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THE
SPIRITUAL COMBAT.

to which are added,

The Peace of the Soul,
PIOUS REFLECTIONS ON DEATH,
and of
PENITENCE.

by *Lawrence Scupoli*



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Advertisement.

THE following treatise comprehends in a concise manner the whole system of a devout life, gathered from the maxims of the gospel; particularly those which regard humility and self-denial.

Among an infinity of encomiums which might be cited in its commendation, let it suffice to say, that one of the greatest saints these latter ages have produced, St. Francis of Sales, for upwards of twenty years carried this book about him, and never failed reading some pages of it every day. He called it his Director, and recommended it to all those who consulted him in the great affair of salvation. And though that excellent book **THE IMITATION OF CHRIST**, like this, tends to unite the soul entirely to God, yet St. Francis gave the preference to the **SPIRITUAL COMBAT**, for this reason, because the latter reduces its maxims to practice; whereas the former contains indeed abundance of choice-sentiments, but does not point out the immediate application of them.

The SPIRITUAL COMBAT has this fate in common with several excellent treatises, to be attributed to various authors: what appears most probable in regard of this tract is, that the first sketch of it was from the pen of D. John de Castanisa, a Spanish Benedictine; but that the finishing hand, with very great additions, was put to it by D. Laurence Scupoli, a Theatine of Italy.

As the author, whoever he was, has laid down a plan, which, if duly followed, will lead to the most consummate sanctity; persons who live in the world may imagine such spirituality too refined for their practice: but this may be depended on, that no one can read this little tract without reaping great advantage from it, in whatever state of life he is placed. And if in the pursuit of human arts and sciences, we are fond of learning under the greatest masters, though we have very little hopes of attaining to their perfection, certainly the same rule ought to direct our choice with regard to the science of the saints, which, at least in some degree, is absolutely necessary for the salvation of our souls.



THE
SPIRITUAL COMBAT.



No one shall be crowned who hath not fought well.
2 Tim. ii,

CHAP. I,

In what Christian Perfection consists: we must fight in order to attain it: four Things necessary for obtaining the Victory.

IF you seek, o christian soul, to attain the highest pitch of evangelical perfection, and unite yourself so closely with God, as to become one spirit with him; it is requisite, in order to succeed in a design the most sublime that can be expressed or imagined, that you be first acquainted with the true nature and perfection of a spiritual life.

Some, who only judge by appearances, make it consist in penitential works, in hair-shirts, chastisements, watching, fasting and such like corporal mortifications.

Many, especially women, fancy themselves consummately virtuous, when habituated to long vocal prayers, hearing several masses, assisting at the whole divine office, spending many hours in the church, and frequent communion,

Others, not excepting some of those who have consecrated themselves to God in a religious life, think that perfection consists in being assiduous in the choir, in affecting silence and retirement, and a strict observance of their rule. Thus different people place perfection in different practices; but

certain it is they all equally deceive themselves : for, as exterior works are no more than either dispositions for becoming truly pious, or the effects of real piety ; it cannot be said that christian perfection and true piety consist in them.

Doubtless they are powerful means for becoming truly perfect and pious, and, when employed with discretion, are of singular efficacy for supporting our nature, ever averse to good and prone to evil ; for repelling the attacks and escaping the snares of our common enemy, for obtaining from the Father of mercies, those succours so necessary for the righteous, especially beginners.

They are besides, in persons truly pious, excellent fruits of a consummate virtue. For such chastise their bodies either in punishment of past offences, or for a greater humiliation and subjection to their Creator. They seek solitude and observe silence, that, retired from the world they may preserve themselves clear of the least stain of sin, and converse only with heaven and the angels. Their time is spent in works of piety and the service of God ; they pray, and meditate on the life and passion of their Redeemer, not through curiosity or for the sake of some sensible pleasure arising from thence, but through a desire of knowing better on one side the immensity of the divine goodness, and on the other, the excess of their own ingratitude, in order to augment their love of God and detestation of themselves, to follow their Lord in taking up his cross, and renouncing their own will. They frequent the sacraments with no other view than the honor of God, and their own stricter union with him, and greater security against the power of the devil.

But the case is far different with those who ignorantly place their devotion in exterior works, which frequently are the cause of their perdition,

and of worse consequence than manifest crimes ; not that they are in themselves pernicious, but only from a wrong application. Their attachment to such works is so great, that they utterly neglect to watch the secret motions of their hearts, but, giving them full scope, leave them exposed to their own corruption and the wiles of the devil. Then it is that this seducer, seeing them go astray, not only encourages them to pursue their way, but fills their imagination with empty ideas, they already taste the joys of paradise, the delights of angels ; they see God face to face ! The deceiver does not hesitate even to suggest in their mental prayer, sublime, surprising, and ravishing thoughts, that, forgetting the world and all earthly things, they imagine themselves rapt up to the third heaven !

But a very little reflection on their conduct discovers their error, and the great distance between them and that perfection, of which we are in search. For in every thing, they are fond of preference before others ; they know no guide but their own private judgment, no rule but their own will ; and, blind in their own affairs, are ever quick-sighted in those of their neighbours, ever ready to find fault. Touch but the empty reputation of sanctity, they fancy themselves possessed of, and of which they are excessively jealous ; order them but to discontinue any of the devotions to which they are habituated ; their trouble and vexation are scarce to be expressed.

If God himself, in order to open their eyes and show them the true path to perfection, send them crosses, sickness, or severe persecutions, the surest trial of his servants' fidelity, and which never happen but by his appointment and permission ;

then it is that the corruption of their hearts discovers itself through their excessive pride.

In all the accidents of this life, whether happy or otherwise, they are utter strangers to a due conformity to the will of God. They know not how to bend under his almighty power, to submit to his judgments no less equitable than secret and impenetrable; and, in imitation of Christ crucified, to humble themselves before all men; to love their enemies, as the instruments employed by the divine goodness to train them to mortification, and cooperate, not only in their salvation hereafter, but also in their greater sanctification in this life. It is to this that their imminent danger of being lost is owing. For contemplating, with eyes dazzled by self-love, themselves and their actions not otherwise blameable, they are puffed up with vanity, they conclude themselves far advanced towards God, and readily condemn their neighbour: nay, their pride oftentimes will so far increase their blindness, that their conversion cannot be effected without a miracle of grace.

And experience convinces us, that professed sinners are with less difficulty reclaimed, than those who wilfully make their own hearts a secret to themselves through a false resemblance of virtue. From whence you will easily comprehend, that a spiritual life does not consist in the several practices before enumerated, if considered only in their outward appearance: it properly consists in knowing the infinite greatness and goodness of God, joined to a true sense of our own wretchedness and proclivity to evil; in loving God, and hating ourselves; in humbling ourselves not only before him, but, for his sake, before all men; in renouncing entirely our own will in order to follow his; and, to crown the work, in doing all this for the sole glory of his holy name, with no other

view than to please him, on no other motive than that he ought to be loved and served by all his creatures.

Such are the dictates of that law of love which the Holy Ghost has engraved on the hearts of the righteous; thus it is we are to practise that self-denial so earnestly recommended by our Saviour in the gospel; this it is which renders his yoke so sweet and his burthen so light; in short, herein consists that perfect obedience our divine Master has so much enforced both by word and example. Since therefore you aspire to the highest degree of perfection, you must wage continual war with yourself, and employ your whole force in demolishing every vicious inclination, though never so trivial. Consequently, in preparing for the combat, you must summon up all your resolution and courage: for no one shall be rewarded with a crown, who hath not fought courageously.

But remember, that as no war can be carried on with greater fierceness, the forces, no other than our ourselves, being equal on both sides: so the victory when gained, is the most pleasing to God, and most glorious to the conqueror. For whoever has the courage to conquer his passions, to subdue his appetites, and repulse even the least motion of his own will, performs an action more meritorious in the sight of God, than if, without this, he should tear his flesh with the sharpest disciplines, fast with greater austerity than the ancient fathers of the desert, or convert multitudes of sinners.

It is true, considering things in themselves, the conversion of a soul is doubtless infinitely more acceptable to the divine majesty, than the mortifying of a disorderly affection; yet every one in his own particular ought to begin with what is im-

mediately required of him. Now what God expects at our hands before all things is a serious application to the subduing our passions; and this is more properly doing our duty, than if, with unbridled appetites, we should do him greater service.

Thus, being apprized what christian perfection is, and that, in order to attain it, you must resolve on a perpetual war with yourself, begin with providing yourself with four things, as so many weapons, without which it is impossible to gain the victory in this spiritual combat. These four things are, a diffidence in yourself, a confidence in God, a good use of the faculties of body and mind, and the duty of prayer. Of these, through God's grace, we shall treat clearly and succinctly in the following chapters.

CHAP. II.

Of Diffidence in Ourselves a very necessary Virtue.

DIFFIDENCE in ourselves is so absolutely requisite in the spiritual combat, that without this virtue we must not expect to defeat the the slightest of our passions, much less to gain a complete victory. This important truth ought to be deeply imprinted in our breasts; for though we are in ourselves a mere nothing, we are too apt to entertain a conceit of our own abilities, and falsely conclude that we are something. This vice springs from the corruption of our nature; but the more natural, the more difficult to be discovered. But God, to whom nothing is hidden looks upon it with horror, because it is his will that we should be convinced we have neither virtue nor grace, but what come from him alone, and that without him we are incapable of one meritorious thought,

But notwithstanding this diffidence in our own strength be a gift from heaven, and bestowed by God on those he loves, sometimes by his holy inspirations, sometimes by severe afflictions or temptations almost insuperable, and other ways unknown to us, yet he expects we should exert all our abilities for obtaining it. Which we shall certainly do, if, with the grace of God, we seriously employ the four following means.

The first is, to consider attentively our own wretchedness, and that being in ourselves nothing, we are incapable of doing the least good, or advancing the least step towards heaven without assistance from above.

The second is, to beg of God, with great humility and fervor, this signal virtue, which must come from him alone. Let us begin with acknowledging not only that we do not possess it, but that of ourselves we are utterly incapable of acquiring it. Then let us cast ourselves at the feet of our Lord, and frequently importune him to grant our request, and this with a firm confidence of being heard, provided we wait with patience the effect of our prayer, and persevere in it as long as it shall please the divine providence.

The third is; to accustom ourselves by degrees to be diffident in our own strength, to dread the illusions of our own mind, the strong propensity of our nature to sin, and the terrible number of enemies which surround us, whose subtlety, experience and force far surpass ours; who can transform themselves into angels of light, and lie continually in wait for us as we advance towards heaven.

The fourth is, that, as often as we commit a fault, we enter into ourselves, in order to discover the excess of our own weakness; for God never permits us to fall, but that we may see better into

ourselves, that we may learn to despise such vile creatures as we are, and to desire sincerely to be despised by others; without this we must not hope to obtain a diffidence in ourselves, which is founded on humility and a conviction of our own wretchedness.

In effect, whoever proposes to approach the eternal truth and fountain of all light, must doubtless know himself thoroughly, and not imitate the pride of those who gain no other knowledge than what their sins afford, and only then begin to open their eyes when they are plunged into some shameful and unforeseen disorder; which happens through God's permission, that they may know their own weakness, and by a fatal experiment learn to diffide in their own strength. But God seldom applies so severe a remedy against their presumption, but when more favorable means have failed.

In a word, he permits persons to fall more or less in proportion to their pride; and if there were any one as free from this vice as the blessed Virgin, I dare pronounce they would never fall. As often therefore as you commit a fault, have immediate recourse to the knowledge of yourself; earnestly beseech our Lord to enlighten you, that you may see yourself as you are in his sight, and no more presume on your own strength: otherwise you will fall again into the same faults, or perhaps much greater, to the eternal ruin of your soul.

CHAP. III.

Of Confidence in God.

ALTHOUGH a diffidence in ourselves be absolutely necessary in the spiritual combat, as I have just now shewn; nevertheless, if this be all we have to trust to, we shall soon be put to

flight, plundered and subdued by the enemy. To it therefore we must join a firm confidence in God, the author of all good, and from whom alone the victory must be expected. For if it be certain that of ourselves we are nothing, dangerous and continual misfortunes will attend us, and reason will suggest a diffidence in our own strength: but if we are fully convinced of our weakness, we shall gain, through the assistance of God, very signal advantages over our enemies, nothing being of greater efficacy for obtaining the assistance of heaven, than placing a noble confidence in God. We have four means of acquiring this excellent virtue.

The first is, to ask it with great humility.— The second is, to contemplate with a lively faith, the immense power and infinite wisdom of that supreme being, to whom nothing is difficult; whose goodness knows no limits, whose love for those who serve him, is ever ready to furnish them with whatever is requisite for their spiritual life, and gaining a complete victory over themselves.

All that he demands of them is to have recourse to him with an entire confidence. And can any thing be more reasonable? Is it possible that the amiable Shepherd, Luke xv. who for upwards of thirty-three years sought after the lost sheep, through rough and thorny ways, with so much pain that it cost him the last drop of his sacred blood; is it possible, I say, that so good a Shepherd, seeing at last his strayed sheep returning to him, with a design of being guided for the future by him alone, and with a sincere, though yet perhaps but weak, intention to obey him, he should not look upon it with pity, listen to its cries, and bear it upon his shoulders to the fold? Doubtless he is greatly pleased to see it united again to the flock, and

invites the angels to rejoice with him on the occasion.

For if he search so diligently after the drachma in the gospel, by which the sinner is figured, if he leave nothing untouched to find it, can he reject those who, like sheep longing to behold their shepherd, return to the fold? Can it be imagined, that the spouse of our souls, who ardently seeks to take possession of our hearts, whose greatest delight is to communicate himself to us, and heap continual blessings on us, but that finding the door open, and hearing us beg to be honored with his presence, he will refuse to grant our request?

The third means of acquiring this salutary confidence, is frequently to call to mind what we are assured of in the holy scriptures, those oracles of truth, in a thousand different places, that no one who puts his trust in God shall be confounded.

The fourth means of acquiring both a diffidence in ourselves and a confidence in God, is, that when we have any good action to perform, or some failing to encounter, before we enter upon it, we cast our eyes on our own weakness on the one side, and on the other contemplate the infinite power, wisdom and goodness of God, and thus balancing what we fear from ourselves, with what we hope from God, we courageously undergo the greatest difficulties and severest trials. With these arms joined to prayer, we shall be enabled to execute the greatest designs, and gain complete victories.

But if we neglect this method, though we may flatter ourselves we are actuated by a principle of confidence in God, we shall generally be deceived; because presumption is so very natural to man, that it even insinuates itself im-

perceptibly into the confidence he imagines he has in God, and the diffidence he fancies he has in himself. Consequently in order to banish entirely all presumption, and to sanctify every action with the two virtues opposite to this vice, the consideration of his own weakness must necessarily precede that of the divine power, and both of them be previous to all his undertakings.

CHAP. IV.

How to discover whether we truly diffide in Ourselves, and place our Confidence in God.

THE presumptuous man is persuaded he has acquired a diffidence in himself and a confidence in God; but this mistake is never more plainly discovered than when some fault is committed. For if he give way to vexation, and despair of advancing in the way of virtue, it is evident he placed his confidence in himself, and not in God. And the greater the anxiety and despondence, the greater certainty of his guilt.

For if he, who much diffides in himself and places great confidence in God, if he should commit a fault, he is not at all surprised, he does not abandon himself to a perplexing vexation; he justly attributes what has happened to his own weakness and a want of due confidence in God. Hence he learns to diffide still more in himself, and place all his hopes in the assistance of the Almighty. He detests above all things the sin he has fallen into; he condemns that passion or criminal habit which occasioned his fall; he conceives a lively sorrow for having offended his God; but his sorrow, ever attended with peace of mind, does not interrupt the method he has laid down, or prevent his pursuing his enemies to their final destruction,

I sincerely wish, that what has been here advanced were attentively considered by many who think themselves very devout, yet from the moment they commit a fault will not be pacified, but hurry away to their director, more to rid themselves of the vexation arising from self-love, than out of any other motive; though their principal care should be to wash away the guilt of sin in the sacrament of penance, and fortify themselves with that of the eucharist against a relapse.

CHAP. V.

Of the Mistake of many who esteem Pusillanimity a Virtue.

THERE is another illusion too common in devotion, which gives the name of virtue to the fear and anxiety arising from sin. For though this vexation be accompanied with some sorrows yet it is founded on pride, and a secret presumption which a person entertains of his own strength. Thus he, who fancying himself far advanced in virtue, looks with too much indifference on temptations, yet finds by woeful experience, that, like other men, he is subject to weakness; he is astonished at his fall, and finding himself deceived in his expectations, gives a loose to anguish and despair.

This never befalls the humble soul, who presumes not on her own strength, but places all her trust in God alone. For if she commit a fault, it occasions no surprise nor vexation, because she discovers by the light of truth which is her guide, that her fall is owing to her natural unsteadiness and frailty.

CHAP. VI.

Farther Advice, of great Efficacy for obtaining a Diffidence in Ourselves and a Confidence in God.

AS all our force for conquering the enemy springs from a diffidence in ourselves and a confidence in God, I think it incumbent upon me to give some farther advice, very necessary for obtaining these virtues.

In the first place, let every one be fully persuaded, that neither all possible qualifications, whether natural or acquired, not all supernatural gifts or perfect knowledge of the scriptures, not even whole ages spent in the service of his Creator, can enable him to do the will of God and comply with his duty, unless the hand of the Almighty support him as often as any good action is to be done, any temptation to be overcome, any danger to be avoided, or cross to be taken up, which providence shall please to ordain. Let him therefore place this truth before his eyes every day, hour, and moment of his life. Let him be ever mindful of it, and thus banish all presumption, never rashly daring to confide in himself.

But in order to acquire an entire confidence in God, we must firmly believe that he is equally able to subdue all enemies, whether many or few, strong or weak, experienced or unexperienced. Consequently, though a soul should be overwhelmed by sins, though she were subject to all the defects imaginable; though she had labored in vain to disengage herself from vice, and follow virtue; though she should even find her propensity to evil increase daily, instead of advancing in virtue: yet she must not fail to place her confidence in God,

she must not be discouraged, or abandon her spiritual works: on the contrary, she ought to excite herself to new fervor, and redouble her efforts against the enemy.

For in this sort of combat the victory is sure to attend him who has the courage not to throw down his arms, or lay aside his confidence in God, whose assistance is never wanting to such as fight his battles, though he may sometimes permit them to be wounded. Persevere therefore to the end, and on this the victory depends. As to the rest, he who fights for God's cause, who places his entire trust in him, finds a speedy and efficacious remedy for the wounds he receives; and, when he least expects it, sees his enemy at his feet,

CHAP. VII.

Of the right Use of our Faculties; and First, that the Understanding be free from Ignorance and Curiosity.

IF we engage in the spiritual combat with no other weapons than a diffidence in ourselves and a confidence in God, we shall not only be disappointed of the victory over our passions, but must expect to commit great oversights very frequently. It is therefore necessary to employ likewise a right use of the faculties both of body and soul; the third means we proposed as requisite for attaining to perfection.

Let us begin with regulating the understanding and the will. The understanding must be exempt from two great defects, under which it frequently labors. The one is ignorance, which prevents its attaining truth, the proper object of its inquiries. By frequent use the darkness surrounding it must be dispelled, that it may clearly discern how to cleanse the soul of all irregular affections, and

adorn her with the necessary virtues. The means of executing this are as follow.

The first and principal is prayer, by which is asked the light of the Holy Ghost, who never rejects such as seek God in earnest, who delight in fulfilling his law, and in all occurrences submit their own judgment to that of their superiors.

The second is, a continual application to examine seriously and diligently every object, in order to distinguish good from evil, and form a judgment not from outward appearances, the testimony of our senses, or the notions of a corrupt world, but suitable to the idea the Holy Ghost annexes to it. Thus we shall clearly discern, that what the world pursues with such eagerness and affection is mere vanity and illusion; that ambition and pleasure are dreams, which, when passed, are succeeded by vexation and regret; that ignominy is a subject of glory, and sufferings the source of joy; that nothing can be more noble, nor approach nearer to the divine nature, than to pardon those who injure us, and return good for evil; that it is greater to despise the world, than to have it at command; that it is infinitely preferable to submit to the meanest of mankind for God's sake, than to give laws to kings and princes; that a humble knowledge of ourselves surpasses the sublimest sciences; in a word, that greater praise is due to him who curbs his passions on the most trivial occasions, than to him who takes the strongest cities, defeats whole armies, or even works miracles and raises the dead to life.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Obstacles which prevent our forming a right Judgment of Things: how we may be assisted in it.

THE difficulty of forming a right judgment of such things as we have just now mentioned, and many others, arises from a hasty motion of love or hatred we are apt to conceive of them at their first appearance; and our reason being prejudiced by such blind passions, every thing appears in a far different light from that in which it ought to be considered. Whoever therefore desires to secure himself from so dangerous and common an illusion, must carefully preserve his heart free from all inordinate affections.

When an object presents itself, let the understanding with mature deliberation weigh its merits, before the will be suffered to embrace it, if agreeable; or reject it, if otherwise.

For whilst the understanding remains unbiassed by the passions, it will easily distinguish between truth and falsehood, between real evil under the appearance of good, and real good under the false appearance of evil. Whereas no sooner is the will moved by the object either to love or hatred, but the understanding becomes incapable of forming a just notion of it; because the affection, by disguising it, imprints a false idea, and then, being presented again to the will, the faculty, already prepossessed, redoubles its love or hatred, exceeds all bounds, and is utterly deaf to the voice of reason.

In such a monstrous confusion, the understanding plunges deeper and deeper into error, and represents the object to the will with the heightened colors of good or evil.

Thus, whenever the rule I before laid down,

and which on this occasion is of the greatest importance, happens to be neglected, the two most noble faculties of the soul are bewildered in a maze of error, darkness and confusion. Happy are those, who, void of all attachment to creatures, endeavour to discern the true nature of things before they suffer their affections to be engaged: who frame their judgment by the dictates of reason, but especially by those supernatural lights the Holy Ghost is pleased to communicate either immediately from himself, or by those he has appointed for our guides.

But remember, that this advice ought oftentimes more exactly to be followed in those things which of themselves are commendable, than in those which are not entirely so, because of the greater danger of being deceived, and the prejudice and eagerness they generally occasion. Let nothing therefore be done rashly, since a single circumstance of time or place not observed may spoil all, and great faults be committed in the very manner and order of the performance; as in the case of many, who have wrought their own perdition in the practice of the most sanctified exercises.

CHAP. IX.

Another Means for preventing the Understanding being deceived in its Choice.

ANOTHER vice, from which the understanding ought to be entirely free, is curiosity. For if we indulge ourselves in vain, frivolous or sinful speculations, our minds will become incapable of chusing what is most proper for mortifying our disorderly affections, or attaining solid perfection. Let us therefore be dead to all worldly things, and utterly neglect them, unless absolutely necessary, even though not criminal in themselves;

let us curb our own minds, and not suffer them to range at large on a variety of objects; let us render them insensible to all profane speculations; let us not listen to rumours; let us shun all such as are ever gaping after news; let us look upon the various revolutions of this lower orb, with the same indifference as if they were only dreams. Even with respect to heavenly things let discretion be our guide; let us not soar too high, let our greatest ambition be to have continually before our eyes Christ crucified, to study the particulars of his life and death, and learn what he requires of us. Beyond this let us not seek any thing, and we shall please that divine Master, whose true disciples ask nothing of him, but what may contribute to their doing his holy will. Whatever desire or search exceeds this, it is no other than self-conceit, a spiritual pride, and a snare of the devil.

Such as regulate their conduct in this manner, will be proof against the attacks of the old serpent, who seeing, in the fervor of persons entering upon spiritual exercises, a will fixed and resolute, tries his subtleties on their understanding, that through it he may work his way to their will, and thus master both those faculties.

In order to succeed, he swells their imagination in time of prayer; suggesting elevated sentiments, especially to such as are naturally curious and penetrating, subject to self-conceit, and fond of their own notions.

His aim is to amuse them with vain fancies, and the sensible pleasure arising from them, that, lulled with a false notion of enjoying God, they may forget to cleanse their hearts, to study themselves, and practise mortification; thus elated with pride, they idolize their understanding, and accustomed to consult nobody but themselves,

they are at last persuaded that they have no farther occasion for the assistance and advice of others.

This is a pernicious and almost an incurable evil; as it is much more difficult to remedy the pride of the understanding than that of the heart. For the pride of the heart is no sooner discovered by the understanding, but it may be removed by a voluntary submission to the orders of proper superiors. Whereas, if a person take it into his head, and obstinately persist in maintaining, that he is wiser than those who are placed over him, how is he to be undeceived? Which way will he discover his error? To whose judgment will he submit, so long as he fancies himself wiser than all the world? If the understanding, that eye of the soul, and which alone can discover and rectify the vanity of the heart, be itself blind and swelled with pride, who shall undertake to cure its maladies? If the light change to darkness, if the rule be erroneous, what must become of the rest?

Let us therefore guard against so pernicious an evil, and never suffer it to take possession of our minds; let us accustom ourselves to acquiesce in the judgment of others, without carrying our notions of spirituality too high; let us grow enamored with that folly and simplicity so much recommended by the apostle, 1 Cor. iii. 18. and we shall surpass Solomon himself in wisdom.

CHAP. X.

Of the Exercise of the Will, and of the End to which all our Actions, interior and exterior, ought to be directed.

HAVING rectified the faults of the understanding, we must proceed to those of the will, that, being divested of its inclinations, it may become entirely devoted to the will of God.

It must be observed, that it is not sufficient to desire, nor even to execute what is most pleasing

to God, but it is also requisite to desire and to perform it from a motion of his grace, and out of a willingness to please him. Here arises the greatest struggle with our nature, ever so greedy of being pleased, that even in spiritual things above others, it seeks its own satisfaction, resting there with the less scruple, as no evil appears. Hence it comes, that when we enter upon works of piety, our impulse proceeds not from the sole view of doing the will of God, but from a sensible pleasure, which often accompanies such exercises.

And the illusion is still the more subtle, as the object of our affections is the more commendable in itself. Who would imagine that self-love, criminal as it is, should prompt us to unite ourselves to God? and that in desiring to possess him, we should have more regard to our own interest, than to his glory and the accomplishment of his holy will? which nevertheless ought to be the sole intention of those who love him, seek him, and make profession of keeping his law. In order to avoid so dangerous a rock, and to habituate ourselves not to desire, or put in practice any thing but by the impulse of the Holy Ghost, and with a pure intention of honoring him, who will be not only the first principle, but also the last end of all our actions, the following method must be observed.

