His express precepts, that His will may be the rule of all my actions. I will daily confess my faults unto Him, morning noon and night, I will take especial care to procure His familiarity, and I will always converse with Him as any of the most abject novices in the presence of his master, and whatsoever I shall see laudable in other novices that I firmly take upon me to exercise in myself.

7. From henceforth I intend to live as if I had nothing to do to think of others, nor will I think of any others' offences, but from my heart I forgive all things whatsoever they have done unto me, and I earnestly desire they will do the same to me ; and I resolve to take all things as from the hand of my Redeemer, for I know that nothing happens unto me here without His permission, and that He intends in all things to work my salvation. Farewell therefore the world, and farewell affection unto temporal things ; and let Jesus alone come unto me, let Him wholly possess me, let Him wholly replenish me, that I may ever live with Him and be for ever made partaker of His infinite love.

8. Finally, because I am never able to make satisfaction unto my most holy Saviour for His infinite benefits bestowed on so wretched a man ; therefore from henceforth I bequeath unto Him my whole soul, all my senses, my whole judgement, my whole will and whatsoever else is in me, that they may be absolutely at His disposing, to do with them whatsoever He pleaseth ; nor will I any more possess them unto mine own use, but will be willingly deprived of them. I utterly renounce both myself and all other created things whatsoever, for Him, that nothing may hinder the absolute authority, the perfect dominion of my most merciful Redeemer, but that He may establish His kingdom in me ; that He may wholly govern me, may urge and compel me by His most wholesome inspirations and chastisements always to obey His most holy will. I also deliver up my body unto the service of all men, unto all labour, all humiliation, that I may refuse nothing, whether I am to suffer it from man or devils, which may procure the glory of my Redeemer and magnify the power of His grace. I bequeath all my labours, all my devotions, unto the most blessed Virgin Mother of God, whom from the beginning of my conversion I chose for my mother, and have ever so found her, a most faithful and tender mother in all my necessities ; and I know that none can serve her with true devotion but that he will receive infinite benefits by her service. I bequeath all my penances and mortifications unto St. Francis whom I have for my father, unto St. Paul whom I have taken for my patron, St. M. Magdalen whom I have chosen for my sister, and St. Clare whom I especially have for my companion, and I know that from the time I contracted with her God hath granted me innumerable favours. Finally all my care and solici-

tude I bequeath unto my crucified Lord Jesus Christ, humbly beseeching Him that He will ever keep me in true humility, in a true depression of my heart under the yoke of His Cross, that by no elation of mind or presumption of my own virtue I may ever depart from Him. I also most humbly beg that in all the occurrences of my life He will ever guard me with His holy aid and special grace, because without His direction and protection I can never perform any kind of good, and whilst I live under His direction I know that the whole world cannot prevail to do me any harm. Therefore let Jesus Christ Himself, the beloved desire of my heart, be unto me all in all. Thus I firmly purpose and desire from the bottom of my heart. So be it, so be it. Amen. *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.*

Douay this 21st of Jan : on the Feast of St. Agnes
in the year 1634, in the Convent of English
Friars.

Some Pious Similes of the same Reverend Father and Martyr.

As fire when it first operates upon green wood maketh a great noise and casteth out flames on every side, but the wood being fully overcome and converted into fire the fire then re-collects itself upon the inward parts of the wood, covering itself with a thin ash in that manner that it cannot so much as be seen, yet if it be touched it will appear to be truly fire : so, in the beginning of a man's conversion, the divine love becomes more sensible and burning, every way casting forth flames of devotion, but nature being vanquished and turned into custom it then becomes less sensible and is drawn inwards ; yet occasion being given it

presently discovers itself as the fire that lies hidden under the ashes.

2. As the sun when the air is clear is easily seen, but if a cloud intervenes is then no longer discernible, and yet the sun truly remains in all his splendour : so the mind remaining serene, the rays of divine grace are easily discerned ; but the soul being afflicted it is then hardly perceived ; and yet it remains in the soul in its full splendour, as long as thou consentest not unto sin.

3. As a man that hath many enemies, if he abide at home although he do no great matter yet he is secured from his enemies : so, if thou do frequently recollect thyself although thou seemest little to profit by this recollection, nevertheless thou wilt thereby avoid many hurtful occasions, and will be the better disposed to receive divine grace.

4. As flowers put in a pot are carried hither and thither and may be set anywhere, and for a while show themselves in great beauty, but the inward sap failing by little and little they fade, and lose all their beauty : so devotion which relieth upon human favour, etc.

5. As a table supported by equal feet holds all things that are set upon it, but if it hath one longer and another shorter it will keep nothing : so if the affections of the soul be equally and indifferently disposed unto all things by true resignation, the soul will then easily bear all things as a firm and unmoved table ; but if it be inordinately affected unto any created desire, it cannot be perfectly subject unto God in all things, nor firmly bear His Cross.

6. As in a journey all parts of the way are not the same, for sometimes we must go over hedges, sometimes through woods where enemies lie hidden, sometimes through dirt where the feet are fouled : so, in the way

unto Heaven, etc. And although thou goest often the same way, and dost sometimes pass without difficulty, yet thou wilt often find difficulties which at other times thou didst not meet withal ; and yet thou must go forwards if thou wilt reach thy country.