When an opportunity offers of performing some pious work, let us be watchful lest our hearts fix upon it, before we raise our minds to God, that we may know whether it be according to his will, and whether we desire it purely because it is pleasing to him. Our will being thus prevented and directed by the will of God, tends to no other motive than that of conforming entirely to him and advancing his glory. The same method

ought to be observed in rejecting what is contrary to his will: the first motion ought to be to raise our minds to God, to know that it is displeasing to him, and to be satisfied, that in rejecting it, we shall act in conformity to his holy will.

But we must remember, it is with great difficulty that we discover the artifices of our corrupt nature, which, ever fond of centering under specious pretexts all things in itself flatters us with a persuasion, that in all our actions we have no other view than to please God. Hence it comes, that in what we embrace or reject, only in reality to humour ourselves, we erroneously imagine that we act on a principle of pleasing, or a dread of displeasing our sovereign Lord. The most efficacious remedy against this evil, is a purity of heart, which every one who engages in the spiritual combat must purpose to obtain, by putting off the old man, and clothing himself with the new.

The application of this divine remedy consists in carefully divesting ourselves of all human motives in every thing we undertake; pursuing or rejecting nothing but in conformity to the will of God. Perhaps in every thing we do, and particularly in the silent motions of the heart, or those exterior actions which are quickly over, we may not always perceive the influence of this motive, let us however be so disposed, that virtually, and as it were through habit, we do nothing but with a view of pleasing God alone. But in actions which last any time, this virtual intention will not suffice; it ought to be frequently renewed, and cultivated in its greatest purity and fervor: for otherwise we shall run great hazard of being deluded by self-love, which always preferring the creature before the Creator,

bewitches in such a manner, that in a short time we are imperceptibly drawn from the intention we first formed.

Well-meaning persons, but who are not sufficiently on their guard, generally set out with no other view than of pleasing God: yet by degrees they suffer themselves, without perceiving it, to be drawn away by vain-glory: so that forgetting the divine will which first influenced them, they are entirely attached to the satisfaction arising from what they do, and the advantage and credit they expect from it.

And if it happen that when they think they are doing wonders, providence permits them to be interrupted either by sickness or any other accident, they are presently dissatisfied, murmuring against every one about them, and sometimes against God himself. This plainly shows the motive and spring of their actions to be bad. For whoever acts from the influence of divine grace, and with the sole view of pleasing God, is indifferent as to what he is employed in; or if he be bent upon any thing in particular, the manner and time of doing it is entirely submitted to providence; being perfectly resigned, whatever success attends his undertakings, he has nothing at heart but the accomplishment of the divine will.

Let every one therefore recollect himself; and direct all his actions to so excellent and so noble an end. And if he find himself disposed to perform any work of piety, in order to avoid the punishments or deserve the rewards of the next life; let him propose, as the end of his undertaking, the will of God, who requires of us to avoid hell and gain heaven. It is not to be imagined what efficacy this motive has, since the least action though never so inconsiderable, per-

formed for his holy sake, far surpasses many others, though of much greater moment, when executed with another view. Upon this principle, a small alms given solely in honor of God, is infinitely more agreeable to him, than if upon any other motive, large possessions were abandoned, even with a view of gaining the kingdom of heaven. Not but that such a motive is highly commendable in itself, and worthy of our regard.

This holy practice of performing our actions with the sole intention of pleasing God, may carry some difficulty with it at first; but time will render it familiar and even delightful, if we use ourselves to seek God in the sincerity of our hearts; if we sigh continually after him as the only and sovereign good, deserving to be sought, valued, and loved by all creatures beyond any thing else. The more attentively we contemplate the greatness and goodness of God, the more frequently and tenderly will our affections tend to that divine object; and thus we shall sooner and with less difficulty attain a habit of directing all our actions to his glory.

Finally, we may assign as a means of always acting on so excellent and elevated a motive, the fervent begging of our Lord this grace, and the frequent consideration of the infinite benefits he has already bestowed upon us, and every moment continues to repeat through an undeserved and disinterested affection for us.

CHAP. XI.

Some Considerations which may incline the Will to desire Nothing but in Conformity with God.

IN order to induce our will to act with an exact compliance to the will of God, and promote his glory; let us remember that he has

set the example of loving and honoring us a thousand different ways. He drew us out of nothing, created us after his own likeness, and all other things for our use: in redeeming us, he would not employ the brightest angel, but his only Son, who purchased our redemption, not with silver or gold, which are perishable things, but with his sacred blood, and that by a death not less ignominious than cruel: he watches continually over us to secure us against the fury of our enemies; fights for us by his holy grace, and in order both to nourish and strengthen us, is ever ready to feed us with the precious body of his Son in the sacrament of the altar.

Are not these convincing proofs of the excessive love which God bears to us? Who can comprehend the immensity of this charity for such vile wretches, or what ought to be our gratitude toward so gracious a benefactor? And if the great ones of this world think themselves obliged to make some return for the respect paid them, even by those whom birth or fortune has made their inferiors; what return ought not the worms of the earth to make, when honored with such signal marks of love and esteem by the sovereign Lord of the universe? Let us not forget in particular, that this infinite Majesty is worthy to be served by us through a principle of singular love, which has no other view than his sole will and pleasure.

CHAP. XII.

Of the different Wills in Man, which continually oppose each other.

THERE are two wills in man, the one superior, the other inferior. The first is usually called reason; the second we name appetite, sensuality, passion. Nevertheless, as man, properly speak-

ing, is only such by his reason, he is not said to will any thing by the first motion of the appetite, unless the superior will confirm the choice.

Thus our whole spiritual warfare consists in this, that the rational will being placed as it were between the divine will above it, and the sensual will below it, is assaulted on both sides; God moving it by his grace, and the flesh by its solicitations, both contending for the victory. Hence arise inconceivable difficulties, when persons, who during their youth have contracted vicious habits, come to a resolution of changing their life, mortifying their passions, and breaking with the world in order to devote themselves to the service of God. For their will is violently assaulted by the divine will and its own sensual appetites, and which way soever it turns, it is with great difficulty it withstands such fierce attacks.

This onset is not experienced by those, who having been long habituated to virtue or vice, are fixed in their manner of living: the virtuous conforming themselves to the will of God, the vicious gratifying their sensual appetites. But let no one flatter himself that he shall be able to acquire virtue and serve God in a due manner, unless he be resolved to use violence with himself, and surmount the difficulty he will experience in quitting the pleasures, great or little, to which he has had any criminal attachment.

Hence it is that so few attain to any great degree of perfection. For after conquering the worst vices, and undergoing great labors, they lose courage, and fail to pursue their victory; though only small trials are to follow, they are negligent in subduing the feeble remains of their own will, and in extinguishing several less

passions, which gathering strength again, at last take full possession of their hearts.

Of these many, for example, do not take what belongs to others, but are passionately attached to what is their own. They do not employ unwarrantable methods of aggrandizing themselves; yet far from contemning advancement, they are fond of it, and pursue it by such means as they think lawful. They observe appointed fasts, but indulge themselves on other days in the most delicious viands. They are careful not to transgress in point of chastity, but will not be debarred their favorite amusements, though great obstacles to a spiritual life and a strict union with God.

Since therefore all these things are highly dangerous, particularly for those who are not aware of their bad consequences, every one ought to avoid them with the greatest caution. Without this, we may be assured that most of our good works will be attended with slothfulness, self-love, human respects, hidden imperfections, self-conceit, a desire of being remarked and applauded by others. Those who are negligent in this particular, not only make no progress in the way of salvation, but even lose ground, and are in danger of falling back to their former vicious courses, because they do not aim at solid virtue; because they are insensible of the great favor God has done them in their deliverance from the tyranny of the devil; because they are ignorant of the danger which surrounds them, and are bewitched by a false and deceitful peace.

We must not here omit to point out an illusion, the more to be dreaded as it is not easily discovered. Many who enter upon a spiritual life, loving themselves too well, if such may be said to love themselves, single out those exercises as are most pleasing, but shun whatever is disagreeable to

their humor, or proper for mortifying their passions, against which their whole force ought to be turned in the spiritual combat. Too much pains cannot be taken to make them relish the difficulty they find in conquering their inclinations, for on this all depends; and the greater resolution they manifest in getting over the first obstacles which occur, the speedier and more signal victory attends them. Let them therefore courageously expect nothing but difficulty in this warfare, and wait with patience for the victory and its fruits, and then they may depend upon not being disappointed.

CHAP. XIII.

In what Manner we are to encounter Sensuality: and what Acts ought to proceed from the Will, in order to acquire virtuous Habits.

WHENEVER we find the possession of our hearts, contended for by our Creator on the one side, and sensuality on the other, if we observe the following methods, victory will attend the cause of heaven.

1. The first motions of the sensual appetite in opposition to reason, must be carefully suppressed, lest the will should give its consent.

2. This being done, they may be suffered to return, in order to give them a greater overthrow.

3. They may even be allowed a third trial, in order to accustom ourselves to repulse them with a generous disdain. But it must be observed, these methods of stirring up passions, are not to take place when chastity is concerned, of which we shall speak hereafter.

4. It is of great importance to form acts of those virtues which are contrary to the vicious inclinations we encounter. The following example will place this in a clear light.

Perhaps you are subject to impatience. Recollect yourself, and observe what passes in your mind. You will plainly see that the vexation, which first arose in the inferior appetite, endeavours to gain the will and the superior appetite. Then, as I set down in the first place, be sure to put a stop to its career, and prevent it from prevailing on the will. Quit not the field till your enemy be entirely subdued, and reduced to a due subjection to reason.

But see the subtlety of the wicked fiend! When he finds you courageously resist any impetuous passion, he not only desists from kindling it in your heart, but even will assist in quenching the fire for the present. His design is to prevent your attaining the contrary virtue by a steady resistance, and to swell you with vanity of thinking yourself a great warrior for dispatching your enemy in so short a time. It is necessary therefore to renew the charge, calling to mind what first moved you to impatience and disquiet, and when you perceive the same emotion to arise in the inferior appetite, excite the whole force of your will to suppress it.

But as it frequently happens, that after the most strenuous endeavours against the enemy, and this on a principle of doing our duty and pleasing God; as, I say, after all this, we are not entirely out of danger of being defeated in a third attack, we must once more encounter the passion we contend with, and conceive not only a hatred, but even a disdain and horror of it.

In short, if you seek to adorn your soul with virtue, and acquire habitual sanctity, it will be requisite to form frequent acts of the contrary virtues to your vicious inclinations. For example, if you would acquire a consummate meekness, you must not think it sufficient to employ the three

sorts of weapons above mentioned, for overcoming all impatience occasioned by the contempt you undergo from others; you must proceed even to an affection for that very contempt; to wish for its being repeated, and that too by the same persons; to resolve to suffer patiently still greater insults.

The reason why we are under a necessity of forming acts directly contrary to the failings we encounter, if we would attain perfection, is this: other acts of virtue, however efficacious and frequent, do not strike directly at the root of the evil. Thus, to continue the same example, though you give no consent to the motions of anger, but encounter them in the several methods we have prescribed; yet be assured, that unless you accustom yourself to relish contempt and rejoice in it, you will never entirely root out the particular vice of impatience, which springs from a dread of being despised, and a fondness for the applause of men. For as long as the root of that weed is not torn away, so long will it sprout afresh, and your virtue fade away; nay, in time you may find yourself stript of all virtuous habits, and in continual hazard of falling back into your past disorders.

Never hope therefore to acquire solid virtues, unless, by forming frequent acts directly opposite, you destroy the failings to which you are subject. I say by frequent acts; for as many sins are requisite for contracting a vicious habit, in the same manner frequent acts are necessary for attaining a virtuous habit. And even a greater number of acts must be employed in the latter case than in the former, because our corrupt nature opposes itself on the one side, as much as it assists on the other.

Observe moreover, that where the virtue sought for, is not to be acquired without forming exterior

acts, corresponding to the interior ones, as it happens in regard of patience, you must not only speak with much charity and mildness to those who have injured you, however great the offence may be, but even assist them to the utmost of your abilities. And notwithstanding such acts, whether interior or exterior, may seem of little moment, and be attended with great repugnance, be sure not to omit them, for however faint they may appear, they will certainly support you in the combat, and greatly contribute to your gaining the victory.

Watch therefore over your mind, and do not content yourself with only restraining the most violent sallies of your passions; resist the most minute, as they generally dispose to greater, and pave the way to confirmed vicious habits. Does not experience teach us, that many, who are negligent in mortifying their passions on trivial occasions, though in things of greater moment they have shown their courage; does not experience, I say, teach us, that they are unexpectedly beset, and furiously attacked, by enemies who had never been entirely defeated?

There is still one thing more I must here recommend with great earnestness; which is, to mortify your inclinations even when the object is in itself lawful, but not necessary. The advantage arising from hence will be very considerable; the victory on other occasions will be much facilitated; you will gain experience and strength against temptations, and render yourself very acceptable to your Saviour. I deal sincerely with you; do not fail to exert yourself in the holy practices I have mentioned, which are absolutely requisite for a perfect reformation of your interior. You will speedily gain a most glorious victory over yourself. You will advance with great rapidity

in the way of virtue, and your life become, not in appearance only, but truly spiritual.

Whereas if you pursue other methods, however excellent you may fancy them, though you taste the greatest spiritual delights, though you may imagine yourself intimately united to God; yet depend upon it, you will never acquire solid virtue, nor know what true spirituality is, which, as we have shown in the first chapter, does not consist in exercises agreeable and soothing to nature, but in such as crucify it and all its irregular affections.

Thus it is that man, renewed by the virtues he has acquired, unites himself strictly to his Creator and crucified Saviour. Likewise it is certain, that as vicious habits are contracted by several acts of the will, yielding to sensual appetites; in the same manner, evangelical perfection is attained by repeated acts of the will conforming itself to the will of God, who moves it to the practice of different virtues at different times. And as the will incurs no guilt, although the whole force of the inferior appetite be exerted for that effect, without its own consent; so on the other side it cannot be sanctified and united to God, whatever strength of grace be employed to attract it, unless it cooperate with that grace by acts not only interior, but even exterior, if requisite.

CHAP. XIV.

How we are to behave when the Will seems to be overpowered and unable to resist the sensual Appetite.

IF at any time you be apprehensive lest the will should give way to the inferior appetite and other enemies which strive to master it, and if you perceive your courage and resolution fail, nevertheless maintain your ground; do not quit the field

for you ought to look upon the victory as your own, so long as you are not entirely overcome. And indeed, as your will does not stand in need of the inferior appetite's consent for making its choice; in the same manner, whatever violence this domestic enemy may use, still the liberty of the will remains inviolable. For it has received from the Almighty so absolute a dominion, that all the senses, the wicked spirits and the whole creation leagued together, cannot prejudice the liberty it enjoys of acting or not acting as often, in what manner and for what end it pleases.

But if sometimes temptations press so hard upon you, that your will, almost overpowered, seems to want sufficient strength to resist any longer, be sure not to be disheartened or throw down your arms. Cry out and defend yourself, saying to the tempter, be gone, infernal fiend! I will die a thousand deaths before I will yield to thy vile suggestions. Behave like one who is engaged with an obstinate adversary, and not being able to pierce him with the point, attacks him with the hilt of his sword; see how he strives to disengage himself, how he retires only to return with greater vigor, and dispatch his enemy with one fatal blow. This will teach you to retire frequently into yourself, and recollect that of yourself you are nothing, and unable to do any thing; to place a generous confidence in the almighty power of God; thus will you be enabled by his holy grace to attack and finally vanquish the passion which molests you.

It is here you must cry out, help me, o Lord! My God assist me! Jesus! Mary! abandon not your servant; let me not fall a prey to this temptation!

As often as the enemy gives you so much respite, call in your understanding to the assist-

ance of your will; strengthen it with the several reflections proper to raise its courage and animate it anew to the fight. Thus for example, if you are persecuted unjustly, or otherwise afflicted, and in the excess of uneasiness tempted to fall into vexation, so as to lose all patience, endeavour to recover yourself by a serious reflection on these or the like points.

1. Examine whether you do not deserve the uneasiness you suffer, and have not drawn it upon yourself. For if you are any ways to blame, it is but fit that you bear patiently the anguish of a wound you yourself have occasioned.

2. But if you have nothing to reproach yourself with on this head, look back on past disorders, for which the divine justice has not yet inflicted a punishment, nor you sufficiently expiated by a voluntary penance. And seeing that God through his infinite mercy, instead of a long punishment in the flames of purgatory, or an eternal one in those of hell, has appointed an easy and momentary one in this life, accept of it not only with resignation, but with joy and thanksgiving.

3. If you imagine without just grounds, that your faults are few, and your penitential works very considerable, remember, the way to the kingdom of heaven is narrow and full of tribulation.

4. Consider moreover, that if you could discover another road, the dictates of ardent love should deter you from so much as thinking of it, since the Son of God, and all the saints after him, arrive there by no other than the thorny path of the cross.

5. But what you ought chiefly to have in view on this and all other occasions, is the will of God, who loves you so tenderly, as to be delighted

with every heroic act of virtue you perform, and the return you make by your fidelity and courage to his immense love. Remember likewise, that the more unjustly you suffer, and consequently the more grievous your affliction, the greater your merit is in the sight of God ; for that in the midst of your sufferings you adore his judgments, and submit with resignation to his divine providence, which draws good from the greatest evils, and makes the very malice of our enemies subservient to our eternal happiness.

CHAP. XV.

Farther Advice how to acquit ourselves well in the Fight ; what Enemies we ought to engage, and what Courage is required for subduing them.

YOU have already seen, how you must behave, in order to gain the victory over yourself, and acquire necessary virtues. But to do this with the greater facility and expedition, we must not content ourselves with once signaling our courage ; it is requisite to return so often to the combat, especially when engaged with self-love, that we may at last esteem all those our friends from whom we receive the most cruel and most mortifying injuries. It frequently happens, as I observed before, that, where this kind of combat is declined, the victories are attended with great difficulty, are very imperfect, less frequent, and soon lost again. Fight therefore with great resolution, let not the weakness of your nature be an excuse. If your strength fail you, beg more from God, who will not refuse what you ask.

Consider, that if the fury of your enemies be great, and their number immense, still the love which God bears you, is infinitely greater ; the angels who protect you, and the saints who intercede in your behalf, are still more numerous.

Even women, by these reflections, have acquired sufficient courage, have baffled the wisdom of the world, trampled on the allurements of the flesh, and triumphed over the malice of the devil. Be not therefore disheartened, though you may think it a difficult task to withstand the efforts of so many enemies; remember that this warfare will not end but with your life, and that unavoidable ruin threatens you on all sides. For know, that neither the force nor artifice of your enemies can hurt you without the permission of him for whose honor you engage. And as he delights in this kind of combat, and, as much as in him lies, exhorts every one to engage in it, he is so far from suffering those, who are bent upon your ruin, to compass their wicked designs, that he will fight on your side, and sooner or later crown your endeavours with victory, though the combat should only end with your life.

All he demands of you is, that you defend yourself courageously, and that, notwithstanding any wounds you may possibly receive, you never lay down your arms, nor quit the field. In a word that you may not be wanting to your duty, remember this war is unavoidable, and that we must either fight or die, the fury and obstinacy of our enemies being such, that all peace or truce with them is utterly impossible.

CHAP. XVI.

That the Soldier of Christ must prepare early for the Fight.

THE first thing you are to do when you awake, is to open the eyes of your soul, and consider yourself as in the field of battle, facing your enemy, and under an absolute necessity of engaging or perishing for ever. Imagine you see before you

the enemy, that particular vice, or disorderly passion you are endeavouring to subdue; imagine, I say, that this hideous monster is coming to devour you. At the same time represent to yourself on your right hand Jesus Christ your invincible leader, attended by the blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and whole legions of angels and saints, and particularly by the glorious archangel St. Michael! on your left hand, behold Lucifer and his troops ready to support that passion or vice you contend with, and resolved to leave nothing undone to accomplish your overthrow.

Imagine you hear your Guardian-Angel thus exhorting you: "This day you must exert yourself in order to subdue this enemy, and all who seek your ruin. Take courage: let no vain fears or apprehensions seize you: since Christ your captain is near at hand, with all the power of heaven, to protect you against all enemies, and to prevent their ever reducing you, either by force or treachery, under their subjection. Maintain your ground, use violence with yourself, whatever pain it may occasion: call aloud on Jesus and Mary; beg the assistance of all the saints, and this being done, depend upon gaining the victory."

However weak you may be; however formidable your enemies may seem either by their numbers or strength, still be not daunted; the succours you have from heaven are more powerful than all that hell can send to destroy the grace of God in your soul. God, who created and redeemed you, is no less than almighty, and more desirous of your salvation, than the devil can be of your destruction.

Fight therefore valiantly; do not fail to mortify yourself; for it is by making continual war on your disorderly affections and vicious habits, that you will gain the victory, acquire the kingdom of

heaven, and unite your soul to God for all eternity. Begin to fight from this moment in the name of the Lord, armed with a diffidence in yourself, a confidence in God, prayer, and a right use of the several faculties of your soul.

With these arms attack your enemy, that predominant passion you design to subdue, either by a noble disdain, a courageous resistance, repeated acts of the contrary virtue, or whatever means heaven furnishes you with for exterminating it out of your heart. Never rest till you have subdued it: your perseverance will be crowned by the sovereign Judge, who with the whole church triumphant is a witness of your behaviour.

I repeat it once more, you must not grow weary of this warfare. Consider, that all are obliged to serve and please God; that there is an unavoidable necessity of fighting, since whoever flies, exposes himself to be wounded and even destroyed: that after all, by revolting against God, and taking part with the world in a life of sensuality, the difficulties are not diminished, for both body and soul must suffer extremely when devoted to luxury or ambition. And what greater madness can there be, than not to dread much trouble in this life, succeeded by endless torments in the next; and yet shrink at small difficulties, which must soon terminate in an eternity of bliss and the never-ending enjoyment of God?

CHAP. XVII.

Of the Order to be observed in encountering our Passions and Vices.

IT is of the greatest consequence, to be well apprized of the order you must observe in warring against your passions and vices; that you may not run on blindly, and fight with the

air, as many do, losing all the fruits of their labors.

You are therefore to begin by recollecting yourself, in order to examine with great care what thoughts and affections your mind generally entertains; what passion predominates in your breast, which you must single out, as your greatest enemy, to be first attacked. But if the devil, in order to draw off your attention, should assail you from another quarter, you must turn to that side where the danger is most pressing, and then immediately return to your first design.

CHAP. XVIII.

In what Manner we ought to curb the sudden Motions of our Passions.

IF you are not as yet able to bear patiently injuries, affronts, and the other evils of this life, you will accustom yourself to it by foreseeing and preparing for their reception. After you have discovered the nature of that passion, from which you suffer most, you must proceed to consider what persons you have to deal with, what places or business you frequent, from whence you may discover what vexations are like to happen.

But if any unforeseen accident should happen, though it be of infinite advantage never to be surprised by any mortification or trouble, we shall point out the means of greatly alleviating it. The instant you find yourself affected by any unforeseen injurious treatment, put yourself on your guard, give not way to vexation, but raising your mind to God, consider what has happened to be an appointment of heaven: that God himself, a tender Father as he is, has no other view in permitting it, but to purify you still more, and unite you still nearer to himself; and that he is infinitely

pleased in seeing you cheerfully undergo the greatest trials for his sake.

After this, turn your thoughts on yourself, and thus upbraid your want of courage: cowardly wretch! What, dost thou shrink from a cross laid upon thee, not by this, or that person, but by thy Father who is in heaven? Then, contemplating this cross, receive it not only with submission; but even with joy, saying: o cross! appointed for me by providence from the beginning: o cross! which the love of my crucified Jesus renders sweeter to me than the greatest sensual delights, fix me from this moment to thee, that I may be united to him, who, expiring in thy arms, became my Redeemer.

But if you find yourself so much moved at first as to be incapable of raising your mind to God, and that even your will is affected by it, at least put a stop to the evil here, and whatever disturbance it may have raised in your heart, spare no pains to conquer it, imploring the assistance of heaven with great fervor. After all, the surest way to repress these first motions of disordered affections, is to endeavour to root out the cause of them beforehand. If you observe, for example, that through an over-great attachment to any thing, you are provoked as often as your inclinations are thwarted, break off that attachment, and you will enjoy a perfect tranquillity.

In case the uneasiness you feel proceeds not from a fondness for something pleasing, but from a dislike to a person, who on all occasions is disagreeable to you; the best remedy for this evil is to endeavour, notwithstanding the antipathy you feel, to love this person, not only as created to the same likeness of God, and redeemed with the same precious blood of Christ, as yourself; but also because in bearing patiently with such defects,

you imitate your heavenly Father, whose love and goodness are extended to all without exception.

CHAP XIX.

In what Manner we ought to fight against Impurity.

THIS vice must be encountered in a different manner from others, and with greater resolution. In order to this we are to distinguish three several instants of time; the first, that which precedes the temptation; the second, during the temptation; the third, that which succeeds.

1. Before the time of temptation we must carefully avoid every, even the least occasion of sin, shunning all those persons whose company is dangerous. Or if we are under a necessity of conversing with them, let it be done with all possible dispatch; let modesty be visible in the countenance, and gravity season the discourse, which must be serious, not inclined to familiarity or mirth.

Presume not on your own strength, though after many years spent in the world, you have been proof against the force of concupiscence. For the devil of lust often achieves in one instant what whole years could not effect. Sometimes he is very long in preparing for the assault: but then the blow is the severer, and the wound the more dangerous for being dissembled, and coming when least expected.

It must likewise be observed, and every day's experience shows it, that the danger is always greatest in those engagements, where there is the least appearance of evil, because founded on the plausible pretences of kindred, gratitude, obligations, or the merit and virtue of the person beloved. Impure inclinations imperceptibly insinuate them-

selves into such friendships, by frequent visits, too long conversations, and indiscreet familiarities, till the poison reaches the heart, and reason is so far blinded as to connive at amorous glances, tender expressions, and jocose liberties in discourse, from whence violent and almost irresistible temptations arise.

Fly therefore with the utmost caution all occasions of this sin, of which you are more susceptible than straw is of fire. Rely not on your own virtue, or a resolution you may have taken rather to die than offend God: for however well disposed you may be to virtue, the frequency of such bewitching conversations, will kindle a fire not to be extinguished. An impetuous desire of satisfying your passion, will render you deaf to the remonstrances of your friends; you will lose the fear of God; reputation, and even life itself, will be set at nought; no, not the flames of hell will master the fury of those sensual fires kindled within your breast. Seek therefore your safety by flying; there is no other way of escaping, since too great confidence will end in eternal perdition.

2. Shun idleness: consider what you have to do, and comply exactly with all the duties of your state of life.

3. Obey your superiors with great alacrity; perform what they order, and in things the most mortifying and contrary to your inclinations show the greatest cheerfulness.

4. Never judge rashly of others, particularly in regard of impurity. If any are so unhappy as to fall into such disorders, and the thing become public, still you must not treat them with scorn and contempt, but pity their weakness, and endeavour to make an advantage of it by humbling yourself before the Almighty, confessing that you are but

dust, but ashes, a mere nothing; redouble your prayers, fly with greater exactness all dangerous company, however little reason you may have to suspect it. For if you give yourself a liberty of judging hardly of your brethren, God will permit you, both for your punishment and amendment, to fall into the same faults for which you condemn others; that by such a humiliation, discovering your own pride and rashness, you may seek the proper remedies for both.

And though it may possibly happen that you avoid such shameful sins, yet be assured that if you continue to form such rash judgments, you are in great danger of perishing.

5. If you perceive your heart to abound with spiritual comforts and delights, beware of taking a secret complacency in yourself; beware of imagining that you are arrived at perfection, or that the enemy is no longer capable of doing you any mischief, because you seem to hold him in the utmost scorn and contempt: for be assured, that the greatest circumspection is now requisite to prevent a relapse.

We are now to consider what regards the time of temptation. In the first place we must examine whether the cause from whence it proceeds be interior or exterior.

By exterior causes, I mean the curiosity of the eyes or ears where decency suffers, excess in point of apparel, too tender friendships, and indiscreet familiarities. Modesty and decency are the proper remedies for this evil; they shut the ears and eyes against every thing that sullies the imagination; but the sovereign remedy, as we have already said, is to fly from all such occasions of sin.

Interior causes proceed from a too good plight

of body, crowds of bad thoughts arising from wicked habits or the suggestions of the devil.

When the body has been too much indulged, it must be mortified by fasting, disciplines, watching, and other austerities; but always regulated by discretion and obedience.

As to unchaste thoughts, from whatever source they arise, we may drive them away, first, by a different application to our several duties: secondly, by prayer and meditation.

Order your prayer thus. When you perceive such thoughts presenting themselves, and like to make any impression, recollect yourself, and speaking to Christ crucified, cry out: sweet Jesus, hasten to my relief, lest I fall a prey to my enemies. Sometimes embracing a crucifix, representing your dying Saviour, kiss the marks of the sacred wounds on his feet, and say with great confidence and affection: o adorable, thrice holy wounds! imprint your figure deep in my heart, filled as it is with abomination, and preserve me from consenting to sin.

With regard to meditation, I am not of opinion, when the temptation is most violent, that you should, as several authors advise in order to form a horror of impurity, consider the shameful and insatiable nature of such sins, that they are followed by disgust, remorse, and vexation, often by the loss of fortune, health, life, honor, &c. The reason is, such considerations are not proper on the occasion, and frequently, instead of freeing us from the danger, only serve to increase it: for, if on the one hand the understanding drive away the evil thoughts, such reflections naturally call them back on the other.

Thus the surest way to be freed from them is, to remove not only them, but also the reflections

directly contrary to them; since in endeavouring to dissipate them by their contraries, we renew the impure ideas, and imprint them deeper without perceiving it. Satisfy yourself therefore with meditating on the life and death of our Saviour: and if during this holy exercise, the same thoughts should return and be more troublesome than before, as it may possibly happen, be not discouraged, nor abandon your meditation; far from exerting yourself in driving them away, slight and contemn such wretched artifices of the devil; persist in meditating with all attention possible on the death of your Saviour, nothing can be more efficacious for putting the foul fiend to flight, though he should be determined never to desist.

Conclude your meditation with the following, or some such prayer: o my Creator and Redeemer, save me from my enemies through thy infinite goodness and the merits of thy bitter passion. But remember in saying this, not to think on the particular vice from which you are endeavouring to free yourself; since the least reflection on it may be dangerous. Above all be sure not to spend any time in disputing with yourself how far you may have given way to the temptation. Such a scrutiny is an invention of the enemy, who under the specious pretext of an imaginary duty, studies to renew the attack, or at least hopes to make some impression with the bad thoughts he had poured into your mind.

When therefore it is not evident that you have consented to the evil, let it suffice to declare in few words, what has passed, to your ghostly father; and be ruled according to what he advises, without giving yourself any farther trouble.

But be sure not to conceal any thing material,

neither through shame or any other motive. For if humility is requisite for subduing your enemies in general, it is infinitely more so in the case before us, as this vice is, for the greatest part, a just punishment inflicted on pride.

When the temptation is vanished, you are to behave thus. Though you should enjoy a perfect tranquillity and think yourself safe, fly nevertheless, with the greatest care, all objects tending to temptation: shut them out from your mind entirely, though recommended with an appearance of virtue, or some imaginary good. Such pretences are the illusions of a corrupt nature, or snares laid by the devil, who will transform himself into an angel of light, in order to drag you with him into the utter darkness of hell itself.

CHAP. XX.

In what Manner we are to encounter Sloth.

THE making war against sloth is of the greatest importance; since this vice is not only an obstacle in our way to perfection, but delivers us over to the enemies of our salvation. If therefore you desire to fight against it in earnest, begin with avoiding all curiosity and vain amusements; wean your affections from worldly things, and quit all employments that suit not with your state of life.

Strive assiduously to comply with the inspirations of heaven, to execute the orders of your superiors, to do every thing in due time and manner: never hesitate a moment to do what is required: consider, the first delay brings on a second, this a third, and thus we lose ground; because the dread of labor increases, as does the love of ease, the more it is indulged. Hence comes that tedious backwardness in applying to

business, or the total neglect of it, so distasteful is labor.

Thus is formed a habit of sloth, and hard it is to be shaken off, unless the shame which attends an indolent life happens to rouse us to greater diligence and application for the future.

We must likewise observe, that sloth is a poison which spreads itself through all the faculties of the soul, infecting not only the will, by making labor odious to it, but also the understanding, blinding it in such manner, that the resolutions of the slothful are generally without effect; and what ought to be done without delay, is either neglected or referred to some other time.

Take notice moreover, that it is not sufficient to do instantly what is required, but the proper time of doing it must be observed, and great application employed to give it all the perfection it can receive. For it must not be called diligence, but an artful refined sloth, which acts precipitately without any regard whether things are well or ill done; solicitous only to get rid of the trouble, and to enjoy ease again as soon as possible. This disorder springs from not considering the great value of a good work, done in its due time and manner, wherein are surmounted all the obstacles which sloth opposes to those who begin to wage war against their vices.

Reflect frequently, therefore, that a single aspiration, an ejaculatory prayer, a genuflection, the least mark of respect for the divine majesty, is of greater value than all the treasures of the earth, and that every time a person mortifies his inclinations, the angels present him a crown of glory in recompence for the victory gained over himself. On the contrary, God withdraws his graces by degrees from the slothful who neglect

them, and heaps them on the fervent who by their means, as faithful servants, may one day enter into the joy of their Lord, Mat. xxv. 21.

But if at first you find your strength insufficient to undergo all the difficulties and troubles you are to encounter in your road to perfection, you must acquire the address of hiding them from yourself; that they may appear much less than the slothful are apt to imagine them to be. When therefore many repeated acts are requisite for acquiring some particular virtue, and this to be continued for several days in opposition to numberless powerful enemies; begin with forming such acts, as if a few would suffice and your trouble would soon end: attack your enemies singly, as if you had but one to encounter, and be assured, through God's grace, you will master them all. Thus the vice of sloth is shaken off, and the contrary virtue acquired.

Observe the same method with regard to prayer. If an hour be to be employed in prayer, and the time seem long, propose at first but half a quarter, that got over, propose another, and thus the whole hour will run away insensibly. But if during this time, you feel a very great repugnance to prayer, do not render it absolutely disgustful; rather desist for a while, which will have no ill consequence, provided soon after you return to this holy exercise.

This likewise will hold good in laborious works. If you apprehend being overwhelmed with a multiplicity of business, or the difficulties attending it, and through indolence are dispirited, begin with what ought first to be done, without reflecting on the rest; use great application, for this being once well done, the others will follow with much less trouble than you imagined. Thus it is you must face difficulties, and never decline labor. For

you have reason to fear lest sloth should gain so much upon you, as to render insupportable even the first steps towards virtue, and imprint a horror in your mind even before you have experienced the least difficulty.

For thus it happens to fearful dastardly souls. They are in continual dread of the enemy, though never so weak and remote from them : ever apprehensive of having more laid upon them than they can bear, and from thence suffer, even when most at ease. Know then, that in this vice there lurks a poison, which not only infects the first seeds of virtues, but even destroys those that are already formed.

What the worm does in wood, this effects in the spiritual life, employed too successfully by the devil to draw men into his snares, especially such as aspire to perfection.

Watch over yourself, and be addicted to prayer and good works ; do not defer making your nuptial robe, till you are called upon to go forth and meet the heavenly Bridegroom. Every day reflect, that he whose goodness has preserved you till morning, does not promise the same favor till night ; nor that being come, can you depend on seeing the following day. Let every day therefore be spent as if it were to be the last ; have nothing at heart, but the will of God, and ever dread that rigorous account he will demand of every single moment.

One word more. Though you may have dispatched much business and taken a great deal of pains, yet look upon the day as lost to you, and all your labor unprofitable unless you have gained many victories over your passions and your own will ; unless you have gratefully acknowledged the benefits received from God, particularly his dying on a cross for you ; unless you have received

as blessings whatever chastisements that Father of infinite mercy has inflicted, as a means of expiating your manifold crimes.

CHAP. XXI.

Of the proper Use of our Senses, and how to make them subservient to the Contemplation of divine Things.

THE greatest care and unwearied application are requisite for the right ordering our senses ; because the sensitive appetite, from whence all the motions of corrupt nature proceed, is doatingly fond of pleasure. And as it is incapable of satisfying itself, it employs the senses for attracting their several objects, whose images it transmits to the mind. Thus do sensual pleasures, by means of that union which subsists between the body and soul, after spreading themselves through all the senses capable of them, seize like a contagious infection on the spiritual faculties, and effect the corruption of the entire man.

The following remedies may be applied to so enormous an evil. Keep a strict watch over your senses ; never let them be employed but for some good end, some virtuous motive, or real necessity, but never for the sake of pleasure. If ever they go astray by stealth as it were ; if they transgress the bounds which reason prescribes ; instantly recall them, and regulate matters so, that instead of fixing upon vain objects for the sake of false delights, they may be accustomed to draw from the same objects great helps for the sanctifying and perfecting the soul ; that the soul, by recollecting herself may rise from the knowledge of earthly things, to the contemplation of the divine greatness : this may be done in the following manner.

When an agreeable object presents itself to any of your senses, do not be taken with what is material in it, but contemplate it with the eye of the understanding, and if there be any thing in it which pleases the senses, remember this is not from itself but from God, whose invisible hand created and endowed it with all it has of good or beautiful. Then rejoice to think that this sovereign and independent being is the sole author of all the charming qualities his creatures possess, containing them all in himself, with infinite pre-eminence above the most excellent of created beings.

When you contemplate any of the beautiful works of the creation, consider that of themselves they are nothing; soar in spirit to the great hand which produced them, place all your delight in him, saying, o my God! thou sole object of my wishes! how delightful is it to consider that the perfections of creatures are but a faint image of thy glory, who art the universal source of all.

When you behold the verdure of trees or plants, the beauty of flowers, &c. remember that they live but in that almighty wisdom who invisibly cherishes them; say to him, o living God! o sovereign life! the delight of my soul! it is from thee, in thee, and through thee that all things live and flourish on the earth!

At the sight of animals, raise your mind and heart to him who gives them sensibility and motion: say with respect and love: great God, who movest all things, thyself remaining immoveable, how I rejoice when I consider thy eternal fixed duration, incapable of the least change!

When the beauty of mankind strikes your eye, immediately distinguish between what appears to the sight and what is only visible to the mind; fix there, remembering that all corporal beauty flows

from an invisible principle, the uncreated beauty of God. Say within yourself, see here an almost imperceptible drop issuing from an endless source and immense ocean, from whence numberless perfections continually flow ! How my soul is ravished when I reflect on that eternal beauty, the cause of all that is lovely here !

When you meet with a person endowed with wisdom, justice, affability, or any other virtue, in the like manner distinguish what he has of himself, from what he has received from heaven, and then say, o God of all virtue, I cannot express my joy, when I consider, that all which is good comes from thee, and that all the perfections of created beings are a mere nothing when compared with thine. I give thee numberless thanks for this and all the good bestowed on my neighbour or myself. Pity my poverty : be mindful how much I stand in need of such or such a virtue,

When you have performed a good action, reflect that God is the author of it, and you but his instrument ; then raising your eyes to him cry out : o sovereign Lord of the universe, it is with the greatest pleasure I know, that of myself I can do nothing, that thou art the first and principal cause of all things !

When you taste any thing pleasant to your palate, consider that God alone is capable of giving it that relish, so agreeable to you : place in him all your delight, and say within yourself, o my soul, rejoice, that as without God there can be no solid content, so in him all happiness is found !

When you perceive any pleasant scent, beware of confining yourself to the pleasure arising from thence : mount in spirit to heaven, and, convinced that this comes from God, rejoice at it ; and beg of him, that being the author of all sweetness, he will cause your soul, freed from all sensible

pleasure, to elevate itself to him like a sweet perfume.

Lastly, when you hear a concert of music, think of God, and say to him : o my God, my heart is filled with delight, when I contemplate thy divine perfections, whose melodious harmony is infinitely pleasing not only to thyself, but to angels, men, and all created beings.

CHAP: XXII.

In what Manner sensible Things may help us to meditate on the Mysteries of our Saviour's Life and Passion.

I HAVE already shewn how we may rise from the consideration of sensible things, to the contemplation of God's greatness: learn now to make the same things subservient to a lively remembrance of the sacred mysteries of the life and death of our Lord. Every object in the universe may conduce to this end.

Consider only, as we have already said, that God is the first cause of all things; that he bestowed upon his creatures, the most sublime not excepted, their being, beauty, and all the perfections with which they are endowed. After this admire the infinite goodness of this sovereign Master of the universe, who condescended to become man, and suffer an ignominious death for your salvation, permitting even his own creatures to conspire against him and nail him to the cross. But if you be desirous to enter into a detail of his labors and sufferings, every thing about you will remind you of them.

If, for example, you see weapons, scourges, cords, thorns, reeds, nails, hammers, you may readily call to mind the several instruments of his passion. A poor cottage may represent the

stable and manger where he was born. The rain falling on the earth, will remind you of the bloody sweat with which he watered the garden of Olivet: the stones are figures of the rocks split at his death. When you behold the sun or the earth, remember, when he expired, the earth trembled and the sun grew dark. When you see water, think of that which flowed from his side; and so of a thousand other objects.

When you drink, call to mind the vinegar and gall, with which that amiable Saviour was regaled by his enemies. If you take too much satisfaction in perfumes, consider the stench of the dead carcasses with which he was saluted on mount Calvary. In putting on your clothes, recollect that the Son of God clothed himself with our flesh, that we might be clothed with his divinity. In putting off your clothes, think you see him stript and in the hands of his executioners, on the point of being scourged and nailed to a cross for your sake. When you hear any confused noise, represent to yourself the horrible cries of the enraged populace against their Lord; take him off, take him off; crucify him, crucify him.

As often as the clock strikes, think how in the garden the sacred heart of Jesus was seized with a mortal agony at the prospect of the cruel torments preparing for him; or think you hear the strokes of the hammer with which the soldiers nailed him to the cross. Whatever you suffer yourself, or see others undergo, be assured it is far short of the pains both of body and mind your Saviour underwent during his passion.

CHAP. XXIII.

Other Means of employing to Advantage the exterior Senses, on different Occasions.

HAVING already shewn in what manner the mind may be raised from earthly to heavenly things, and contemplate the several mysteries of Jesus Christ; I shall proceed to point out other subjects of meditation, that persons of different tastes may here find wherewithal to satisfy their devotion. This will be of service not only to the weaker sort, but even to the more advanced, who do not all take the same method of attaining perfection, nor are equally capable of sublime contemplation. Nevertheless, be not apprehensive that a variety of methods should create any perplexity; let discretion be your guide; take the advice of a prudent director, and attend with great humility to whatever he prescribes.

When therefore you behold any thing pleasing and what is esteemed by the world, be convinced that it is viler than the dirt under your feet; infinitely short of what heaven promises, whither you ought continually to tend, despising every thing else.

When you look up to the sun, reflect that your soul, when adorned with sanctifying grace, is incomparably more bright and beautiful than all the firmament together: but that destitute of it, she is fouler than hell itself. In viewing the sky, soar in spirit to heaven itself and there dwell, where you are sure of reigning for all eternity, if you live in innocence and sanctity on earth.

When you hear the warbling of birds, think of paradise, where the praises of God are sung without ceasing; beg at the same time that God would make you worthy to join with the blessed spirits in singing his praises to all eternity.

If the beauty of creatures charm you, imagine

you see the fiend concealed under those bewitching appearances, endeavouring to sting you and destroy the life of your soul. Say to him with a holy indignation: be gone cursed serpent; in vain do you hide yourself for my destruction. Then, turning to God; blessed be thy name, shall you say, who thus graciously discovers and prevents the snares of my enemy! After this retire into the wounds of your Saviour, as an undoubted refuge; employ your mind on the inexpressible sufferings he underwent, to cleanse you from sin, and to imprint in your heart a detestation of sensual pleasures.

Another method of avoiding the force of the beauty of creatures, is to consider what a change death will certainly work in what now appears so charming. When you walk, consider yourself at every step as so much advanced towards your grave. The flight of a bird, or rapid stream of a river, are slow when compared with the swiftness of human life. A storm laying every thing waste, a peal of thunder shaking the earth, remind us of the last day, and bid us bow the knee before our great Judge, adoring and beseeching him to assist us, that we may prepare betimes for appearing before him, without withering away through fear.

But if you desire to take advantage of an infinity of accidents, to which this life is subject, you may take the following method. If, for example, you suffer from heat, cold, or any other inconvenience; if you be oppressed with grief or melancholy, consider the eternal decrees of providence, which for your good has appointed this uneasiness, and know how to proportion it to your strength. Thus with joy will discern the paternal love and tenderness the Almighty bears towards you, which is evident in his giving

you this opportunity of serving him, in the manner most agreeable to him.

Seeing yourself therefore in a condition of pleasing him more than ever, say: now is accomplished in me the will of him, who, in compassion to me, from all eternity appointed I should this day undergo this mortification! May he be for ever blessed! When any good thought occurs, be firmly persuaded that it comes from God, and return due thanks to the Father of all good. When you read any pious book, think it is the Holy Ghost who speaks to you and who dictated the contents.

When you see a cross, look upon it as the standard of Jesus Christ your Captain, and know that if you stray ever so little from him, you will fall into the hands of the most cruel enemies: whereas if you follow him, you will be received, covered with the ensigns of victory, into the kingdom of heaven.

When you behold an image of the blessed Virgin, offer your heart to that Mother of mercy; rejoice with her on her having always accomplished with the greatest exactness the will of God; on her having brought forth the Saviour of the world and nourished him with her milk. Thank her for the assistance she affords to all those who call upon her in their struggles with the enemy of mankind. All the images of the saints will remind you of those valiant soldiers of Christ, who fighting courageously till death, have marked out the road you must follow, if you wish to share in their glory.

When you hear the bell ring three times for the angelical salutation, you may make a short reflection on the words which precede each Hail Mary. The first time, return God thanks for the solemn embassy he sent to Mary, concerning the

great work of our redemption. The second, rejoice with Mary on the high dignity to which God raised her for her profound humility. At the third, adore the Word now made Man, and then acknowledge the honor due to his blessed Mother and the Archangel Gabriel. At each time it is proper to bow the head out of respect, but particularly at the third.

These acts may be exercised at any time. We shall assign others more peculiarly adapted to particular times of the day, morning, noon and night, but all regarding the mysteries of our Saviour's passion. We must not neglect frequently to call to mind the cruel martyrdom the blessed Virgin underwent at that juncture, nothing but ingratitude itself can be forgetful of it.

At night consider the cruel affliction she felt from the bloody sweat, and the seizing of her Son Jesus in the garden, and all the agonies of her mind during that night. In the morning condole with her for what she suffered in seeing her beloved Son dragged to Pilate and Herod, condemned to death, loaded with a heavy cross to the place of execution. At noon contemplate the sword of grief which pierced the soul of this afflicted Mother, when she saw him crucified, expiring, and his side opened with a lance.

These pious reflections on the grief of the blessed Virgin may be continued from Friday evening to Saturday noon: the preceding meditations may be made on other days. Nevertheless, consult your own devotion, as you find yourself affected with exterior objects.

To set down in few words the best manner of governing the senses, regulate them so as never to suffer either love or hatred to enter your heart on human motives, but as the will of God directs

your inclinations either to embrace or reject whatever objects present themselves to your mind.

But take notice, in regard of this variety of practices pointed out for the better regulating of your senses, it is far from my design to have you entirely employed in them. On the contrary, you ought for the most part to keep yourself recollected and attached to God; your chief employment must be an interior combat against your vicious inclinations, and the forming acts of contrary virtues. All that I propose is, that you may use them on proper occasions. For it must not be imagined, that any great progress in devotion will be made by employing a great number of exercises, which, though commendable in themselves, yet by ill management, may perhaps only serve to perplex the mind, increase self-love and unsteadiness; and consequently open a gate to the illusions of the devil.

CHAP. XXIV.

How we are to govern the Tongue.

THE tongue requires a strict guard over it, by reason of the propensity we have to discourse of every thing agreeable to our senses. This is to be attributed to a certain pride, which inclines us to think ourselves more knowing than we really are, and thus, fond of our own conceptions, we utter them with great self-complacency, fancying we shine in conversation, and expect the whole company should be attentive to what we say.

It would be no easy task to number the evils arising from this detestable vice. In general, we may say it occasions much loss of time; is a certain sign of ignorance and folly, and is usually accompanied with calumny and lies; that it cools

the fervor of devotion, gives new strength to our disorderly passions, and accustoms the tongue to frivolous and idle discourse.

In order to correct it, I would advise as follows. Never talk too much either to those who are little attentive to you, lest you tire them ; or to those who hear you with pleasure, lest you be insensibly led to say what is not proper. Avoid talking loud or in a magisterial tone ; both are ungrateful to the ear, and only betray much self-sufficiency and presumption.

Never discourse of yourself, your kindred, or what you may have done, without an absolute necessity, and even then let it be in as few words as possible, and with great modesty. If you meet with a person who is the subject of his own discourse, neither despise nor imitate him, though all he says should tend to discover his failings and cover him with confusion. Rarely speak of your neighbour or his affairs, unless an opportunity presents itself of saying something to his praise. Speak willingly of God and his immense charity for us : but lest you should not express yourself in a proper manner, rather listen to others on that subject, and treasure up what you hear.

As to what regards worldly discourse, if it reach your ears, at least let it not enter your heart. But if you are obliged to hear it in order to give an answer, look up from time to time to heaven, where reigns your God, and from whence that divine Majesty condescends to behold even you, unworthy as you are. Weigh well what you intend to say, before it reaches your lips. Be very circumspect, for you will always find a great superfluity ; and even when you have determined what to say, still retrench something of it, since

in the end you will always perceive you have said too much.

Silence is of infinite service in the spiritual warfare; and they who observe it, may be assured of the victory. For generally speaking, it is accompanied with a diffidence in themselves and a confidence in God, a great relish for prayer, and facility in virtuous exercises.

In order to engage you to a love of silence, consider the great advantages arising from it, and the numberless evils which spring from the contrary vice. Nay more; if you desire to accustom yourself to few words, hold your peace even when you may be allowed to speak; provided your silence be not prejudicial to yourself or others. Be sure to avoid all unprofitable discourse: prefer the company of God, his saints and angels; to that of men. If you be always mindful of the war you have undertaken, you will scarce find time to breathe, much less to throw away in frivolous and vain conversation.

CHAP. XXV.

That the Soldier of Jesus Christ, who has resolved to engage and conquer his Enemies, must avoid, as much as possible, whatever may disturb his Peace of Mind.

WHENEVER we have lost our peace of mind, we must omit nothing that can contribute to the recovery of it; though let what will happen, we can never lose it, or have it disturbed, but through our own fault. It is true, we are to be sorry for our sins, but this sorrow ought to be calm and moderate, as I have often said. We ought to compassionate all sinners, and interiorly lament their destruction: but still this compassion must be void of all vexation and

trouble, as it springs from a motive of pure charity.

Even that infinity of evils, to which this life is subject, as sickness, wounds, death, the loss of friends and kindred, plagues, war, fire, and the like, which men dread as contrary to their nature, ever averse to suffering; all these, I say, by the assistance of the divine grace, may not only be received with submission from the hand of God, but even become subjects of joy, if we consider them as wholesome punishments inflicted on sinners, or opportunities given the just of laying up a treasure of merits.

For on both these considerations the Almighty delights in afflicting us: but this is certain, that as long as our minds are resigned to his will, the severest trials can never disturb our peace. Besides, all vexation is highly displeasing to him; because whatever nature it is of, it is always sinful, as arising from a bad principle, the love of ourselves. Endeavour therefore to foresee any uneasiness that may happen, and provide with patience for its reception. Consider that the evils of this life, how frightful soever they may appear, are only imaginary, as they cannot deprive us of real goods; that God ordains or permits them for the reasons alledged above, or for others, which, though hidden from us, are truly equitable.

Thus preserving an even mind in all occurrences of life, your advantage will be very great: but without it, your pious exercises will come to nothing. Not to mention how much you will be exposed by anxiety to the insults of your enemy, without being able to discern the sure and ready path to virtue; the devil is ever solicitous to banish peace from your mind, knowing well that God only

dwells there in peace, and that it is in peace that he works his wonders. Hence it is that Satan employs all his cunning to destroy it; even in order to surprise us, he does not hesitate to inspire seemingly good designs, but which are otherwise in effect, as is easily discovered, but particularly by their disturbing our inward peace.