7. As he who carries a staff in his hand, if he use it it will be a help unto him in a journey, but if he only carry it in his hand it will be a burden unto him : so he that hath many good purposes inspired by God, if he use them and reduce them into practice they will much help and defend him against his enemies ; but if he neglect them, or only bear them in mind, they will be a burden unto his conscience when he shall think that he hath frustrated the grace of God and hath not observed the purposes made by Him.

8. As the ant gathers not all his provision in one journey, but with much industry, with great labour, with frequent journeys : so, he that tendeth towards God gains not all perfection at once, but by continual labour and exercise, until he come to the time of rest.

9. As a lazy traveller after a mile or two presently seeks a convenient place to rest him in his journey, and finding a place in a wood is so much taken with the pleasantness of it that presently forgetting his journey falls asleep, and the more soundly he sleeps the more unfit he is for travel ; yet at length perceiving the day to draw towards an end and the sun near setting, remembering he has a journey to make he resumes new courage, and perhaps will travel more miles in one hour towards the end of the day than otherwise he would have gone in three, until he arrive at the city : so a sinner may perhaps at the latter end of his life be perfectly converted unto God ; and therefore we are to despair of none in this life.

10. As a painter at the beginning of his art, by reason he is not as yet expert, doth often with a strong apprehension recollect the rules of painting, but when he is grown expert he doth seldom with an actual apprehension think over those rules, and yet they are those which habitually lie hid in his mind whereby he is always moved : so a beginner is strongly moved with the Passion of Christ and other motives of devotion, but becoming perfect he feeleth not so strong an apprehension, and yet it is the Passion of Christ that moves him, lying hid in his soul.

11. As the son of some nobleman living in a strange country and brought into misery, although he be compelled to undergo mean offices, to make fires, to defile himself with coals ; yet there will still appear some marks of his nobility, either in the gravity of his behaviour or in the prudence of his speech, or in the shape of his body, from whence any man might say, Certainly this is not the son of any peasant, but a true gentleman : so one that is predestinated, being separated from God by mortal sin, made a slave of the devil, oppressed with grievous misery and sullied with the coal of sin, retaineth yet some marks of his predestination ; for there are discerned in him good inclination, a docible ingenuity, honest manners or some such like. These are, at least, remote marks of predestination, to which afterwards do follow vocation and justification, that he may truly return unto his heavenly Father.

12. As in the winter time a man gathers together his clothes and girds himself closer lest he take cold, but in the summer he leaves off his clothes by reason of the heat and for the benefit of air, and so going almost naked exposeth himself unto the air and the influences thereof, and doth by that means easily cast himself into

sundry diseases: so in time of adversity we then walk more warily, being habited in the garments of devotion and penitence, but prosperity coming we then lay by those garments, and so by outward occasions of sin we are easily drawn unto sinning.

13. As he who were to go in a chariot unto such a city, so he were sure to come unto the city, what matter were it whether the chariot were of gold or of wood: so he who by exercises of obedience goeth towards heaven, what matter is it whether the exercises be humble or sublime, whether they proceed from this or that Superior?

14. As he that goes up into a high tower ascendeth by steps and if he look downwards he will find a giddiness in his head whereby he will be hindered from ascending farther: so he that climbeth unto the height of perfection must go by degrees; and if he look behind him from the remembrance of occasions past he will be apt to find a weakness whereby he will become unfit to climb higher.

15. As a flint can never be brought unto another shape how much soever it be hewed, so that it will rather be broken than be changed into another shape: so the heart of a perverse man can with no admonition or punishment be converted unto good, unless divine grace and assistance do in an especial manner dispose him.

16. As he that moderately uses the heat of the sun will very well perceive a strengthening of his body, but if he expose himself too long unto the beams of the sun he will find a great weakening of his head and body: so he that doth moderately use the creatures, and only for necessity, will receive great refreshment by them, but if he immoderately affect them he will soon find a blinding of reason and a weakening of his affection unto

God. Yea, in spiritual and the best things, if thou use them immoderately thou wilt soon take hurt, but if thou proceed moderately they will much avail thee.

17. As a ship whilst she goes a straight course is very well holpen by the wind and tide that she may soon dispatch her voyage, but if she decline from her straight course she easily runneth upon rocks where she may suffer shipwreck : so he that goeth in the straight way of religion proceedeth happily, being carried on by the stream of religion and the breath of the Holy Ghost ; but if he vary from the straight way he will quickly run into divers precipices of temptation. But he that doeth wisely will keep the straight way, and the more exercises he is burdened withal the more humbly and securely doth he proceed, as a ship well laden, etc.

18. As he who on shipboard pulls the rope of the anchor draws not the anchor towards him but himself towards the anchor, until he arrive at a safe port : so he that liveth in religion ought not to draw religious customs unto his own opinion, but to submit himself and his own will unto religion, that he may rather study to be drawn than to draw unto himself ; and then will he come safe unto his wished haven.

19. As some trees are beautified with many blossoms but in fruit time bear little fruit : so those who are not well rooted in the fear of God in the beginning, boast much, but afterwards bring forth no fruit.

Heath

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