To remedy so dangerous an evil, when the enemy endeavours to put us upon some new design, let us beware of giving it entrance too hastily into our hearts: first let us renounce all affection arising from self-love; then offer the design to God, begging with great earnestness, that he will manifest to us whether it comes from him or our enemy, and, in order to it, our director ought to be consulted. Even when we are assured that such a design is the motion of the Holy Ghost, we ought to defer the execution of it, till we have mortified our too great eagerness in executing it. For a good work, preceded by such a mortification, is much more pleasing to God, than when accompanied with too solicitous an ardor; and oftentimes the merit of the work, falls short of that of the mortification. Thus rejecting all pernicious motions, and not executing even the good ones, till we have suppressed the effects of self-love, we shall preserve a perfect tranquillity of mind.

It is moreover requisite to condemn a certain interior regret, which, though seemingly coming from God, as being a remorse of conscience for past faults, yet is doubtless the work of the devil, as the following test will clearly discover. If the regret tend to our greater humiliation, if it increase our fervor in performing good works and our confidence in the divine mercy, we ought to receive it with great thankfulness as a gift from heaven. But if it occasion anxiety; if it render

us dispirited, slothful, timorous and backward in our duty, we may certainly conclude, that it proceeds from the suggestions of the enemy, and ought to be passed over without the least regard.

Besides this, as it frequently happens that our vexations arise from the evils of this life, there are two things to be done, as preservatives against them. The first is, to consider what will be the consequence of such evils, whether they will destroy in us the desire of attaining perfection, or self-love; if they only tend to diminish self-love, one of our greatest enemies, we ought not to complain: rather let us receive them with joy and thanksgiving, as so man favors which God bestows on us. But if they incline us to swerve from the path of perfection, and make virtue distasteful, we must not be cast down and lose our tranquillity of mind, as we shall see hereafter.

The second is, to raise our hearts to God, and receive without exception whatever he ordains, fully persuaded that every cross he is pleased to inflict, will certainly prove an endless source of blessings, if we, for want of knowing better, do not neglect to improve it to the best advantage.

CHAP. XXVI.

What we are to do on receiving any Hurt in the Spiritual Combat.

WHEN you perceive yourself wounded, that is, fallen into any sin, whether through frailty, or deliberately through malice, be not too much cast down: do not abandon yourself to grief and immoderate vexation; but, addressing yourself to God, say with a great, but humble, confidence: I am now convinced, o my God,

that I am nothing : for what can be expected from so blind and wretched a creature as I am, but sin and folly ? Dwell on this thought in order to your greater confusion, and a lively sorrow for your fault.

Then, with great calmness, shew your displeasure against those passions which reign most in your breast, especially that which occasioned your misfortune. Lord, shall you say, what might I not have done, had not your infinite goodness come in to my assistance.

Then return millions of thanks to that Father of mercies, who far from resenting the affront you have given, stretches forth his hand, lest you fall into the same disorder again.

Full of confidence in him, say : manifest, o my God, what thou art : let a humble penitent partake of thy infinite mercy ; forgive my offences ; suffer me not to wander from thee : strengthen me with thy holy grace, that I may never more offend thee.

This done, do not perplex yourself with examining whether God has pardoned you or not. This is a needless trouble and loss of time, proceeding only from pride and the illusion of the devil, who under such specious pretexts seeks to molest you. Rather abandon yourself to the divine mercy, and pursue your usual exercises with as much tranquillity as if you had not committed any fault. Though you should fall several times in a day, yet lose not a just confidence in him. Observe the method I have set down, after a second or third, after the last relapse ; conceiving every time a greater contempt of yourself, a greater abhorrence of sin, and put yourself more on your guard than ever. This will greatly perplex your enemy, because it is very pleasing to God ; the devil will gain nothing but confusion, finding him-

self baffled by one, he has so often overcome. And consequently he will use his utmost endeavours to induce you to change your method; and in this he frequently succeeds, where persons do not keep a strict watch over the motions of their heart.

And the greater difficulty you meet with in this, the greater efforts you must use in conquering yourself. Be not satisfied with once doing it, but repeat this holy exercise frequently, though but one fault was committed. If therefore in such a case you feel great vexation, and your courage sink, you must first endeavour to recover your peace of mind and confidence in God. Then raise your heart to heaven, and be persuaded that the trouble which sometimes follows the commission of a fault, is not so much a sorrow for having offended God, but a dread of punishment which is more apprehended than any thing else.

The means of recovering this peace, so desirable and absolutely necessary, is to think no more on the fault, but to contemplate the immense goodness of God, who is ever ready, and even desires to pardon the most enormous sinners, and leaves nothing undone to bring them back to their duty, to unite them entirely to himself, to sanctify them in this life, and make them eternally happy in the next. When these and the like considerations have restored your tranquillity, then weigh the heinousness of your fault according to the method prescribed above.

In fine, when you approach the sacrament of penance, which I would advise to be done often, call to mind all your sins, and declare them sincerely to your spiritual Father, renewing your grief for having committed them, and your purpose of doing so no more for the future.

CHAP. XXVII.

In what Manner the Devil tempts and seduces those who are willing to embrace Virtue, or are still plunged in Vice.

IT is certain the devil is continually seeking the destruction of mankind, and has various ways of working his ends. In order therefore to let you see some of his stratagems, we will consider different sorts of persons in different dispositions. Some, overwhelmed with iniquity, think not of breaking their chains: others are willing to free themselves from their thralldom, but do nothing towards it: others again think themselves in a good way, but by that means are very far from it: others, after attaining a high degree of virtue, fall into a more dangerous condition than before. In the following chapters we shall consider these several sorts of persons.

CHAP. XXVIII.

The Artifices employed by the Devil to complete the Perdition of those he has drawn into Sin.

WHEN the devil has entangled a soul in sin, all his artifices are employed to take off her thoughts from every thing capable of discovering to her the horrible state in which she is engaged. Not content with stifling all inspirations which are sent down from heaven, and suggesting wicked thoughts in their room, he endeavours to plunge her, by furnishing dangerous opportunities, into fresh crimes, either of the same or of a more enormous nature. Hence it is, that deprived of the light of heaven, she heaps sins on sins, and hardens herself in iniquity. Thus she wallows in the mire, and rushes from darkness to darkness, from one abyss to another, always

living farther than ever from the way of salvation, and multiplying relapse upon relapse, unless supported by an extraordinary grace from heaven.

The most efficacious remedy against this evil, is to receive without the least resistance the divine inspirations, which will recall her from darkness to light, from vice to virtue ; let her cry out with great fervor, Lord assist me ! Haste to my relief ! Suffer me not to remain any longer in the shades of sin and death ! These and the like ejaculations must be often repeated ; and if it can be done, let her have immediate recourse to her director for his advice against the assaults of the enemy. If this be not feasible, let her prostrate herself before a crucifix. Let her invoke the Queen of heaven, and implore her compassion and assistance. For she may be assured, that the victory entirely depends on exerting herself with great diligence, as we shall see in the following chapter.

CHAP. XXIX

The Inventions of the Devil to prevent the entire Conversion of such as, convinced of the bad State of their Conscience, have some Thoughts of amending their Lives. How it happens that their good Designs are frequently ineffectual.

THOSE who are sensible of the wretched state of their souls, and are willing to put a stop to it, are often deluded by the devil, who endeavours to persuade them they have a long time to live, and consequently may safely defer their conversion. He represents to them, that such an affair or law-suit must first be ended, such a business finished, before they can sufficiently extricate themselves in order to follow a life of devotion, and peaceably perform the several exercises of it.

This snare has and does daily entangle many. But they may all justly attribute its success to their own supine negligence in an affair wherein the glory of God and their own salvation ought only to be considered. Let all such, instead of saying, to-morrow, to-morrow, cry out now, now. And why to-morrow? How can I be sure of living till it comes? Even were I sure of it, would it look like saving my soul, if I deferred my repentance? Would it look like aiming at victory, if I exposed myself to fresh wounds?

It is therefore past all dispute, that a ready compliance with the inspirations of heaven, is the only means of escaping this illusion, as well as that mentioned in the preceding chapter. When I say ready compliance, I would not be understood to mean mere desires, or feeble and barren resolutions, by which so many are deceived, for the following reasons. First, such desires and resolutions have not for their foundation a diffidence in ourselves and a confidence in God. The consequence of which is, that a soul puffed up with a secret pride, is so blind as to take that for solid virtue, which is only so in appearance. The remedy for this evil, and the light requisite for discovering it, must be obtained from heaven, which suffers us to fall, that our eyes being opened by woeful experience, we may remove the confidence we had in ourselves, placing it in the divine grace, and exchange an almost imperceptible pride, for an humble knowledge of our own weakness. Thus good resolutions will never be effectual, unless firm and steady; neither can they be firm and steady, unless founded in a diffidence in ourselves and a confidence in God.

The second reason is, that when we conceive some good purpose, we only fix our eyes on the charms and excellence of virtue, which draws to

it even the most feeble minds, but never consider the difficulties of attaining it; whence it comes that cowardly minds are dashed at the first appearance of trouble, and fly off from their enterprize. Upon this account you ought rather to place before your eyes the difficulties which occur in the acquisition of virtues, than the virtues themselves; think often of it, and prepare yourself accordingly. Know moreover, that the greater courage you shew in conquering yourself or defeating your enemies, the sooner will the difficulties diminish, and by degrees entirely vanish.

The third reason is, the too great regard we have to our own private advantage, preferably to virtue and the will of God: this frequently happens when soothed with consolations in time of affliction. For finding ourselves destitute of all earthly comfort, we take up a resolution of attaching ourselves to God and his service. That we may be blameless on this head, let us beware of misusing the favors of heaven: let us be humble and circumspect in forming good resolutions: let us guard against all indiscreet fervor, which may rashly engage us in making vows beyond our abilities.

If we groan under affliction, let us barely propose to carry our cross as we ought, it coming from God, placing all our glory therein, without seeking any alleviation from earth, or even heaven itself. Let us ask, let us wish for no more, but that the Almighty vouchsafe to support us under the trial, and that we may patiently undergo whatever he is pleased to inflict.

CHAP. XXX.

Of the Mistake of several who think themselves in the Way to Perfection.

THE enemy being defeated in his first and second attack, will not fail of renewing it a third time. He endeavours to make us forget the vices and passions we actually labor under, and fills our imagination with vain projects of a chimerical perfection, to which he knows we shall never reach. By this contrivance we receive frequent and dangerous wounds, without ever thinking how to remedy them. For such imaginary desires and resolutions pass upon us for real effects, and through a secret pride we value ourselves as great saints. Thus at the very time, when the least contradiction or affront is insupportable, we amuse ourselves with imagining we are ready to suffer the greatest torments, even the pains of purgatory, for the love of God.

The deceit lies in this, that our sensitive part, nothing affected with sufferings at a distance, boldly compares itself with those who actually bear the greatest pains with an unwearied patience. To avoid so dangerous a snare, we must resolve to fight, and actually engage those numerous enemies we have at hand. This will quickly discover whether our resolutions are cowardly or courageous, imaginary or real; and thus we shall advance to perfection through the road the saints have marked out.

As to those enemies who rarely molest us, we need not give ourselves much trouble about them, unless we have reason at some particular time to expect an attack from them. In such a case, we must prepare for their reception by a firm resolution to conquer. But however strenuous our resolutions may be, let us beware of counting upon

them as so many victories; even though we should have for some time practised acts of virtue, and made no inconsiderable progress therein. Let humility ever accompany us; let our weakness be always before our eyes, and our confidence placed in God alone; let us frequently beseech him to strengthen us during the fight, and shield us from all danger; to banish in particular from our breasts all presumption and confidence in our own abilities. In this manner we may aspire to the most sublime perfection: though we may possibly find great difficulty in getting the better of some frailties, which God is pleased to leave us in order to humble us, that we may not lose the little merit already acquired by our good works.

CHAP. XXXI.

The Artifices employed by the Devil to make us forsake the Path of Virtue.

THE fourth artifice, which the devil employs to impose on those who are advancing in the way to perfection, is to put them upon ill-timed designs, though otherwise commendable, to the end that desisting from such exercises of virtue as are requisite, he may engage them insensibly in vicious habits.

For example. A sick person bears his illness with great resignation; the enemy, dreading lest he acquire an habitual patience, puts in his head many pious works he might perform if in health; he persuades the sick man, that then he would not fail to do great service to God, his neighbour, and his own soul. When the fiend has gained so far as to make him desirous of health, he contrives to make him uneasy under the disappointment; and the more earnest the wishes, the greater the solicitude. The enemy does not stop here, but

urges him to great impatience in his sickness, which is represented as an obstacle to those chimerical designs the sick man passionately affects as the more acceptable to God.

This point being gained, the good designs are effaced by degrees, and nothing left but a criminal solicitude to be freed from sickness, which is soon attended with all the evils arising from vexation and impatience. And thus instead of the practice of an habitual virtue, the very opposite vice takes place.

The means of preventing this illusion, is to beware of forming any pious designs, incompatible with the state of suffering, with which you are visited; for, incapable as you are of executing them, the only consequence will be anxiety and vexation. Be persuaded, with great humility and resignation, that when God shall please to lift you up again, all these good desires, which you now form, very likely may prove ineffectual for want of courage to put them in execution. At least imagine, that God, by a secret disposition of providence, or in punishment of past offences, denies you the satisfaction of performing such a good work, and chuses to behold you resigned to his will, and humbled under his all-powerful hand.

Behave in the same manner, when, either by the direction of your ghostly father, or for some other reason, you are obliged to refrain for a time from the holy communion. Be not cast down by uneasiness; but renounce your own will, and conform yourself to that of heaven, saying: did not God, the searcher of hearts, see in me, some failing or ingratitude, I should not be thus deprived from approaching him. Let his name be for ever blessed who thus discovers to me my unworthiness. I am fully persuaded, o Lord, that

in all the trials thou art pleased to appoint, thou requirest nothing of me, but that bearing them with patience and a desire of pleasing thee, I may offer to thee a heart ever conformable to thy will; that taking up thy habitation there, it may be replenished with divine consolations, and secured against the power of hell, which would ravish it from thee. O my Creator and Redeemer, dispose of me as to thee seemeth good! May thy divine will be now and evermore my strength and support! All I demand is, that my soul being cleansed from every thing displeasing to thee, and adorned with all virtues, may be in a condition not only to receive thee, but to comply with whatever thou art pleased to appoint!

Those who carefully put in practice what is here set down, may be assured, that though they should be moved to undertake some work of piety beyond their abilities, whether such a motion be purely natural, at the instigation of the devil to make virtue distasteful to them, or be inspired from heaven for a trial of their obedience; they may be assured, I say, that it will prove a means of advancing in the way of salvation, and of serving God in the most acceptable manner: wherein alone true devotion consists.

Observe moreover, that when you employ any means, lawful in themselves, and such as the saints used, to remove an infirmity or any other troublesome inconvenience, beware of being too eager and solicitous for the success. Entirely resigned, propose nothing to yourself but the holy will of God. For, how can you tell whether by these or more powerful means he designs to free you from your troubles? If you act otherwise, you alone will be the sufferer; for perhaps you may not be indulged in what you so passionately

desire, from whence nothing but impatience will follow: or if you guard against it, still your patience will be sullied with many imperfections, and consequently less agreeable and less meritorious in the sight of God.

There is a secret artifice of self-love, I must not omit, which on many occasions disguises our failings, though in themselves considerable and remarkable enough. A sick person, for example, who takes his illness much to heart, would have it believed that his impatience springs from a justifiable cause. It is not, according to him, properly impatience, but a commendable regret for his faults, of which this sickness is the punishment, or an uneasiness for the trouble it occasions those about him. The ambitious man, who laments his not obtaining such or such an employment, behaves in the same manner. He would make you believe his repining is not to be attributed to vanity, but to other commendable motives, which he knows very well would have very little influence on him on other occasions. Just so the sick man, who pretends so much uneasiness on account of those who attend him, is no sooner well, but he is utterly unconcerned at what they suffer in waiting upon others.

This is a demonstration that his impatience is not owing to the sufferings of others, but to a secret horror of having his own inclinations thwarted. Whoever desires to avoid these rocks, must resolve to suffer patiently, all the crosses inflicted on him in this life, from whatever quarter they come.

CHAP. XXXII.

The last Artifice of the Devil, to make even the Practice of Virtue become Occasions of Sin.

THE old serpent takes opportunities of tempting us even by the means of virtue itself. He inspires us with esteem and complacency for

ourselves, and lifts us up to that pitch that we cannot escape the snares of vain-glory. Wherefore fight without ceasing, and fortify yourself with the knowledge of your own nothingness: be ever mindful that of yourself you are nothing: know nothing, can do nothing: that you are full of sin and misery, and deserve nothing but eternal perdition. Let this important truth be always before your eyes: let it be a kind of intrenchment, which you must never quit; and if any thoughts of vanity and presumption arise, repel them as the most dangerous enemies who have vowed your destruction.

But if you desire to attain a perfect knowledge of yourself, take the following method. As often as you look upon yourself or your actions, carefully distinguish between what is your own, from what is owing to God and his holy grace; and then let the esteem you have for yourself, rest upon what is properly yours. If you consider what past before you came into the world, you will find that from all eternity you were just nothing, utterly incapable of doing the least thing to deserve a being. If you consider this life, which you only hold through God's infinite mercy, what would you be without his support, what but a mere nothing? And would you not return every instant to what his omnipotence drew you from, unless continually preserved by him?

This therefore is unquestionable, that what is properly your own deserves not your esteem, and much less that of others. If considered in a state of grace, and the performance of good works, still you have no reason to value yourself: for without the assistance of heaven, where would be your merit? what good could you perform?

If after this you consider the frightful multitude of sins you either have committed, or might

have committed, had not God preserved you from them, you will find by reckoning up not only the years and days, but the crimes and vicious habits, you will find, I say, that as one vice draws on another, your iniquities might have been innumerable, and your guilt equal to that of devils. These considerations ought daily to increase your contempt of yourself, and gratitude for so many obligations to the divine goodness, instead of assuming to yourself the glory due to it.

But remember, that whatever sentence you pass upon yourself, let it be strictly conformable to truth, and let not vain-glory creep in. For though you are more sensible of your own misery, than a man blinded by self-love, yet you will be much more criminal and deserve a severer punishment than he, if, with such a knowledge, you be desirous of passing upon the world for a saint.

In order therefore that this knowledge may secure you against vain-glory, and render you pleasing to him who is the father and pattern of the humble; it is not sufficient to have a mean opinion of yourself, even so as to think yourself unworthy of all good and only deserving of evil: but you must be willing to be despised by others; you must dread hearing yourself praised, receive contempt with joy, and take all opportunities of debasing yourself. Set at nought what the world will say of you when busied in the most servile good works. Only be careful on these occasions that your real motive be humility, and not the effect of pride and a stubborn haughtiness, which, under the appearance of a christian courage, despise the discourse of worldlings, and contemn their judgments.

If any one shew an esteem and affection for you, or commend any qualifications you have received from above, recollect yourself immediately,

and on the principles of truth and justice we have just now established, say in your heart with all sincerity : suffer me not, o Lord, to rob thee of thy glory, by attributing to myself what is entirely owing to thy holy grace ! To thee be the honor and praise, let shame and confusion be my portion ! In regard of the person who praises you, say from the bottom of your heart : what motive can he have for prasing me ? What perfection or good can he discern here ? God alone is good, and only his works praise-worthy. Humble yourself in this manner ; and give to God what is God's ; This will preserve your heart from vanity, and you will merit every day greater graces.

If the remembrance of any good performed, occasion a vain complacency in yourself, stifle it instantly, by reflecting that those good works came from God, not from you, and say with great humility, as if speaking to them : I know not what gave birth to you in my heart, or how any thing commendable could spring from such an abyss of sin and corruption. God, not I, must have produced you and brought you to perfection. Him I ought to acknowledge as the author ; it is him I will and ought to thank ; to him I refer all the praise so unjustly bestowed upon me.

Consider in the next place, that in all the pious works you may have performed, so far from having exactly corresponded with the abundance of grace and light with which God then favored you, that even many deficiencies accompanied them, a purity of intention, a proper fervor, a due diligence in the execution were wanting. Thus upon a strict scrutiny, instead of vain-glory, confusion must be the consequence, since so little advantage, or rather such a bad use, has been made of so much grace.

If, after this, you compare your actions with

those of the saints, you will blush at the difference. But if you proceed to compare them with what the Son of God performed, whose whole life was one perpetual cross, abstracting from the infinite dignity of his person, and only considering the greatness of his sufferings and the purity of his love in undergoing them, you will be constrained to avow you have neither done nor suffered any thing in comparison with him.

If you lift up your eyes to heaven, and there contemplate the Majesty of God, to whom infinite services are due, you will be convinced that all your good deeds ought rather to be a subject of fear than of vanity. Whatever pious work you do, always say with a profound humility, Lord be merciful to me a sinner. Luke xviii. 13.

Be not subject to publish the favors you have received from God. This is generally displeasing to him, as he was pleased to declare in the following manner. Appearing one day to a great saint, under the form of an infant, she asked him to recite the Hail Mary: which he immediately complied with, but stopped when he had repeated those words, blessed art thou amongst women, unwilling to add what was in his own praise. Being pressed to finish what he had begun, he disappeared, leaving the devout soul replenished with consolation, and more than ever convinced of the importance of humility, by the example he was pleased to give.

Learn moreover to humble yourself in all your actions, as they are lively representations of your own nothingness. On this are grounded the several virtues. For as God in the beginning created our first parent out of nothing; so he continues to build all spiritual edifices on this confessed truth, that of ourselves we are nothing. Consequently, the more we humble ourselves, the higher the

building rises ; and in proportion as we sink and reach the depth of our nothingness, the sovereign Architect lays on the solid stones employed in rearing the structure. Imprint deep therefore in your mind, that you can never descend too low, and that if there be any thing infinite in a created being, it must be his weakness and wretchedness. O heavenly knowledge, which makes us happy here and glorious hereafter ! O admirable light, piercing through the darkness of this nothing, in order to enlighten our souls and raise our minds to God ! O precious, but unknown jewel, which shineth through the filth of our sins ! O nothing, the contemplation of which, puts all things in our power !

This is a subject I could treat of without ever finishing. Whoever desires to honor the divine Majesty, must despise himself, and wish the same treatment from others. Humble yourself before every one, lay yourself at the feet of the whole world, if you are willing that God should be glorified in you, and you in him. In order to unite yourself to him, fly all grandeur ; for he flies from all who extol themselves ; chuse always the lowest place ; he will descend from his throne to embrace you with the greater love, the more you are fond of humiliations, and of being trampled under foot as the least deserving of all mankind.

If no less than God, who to promote a closer union with you, became the last of men, inspires you with such humble sentiments, be sure you frequently return him due thanks. Thank likewise all who contribute to preserve them by their ill usage to you, or imagine you incapable of bearing patiently an affront ; thank, I say, all such, and let nothing prevail on you to complain against them.

But if notwithstanding all those powerful considerations, through the malice of the devil, a want of knowledge of yourself, or an evil propensity put thoughts of vanity into your mind, and desires of placing yourself before others, humble yourself the more for this, as it shows the little progress you have made, and the great difficulty of overcoming such troublesome suggestions, a fatal proof of a great innate pride. This conduct will change the poison into an antidote, the evil into its proper remedy.

CHAP. XXXIII.

Some important Instructions for such as desire to mortify their Passions, and attain the Virtues requisite for them.

ALTHOUGH I have been very copious in pointing out the method of subduing your passions and acquiring the necessary virtues, yet there still remain several instructions to be given of equal importance to what has been said.

1. If you desire to attain solid virtue and an entire command over yourself, do not, for example, divide your exercises of different virtues, so as to assign them to particular days, and thus live in a perpetual vicissitude. The method you ought to observe, is to apply yourself to the rooting out the most predominant passion, and which presses most upon you at present; laboring at the same time with great earnestness to acquire in an eminent degree the contrary virtue. For being once possessed of so essential a virtue, the rest may be attained with little difficulty, as but few acts will be requisite for that end. And indeed, the connection of one virtue with another is so firmly cemented, that whoever entirely possesses one, possesses all.

2. Never set a precise time for acquiring any one virtue: never say, so many days, weeks, years, shall be employed in it; but like a fresh and vigorous soldier who never saw the enemy, fight without ceasing, till by a complete victory, you open the way to perfection. Every moment advance in the road to heaven, for whoever makes any stop, is sure to lose both ground and courage. When I advise you to advance continually, I mean that you must never imagine yourself arrived at the height of perfection; that you never omit any opportunity of exercising new acts of virtue; and preserve a horror of sin even in the lightest degree.

In order to this, you must acquit yourself of every duty incumbent on you with the greatest fervor and exactness, and on all occasions inure yourself to a perfect practice of every virtue. Embrace therefore with great affection every opportunity of advancing towards perfection and sanctity, especially such as are attended with any difficulty: for every effort of that nature is of singular efficacy for forming in a short time virtuous habits in the soul. Love those who furnish you with such opportunities, avoiding only, with the greatest caution, whatever may be in the least prejudicial to chastity.

3. Use great moderation and prudence in the practice of certain virtues, whereby your health may receive any detriment, such as severe discipline, hair shirts, fasting, watching, long meditations, and the like indiscreet penitential works. For the practice of exterior virtues must not be pursued too eagerly, but step by step. Whereas all interior virtues, such as the love of God, a hatred of the world, a contempt of oneself, a sorrow for sin, mildness and patience, charity for our enemies, as they know no bounds, so no pre-

caution is necessary in their regard, and every act of them ought to be practised in the most eminent degree possible.

4. Let the scope of all your designs and endeavours be the demolition of that passion, with which you are engaged, regarding such a victory as of the greatest consequence to you, and the most acceptable to God. Whether you eat or fast, whether employed or unemployed, at home or abroad, whether a contemplative or active life take up your time, still let your aim be the conquest of that predominant passion, and the acquisition of the contrary virtue.

5. Let the conveniences and pleasures of life in general be the object of your aversion, and the attacks of vice will be much enfeebled; all their force being drawn from the love of pleasures. But if you indulge yourself in one sensual satisfaction, while you shun another; if you make war only against one vice, be assured, that though the wounds you receive may not always be attended with the greatest danger, yet the encounter will be very sharp, and the victory very doubtful. Have therefore continually before your eyes those words of the holy scripture. He that loveth his life, shall lose it: and he that hateth his life in this world, doth keep it to everlasting life. John xii. 25. Brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die; but if by the spirit, you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live. Rom. viii. 12.

6. I shall conclude with advising what is of infinite service, if not absolutely necessary, a general confession with the requisite dispositions, in order to secure a perfect reconciliation with God, the source of all graces, the giver of victories, and dispenser of crowns.

CHAP. XXXIV.

That Virtues are not to be acquired but by Degrees, and one after another.

ALTHOUGH a true servant of Jesus Christ, who aspires to the summit of perfection, ought to set no bounds to his spiritual advancement; nevertheless prudence must restrain all excesses of an inconsiderate fervor, to which though every thing seems feasible at first, yet it is too apt to cool, and be entirely extinguished. Wherefore it must be observed, that besides the method we have laid down with respect to exterior exercises, even interior virtues are not acquired but by degrees. Thus it is we are to lay the foundations of a solid and lasting piety, and in a little time may expect to make a considerable progress.

For example. In acquiring patience, you must not think at first setting out, to wish for crosses and to delight in them, but content yourself with the lowest degrees of this great virtue. Upon the same principle, do not grasp at all sorts of virtues, nor even many at the same time; but pitch first upon one, then another, if you desire such habits should easily take deep root in your soul. For in undertaking any one particular virtue, and constantly applying your thoughts that way, your memory will be more exercised in it; your understanding, enlightened by the divine assistance, will discover new means and stronger motives for attaining it; and your will will be carried on with greater ardor in the pursuit: all which cannot be expected when these three faculties are divided by different objects.

Besides, the acts requisite for forming a habit of such a virtue, all tending to the same end, and mutually assisting each other, will be attended with much less difficulty, and the latter of them

will make the deeper impression on your heart, by means of the pious dispositions the former have left.

These reasons will still carry the greater force with you, if you reflect that whoever strenuously engages in the pursuit of any one virtue, is insensibly advanced in the practice of the rest, and that the attaining of one in an eminent degree, must necessarily introduce a great perfection in the others, they being, like the rays of the sun, almost inseparably united.

CHAP. XXXV.

The most profitable Means of acquiring Virtues; in what Manner we are to apply ourselves to any one Virtue for a Time.

TO what has been already said I must subjoin, that in order to attain solid piety, great courage and a will not to be shaken are absolutely requisite, where so many contradictions and difficulties are to be encountered. Besides, a particular relish for virtue is likewise necessary, which arises from frequently reflecting how pleasing virtue is to God, how amiable in itself, how important to man, and that in it all christian perfection begins and ends. It will be of great moment, to purpose every morning a strict compliance with its dictates in all the occurrences of the day; and frequently to examine how such resolutions have been put in practice, and to form such as may be more effectual than the first.

What is here set down regards more especially that particular virtue which is the object of our immediate pursuit, and of which we stand most in need. To this virtue must be referred all reflections drawn from the examples of the saints,

our meditations on the life and death of our Saviour, which will be of infinite service in this spiritual warfare. Let us inure ourselves in such a manner to the practice of virtues, whether interior or exterior, that we may find the same ease and satisfaction in it, as in following heretofore the bent of our corrupt nature; the acts most contrary to which, as we have said before, are the most conducive to the establishing habitual virtue in our souls.

Select sentences out of the holy scripture, pronounced with due attention, or revolved in the mind, are likewise of great efficacy. Consequently we ought to be provided with such as have any relation to the virtue in question, and employ them frequently in the day, particularly when pressed by the predominant opposite passion. Such as labor to attain mildness and patience, may repeat these or the like passages. Bear patiently the wrath of God, which comes upon you in punishment of your sins. Baruch iv. 25. The patience of the poor shall not perish, or be deprived of its reward. Ps. ix. 19. Better is the patient than the strong man: and he that ruleth his mind, than the overthrower of cities. Prov. xvi. 32. In your patience you shall possess your souls. Luke xxi. 19. By patience let us run to the fight proposed unto us. Heb. xii. 1.

These or such like aspirations may also be used. O my God, when shall I be armed with patience like a shield, proof against the weapons of my enemy? When shall I so love thee, as to receive with joy, all the afflictions thou shalt be pleased to appoint? O life of my soul, shall I never begin to live for thy glory alone, perfectly resigned to all sufferings? O how happy should I be, if, in the fiery trial of tribulation, I

burn with a desire of being consumed for thy service ?

Let such prayers be frequently offered up, as our devotion suggests, and our progress in virtue requires. They are called ejaculations, being like darts of fire directed to heaven, lifting our hearts thither, and piercing to the divine goodness. They must however ever be accompanied with a firm persuasion of the delight God takes in seeing us laboring in the practice of virtue; and a vehement desire on our part of excelling in all virtue, on the sole motive of pleasing him.

CHAP. XXXVI.

That the Practice of Virtue requires continual Application.

OF all things which contribute to the acquiring of christian virtues, an earnest desire of advancing continually is of the greatest moment, since the least stop throws us back. The moment we cease to form acts of virtue, our inclinations, naturally prone to ease and the pleasures of the senses, raise in us disordered appetites, which overthrow, or at least much weaken our virtuous habits. To say nothing of the loss of many graces through such neglect, which we might have merited by a steady application to our spiritual advancement.

Such is the difference of a journey on earth, and that which tends to heaven. In the former we may frequently stop, without going back, and rest is moreover necessary to enable us to hold out to the journey's end. But in the latter, which leads to perfection, the more we advance, the more our strength increases. The reason is, the inferior appetites, which throw all possible obstacles in our way to heaven, grow weaker and

weaker as we advance ; and on the contrary, our good inclinations, the seat of virtue, acquire new strength.

Thus as we advance in piety, the difficulties which at first occurred continually diminish, and a certain delight, with which God is pleased to sweeten the bitterness of this life, increases in proportion. So that going cheerfully on from virtue to virtue, we reach at last the height of perfection, that happy state, wherein the soul begins to practise virtue, not only without disgust, but with unspeakable pleasure ; because, triumphant as she is over her passions, the world, and herself, she lives in God ; and through him, amidst her continual labors, enjoys an undisturbed tranquillity.

CHAP. XXXVII.

That since we must exercise ourselves in Virtue without ceasing, all Opportunities of practising it ought to be embraced.

WE have already shewn, that in the way to perfection, we must continually advance, without making the least stop. Watch therefore over yourself, that no opportunity of acquiring any virtue be ever neglected. Be careful never to avoid, as many do, what is contrary to the vitiated affections of nature, since it is by struggling against them, we attain the most heroic virtues.

Would you, to continue the same example, attain the virtue of patience ? Never avoid the persons, the business, not even the thoughts from whence you have experienced much impatience ; but rather accustom yourself to converse with those who are most disagreeable to you. Be always willing to undergo every thing that is

irksome. There is no other method of acquiring habitual patience,

If any employment give you uneasiness, either from its own nature, from those who impose it, or because it takes you from something else more agreeable to your inclinations, be sure not to throw it up on any of these accounts; shew your courage not only in cheerfully accepting of it, but in persevering, whatever vexation arises from it, or satisfaction may be found in quitting it. Otherwise you will never learn to suffer, or enjoy that true peace, which souls divested of all passions, and adorned with every virtue, find in themselves.

The same is to be said of any thoughts which are very irksome. For you gain no advantage in being entirely freed from them, because the uneasiness they create, will inure you to bear the most vexatious accidents. Be assured therefore, whoever teaches you a contrary method, shews you indeed how to avoid the trouble you dread, but not how to acquire the virtue you really want.

The truth is, a new soldier, who wants experience, must be very discreet and cautious, sometimes attacking the enemy, at other times remaining on the defensive, as he finds his strength and courage will best bear; but must never think of turning his back, or leaving the fight, by shunning every occasion of trouble and vexation. Such behaviour indeed will remove the immediate occasion of impatience, but will leave you more than ever exposed to its assaults, for want of habitual patience.

What has been here alledged does not regard the vice of impurity, which, as before observed, can only be subdued by flight.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

That all Opportunities of engaging the Enemy in the Acquisition of the several Virtues, particularly those attended with the greatest Difficulty, ought to be embraced with Joy.

WE must not content ourselves with not avoiding opportunities of acquiring virtue; we must seek them, embrace them with great alacrity when found, and take the most delight in such as are attended with the greatest mortification, they being the most advantageous. Nothing will appear difficult to us, with the assistance of heaven, if we imprint deep in our hearts the following considerations.

The first is, that such opportunities are proper, not to say necessary means, for acquiring virtue. Consequently, as often as we beg of God any particular virtue, at the same time we ask for those means, which he appoints for the attaining it. Otherwise our prayer would be frivolous, and contradictory to itself; it would be tempting God, who never bestows patience but through tribulation, nor humility but through ignominy.

The same is to be said of all other virtues, which are the fruits of those trials God is pleased to send us, and which we ought to cherish in proportion as they are severe; because the violence we use with ourselves, is of great efficacy towards forming habitual virtues in our souls.

Let us therefore be ever on our guard to mortify our own will, though but in a look too curious, or a word of too great freedom. For though the victories gained in matters of importance, are more honorable, yet those, where only trifles are concerned, are much more frequent.

The second consideration which we have already touched upon, is, that all things happen by God's

appointment, that we may advantage ourselves by them. Indeed, properly speaking, many things, such as the sins of men, cannot be said to happen by his appointment, who abhors iniquity; nevertheless in some sense it is true, since he permits them, when he has it in his power to prevent them. But as for afflictions, whether they befall us through our own or our enemies' fault, yet they certainly are appointed by him, however displeasing the immediate cause may be. He expects that we bear them with patience, either because they are the means of our sanctification, or for other reasons unknown to us.

If therefore we be convinced, that to comply exactly with his holy will, we must receive without murmuring those evils which the malice of others or our own sins draw upon us, how much in the wrong must all those be, who, to screen their own impatience, assert that God, as he is infinitely just, can never lay any stress on what comes from a bad cause? It is evident their only aim is to avoid uneasiness, and to persuade the world, they are in the right to reject the crosses God is pleased to send. But this is not all; if the thing were indifferent on other accounts, yet God takes greater delight in seeing us bear patiently any injurious treatment, particularly from those who are under obligations to us, than when on any other occasions we exert our patience. And this for the following reasons.

The first is, because our innate pride is much better curbed by the ill usage we receive from others, than by any voluntary mortifications we chuse for ourselves. The second is, that in suffering on such occasions with patience, we conform to what God requires, and contribute to his glory, because we regulate our will by his, in a matter wherein his goodness and power are equally con-

spicuous, and from so vile a thing as sin itself, we gather the excellent fruits of virtue and sanctity.

Know then, that God no sooner finds us resolved to attain solid virtue, than he sends us trials of the severest kind. Thus being convinced of that immense love he bears us, and the affection he has for our spiritual advancement, we ought to receive with the greatest gratitude the cup he is pleased to offer us, and drink the last drop of it; being well assured, that in proportion to its bitterness, we shall find it beneficial.

CHAP. XXXIX.

How we may exercise the same Virtues on different Occasions.

IN a preceding chapter it was said, that the applying ourselves for a time to one particular virtue is preferable to the embracing the practice of too many at once, and that the particular virtue we have pitched upon must be cultivated on all occasions. We shall set down the manner of doing this with great facility.

It may happen on the same day, perhaps within the same hour, that you are severely reprimanded for some action, in itself commendable; that you are ill spoken of, or refused in a harsh manner some small favor: that you are unjustly suspected, or employed in a disagreeable affair: that your dinner is spoiled, or some illness seizes you, or perhaps are overwhelmed with far greater evils, of which this wretched life is very fertile; in such a combination of vexations, doubtless there is room for the exercise of several virtues; but, according to the foregoing rule, you will reap the most benefit by applying yourself to the practice of that virtue, which you chiefly want.

If it be patience, you must endeavour to bear with great courage and alacrity whatever evils

may befall you. If it be humility, in all your sufferings you must remember, that they are far short of what your sins deserve. If it be obedience, resign yourself to the will of God, who justly punishes you. Even for the love of him, and since it is his pleasure, submit yourself not only to rational creatures, but also to those who, though void of sense or life, are the instruments of his divine justice. If it be poverty, be content under your afflictions, though deprived of the comforts and conveniences of life. If it be charity, exert yourself in forming acts of the love of God and your neighbour, remembering that when others try your patience, they give you an opportunity of increasing your merit; and that God, in sending or permitting the evils which besiege you, has no other view but your spiritual good.

What has been said of exercising the virtue you pursue, in various occurrences, points out the method of practising it on any one particular occasion, as in sickness or other trouble, whether of body or mind.

CHAP. XL.

What Time ought to be employed in acquiring each Virtue. The Marks of the Progress we make.

IT is impossible to prescribe in general any determinate space of time to be employed in acquiring each virtue, as it depends on our different states and dispositions, the progress we make in a devout life, and the direction of our spiritual guide. But this is certain, that if the diligence and alacrity we have prescribed, be not wanting, in a few weeks we shall be far advanced.

A sure mark of a considerable progress, is perseverance in exercises of piety, in spite of all

disgust, vexations, dryness, and the want of all sensible consolation. Another no less evident mark, is when our corrupt inclinations, subdued and kept under by reason, are no longer capable of interrupting us in the practice of virtue. For as those decay, virtue gains strength and takes deeper root in our souls. Wherefore when we feel no repugnance on the part of the inferior appetites, we may be assured of having acquired habitual virtue; and the greater the facility in producing the several acts, the more perfect is the habit.

But you are not to imagine, that you are arrived to a great degree of sanctity, or that your passions are entirely subdued, because for a long time and in many trials you have not perceived any resistance; for know, that often the enemy, and our own corrupt nature thus disguise themselves for a time. And thus through a secret pride, we take that for virtue, which is the effect of vice. Moreover if you consider the degree of perfection, to which God calls you, whatever you may have done hitherto, you will find yourself at a great distance from it. Persevere therefore in your usual exercises, as if you had but just begun, never suffering your first fervor to relent.

Remember that it is much better to endeavour to advance in virtue, than to examine too nicely what progress we have made; because God, to whom alone our hearts are known, discovers this secret to some, while he hides it from others, as he knows they are susceptible of humility or vanity from thence; and thus this Father, equally gracious and wise, takes from the weak what might occasion their ruin, and affords to others the means of advancing in virtue. Thus although a soul be ignorant what progress she makes, yet she must

not abandon her exercises of devotion, since she will certainly know it when the Almighty shall please, for her greater good, to manifest it to her.

CHAP. XLI.

That we must not be too solicitous to be freed from those Evils we bear with Patience; in what Manner our Desires are to be regulated.

WHEN you are in affliction, of whatever kind it be, and bear it with due patience, hearken not to the tempter, nor the suggestions of self-love, who stir up urgent desires of being freed from the trouble. For from such impatience two great evils will arise: the one, though you may not perhaps be entirely deprived of the habit of patience, yet there will remain a disposition to the contrary vice; the other is, your patience will be but imperfect, and your recompence proportionable to the time you exercised it: whereas had you desired no relaxation, but shewed an entire resignation to the divine will, though your trouble had not lasted one quarter of an hour, God would have rewarded your willingness to suffer for years.

Take this therefore for a general rule, to desire nothing but in conformity with the will of God; to direct all your wishes thither, as the only scope to which they ought to tend; thus they will be ever equitable and holy; and whatever happens, you will remain undisturbed in the enjoyment of a perfect tranquillity. For as all things here are appointed by providence, if your will be entirely conformable to it, every thing will fall out agreeably to your desires, because nothing can happen but according to your will.

What is here advanced does not regard our own-sins, or those of others, because held in the utmost detestation by the Almighty; but only such trou-

bles as are the punishment of your crimes, or only trials of your virtues, though your heart should be pierced with grief, or even life itself in danger. For these are the crosses with which God favors those he loves best.

If you should endeavour to mitigate your pain, and employ the ordinary means for that end without success, you must resolve to bear patiently the evil you cannot remedy. You are even obliged to have recourse to such means, as are commendable in themselves, and appointed by God for such ends; but then let this be your motive for employing them, because he has so ordained, not out of any attachment to yourself, or too eager a desire of being freed from your afflictions.

CHAP. XLII.

How to defend ourselves against the Artifices of the Devil, when he suggests indiscreet Devotions.

WHEN the devil, that subtle serpent perceives we go courageously on towards heaven, that all our desires tend to God alone, and that we are proof against his ordinary delusions, he transforms himself into an angel of light; he urges us to attain perfection, hurrying us on blindly and without the least regard to our own weakness; he fills our heads with devout thoughts, seconding them with passages of the holy scripture, and examples drawn from the greatest saints, in order to draw us into some shameful false step, through an indiscreet and precipitate fervor.

For example. He puts us upon chastising our bodies with excessive fasting, disciplines, and the like mortifications. His design is, that out of a notion of having performed wonders, we fall a prey to vanity, as is frequently the case in the

weaker sex; or, that being dispirited with such penitential works as exceed our strength, we may be incapable of performing any exercises of devotion; or, that unable any longer to undergo such severe austerities, we may grow out of conceit with a devout life, and at last, being tired with the practice of virtue, return with greater relish than ever to the vanities of the world.

Who can number the multitudes who have perished in this manner? Presumption has blinded them so far, that, carried away with an indiscreet zeal of suffering, they fell into the snare they themselves have helped to contrive, and became the scorn of devils. All which might doubtless have been prevented; had they considered, that in all such mortifications, however commendable in themselves, or productive of excellent fruit, where there are strength of body and humility of mind proportionable; in all such mortifications, I say, moderation must be observed, and a strict regard had to our several abilities. For every one is not capable of practising the austerities of the saints, and yet every one may imitate them in many things: they may form ardent and efficacious desires of sharing in all the glorious crowns gained by the faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ in their spiritual combats; they may imitate the saints in their contempt of the world and themselves; in their love of silence and retirement; in their humility and charity to all men; in their patient suffering the greatest injuries, and returning good for evil to their worst enemies: in their care to avoid even the smallest faults; which are things infinitely more meritorious in the sight of God, than all the corporal severities we can possibly inflict on ourselves.

It must likewise be observed, that at first it is adviseable to use some moderation in external

works of penance, that there may be room to increase them if it should be requisite, rather than by an excess to endanger our being incapable of performing any. I mention this, because I am willing to believe you do not give into that gross mistake of many, who make an idol of their health. These are ever in dread of being the least out of order, and their whole study and conversation run on the means of avoiding sickness. Extremely nice in point of eating; instead of strengthening, they often ruin their stomachs by the use of delicious viands; and yet would make the world believe they have no other view, than to preserve themselves for God's greater glory.

Thus do they veil their sensuality; but the truth is, their design is to unite two irreconcilable enemies, the flesh and the spirit; which can only end in the ruin of both, as their health and devotion will equally suffer. Consequently those who live in a plain unaffected way, must make the greatest and surest advances in devotion.

But in all things discretion must be used, and regard had to different constitutions, which are not all equally fitted for the same exercises. And this is to be understood not only of exterior mortifications, but even of those practices which depend entirely upon the mind, as we have shewn in treating of the manner of attaining by degrees the most sublime virtues.

CHAP. XLIII.

That our corrupt Nature, prompted by the Suggestions of the Devil, is apt to judge rashly of our Neighbour: in what Manner this Evil is to be remedied.

THE good opinion we have of ourselves, occasions another great disorder; that is,

rash judgment, which we do not only encourage in our own breasts, but endeavour to infuse into others. This vice, as it springs from, so it is nourished by pride ; and in proportion as we give way to it, we become more conceited of ourselves, and more exposed to the devil's delusions. For by degrees we arrogate to ourselves as much as we detract from others, foolishly imagining ourselves exempt from the sins for which we so readily condemn our neighbour.

The enemy of our souls no sooner discovers this malicious propensity in us, but he immediately employs all his artifices to make us attentive to the failings of others, and magnify them beyond the truth. It is not to be expressed what pains he takes to make us observe the most trivial faults in our neighbour, when he cannot point out to us any thing of moment.

Since therefore he is so artful and intent on our destruction, let us be no less vigilant in discovering and defeating his designs. When he suggests to us other persons' sins, we must banish all such thoughts, and if he persist in endeavouring to draw us into rash judgment, we are to conceive an abhorrence of such malicious insinuations. Let us recollect that we are not authorised to judge others, or if we were, how seldom does equity guide us? Blinded as we are with prejudice and passion, we are naturally inclined to put the worst construction upon the lives and actions of others !

The most efficacious remedy for this evil is to be ever mindful of our own wretchedness, where we shall find so much room for amendment, as to have little inclination to judge and condemn others. Besides, in applying ourselves to the discovery of our own failings, we shall easily free the eye of our mind from a certain malignity which is the source of rash judgments. For whoever without

just grounds condemns his neighbour, has too much reason to suspect himself guilty of the same crime, as vicious men are always prone to think others like themselves. When therefore we find ourselves inclined to condemn others, let us interiorly blame ourselves with this just reproof: blind and presumptuous wretch, how darest thou thus rashly examine into thy neighbour's actions, thou who hast the same, perhaps greater sins to answer for? Thus turning these weapons against ourselves, we may, instead of injuring our neighbour, remedy our own failings.

But if the fault be really and publicly known, let charity suggest some excuse; let us believe there are some hidden virtues, for the preservation of which, God was pleased to permit it; let us hope that this failing, in which God suffers him to remain for a time, may bring him to a true sense of himself; and that by being despised by others, he may learn to humble himself, and consequently be a gainer by his fall. But where the sin, besides being public, is of an enormous nature; if the sinner is hardened in impenitence, let us raise our hearts to heaven, and contemplate the secret judgments of God; let us consider that many, after being long buried in the worst of crimes, have become great saints, while others from the highest pitch of perfection have fallen into the lowest sink of sin and iniquity.

These reflections will convince every considerate person, that his mistrust ought to begin at home, and that if he find himself disposed to think favorably of his neighbour, it is owing to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost: whereas his rash judgments, his dislike and contempt of others, owe their rise to his own malice and the suggestions of the devil. If therefore we ever find ourselves too

attentive to the failings of others, let us not desist till we have entirely erased them from our memory.

CHAP. XLIV.

Of Prayer.

IF a diffidence in ourselves, a confidence in God, and a right application of the faculties of our souls, are weapons without which we can never succeed in the spiritual combat; prayer, which remains to be treated of, is still far more necessary, since by it are obtained, not only those virtues, but every thing requisite for our salvation. This is the channel through which all grace flows from above: by this is the Almighty compelled to assist us from his throne, and destroy by our hands, weak as they are, the fiercest of our foes. In order to employ it with success, the following method must be observed.

1. We must sincerely desire to serve God with fervor, and in the manner most agreeable to him. This desire will be kindled in our breasts, if we consider three things attentively. The first is, that God infinitely deserves our homage and service by reason of the excellence of his sovereign being, his goodness, beauty, wisdom, power, and his endless unspeakable perfections. The second is, that God was made man, and during thirty-three years labored for our salvation; that he condescended to dress our horrible wounds with his own hands, and healed them, not by pouring into them oil and wine, but by applying his own precious blood and immaculate body, torn and disfigured with cruel whips, thorns and nails. The third is, how much it concerns us to observe his law and discharge our duty, since through that, and only that we can expect to triumph over the devil, to become masters of ourselves, and the children of God.

2. We must have a lively faith and firm confidence that God will not refuse us the assistance necessary for serving him faithfully, and working out our salvation. A soul replenished with this holy confidence, is like a sacred vessel into which the divine mercy pours the treasures of his grace; and the more capacious this vessel is, the greater abundance of heavenly blessings will it receive through prayer. For how can God, whose power knows no bounds, whose goodness cannot deceive, ever refuse his gifts to those whom he so earnestly presses to demand them, and to whom he has promised his Holy Spirit, if we sue for it with faith and perseverance?

3. Our motive for prayer must be the divine will, not our own; applying ourselves to this great duty because God commands it, and desiring to be heard no farther than what is agreeable to him; thus our intention will be to conform entirely our will to his, and not to make the divine will subservient to our own. The reason for this is the perversity of our own will, tainted as it is with self-love, which frequently knows not what it would be at: whereas the will of God, essentially just and holy, can never be mistaken. Consequently it ought to be the rule of every other will, since not to follow it, is to go astray. Let us be solicitous that all our demands be agreeable to God; and if there be the least doubt whether they are so or not, let an entire submission to the divine providence ever accompany them. But if the things we ask, are certainly pleasing to him, such as grace, virtue, &c. let us beg them with a view of pleasing and serving his divine Majesty, rather than on any other consideration, though never so pious.

4. If we desire our prayers should be heard, our actions must be suitable to our petitions; we

must exert ourselves both before and after prayer, in rendering ourselves worthy of the favor we ask. For prayer and interior mortification must be inseparable; since he that begs any particular virtue without striving to put it in practice, only tempts God.

5. Before we ask any thing, we ought to return most humble thanks to God for all the benefits he has graciously bestowed on us. We may say: Lord, who after creating me, hast mercifully paid the price of my redemption, and delivered me from the fury of my enemies times without number, come to my assistance, and, forgetting all my past ingratitude, bestow on me this favor I now ask. But if at the very time we seek to attain some one particular virtue, we find ourselves tempted to the contrary vice, we must thank God for giving us such an opportunity of practising that virtue; we ought to look upon it as a particular favor at that instant.

6. The whole force and efficacy of prayer, being solely due to the goodness of God, the merits of our Saviour's life and passion, and the promise he has made graciously to hear us, we ought always to conclude our prayers with one or more of these sentences. I beseech thee, o Lord, through thy infinite mercy, grant my petition. Through the merits of thy Son, bestow this favor on me. Be mindful, o my God of thy promises, and hear my prayers. Sometimes we may also have recourse to the intercession of the blessed Virgin and other saints. For they can prevail much with God, who is pleased thus to honor them, in proportion to the honor they paid him during their abode on earth.

7. We must persist in this exercise, since it is certain God cannot refuse to hear a humble perseverance in prayer. For if the importunity of the

widow in the gospel prevailed with the wicked judge, can our prayers fail of success with God who is infinitely good? And thus, though he should not immediately grant what we ask, though he should seem not even to hear us, we must not for all this lose our confidence in his infinite goodness, nor desist from prayer; for he possesses both an immense power and will to do good to us. Consequently, if we be not wanting to ourselves, we shall infallibly obtain what we ask, or something better, and perhaps both. As for the rest, the more we think ourselves slighted, the greater ought to be our hatred and contempt of ourselves; but with this condition, that the consideration of our own misery lead us to contemplate the divine mercy, and far from lessening our confidence in him, we must increase it by reflecting, that the steadier we remain in the midst of so much cause of diffidence, the greater will be our merit.

In that let us never cease to thank God; let us equally bless his wisdom, his goodness, his charity, whether he grants or refuses our petition; whatever happens, let us be undisturbed, contented and resigned to his providence in all things.

CHAP. XLV.

Of Mental Prayer.

MENTAL prayer is the raising our minds to God, and either expressly or tacitly asking those things of which we stand in need.

We ask for them expressly when we say in our hearts: o my God, grant me this favor for the honor of thy holy name: or, Lord, I am firmly convinced that it is thy will, and for thy greater honor, that I ask this blessing; accomplish therefore now thy divine will in me. When hard pressed by the attacks of our enemies, we may say: haste, o Lord, to my assistance, lest I fall a

prey to my enemies : or, my God, my refuge and all my strength, help me speedily, lest I perish. If the temptation continue, we must likewise continue the same prayer, courageously resisting the fiend. When the fury of the combat is passed, let us address ourselves to the Almighty, begging him to consider on one side the strength of the enemy, and on the other our weakness, saying : behold here, o my God, thy creature, the work of thy hands : behold a soul redeemed with thy precious blood. See the devil endeavouring to carry it from thee, and utterly destroy it. It is to thee I fly for succour, in thee I place all my confidence, because I know thou art infinitely good and infinitely powerful. Have pity on a blind wretch, though wilfully so, who without the assistance of thy grace must inevitably fall a prey to his enemies. Help me therefore, o my only hope, o sole strength of my soul.

We tacitly ask favors of God, when we lay before him our necessities, without making any particular request. Placing ourselves therefore in his presence, and acknowledging that of ourselves we are unable to avoid evil or to do good, yet inflamed with a desire of serving him, we must fix our eyes on him, waiting for his assistance with great confidence and humility. This confession of our weakness, this desire to serve him, this act of faith thus performed, is a silent prayer, which will infallibly obtain of heaven what we wish, and will carry the greater force, as the confession is the more sincere, the desire more ardent, and the faith more lively. There is another manner of prayer of this sort, but more concise, which consists in one act of the soul, laying before the Almighty her wants, that is, calling to mind a favor which has been already asked, and is still besought without expressing it.

Let us endeavour to practise this kind of prayer, and learn to employ it on all occasions; for experience will convince us, that as nothing is more easy, so nothing is more excellent and efficacious.

CHAP. XLVI.

Of Meditation.

WHEN a longer time is to be employed in prayer, as half an hour, an hour, or even more, it is adviseable to form a meditation on some point of our Saviour's life or passion, and apply the reflections naturally arising from thence, to that particular virtue we are endeavouring to attain.

If you stand in need of patience, contemplate the mystery of your Saviour scourged at the pillar. Think 1. how the soldiers, being ordered to bring him to the place appointed, dragged him thither with loud cries and bitter scoffs. 2. How being stript of his garments he was exposed to piercing cold. 3. How his innocent hands were bound tight to the pillar. 4. How his body was torn with whips till the blood flowed in streams to the ground. 5. How the strokes being often repeated on the same part, increased and renewed his wounds.

While you dwell on these, or the like particulars, proper to inspire you with the love of patience, endeavour to feel interiorly in the most lively manner, the inexpressible anguish your divine master endured all over his body. From thence pass to the cruel pangs his blessed soul endured, and endeavour to conceive the patience and mildness with which he suffered, ever ready to undergo even more for his Father's glory and your good.

After this behold him covered with blood, and

be assured, that he desires nothing more earnestly than that you may bear your affliction with patience, and that he implores his heavenly Father's assistance for enabling you to bear with resignation not only this cross, but all others for the future. Strengthen with repeated acts the resolution you have taken of suffering with joy; then raising your mind to heaven, give thanks to the Father of mercies, who vouchsafed to send his only Son into the world, to suffer such horrible torments, and to intercede for you. Conclude with beseeching him to give you the virtue of patience, through the merits and intercession of this beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased.

CHAP. XLVII.

Another Method of Prayer by Way of Meditation.

THERE is another method of prayer and meditation, as follows. After having considered with great attention the pains your Saviour felt, and his cheerfulness in suffering, you may proceed to two other considerations of equal moment.

The one is, the contemplation of his infinite merits: the other, of that satisfaction and glory which the eternal Father received from his obedience to death, even the death of the cross.

You must represent these two considerations to the divine Majesty, as two powerful means of obtaining the grace you ask. This method is applicable not only to all the mysteries of our Saviour's passion, but to every act, whether interior or exterior, he formed in each mystery.

CHAP. XLVIII.

A Method of Prayer grounded on the Intercession of our blessed Lady.

BESIDES the methods of meditation already mentioned, there is another which is ad-

dressed particularly to the blessed Virgin. First represent to yourself the eternal Father, then Jesus Christ our Lord, and lastly his ever-blessed Mother.

With regard to the eternal Father, you are to consider two things. The first is, that singular affection he had from all eternity for this most chaste Virgin, even before he had drawn her out of nothing. The second is, that eminent sanctity he was pleased to bestow on her, and all the virtues she practised during her whole life.

Concerning the first; you must begin with raising your mind above all created beings; anticipate all time; launch into the vast expanse of eternity; enter into the heart of God, and see with what delight he viewed in futurity the person appointed to be Mother of his Son; beseech him by that delight to give you sufficient strength against your enemies, especially those who press hardest upon you. Then contemplate the virtues and heroic actions of this incomparable Virgin; make an offering of them all, or of each one singly to God, making a merit of them towards obtaining of the divine goodness whatever your necessities may require.

After this, address yourself to Jesus, and beg of him to be mindful of that amiable Mother, who for nine months carried him in her womb, and from the first instant of his birth paid him the most profound adoration, in acknowledgment of his being at once God and Man, her Creator and Son; who with great compassion saw him poorly accommodated in a stable, nourished him with her pure milk, kissed and embraced him a thousand times with maternal fondness, and through his whole life and at his death suffered for him beyond expression. Lay all this so strongly before him, that he may be

compelled, as it were, by such powerful motives to hear your prayers.

Lastly, applying to the blessed Virgin herself, say, that providence designed her from all eternity to be the Mother of mercy and refuge of sinners; and consequently that after her divine Son, you place your greatest confidence in her intercession. Represent to her what so many learned men have asserted, and what has been confirmed by so many miraculous events, that no one ever called upon her with a lively faith, without experiencing her assistance. Lastly, represent to her the sufferings of her Son for your salvation, that she may obtain of him the grace necessary for making a right use of it to the greater glory of your amiable Saviour.

CHAP. XLIX.

Some Considerations to induce Sinners to confide in the Assistance of the blessed Virgin.

WHOEVER has recourse to the blessed Virgin with due confidence, must attend to the following motives.

1. Experience teaches us that a vessel which has contained perfumes, preserves the odor of them, especially if it were for any considerable time, or if any still remain in it; yet they have but a limited force, no more than fire, whose warmth is retained after removing from it. If so, what shall we say of the charity and compassion of the blessed Virgin, who for nine months bore, and still carries in her heart the only Son of God, the uncreated charity which knows no bounds? If, as often as we approach a great fire, we are affected by its heat, does it not follow, and have we not great reason to believe, that whoever approaches Mary, that Mother of mercies, that heart ever burning with the most ardent charity, must be the more affected, the oftener he addresses

himself to her, and the greater his reliance and humility are?

2. No created being ever bore such ardent love to Jesus Christ, nor shewed so perfect a submission to his will, as his blessed Mother. If therefore this divine Saviour, who gave himself a sacrifice for us wretched sinners; if, I say, this Saviour has appointed his own Mother to be Mother to us all, our advocate and intercessor to him, she cannot but comply with his appointment, and will never refuse us her assistance. Let us not hesitate to implore her pity; let us have recourse to her with great confidence in all our necessities, she being an inexhaustible source of blessings, and ever proportions her favors to the confidence placed in her.

CHAP. L.

A Method of Meditation and Prayer, through the Intercession of the Saints and Angels.

IN order to obtain the protection of the saints and angels, the two following methods may be employed.

The first is, to address yourself to the eternal Father, and lay before him the divine hymns of the heavenly choirs, the labors, the persecutions, the torments undergone by the saints while on earth for the love of him; and then by all these marks of their respect, their fidelity, their love, conjure him to grant your petitions.

The second is, to call upon those blessed spirits, who earnestly desire not only that we may attain their perfection here, but even greater glory hereafter. Beg therefore earnestly, that they would assist you in subduing your evil inclinations and overthrowing the enemies of your salvation, but particularly to be mindful of you in the hour of

death. Sometimes revolve in your mind the extraordinary graces they received from the Almighty, and rejoice as if they had been bestowed on yourself. Nay, your joy may be greater for his having rather bestowed such favors on them than yourself, because such was his divine will; for which you ought to bless and praise his holy name.

But that this exercise may be attended with less difficulty, and performed with greater regularity, it will be proper to assign the several days of the week, to the different orders of the blessed. On Sunday, beg the intercession of the nine choirs of angels; on Monday, invoke St. John Baptist; on Tuesday, the patriarchs and prophets; on Wednesday, the apostles; on Thursday, the martyrs; on Friday, the bishops and confessors; on Saturday, the virgins, and other saints. But let no day pass without imploring the assistance of our blessed Lady, the Queen of all saints, without invoking your angel guardian, the glorious archangel St. Michael, or any other saint, to whom you have any particular devotion, particularly the saints of your name.

Moreover, daily beseech the eternal Father, Jesus Christ, and the blessed Virgin, that you may be particularly under the protection of Saint Joseph, the worthy spouse of the chastest of virgins. Then addressing yourself to him, ask with great humility, to be received into his protection. Numberless are the instances related of this saint's wonderful assistance afforded to those who have called upon him in their necessities, whether spiritual or corporal; and chiefly when they have stood in need of light from heaven, and an invisible director in their prayers. And if God shew so much regard to other saints, on account of their having loved and served him here; what

consideration and deference will he not manifest for the person he honored so highly on earth, as to be subject to, and obey as a Father?

CHAP. LI.

Of Meditation on the Sufferings of Christ, and the affecting Sentiments to be drawn from thence.

WHAT I before laid down concerning the method of praying and meditating on the sufferings of our Lord and Saviour, regarded only the asking for which we stood in need of; we are now to proceed to the forming from thence various affecting sentiments. If therefore, for example, you have chosen for the subject of your meditation the crucifixion of the Man God, among other circumstances of that mystery, you may dwell on these which follow.

Consider, 1. That Jesus being arrived on mount Calvary, the executioners rudely stripped him, tearing off the skin with the clothes, to which his wounds and congealed blood had now closely cemented them. 2. That taking off his crown of thorns, and setting it on again in derision, his sacred head was pierced in fresh places. 3. That he was fastened to the cross with large nails drove by heavy hammers. 4. That his hands not reaching to the places designed for them, they were stretched so violently, that all his bones were dis-jointed, and might easily be counted. Ps. xxi. 18. 5. That being elevated on the cross, the whole weight of his body rested on the nails, which tore the wounds of his hands and feet wider, and gave him most exquisite pain.

If by these and the like considerations you be desirous of kindling in your breast the flames of divine love, endeavour to attain by meditation a sublime knowledge of your Saviour's infinite good-

ness, who, for your sake, condescended to suffer so much. For the more you advance in the knowledge of his love for you, the greater will be your love and affection for him.—Being thus convinced of his exceeding great charity, you will naturally conceive a sincere sorrow for having so often and so heinously offended him, who offered himself a sacrifice for your offences.

Then proceed to form acts of hope, from the consideration, that this great God had no other design on the cross than to extirpate sin out of the world, to free you from the tyranny of the devil, to expiate your crimes, to reconcile you to his Father, and provide a resource for you in all your necessities. But if after contemplating his passion, you consider its effects; if you observe, that by his death the sins of men were blotted out, the anger of a sovereign Judge appeased, the powers of hell defeated, death itself vanquished, the places of the fallen angels filled up in heaven, your grief will be changed into joy; and this joy will increase by reflecting on the joy which the holy Trinity, the blessed Virgin, the church militant and triumphant receive from the accomplishing of the great work of the redemption of mankind.

If you would conceive a lively sorrow for your sins, let your meditation tend no farther than to convince you, that if Jesus Christ suffered so much, it was to inspire you with a wholesome hatred of yourself and your disorderly passions, particularly of that which occasions your greatest failings, and consequently most offensive to almighty God.

If you would excite sentiments of admiration, you need only consider, that nothing can be so surprising as to see the Creator of the universe, the fountain of life, butchered by his own crea-

tures; to see the supreme Majesty as it were annihilated, justice condemned, beauty itself defiled and lost under filth; the object of the eternal Father's love become the hatred of sinners; light inaccessible overwhelmed by the powers of darkness; uncreated glory and felicity buried under ignominy and wretchedness.

To excite compassion in your breast for the sufferings of your Saviour and your God, besides his exterior pains, consider those interior ones which far exceeded the others. For if you be moved with the former, your heart will be pierced with grief at the sight of the latter. The soul of Christ beheld the divinity at that instant as clearly as it does now in heaven: it knew how much God deserved to be honored; and as it infinitely loved him, it likewise earnestly desired, that all his creatures should love him with all their force. Seeing him therefore so horribly dishonored throughout the world by numberless abominable crimes, it was overwhelmed with a grief answerable to its love and desire, that the divine Majesty should be loved and served by all men. As the greatness of this love and desire was beyond imagination, it is in vain to attempt to comprehend the excess of those interior pains which Christ endured in the agonies of death.

Besides, as this divine Saviour loved mankind beyond any thing that can be expressed, such a tender and ardent affection must have created an extreme affliction for those sins which would tear them from him. He knew that no one could commit a mortal sin, without destroying that charity and sanctifying grace, which are the spiritual bond of union between him and the just: and that this separation would cause greater anguish to the soul of Jesus, than the dislocation of his limbs was to his body. For the soul being altogether spiritual,

and of a nature far more perfect than the body of consequence must be more exquisitely capable of pain. But doubtless the most grievous affliction our blessed Saviour underwent, was, the view of the sins of the damned, who being incapable of repenting, must be banished from him for all eternity.

If the contemplation of so many sufferings move you to compassion for your dying Jesus, go on, and you will find that he suffered excessively, not only from the sins you have actually committed, but even on account of those you have not committed, since the last drop of his precious blood was poured out both to wash away the former and preserve you from the latter. Trust me, you can never want motives for taking part in the sufferings of Jesus crucified. Know moreover, that there never was, nor ever will be in any rational creature, that affliction which he hath not experienced; injuries, reproaches, temptations, pains, loss of goods, voluntary austerities, and this more exquisitely than those who actually groan under them. For as this tender parent has a perfect comprehension of whatever we are liable to suffer, whether in body or mind, even to the least pain or head-ache, he must certainly have been moved with great compassion for us.

But who can express what he felt at the sight of his blessed Mother's affliction? She shared in all the pangs and outrages with which his passion was attended, and this with the same views and from the same motives; and though her sufferings were infinitely short of his, yet were they beyond expression. This redoubled all the sorrows of Jesus, and pierced his heart still deeper. Hence it was that a certain devout soul compared the heart of Jesus to a burning furnace, in which he voluntarily suffered from the ardent flames of divine love.

And, after all, what is the cause of such unspeakable torments? No other than our sins; and therefore the greatest compassion and gratitude we can possibly shew towards him who has suffered so much for us, is to be truly sorry for our past offences, and this purely for the love of him; to detest sin beyond all things, because displeasing to him; to wage continual war against our evil inclinations, as his greatest enemies; that thus divesting ourselves of the old man, and putting on the new, we may adorn our souls with virtue, in which alone their beauty consists.

CHAP. LII.

Of the Fruits arising from Meditations on the Cross, and the Imitation of the Virtues of Christ crucified.

GREAT are the advantages which may be reaped from meditating on the cross. The first is, not only a detestation of past sins, but a firm resolution to fight against our disorderly appetites, which crucified our Saviour, and are not as yet extinguished in us. The second is, the obtaining of Jesus crucified the forgiveness of sins committed, and the grace of a wholesome hatred of ourselves, so as never to offend him more, but to love and serve him with our whole hearts for the future, in acknowledgment of what he suffered for our sakes. The third is, to labor without ceasing in rooting out all depraved habits, however trivial they may appear. The fourth is, to exert ourselves in imitating the virtues of this divine Master, who died not only to expiate our sins, but to set us the example of a life of sanctity and perfection.

The following method of meditation will be highly serviceable. In the supposition, that you desire to imitate the patience, among other virtues

of your Saviour, in bearing the crosses which befall you, weigh well these several points.

1. What the soul of Jesus did on the cross for God. 2. What God did for the soul of Jesus. 3. What the soul of Jesus did for itself and its body. 4. What Jesus did for us. 5. What we ought to do for Jesus.

1. Consider in the first place, that the soul of Jesus, swallowed up in the ocean of the divinity, contemplated that infinite and incomprehensible being, before whom all creatures, even the most exalted, are a mere nothing; contemplated, I say, in a state, wherein, without the least diminution of its essential glory and splendor, it debases itself so far as to suffer all sorts of indignities from vile ungrateful man; and then adored its sovereign majesty; giving it millions of thanks, and accepting of every thing for its service.

2. Behold on the other hand what God did in regard of the soul of Jesus; consider that his will was, that this only Son, so dear to him, should for the love of us be buffeted, spit upon, blasphemed, torn with whips, crowned with thorns, and nailed to a cross. See with what delight he beholds him loaded with infamy and overwhelmed with affliction for so deserving an end!

3. Contemplate after this the soul of Jesus, and observe, that, knowing the pleasure God took in seeing it suffer, for the love it bears the divinity, either on account of its immense perfections, or the infinite favors received, it submitted itself to his will in all things with the greatest alacrity. Who can describe its ardent affection for crosses? It sought even new ways of suffering, but failing in this, it abandoned itself and the innocent body to the mercy of miscreants and the powers of hell.

4. Then turn your eyes to Jesus, who in the midst of most cruel torments, thus addresses himself to you in the most affectionate manner. See to what excess of misery I am reduced by thy ungovernable will, which refuses the least constraint in compliance with mine. See the horrible pains I endure, with no other view but to teach thee a lesson of patience. Let me conjure thee, by all these sufferings, to accept with resignation this cross I here present, and all those I shall send thee hereafter. Give up thy reputation to calumny, thy body to the fury of such persecutors as I shall chuse for thy trial, however vile and inhuman they may be. O that thou didst know what delight thy patience and resignation afford me ! But how canst thou be ignorant of it, when thou beholdest these wounds I have received to purchase for thee, at the price of my blood, those virtues, with which I would willingly adorn thy soul, more dear to me than life itself ? If I have suffered myself to be reduced to this extremity for thy sake, canst not thou bear a light affliction, in order to mitigate a little the excess of mine ? Canst thou refuse to heal those wounds I have received through thy impatience, more cruel to me than the pangs I suffer ?

5. Consider who it is that speaks thus to you, and you will find that it is Jesus Christ, the King of glory, true God and true Man. Consider the greatness of his torments and humiliations, beyond what the worst of criminals deserve. Be astonished to behold him in the midst of these agonies, not only fixed and resolute, but even replenished with joy, as if the day of his passion was a day of triumph. Think, that as a few drops of water sprinkled upon a furnace, only add a fresh fierceness to it ; so his torments, which to his charity

appeared light, served but to increase his joy and desire of suffering.

Moreover, reflect that all he did and suffered, was neither through constraint nor interest, but from a motive of the most pure love, as he has declared, and in order to teach you how to practise patience. Endeavour therefore to attain a perfect knowledge of what he demands of you, and the delight he takes in seeing you put in practice this virtue: then form an ardent desire of carrying the cross, under which you labor, not only with patience, but with joy, and even others far heavier, that you may more exactly imitate Christ crucified, and render yourself the more acceptable to him.

Represent to yourself all the torments and ignominies of his passion, and, astonished at the constancy he shews, blush at your own weakness! look upon your own sufferings, when compared with his, as merely imaginary, and be convinced that your patience is not even the shadow of his. Dread nothing so much as an unwillingness to suffer for your Saviour, and if such a thought but present itself, reject it as a suggestion from hell.

Consider Jesus on the cross as a devout book, which you ought to study without ceasing, to learn the practice of the most heroic virtues. This is the book which may be truly called the book of life, Rev. iii. 5. which at once enlightens the mind by its doctrines, and inflames the will by its examples. The world is full of books; but were it possible for a man to read them all, he would never be so well instructed to hate vice and embrace virtue, as by contemplating a crucified God. But remember, that such as spend whole hours in bewailing the passion of our Lord, and admiring his patience, yet on the first occasion betray as great an impatience of suffering, as if they had never

thought on the cross : such, I say, are like raw soldiers, who in their tents breathe nothing but conquests, but on the first appearance of the enemy, shamefully run away. What is there more despicable than after considering, admiring and extolling the virtues of our Redeemer, in an instant to neglect and forget them all, when an opportunity offers of putting them in practice ?

CHAP. LIII.

Of the Eucharist.

THUS far I have endeavoured, to furnish you with four sorts of spiritual weapons, and teach you the method of employing them ; it remains to lay before you the great succour you may draw from the most holy eucharist, for subduing the enemies of your perfection and salvation. As this august sacrament surpasses in dignity and efficacy all the rest, it is also the most terrible of all weapons to the infernal powers. The four we have already treated of, have no force but through the merits of Jesus Christ, and by the grace he has acquired for us with his precious blood ; but this contains Jesus Christ himself, his body, his blood, his soul and divinity. Those are bestowed upon us by God, that we may with them subdue our enemies through Jesus Christ, but this is given us that we may fight against them with him ; because by eating his body and drinking his blood, we dwell with him, and he in us. But, as we may eat this body and drink this blood, two different ways, in reality every day, and spiritually every hour, both highly profitable and holy ; the latter ought to be practised as often as possible, the former as often as shall be judged expedient,

CHAP. LIV.

In what Manner we ought to receive the blessed Sacrament.

THE motives for approaching this divine sacrament are many. From thence it comes, that several particulars are to be observed at three different times, viz. before communion, at communion, and after communion.

Before communion, whatever the motive be, we must never fail of cleansing our souls by the sacrament of penance, if defiled with the guilt of mortal sin. After this we are to offer ourselves with all sincerity to Jesus Christ, and consecrate our souls with all their faculties to his service; since in this sacrament he bestows on us himself entire, his body, blood, soul and divinity, accompanied with the immense treasure of his infinite merits. And as all we can present to him is nothing in comparison with what he gives us, we must wish to be possessed of all the merits which the created beings of the universe could ever offer, that the present might deserve the regard of an infinite Majesty.

If our design be to obtain some victory over our spiritual enemies, let us for some days before communion meditate on the ardent desire our blessed Saviour has of entering into our breasts by this sacrament, that he may be united to us, and assist us in subduing our disordered appetites. The ardency of this desire is infinitely beyond our comprehension.

In order to form some idea of it, let us endeavour to comprehend two things. The one is, the unspeakable pleasure which the Wisdom incarnate takes in dwelling among us, calling it his delight, Prov. viii. 3. The other is, the infinite hatred he bears to mortal sin, both as it is an insu-

perable obstacle to that intimate union he so much seeks with us, and as it is destructive, as far as in it lies, of the divine attributes. For as God is sovereignly good, a pure light, a beauty without spot, he must necessarily abhor sin, which is all malice, all darkness, all filth and corruption. So great is his abhorrence, that all he hath done both in the Old and New Testaments, all that his Son suffered in his life and passion, all tended only to the destruction of it. Several great saints have not doubted to assert, that he would consent his Son, dear as he is, should suffer a thousand deaths, were it necessary, for the expiation of the least of our faults.

From these two considerations having gathered, though very imperfectly, how much our Saviour desires to enter our hearts, that he may entirely exterminate for ever his and our enemies from thence, we ought to conceive and shew a most ardent impatience for his reception. The hopes of his arrival will raise our courage, and inspire us to declare war anew against the predominant passion we struggle with, forming as many acts as possible of the contrary virtue; and this particularly on the evening and morning before communion.

When we are on the point of receiving the body of our Lord, let us for a moment take a review of all the faults we have committed since our last communion; and in order to conceive a true sorrow, let us reflect that we committed them with as little remorse as if God had not died upon a cross for us; this must cover us with confusion, and strike a terror for having basely preferred a trifling compliance with our own will, to the obedience due to so gracious a master. But when we consider, that notwithstanding our ingratitude and

infidelity, this God of all charity still condescends to bestow himself upon us, to invite us to receive him, let us then approach him with great confidence, opening our hearts that he may enter and take possession of them; after this let us shut them close, that no unclean affection may creep in.

After communion we are to remain in a profound recollection, adoring our Lord with great humility, and saying in our hearts: thou seest, o God of my soul, my wretched propensity to sin; thou seest how this passion domineers over me, and that of myself I cannot resist it. It is thou must fight my battles, and, if I have any share in the combat, it is from thee alone that I must hope for victory. Then addressing ourselves to the eternal Father, let us offer him this beloved Son now bestowed upon, and dwelling within us; let us offer him in thanks for so many benefits received, and in order to obtain through his assistance a complete victory over ourselves, Let us form a resolution of fighting courageously against that particular enemy, from whom we suffer most; and we may expect to conquer, since, if we are not wanting on our part, God sooner or later will certainly crown our endeavours with success.

CHAP. LV.

The Manner of preparing for Communion, in order to excite ourselves to the Love of God.

IF our motive for communion be a desire of increasing the love of God in us, we must call to mind the love which God bears to us. The preparation consists in considering with great attention, that this sovereign Lord, whose power and majesty are without bounds, was not satisfied with creating us according to his own image and likeness, nor with sending his only Son to expiate our sins by a laborious life of upwards of thirty

years, and a death on the cross no less cruel than ignominious: but also has left him to us in this sacrament, to be our food and support in all our necessities. Weigh well the greatness and singularity of this love in the following manner:

1. As to its duration, we shall find that it is eternal, and never had a beginning. For as God is from all eternity, so long hath he loved man, even to the bestowing his Son upon him in this incomprehensible manner. Say therefore, in a transport of joy: true it is that such a desperate creature as I am, have been so much esteemed and beloved of God, that he was pleased to think of me from all eternity, designing the body and blood of his only Son for my food and nourishment.

2. Our strongest passions for earthly things are circumscribed by certain limits, which they cannot exceed. The love alone which God bears us, knows no bounds. To fulfil it, he sent his Son, equal to himself in substance and perfections. Thus is the gift equal to his love, and his love to the gift; both infinite, and beyond the reach of all created understandings.

3. In thus loving us, God was not under the least constraint, but only influenced by the excess of his love, naturally tending to heap benefits on us.

4. We had not performed the least good action, or acquired the least merit towards deserving his love; and if he has loved us to this excess, if he has given himself entirely to us, it is all owing to his immense charity.

5. His love for us is most pure, and, as may be observed, no ways blended with views of interest like the friendships of this world. What is all we are worth to him, who in himself, independently of us, possesses the source of all happiness and glory? When therefore he showers his blessings

upon us, he has no other view but our advantage. With this thought, let each one say in himself; who could have imagined, o Lord, that a God, infinitely great, should place his affections on so vile and abject a creature as myself? What could be thy design, o King of Glory? What couldst thou expect from dust and ashes? That ardent charity in which thou art encircled, that fire which at once enlightens and inflames me, convinces me that thou hadst but that one design, and consequently that thy love is void of all interest; thy design in giving thyself entire to me in this sacrament, is to transform me into thee, that I may live in thee, and thou in me; and that by so intimate an union I become one with thee, and change an earthly heart, such as mine, into a heart entirely spiritual and divine, as thine is.

After this, let us enter into sentiments of joy and admiration at the marks the Son of God gives us of his esteem and love; and being convinced, that his only aim is to win our hearts entirely over to him, by weaning us from creatures and attaching us to himself, let us offer ourselves as an holocaust, that our will, memory and understanding may be no longer influenced by any other principle than a love and desire of pleasing him.

Then reflecting, that without his grace we are utterly incapable of being properly disposed for receiving the holy eucharist, let us lay open our hearts to obtain it, employing short but ardent ejaculations like the following aspirations: o heavenly food! when shall I be united to thee, and be happily consumed in the fire of divine love? When shall I, o divine charity! o living bread! when shall I live only in thee, by thee and for thee alone? o heavenly manna! o my life! o life of eternal happiness! When shall I see the day, that disgusted with all this world

affords, I shall seek my nourishment from thee alone ! o sovereign good ! o only joy of my heart ! When will the happy time come ? Disengage, o my God, from this moment, disengage my heart from the slavery of its passions and vices ; adorn it with thy heavenly virtues ; stifle all desire in it, but that of loving and pleasing thee. Then will I lay it open, and beg thou wilt please to enter it ; and to prevail, I will, if necessary, employ even an affectionate violence. Thither shalt thou come, o my only treasure, and nothing shall prevent thy presence from producing its desired effects. Such are the tender and affectionate sentiments which ought to be formed, especially on the evening and morning before communion.

When the time draws near, we are to consider attentively whom we are going to receive. No less than the Son of the living God ; the august majesty, before whom the heavens, and the powers of the heavens, shake for fear ; the Saint of saints, the mirror without spot, purity itself, before whom every thing is unclean : it is this God humbled, who, though the dread arbiter of life and death, was pleased for man's salvation to become like a worm of the earth, the derision of a mob, to be rejected with scorn, mocked, trampled upon, defiled with spittle, and fastened to a cross by a factious party of worldlings. On the other side consider, that of yourself you are nothing ; that your sins have reduced you below the vilest of creatures, even brutes themselves ; in a word, you have deserved to become a slave to devils. Reflect, that instead of shewing your gratitude for infinite favors received, you have barbarously insulted your Redeemer, have even trampled upon his blood, shed for you as the price of your redemption.

But still your ingratitude cannot overcome his unchangeable charity. Still he calls upon you

to approach his banquet, and, so far from excluding you, he threatens you with death if you absent yourself. This merciful Father's arms are ever open to receive you; and though you appear to him a mere leper, lame, blind, a demoniac, and what is still worse, full of sin and iniquity, yet he flies not from you, he shews no aversion; all he demands of you is, 1. To conceive a sincere sorrow for having so shamefully offended him. 2. To hate sin above all things. 3. To be ever ready to do his will, with great alacrity and cheerfulness on all occasions. 4. To have a firm confidence that he will forgive all your debts, cleanse you from all stain, and defend you against all your enemies.

Being thus animated by reflecting on the love he bears penitent sinners, approach the holy table with a fear tempered by hope and love, saying: I am not worthy to receive thee, after so many heinous offences, and without making sufficient satisfaction to thy justice. No, my God, I am not worthy to receive thee, sullied as I am with an attachment to creatures, and have not as yet begun to love and serve thee with my whole strength. Ah! my God, forget not thy wonted goodness; be mindful of thy promise; make me worthy through love and faith to receive thee.

After communion be profoundly recollected, and shutting out every thing else from thy heart, entertain thy Saviour with these or the like expressions: o sovereign Lord of heaven! what can have brought thee thus low, to visit a poor wretched, blind creature? His answer will be, love. To which you must reply: o eternal love! what is it thou askest of me? Nothing but love, he will answer; I would have no other fire in thy breast but that of charity. That fire will extinguish the impure flames of thy passions, and

inflame thy heart, and make it a victim of sweet odor before me. This is what I have long desired, and do still desire; that thou be all mine, and I all thine; which can never be, if instead of a conformity to my will, thou followest thy own, ever fond of liberty and the vanity of this world. Know then, that what I would have thee do, is, to hate thyself, that thou mayest love me alone, giving me thy heart in order to unite it to mine, which was opened on the cross for its reception. Thou knowest who I am, and seest nevertheless, that in some measure I have made thee my equal through an excess of love. When I give myself entire to thee, I ask but thee in return: be mine, and I am satisfied; seek nothing but me, think of nothing else, look upon and listen to me alone, may I be the sole object of thy thoughts and desires; only act in and through me, let my immense greatness absorb thy nothing, thus mayest thou find thy happiness in me, and I my repose in thee.

To conclude, make an offering to the eternal Father of his beloved Son. 1. In thanksgiving for the favor he has done in bestowing him on thee. 2. To obtain what is necessary, whether it be for thyself, the whole church, thy kindred and benefactors, or the souls in purgatory; uniting this offering with that our Saviour made of himself on the cross, when bathed in his own blood and covered with wounds, he offered himself an holocaust to his Father for the world's redemption. For the same intention may be offered the sacrifice of the mass, wherever it is celebrated that day throughout the christian world.

CHAP. LVI.

Of Spiritual Communion.

ALTHOUGH a real communion is at the oftencst restrained to once a day, yet you are at liberty, as was said above, to communicate in spirit every hour; and nothing but your own negligence can prevent your receiving this great benefit. And it is worth observing, that a spiritual communion is sometimes of greater advantage to the soul, and more acceptable to God, than many sacramental communions performed with little preparation and affection. When therefore you are disposed to receive the Son of God spiritually, be assured he is ready to give himself thus to you for your food and nourishment.

By way of preparation, turn your thoughts towards Jesus, and after a little reflection on the multitude of your sins, declare to him your sincere sorrow for them. Then beg of him, with the most profound respect and lively faith, that he will condescend to enter your heart, and replenish it with new grace, as a remedy against its weakness and the violence of its enemies. Every time you mortify any of your passions, or perform some act of virtue, take that opportunity of preparing your heart for the Son of God, who continually demands it of you; then addressing yourself to him, beg with great fervor the blessing of his presence, as the physician of your soul, as a powerful protector to take and keep possession of your hearts against all opponents.

Call likewise to mind your last sacramental communion, and inflamed with the love of your Saviour, say to him: when shall I receive thee again, o my God? When will the happy day return? But if you desire to communicate spiritually with greater devotion, begin to prepare for it over

night; and let every mortification and each act of virtue you practise, tend to prepare you for receiving in spirit your amiable Redeemer.

In the morning when you awake, meditate on the great advantages accruing from a holy communion, in which the soul retrieves lost virtues, recovers her former purity, is rendered worthy to partake of the merits of the cross; and performs an action highly pleasing to the eternal Father, who desires that every one should enjoy this divine sacrament. From hence endeavour to excite in your soul an ardent desire of receiving him in compliance with his will; and with this disposition say: Lord, since I am not allowed to receive thee this day sacramentally, let thy goodness and almighty power so order it, that, cleansed from the stain of sin, and healed of all my wounds, I may deserve to receive thee in spirit, now, each day and hour; to the end that, being strengthened with new grace, I may courageously resist my enemies, especially that failing against which for the love of thee I now wage war.

CHAP. LVII.

Of Thanksgiving.

SINCE all the good we possess or perform comes from God, and appertains to him; we are bound in justice to return continual thanks for every good action done, for every victory gained over ourselves; for all benefits, whether general or particular, received from his all-bounteous hand. And in order to acquit ourselves in a proper manner of this duty, let us consider for what end he has thus heaped his blessings upon us. This will shew us in what manner he expects our acknowledgments should be made.

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As his principal design in what he does for us, is to advance his own glory, and draw us to his service, let every one first make this reflection; what a proof have I in this benefit, of God's infinite goodness, wisdom and power! Then considering, that of himself he cannot merit so great a favor, or rather, that through his black ingratitude he is altogether unworthy of it, let him say with great humility: Is it possible, o Lord, that thou shouldst have the least regard for the most abject of all thy creatures? What an excess of bounty, to heap thy favors on so wretched a sinner as myself! May thy holy name be for ever blessed! and, as nothing more is required in return for so many signal benefits, but that he love and serve his benefactor, let him conceive the highest sentiments of gratitude and affection for so good a God, and the most earnest desires of a strict compliance with his holy will in all things. For a conclusion, he may make an entire offering of himself to God, in the following manner.

CHAP. LVIII.

Of the Offering we are to make of ourselves to God.

TWO things are to be observed, if we desire to render this oblation pleasing to God. The one is, to join it with all the offerings which the Son of God made whilst on earth; the other is, to disengage our hearts from all affection for creatures.

As to the first, it must be observed that our blessed Redeemer, during his mortal life, continually offered to the eternal Father, not only himself, but all his actions, mankind and all their good works. Let us therefore join our offerings with his, that from such an union they may be sanctified in the sight of the almighty.

With regard to the second, let us be careful to break off all attachment to creatures, before we presume to offer this sacrifice of ourselves. Consequently, if we perceive we are still entangled in the least impure affection, let us have recourse to God, and conjure him to break asunder our bonds, that nothing may prevent our being entirely his. This is of very great importance. For if he, who is a slave to creatures, pretend to give himself to God, does he not present that which is already engaged to another? This is mocking the almighty. Hence it is, that though we may have many times thus offered ourselves, as an holocaust to the Lord; yet we have not only advanced in the way of virtue, but even contracted fresh imperfections, and increased the number of our sins.

It is true, we may be allowed to make this oblation to God, though our hearts be not entirely weaned from the world; but then it must be done with a serious view of creating a thorough aversion to it, and this being obtained, we may without the least obstacle devote ourselves entirely to his service. Let therefore all our offerings be pure and unspotted; let not our own wills be consulted. Let us not regard the good things of this life, let us even overlook those of heaven, and have nothing in view but the sole will of God; let us adore his divine providence, and implicitly submit to his appointments; let us sacrifice every affection of our souls to him, and, forgetting all created beings, let us say: behold, o my God and my creator, the offering I make of all that I am; I submit my will entirely to thine; dispose of me as thou pleasest as to life, death, here and hereafter, in time or in eternity.

If we say this sincerely from our hearts, if we be truly thus affected, which the first affliction that

happens will plainly demonstrate, we may depend upon acquiring in a short time very great merits, of infinite greater value than all this world can afford; we shall belong to God, and he be ours, since he always bestows himself on those, who renounce themselves and all creatures, that they may live for him alone. What powerful means must such a practice afford for defeating our enemies? For if by this voluntary sacrifice, we unite ourselves so closely with God, that we are entirely his, and he is reciprocally ours, what enemy can have power to hurt us?

But, to enter into a farther detail, when we offer up our fasting, prayers, patience or other good works, we must first call to mind the holy actions of the Son of God, and placing all our confidence in their merit, present our own to the eternal Father. But if we desire to offer to this Father of mercy the sufferings of his Son, in satisfaction for our sins, it may be performed in the following manner.

We must call to mind either in general or in particular the chief disorders of our past lives; and being convinced, that of ourselves we are unable to appease the wrath of our sovereign judge, or make satisfaction to his offended justice, we must have recourse to the life and passion of our Saviour. We must remember, that when he prayed, fasted, labored, poured out his precious blood, he offered all he did and suffered to his Father, in order to reconcile us to him. Behold, said he, how I comply with thy decrees, in satisfying thy justice for the sins of such and such: graciously grant them pardon, and receive them into the number of thy elect.

Every one ought to join his prayer with those of Jesus Christ, and conjure the eternal Father to have mercy on him, through the merits of his Son's death and passion. This may be done every time

we meditate on the life or passion of our Lord, not only in passing from one mystery to another, but also at the various circumstances of each mystery : and this whether our prayers be offered up for ourselves or for others.

CHAP. LIX.

Of sensible Devotion, and the Affliction of Spiritual Dryness.

SENSIBLE devotion arises either from a natural disposition, the artifices of the devil, or is the effect of grace. From which of these sources it springs, the effects will discover. For if no amendment follow, we have reason to fear the devil or our own corrupt nature is at the bottom of it ; especially if too great a satisfaction be found in it, too great an attachment to it be indulged, or a better opinion of oneself entertained on its account. When therefore your heart abounds with joy and spiritual comfort, be not over solicitous to discover from whence it proceeds ; but be exceedingly careful to lay no stress upon it, or cherish any better opinion of yourself ; on the contrary, be ever mindful of your own nothingness, hate yourself the more, and break off all attachment to created objects, even spiritual ones, seeking God alone, and desiring to please only him. This conduct will change the very nature of the consolation you experience, and though it should at first arise from a bad principle, it will become an effect of grace.

Spiritual dryness proceeds from the causes we have just now mentioned. 1. From the devil, who sets all engines at work to make us negligent, to lead us out of the way of perfection, and plunge us afresh into the vanities of the world, 2. From the corruption of our nature, ever in-

clining us to evil, to tepidity and sloth, and attaching our hearts to the good things of this life. 3. From the divine grace infused into our souls by the Holy Ghost, in order to wean us from every thing which is not God, or tends not to God; or else to convince us, that we have nothing but what we receive from God, to give us a greater relish for the gifts of heaven; or to unite us still more to himself, by teaching us to renounce every thing else, even spiritual consolations, lest a too great fondness for them should divide our affections, which are due to him alone; or, because he delights in seeing us behave courageously, and make a right use of his holy graces.

When therefore you find yourself oppressed with a spiritual distaste and dryness, examine whether it be owing to any fault of yours, and amend it instantly; not so much with a view of regaining that sweetness, which is changed into bitterness, but in order to banish every thing that is in the least displeasing to God. But if after an exact scrutiny no such fault appear, give yourself no farther concern for recovering the sensible devotion you have lost, but exert yourself in acquiring true devotion, which consists in an exact conformity with the will of God; desist not from your usual exercises, but, however barren and insipid they may appear, be resolute and persevere, drinking cheerfully the bitter cup your heavenly Father presents to you.

And if, besides this dryness, which makes you almost insensible to heavenly things, you likewise perceive your mind laboring under heavy clouds of spiritual darkness, and incapable of resolving upon any thing; nevertheless be not discouraged; let nothing separate you from the cross of Christ; disdain all human consolation, vain and wretched as it is.

Be careful moreover not to discover this affliction to any but your spiritual physician, to whom it ought to be declared, not with a view to any alleviation, but in order to learn how to bear it with a perfect resignation to the divine will. Let not your communions, your prayers or other devout practices, be offered up for the freeing yourself from this cross; but beg that your courage may, according to his example, fix you to it, for his greater glory, even to the end of your life.

But if your mind be so disquieted as to be incapable of praying and meditating as formerly, yet you must persist in those exercises with as little anxiety as possible, and supply the defects of the mind by the affection of the will; employ vocal prayer, and speak sometimes to yourself, sometimes to your Saviour. Such a practice of devotion will have surprising effects, and afford you great consolation in your troubles. On such occasions say to yourself: o my soul, why art thou thus dejected, and why dost thou give me so much uneasiness? Put thy confidence in God, for I will still sing his praises, because he is my Saviour and my God. Why art thou retired from me, o Lord? Why dost thou contemn me when I stand most in need of thy assistance? Abandon me not for ever! Call to mind the pious sentiments with which God inspired Sarah the wife of Toby in her affliction, and say with her in the same spirit, not only in mind but in word: my God, all who serve thee, know that if they are visited with trials of affliction in this life, they will be rewarded; if oppressed with affliction, they shall be delivered: if punished by thy justice, they hope in thy mercy. For thou delightest not in seeing us perish; thou sendest a calm after storms, and joy after mourning. O God of Israel, be thy name for ever blessed Toby iii. 22. 23.

Represent to yourself your Saviour in the garden and on mount Calvary, abandoned by him whose beloved and only Son he was : carry the cross with him, and say from the bottom of your heart : *not my will, but thine be done.* Thus by joining patience with prayer, you will acquire true devotion by the voluntary sacrifice you make of yourself to God. For, as I have said before, true devotion consists in a ready and resolute will to follow Christ loaded with his cross, wherever he pleases to lead us ; in loving God, because worthy of our love ; and in quitting the sweetness of God for God's sake. And if numbers of those who profess piety, would measure spiritual advancement by this standard, rather than by the sweets of sensible devotion, they would not be so much deceived as they are by a false judgment of things, nor the artifices of the devil ; they would not be so very ungrateful as to murmur against their Lord, and unjustly complain of the favor he does them, in giving opportunities for the exercise of their patience ; on the contrary, they would exert themselves in serving him with greater fidelity than ever, being persuaded that he permits every thing for the greater advancement of his own glory and our salvation.

There is another dangerous illusion, to which women especially are often exposed, who detest vice, and are assiduous in avoiding the occasions of sin : but if the unclean spirit molest them with wicked and abominable thoughts, or perhaps excite in their imagination horrible visions, they are dejected, and despond under the apprehension that God has forsaken them. They cannot conceive that the Holy Ghost will dwell in a soul filled with impure thoughts. Thus they abandon themselves to affliction, and a kind of despair ; so that half conquered by the temptation, they begin to think

of desisting from their exercises of devotion, and returning to Egypt. Blind as they are, they see not God's goodness in permitting them to be tempted, in order to prevent their falling into any negligence, and to force them by the effects of their own wretchedness, to unite themselves more closely to him. It is therefore the greatest ingratitude to complain of that, for which they ought to thank without ceasing the divine mercy.

On such an occasion we ought to weigh well the perverse propensity of our corrupt nature. For God, who best knows what is for our advantage, would make us sensible, that of ourselves we tend to nothing but sin; and if not supported by him, we should continually fall into the greatest of miseries. After this we must excite ourselves to a due confidence in his divine mercy, being persuaded, that since he has been pleased to open our eyes to the danger we are in, he designs to free us from it, and unite us by prayer more strongly to himself. This deserves our most grateful acknowledgments.

But to return to those wicked thoughts which are involuntary; it is certain, that they are put to flight much sooner by a patient resignation to the anxiety they occasion, and a speedy application of the mind to something else, than by a tumultuous and violent resistance.

CHAP. LX.

Of the Examination of Conscience.

IN examining your conscience, three things are to be regarded. 1. The faults committed that day. 2. The occasions of those faults. 3. Your disposition to begin anew in amending your faults, and acquiring the contrary virtues. With regard to the faults committed that day, you are to recol-

lect what I have directed to be done, Chap. 27. where you will find all that is to be performed after falling into sin. As to the occasions of sin, you must resolve to avoid them with the greatest caution and circumspection. Lastly, as to the amendment of these faults, and the acquisition of the requisite virtues, you must fortify your will by a firm confidence in God, by prayer and frequent earnest desires of breaking off all ill habits, and acquiring such as are commendable.

But if you find that you have gained some victory over yourself, or performed some good action, be upon your guard, beware of vain-glory. I would not even advise you to dwell too long on the remembrance of it, lest presumption and vanity take that time to steal into your heart. Leave therefore your good works, whatever they be, in the hands of the divine mercy, and think of nothing but doing your duty with greater fervor for the future. Be mindful of giving God most humble thanks for the assistance you have received from him that day; acknowledge that all good comes from him; and in particular return thanks for his having defended you from numberless enemies, both visible and invisible; for the manifold good thoughts bestowed, and the occasions offered of practising virtue; and for a thousand other benefits you cannot discover.

CHAP. LXI.

In what Manner we must persevere in the Spiritual Combat till Death.

AMONG other things requisite for succeeding in the spiritual combat, perseverance is justly reckoned a virtue, through which we apply without ceasing to the destruction of our disorderly inclinations, whose duration is the same with our

lives, never failing to shoot up and spread in our hearts, like rank weeds in a fertile soil. It is in vain to think of putting an end to this war, it cannot end but at our death, and whoever ceaseth to fight, must give up his liberty or life. Alas! how should he avoid being overcome, when attacked by enemies devoted to his utter destruction, and whose malice increases, the more this friendship is sought? Nevertheless, be not daunted with their strength and number, for in this sort of fight no one is conquered but he that surrenders; neither have your enemies a greater power than your leader, for whose honor you engage, is pleased to allow them. Be assured he never will suffer you to fall into their hands; he will be your champion, he, who is infinitely superior to them all, will crown you with conquest provided that fighting his battle, you place all your confidence, not in your own strength, but in his almighty power and sovereign goodness.

But if he seem slow in succouring you, if he permit you to be exposed to danger, be not discouraged; let your faith be stedfast, and with the following consideration animate yourself to the combat; believe, I say, that he will so order every thing, that all which seems an obstacle to your glory, will turn out to your advantage. For your part, let your resolution and fidelity be seen; never desert your leader, who for your sake did not shrink from death itself, and by dying conquered the world; fight courageously under his standard, and quit not your arms while there is one enemy left. For if you spare but one, if but a single vice be neglected, it will ever be an eye-sore, an arrow fixed in your breast; and as it will encumber you in the fight, it will consequently retard your victory.

CHAP. LXII.

In what Manner we must prepare for engaging those Enemies by whom we shall be attacked at the Hour of Death.

ALTHOUGH this mortal life be a continual warfare, yet it is very certain, that the last day of battle will be the most dangerous; for he who loses that decisive day has nothing left to trust to. In order therefore not to perish at that juncture without resource, endeavour to inure yourself to the combat, while God gives you opportunities; for he that fights valiantly during life, will gain the victory in his last moments, through his accustomed conquests in the fiercest assaults.

Besides, think frequently on death; for that will much diminish the terror of it when at hand: your mind will be more at liberty, and better prepared for the combat. Worldlings banish this thought as troublesome and unseasonable, lest it should destroy the pleasures this life affords, and being unwilling to entertain so vexatious a reflection, as that which tells them they must one day part with all they now hold so dear. Thus their affections are more strongly rivetted to this world every day. And thence it comes, that the leaving this life, and all that is dear to them, is a torture the more insupportable, the longer they have enjoyed such delights.

But in order to be prepared for that terrible passage from time to eternity, imagine yourself sometimes all alone, no assistance to be had, and the agonies of death pressing upon you; consider attentively the following particulars, which will give you the most uneasiness, and imprint deep in your mind the remedies I shall propose, that you may employ them when the time of extremity is at hand: for it is absolutely necessary to know that

lesson well, which is to be performed but once, lest an irreparable fault be committed, and an eternity of misery be the consequence.

CHAP. LXIII.

Of four Kinds of Temptations usual at the Hour of Death: and first of those against Faith, and the Manner of resisting them.

THE enemies of our salvation generally assault us at the hour of death with four kinds of dangerous temptations. 1. With doubts against faith. 2. With thoughts of despair. 3. With thoughts of vain-glory. 4. With various illusions employed by these ministers of darkness, transformed into angels of light, for our destruction.

As to the first sort, if the enemy should offer any captious and fallacious argument, be sure not to enter into any dispute with him; let it suffice to say to him, with a holy indignation; begone Satan, father of lies; I will not hear thee; my belief is no other than that of the holy Roman Catholic Church.

Be likewise on your guard against any thoughts which may offer themselves as conducing to strengthen your faith; reject them as suggestions of the devil, who seeks to disturb you, by insensibly engaging you in a dispute. But if you cannot free yourself from such thoughts, and your head be full of them, still be resolute, listen not to his arguments, not even to those passages of scripture he may possibly alledge. For however clear and direct they may seem, yet he will certainly quote them wrong, maim or misapply them.

If therefore the fiend should ask you what the Church believes, make no reply; but as you know his design is to surprize you, and wrangle on some ambiguous word, content yourself with making

one general act of faith; or, if you be desirous to mortify him still more, answer, that the Church believes the truth; if he press to know what is the truth, tell him, it is what the Church believes. Take especial care that your heart be inseparable from the cross, and say to the Son of God: my Creator and Redeemer, come immediately to my assistance, and depart not from me, lest I wander from the truth thou has taught me; and since thou hast favored me with being a member of thy Church, grant I may die such to thy greater glory.

CHAP. LXIV.

Of Temptations to despair; how to be resisted.

THE second temptation which the enemy throws in our way, is a vain terror which he endeavours to strike into us, and make us despair at the sight of our past sins. If you perceive yourself in any danger of this kind, take it as a general rule, that the remembrance of former crimes proceeds from the divine grace, and is salutary, if it tend to form in you sentiments of humility, compunction, and confidence in God's mercy. But know likewise, that it certainly is suggested by the devil as often as it creates vexation and despondency; leaving you spiritless and daunted, from the strong reason it offers to make you believe you are lost, without any hopes of salvation.

Think of nothing, in such circumstances, but of humbling yourself, and placing a greater confidence than ever in the boundless mercy of our Lord. This will entirely defeat the devil's stratagem, as it turns his own weapons against him, and gives greater glory to God. It is true, you ought to be truly contrite for having offended such sovereign goodness, as often as you call to mind your past iniquities; but you ought at the same time to ask pardon with a firm confidence in

your Saviour's merits. Even though it seems as if God said in your heart, you are not of the number of his flock, still you must not cease to hope in him, saying with great humility : Lord, thou hast too much reason to reject me and punish my sins to all eternity ; but still I have greater reason to hope thou wilt manifest thy mercy in me. I beseech thee therefore to spare a miserable wretch, who deserves indeed to be for ever banished from thee, but yet is the dear purchase of thy precious blood. I desire to be saved, o blessed Redeemer, that I may bless thee for ever in thy glory ; all my hopes are in thee ; to thee do I abandon myself entirely ; dispose of me as thou pleasest who art my sovereign master ; dispose I say as thou pleasest ; but however that be, I will hope in thee, though thou shouldst condemn me this very instant.

CHAP. LXV.

Of Temptations to vain-glory.

THE third kind of temptation is vain-glory. Dread nothing so much as giving the least way to an opinion of yourself and your good works. Take no glory but in our Lord, and acknowledge that all is due to the merits of his life and death. To the utmost verge of life, look upon yourself only with hatred and contempt ; let your humility increase every moment, and never cease giving thanks to God, as the author of all the good you have ever done. Beseech him to succour you ; but beware of esteeming his assistance to be the reward of your merits, even though you have gained the most signal victories over yourself. Be ever in fear, and confess ingenuously, that all your endeavours would be vain, unless God, in whom is all your hope, crowns them with success. Follow this advice, and rest secure that your enemies cannot hurt you.

CHAP. LXVI.

Of various Illusions employed by the Devil at the Hour of our Death.

IF the enemy of our salvation, who never ceases to persecute us, should, under the appearance of an angel of light, endeavour to deceive you with illusions, imaginary or even real visions, still remain firm in the knowledge of yourself, and say boldly to him: avaunt, wretched fiend; return to thy dark abodes from whence thou camest; for I am too great a sinner to deserve visions; I seek nothing but the mercy of my Jesus, the prayers of the blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and the other saints.

But if it appear almost evident that such are from God, be sure you do not too easily give them credit; be not afraid of rejecting them: such resistance, founded as it is on a sense of your own wretchedness, must be highly acceptable to God; and if he be the author of what you experience, he will not fail to convince you that it is so, without any detriment to you; since he that gives his grace to the humble, will not deprive them of it, when they humble themselves before him.

Such are the weapons the enemy usually employs against us in general, when our last moments draw near; but besides this, he attacks each one in particular where he knows they are least able to resist. He studies our inclinations, and through them draws us into sin. Wherefore, before the hour of the great combat approaches, let us take arms and make war on our prevailing passions, that we may with less difficulty resist and conquer them in the time, which will be to us the last of all time. Ye shall fight against them, till they be utterly destroyed.

THE
PEACE OF THE SOUL.

CHAP. I.

Nature of Man's Heart ; how to govern it.

GOD created the heart of man for no other end than to love him and be beloved by him again. The excellence of this end of its creation, ought to convince us, that it is the most noble and most excellent work of his almighty hand.

On the government of this alone, depend our spiritual life and death. The art of governing it must needs be very easy, since its true character is to act through love, and to do nothing by force. All we have to do is to watch, with great calmness, the true spring of our actions. To observe from whence they spring or whither they tend. Whether they are actuated by the heart, the source of divine love ; or by the understanding, from whence arises human vain-glory.

You will discover that it is the heart which influences you in your good works, through a motive of love, when all you do for God, seems little, and after doing your very best, you are ashamed of having done so little.

But you may conclude, that your actions proceed from the understanding moved by worldly motives, when your good works, instead of producing meek and humble sentiments, leave nothing behind them but the empty illusions of vain-glory, puffing you up with a false notion of having performed wonders,

when in fact you have done nothing that is praiseworthy.

Man's warfare, mentioned by Job, consists in watching thus continually over ourselves. This is to be performed without the least peevishness or anxiety; for what is aimed at, is to give peace to the soul, to calm and appease its motions, when troubled or disturbed in its operations or prayers. For we may be assured, in such a condition, prayers will be very indifferently said, till the soul be freed from all uneasiness.

Know that this may be effected by a single emotion of mildness, which is the only means of remedying this disorder and restoring her former tranquillity.

CHAP. II.

How careful the Soul ought to be in acquiring perfect Tranquillity.

THIS mild, peaceable, and especially constant attention to all the motions of the heart, will easily produce wonderful effects: for we shall not only pray and act with great facility and peace, but even suffer, without repining, what occasions the greatest disturbances, contempt and injuries themselves.

Not but that to acquire this external peace, we must necessarily undergo much labor, and our want of experience will expose us to the assaults of powerful domestic enemies; but this we may depend upon, that if we be not afraid of the encounter, we never shall want assistance and consolation in the combat; that our enemies will grow weaker and their powers be dispersed, whereas our command over our affections will increase, and we shall procure for our souls that precious repose, in which their happiness on this side the grave alone consists.

If it happen that the emotion be too strong to be assuaged, or the weight of affliction too heavy to be borne, let us have recourse to prayer; let us pray, and this without ceasing. Jesus prayed three times in the garden, to teach us, that prayer is the refuge and solace of every afflicted mind.

Let us pray continually, till we find all quiet within our breasts, our will submissive to that of heaven, and our soul restored to its former tranquillity.

Let us not suffer ourselves to be disturbed by any hurry of business; whenever our minds or bodies are at work, let it be done with all sedateness and composure, not tasking ourselves to a fixed time, or being too eager to see it finished.

One principal intention ought to preside over all our actions, that is, to be ever mindful of God's holy presence, with great humility and peace, only solicitous how to please him.

If we suffer any other consideration to interfere, our souls will soon abound with disquiet and anxiety; we shall often fall, and the difficulty of recovering ourselves, will convince us, that all our evils proceed from acting on all occasions in compliance with our own will and humour; and which likewise, when success attends us, fills us with vain satisfaction, and, when disappointed, leaves us overwhelmed with uneasiness, trouble and vexation.

CHAP. III.

This peaceable Habitation must be built by Degrees,

BANISH from your mind whatever may tend to elevate, depress, or discompose it; endeavour with great mildness to acquire or preserve its peace; for Jesus Christ hath said: blessed are the peaceable; learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart, Doubt not that God will crown

your labor, and make your soul a dwelling of delight; all he asks of you is, that as often as the emotions of your senses and passions molest you, you would speedily endeavour to disperse the clouds, to calm and appease the storms, and make peace once more smile on all your actions.

As a house cannot be built at once, so is not this acquisition of interior treasure to be made in an instant. But the perfection of this work, depends essentially on two things; the one is, that the hand of God himself prepare his habitation in you; the other, that humility be the foundation of the building.

CHAP. IV.

That to attain this Peace, the Soul must relinquish all Human Consolation.

THE path which leads to this peace, incapable of being disturbed, is almost unknown to the world. In it, tribulation is as earnestly sought as pleasure by worldlings; there contempt and derision are pursued, as honors and glory are by ambitious men; there as great pains are taken to neglect and be neglected, to forsake and be forsaken by all men, as the children of this world take to be sought for, caressed and esteemed by kings and princes. But there the holy ambition, with all humility, is to be known, regarded, comforted and favored by God alone.

The Christian soul learns there to converse only with God, and to be so strongly fortified by his presence, that she is willing to suffer every thing for his sake, and to promote his glory. There is learnt that suffering blots out sin, and that an affliction supported in a proper manner is a treasure laid up for eternity, and that to suffer with Jesus Christ ought to be the only ambition of a soul, which seeks the glory of resembling him. There is taught,

that to love ourselves, to follow one's own will, to obey our sensual appetites, and to destroy ourselves, is one and the same thing. That our own will is not even to be indulged in what is commendable, till we have submitted it to that of God in all simplicity and humility of heart; that what his divine Majesty appoints, and not our inclinations, may be the rule of our actions. We often perform good works from wrong motives or through our indiscreet zeal, which, like a false prophet, appears to be an innocent lamb, but in reality is a ravenous wolf. But the devout soul will discover the illusion by its fruits: when she finds herself in trouble and anxiety, her humility diminished, her composure disturbed; when she no longer enjoys her peace and tranquillity, and sees that all she had attained with much time and labor, is vanished in an instant.

We may sometimes fall in this road, but this serves only to increase our humility, which assists us to recover, and to watch more strictly over ourselves for the future. Perhaps God permits us to fall, in order to root out some secret pride our self-love hides from us. The soul may sometimes be molested with temptations to sin; but she must not disturb herself on this account, she must withdraw quietly from them, without solicitude, and reinstate herself in her former tranquillity without indulging either joy or sorrow in excess. In a word, all we have to do is this, to keep our souls in peace and purity in the sight of God; we shall find him in our own breasts, and know by experience that his will appoints every thing for our greater good.

CHAP. V.

That the Soul ought to keep herself disengaged, that God's holy Will may operate in her.

IF we are sensible how great a value we ought to set upon our souls, a temple designed for

the habitation of God ; let us take care that nothing of this world intrude itself there, placing our hope in the Lord, and waiting with a firm confidence his coming ; he will certainly enter, if he find it alone and disengaged ; alone, having no desire but of his presence ; alone, loving only him ; alone, void of all other will but that of heaven.

Let us do nothing to please ourselves, that we may merit the presence of him, who surpasses the comprehension of all created beings. Let us follow exactly the steps of our guide ; let us not, without his advice, embrace either sufferings, or good works to offer to God. It suffices to keep our minds ever ready and willing to suffer, for love of him, what he pleases, and how he pleases.

Whoever acts of his own accord, would do better to remain in peace, attentive to what the divine Majesty shall perform in him. We must not suffer our will to entertain any engagement, but to be always free. And since we ought not to act according to our desires, let us be persuaded not to desire any thing ; or if we do, let it be in such a manner, that in case of a disappointment, our minds be as undisturbed as if we had desired nothing. Our desires are our chains ; to be entangled with them, is to be slaves ; but to have none, or not be subject to them, is to be free.

God demands our souls, alone, void of all engagements, that he may manifest his wonders in them, and in a manner glorify them in this life. O holy solitude ! o happy desert ! o glorious hermitage, where the soul may so easily enjoy its God ! Let us not only run thither, but beg the wings of the dove that we may fly to it, and find a holy repose ; let us not stop by the way, let us not lose time in frivolous discourse with any one ; let us leave the dead to bury their dead, let us fly

to the land of the living, and have nothing to do with death.

CHAP. VI

Prudence must guide our Love of our Neighbour, that it may not disturb our Soul's Peace.

GOD dwells not in a soul, which he does not enflame with the love of himself, and charity for others; Christ said, he came to set the world on fire. The love of God must have no bounds, but charity for our neighbour must have its limits: we cannot love God too much, but we may exceed in the love of others; for if it be not duly regulated, it may prove our ruin; we may destroy ourselves in seeking to save others. Let us therefore love our neighbour in such a manner as not to hurt our own souls; this is best secured when we do nothing with the sole view of setting them a good example, as models of their imitation lest in endeavouring to save them, we throw ourselves away: let us perform our actions with great simplicity and sanctity, and with the sole view of pleasing God, humbling ourselves and acknowledging, that as our good works contribute so little to our own advantage, they can be of little service to others. It is not required of us to be so zealous for the salvation of others, as to destroy the peace of our own souls.

We may have that ardent thirst for their illumination, when God shall please to give it us; but we must wait for it from his hand, and not vainly imagine it is to be acquired by our solicitude and indiscreet zeal; let us secure to our souls the peace and repose of a holy solitude; such is the will of God in order to bind and attach us to himself. Let us remain recollected within ourselves, till the master of the vineyard hires us. God will clothe us with himself, when he finds us stripped and

divested of all earthy solicitude. He will be mindful of us, when we have entirely forgotten ourselves; peace will reign in our breasts, and his divine love will put us in action without disquiet, will give moderation and temperance to our motions, and thus we shall perform every thing in the holy repose of that peace of love, in which even silence is eloquent. To hold ourselves free and susceptible of God's operations, is to do every thing. For it is his divine goodness which must work in us and with us, without requiring any more of us, than with great humility to present him a soul, void of every desire but this one, that his holy will be accomplished in her, in the most perfect manner possible.

CHAP. VII.

Our Souls must be divested entirely of their own will.

COME to me all ye that labor and are oppressed, if ye would rest from your toil; and all ye that thirst, if ye would be refreshed. Such are the words of Christ in two places in the scripture. Let us follow this divine summons, but without violence or precipitation, in peace and mildness, referring ourselves with great respect and confidence to the endearing almighty power, which calls upon us. Let us wait in the spirit of peace, the coming of that spirit which gives peace; let us think of nothing but the means, by which he may be desired, loved and glorified, entirely resigned and obedient to what he shall appoint.

We must not use violence with our heart, lest, if it should prove stubborn, it be rendered incapable of that holy repose, we are commanded to acquire. But let us accustom it by degrees to contemplate nothing else except the goodness, love, and benefits, which God exercises towards his

creatures, and to nourish itself with that delightful manna, which a frequency of such meditations will shower down upon our souls with unspeakable sweetness.

Let us not strive to shed tears, nor to excite sentiments of devotion which we have not; our hearts must repose in God, as in their centre, and we need never despair of the will of God being accomplished in us. He will bestow on us the gift of tears when it is proper, but then they will be mild, humble, affectionate, and peaceable; by these marks you will discover the source from whence they spring, and receive them as dew from heaven, with all humility, reverence and gratitude.

Let us not presume to know, to have, nor to desire any thing. The beginning and end, the corner-stone and key of the spiritual building, are not to depend in the least on ourselves, on what we know, what we desire, or what we possess; we must remain in a state of perfect self-denial, like Magdalene at the feet of Jesus, without busy-ing ourselves like Martha.

When you seek God by the light of your understanding, to repose in him, it must be done without comparing him to any thing, without bounds or limits; for he is beyond all comparison, he is every where without division, and contains all things in himself. Conceive an immensity without limits, a whole which cannot be comprehended, a power which has made and still supports all things, and then say to your soul, behold thy God. Contemplate and admire him without ceasing. He is every where, he is in your soul, in her he places his delight, as he has declared; and although he stands not in need of her, he is pleased to make her worthy of himself.

But in searching after these divine truths by

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your understanding, let them be the resting-place of the mild and peaceable affections of your will. You are neither to neglect nor limit your devotion, tying yourself down to so many prayers, so much reading or meditation; but let your heart be at liberty to stop where it finds a resting-place, and always ready to enjoy its Lord, whenever he pleases to communicate himself to you, without being in any concern for not having finished what you had begun; abandon the rest without scruple, taking no thought on this subject; because the end of your devotion being to enjoy God, as that is accomplished, the means are of no farther signification for the present.

God leads us by that way which he has chosen, and if we oblige ourselves to such or such particular exercises which we fancy, and thus lay imaginary obligations on ourselves, we expect to find God when we are in reality running from him; we pretend to please him, without conforming to his will, and put ourselves out of condition of being disposed of according to his pleasure.

If you desire to advance in this path with success, and attain the end to which it leads, seek and desire God alone, wherever you find him, there stop, go no farther; whilst he is pleased to remain with you, enjoy in his company the repose of saints; and when his divine Majesty pleases to retire, then you may by pursuing your devotions, endeavour to find him again, earnestly desiring to succeed; which when done, you are to abandon every thing, that you may the more perfectly enjoy him.

This advice is of the greatest importance, and well deserves our attention in practising it; for we see many churchmen, who waste themselves with the fatigues of their employments, without reaping any advantage or repose for themselves; be-

cause they imagine thy have done nothing, if they leave their task unfinished, wherein they place perfection, they act like journeymen, bound to obey the dictates of their own will, but never attain true interior peace, the dwelling of the Lord and sanctuary of Jesus Christ.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Faith we ought to bear the blessed Sacrament ; how we are to offer ourselves to God.

OUR faith and love in regard of the holy eucharist must continually increase, growing stronger every day, and become more naturalized to us.

Let us approach it with a will prepared to undergo all afflictions, tribulations, weakness, and spiritual dryness for his holy sake. We must not ask him to change himself into us, but that we may be changed into him.

Let us not entertain him with pompous speeches ; admiration and joy ought to engage our souls, and swallow up all their functions when he is present ; our understanding must be employed in admiring this incomprehensible mystery, and our heart melt away with joy at the sight of such immense majesty under such simple veils. Let us not desire him to manifest himself to us, remembering that he hath declared, blessed are those who have not seen, yet have believed.

Above all let us be constant and punctual in our devotions, and continually practise those means which will most contribute to purify and adorn our souls with a peaceable and mild simplicity. While these methods are pursued, the grace of perseverance will never be wanting to us. A soul which has once tasted this spiritual repose, can never return to the hurry of a worldly life ; it is impossible she should ever bear the torment of it,

CHAP. IX.

The Soul must not seek Repose but in God.

A Soul which relishes nothing this world affords, but its persecutions and disgraces; which neither loves nor desires any thing it can bestow, nor dreads all it can inflict; which flies the former as a deadly poison, and covets the latter as the greatest delight; such a soul, I say, may expect all consolation from God, provided her whole confidence is in him, without presuming the least on her own strength. The courage of St. Peter was very great, when he declared his resolution of dying with Christ; such a fixed will was in all appearance very commendable, but in reality was very defective, in being his own will, which was the occasion of his shameful fall; so true it is, that we can neither propose nor execute any good, unless supported by the almighty power of God.

Let us preserve our souls entirely free from all desires, that nothing may impede her operations, ever present in all she does or thinks, not suffering any concern of what she has to do or resolve on, except in the present instant, to give her the least disturbance.

Nevertheless, every one is to apply himself to his temporal affairs, with a prudent and commendable solicitude, suitable to what his state of life requires; such business rightly managed, is according to the divine appointments, and does not interfere with our internal peace and spiritual advancement

We can do nothing better towards rightly employing the time present, than to offer our soul, entirely divested of all desires, to almighty God, and standing before him, like a weak languishing wretch, incapable of doing any thing for himself.

In this freedom of mind, disengaged within, and

depending altogether on God, consists the very essence of perfection. It is impossible to conceive how tender the divine goodness is of those who are thus entirely devoted to it. It is pleased with their shewing a confidence without reserve; it delights in enlightening them, in resolving their difficulties, in raising them when fallen, and forgiving their offences as often as they are truly penitent: for God is still the Priest for ever, and though he has given to St. Peter and his successors the power of loosing and binding, he has not divested himself of the same; so that if these cannot have recourse to their confessors as often as they desire, the divine majesty receives them to his mercy, pardoning their sins whenever they approach him with due confidence, a perfect sorrow, and an entire love. Such are the fruits of this holy disengagement.

CHAP. X.

We must not be dejected at the Obstacles and Repugnance we find in attaining interior Peace.

GOD is often pleased to permit this interior serenity, this solitude of the soul, this peace and holy repose of heart, to be disturbed and overcast with the clouds and emotions arising from our self-love and natural inclinations. But as his goodness permits it for our greater good, he will not fail to bestow the refreshing showers of his divine consolation on this dryness, which will not only lay the dust, but enrich it with fruits and flowers worthy the regard of his divine majesty.

These interruptions of our tranquillity, occasioned by the emotions of our sensitive appetites, are those very combats, in which the saints have gained victories worthy of immortal crowns. Whenever you fall into such weaknesses, disgusts, troubles and desolations of mind, say to God with a humble

and affectionate heart : Lord, I am the work of thy own hands, and the slave redeemed by thy precious blood; dispose of me as entirely thine, made for thee alone, and permit me only to hope in thee. Thrice happy soul, who thus offers itself to God in time of affliction !

And though perhaps you cannot immediately bend your will to an entire submission to God, you must not be dejected ; it is your cross, which he commands you to take up and follow him. Did not he carry one, to shew how you ought to behave ? Contemplate the combat he underwent in the garden ; when he struggled with his human nature, whose weakness made him cry out : Father, if it be possible let me not drink of this cup ; and his soul, rising above the weakness of the body, immediately subjoined, with a most profound humility : *Let not my will, but thine be done.*

Perhaps the weakness of nature may make you avoid all trouble or affliction, and when it happens, you may shew your dislike, and wish it at a distance. But notwithstanding be sure you persevere in prayer and acts of humility, till you find no other desire nor inclination, but that the will of God be accomplished in you. Endeavour that God alone may dwell in your heart, that there be no room for bitterness, gall, or voluntary repugnance to what God shall appoint ; never look upon or consider the failings of others, but pursue your way, regarding nothing but how to avoid what may hurt your conscience ; the great secret of belonging entirely to God, is to neglect and pass by every thing else.

CHAP. XI.

The Artifices employed by the Devil to disturb our Peace ; how we may defeat them.

THE enemy of mankind endeavours chiefly to withdraw us from a state of humility and

Christian simplicity. To effect this he inclines us to presume a little on ourselves above others, which is soon followed by a contempt of them for some supposed failing. He steals into our souls by some of these means; but his greatest inclination is to enter them by the door of vanity and self-love.

The art of defeating him, is to keep closely entrenched in holy humility, never forsaking it in the least; to confound and annihilate ourselves; if we abandon that state, we shall never defend ourselves against this proud spirit, who, if he once get possession of our will, is sure to play the tyrant and introduce every vice into our souls.

Neither will it suffice to watch, we must also pray; for it is said, *Watch and pray*. Peace of mind is a treasure, which cannot be secured, unless thus guarded. Let us not suffer our minds to be afflicted or disturbed on any account whatever. The humble and peaceable soul does every thing with great facility; before her all obstacles vanish; her conduct is holy, and she perseveres in it; but the soul which suffers herself to be disquieted, performs few good actions and those very imperfect ones, is soon weary, continually suffers, but her sufferings are of no advantage.

You will discern whether thoughts ought to be encouraged or banished, by the confidence or diffidence they inspire, to be placed in the divine mercy. If they dictate that this affectionate confidence ought to increase continually, you are to look upon them as messengers from heaven, entertain and take a delight in them; but you must reject and banish, as the suggestions of hell itself, all such as tend to make you in the least diffident of his infinite goodness.

The tempter of pious souls often magnifies their failings; he endeavours to persuade them they do not comply with their duties; that their con-

essions are imperfect, their communions tepid, their prayers deficient; and thus with various scruples he keeps them in perpetual alarms, seeking to draw them from their exercises, as if God did not regard, or had entirely forgotten them; than all which nothing can be more false. For the advantages arising from distractions, spiritual dryness, and the like, are very numerous, provided the soul comprehends and complies with what God expects of her in those circumstances, that she exercises her patience, and perseveres in her good works; for the prayers and exercises of a soul, deprived of all satisfaction in what she does, is the delight of the almighty, according to St. Gregory; especially, if notwithstanding she be cold, insensible, and as it were absent from what she does, yet she persists in it with courage, her patience prays sufficiently for her, and will prevail more with God, than any prayers said with the greatest sensible devotion. The same Saint adds, that the interior darkness with which her devotion is surrounded, shines bright in the presence of God, that nothing we do can sooner draw him to us, and even compels him to bestow new graces upon us.

Never quit therefore any work of piety, how little relish soever you may possibly find in it, unless you would comply with what the Devil desires; and learn from the following chapter, the great advantages which may be reaped through a humble perseverance in works of piety, when attended with the most irksome spiritual barrenness

CHAP. XII.

We must not be afflicted at internal Temptations.

THE fruits which spring from spiritual barrenness, and even from faults committed in our devotions, are certainly very great; but it is

only through humility and patience, that we reap the benefit of them. Were we thoroughly masters of this secret, we should prevent many uneasy days and unhappy hours.

Alas! how mistaken are we in thinking ourselves forsaken and abhorred by God almighty, from the precious tokens of his divine love, and to fancy his anger punishes us when we are highly favored by his goodness. Do not we see that the uneasiness which arises from such interior barrenness, can only spring from a desire of being altogether acceptable to God, zealous and fervent in what regards his service, since what afflicts us is nothing but a want of such sentiments, from whence we imagine we displease God as much as we are displeasing to ourselves? No, no, we may be assured that it is a good effect from a good cause; such trials never happening but to those who desire to live like the faithful servants of God; avoiding not only what may offend, but even what may be disagreeable to him.

On the contrary, we seldom hear great sinners, or even those who live according to the maxims of this world, complain of such kind of temptations. It is a remedy, not very palatable indeed, and such as we are apt to set ourselves against, but of wonderful efficacy, though we do not perceive it. Let the temptation be dreadful, even to that degree as to terrify us with the bare thought of it, the greater our affliction and humiliation, the greater advantage we shall reap. This the soul does not comprehend, and therefore declines a path which presents nothing but crosses and afflictions. Which is as much as to say, she is unwilling to be deprived of delight and consolation, and that whatever is not attended with such sweetness, she esteems no better than lost labor.

CHAP. XIII.

God sends these Temptations for our good.

WE are naturally proud, ambitious, and indulgent to our senses; hence it is we are apt to flatter ourselves on all occasions, and set a much greater value on what belongs to us than we deserve. But such presumption is so great an obstacle to our spiritual progress, that the least tincture of it, though never so small, will hinder us from attaining true perfection. It is an evil undiscernible by us; but God, who knows its nature, and loves us, is ever careful to undeceive us, to awake us from the lethargy of self love, and bring us to a true knowledge of ourselves. Did he not deal thus with St. Peter, when he permitted that apostle to deny him, and forswear any knowledge of his Lord, that he might return to the knowledge of himself, and lay aside his dangerous presumption? Did he not likewise deal in the same manner with St. Paul, when in order to secure him from this bane of our souls, and from making a wrong use of the sublime revelations with which he had been favored, he was exposed to a shameful temptation, which continually reminded him of his own weakness?

Let us admire the goodness and wisdom of God, who thus opposes us for our good, and highly favors us when we least perceive it, even when we imagine he hurts us. We are apt to think this tepidity arises from our imperfections and insensibility in regard of God; we are easily persuaded that no one is so distracted and forsaken as ourselves; that God has no such wretched servants as we are; that none but miscreants have their minds filled with thoughts like ours. Thus, by the effects of this heavenly medicine, is this presumptuous person, who had so good an opinion of

himself, brought to think no one so bad, or so unworthy the name of christian. Would he ever have descended from those lofty sentiments to which his pride had raised him? Would he have been ever cured of his haughtiness? Would such fumes of vanity ever have been banished his head and heart, without this remedy?

Neither is humility the only advantage we receive from such kind of temptations, afflictions, and interior desolations, which leave the soul thus disconsolate, and deprive it of all the sensible delights of devotion; for besides, they compel us to have recourse to God, to fly every thing displeasing to him, and to apply ourselves with greater diligence to the practice of virtue. Such afflictions are a kind of purgatory, which cleanse us and bring crowns of glory, when received with humility and patience.

The soul being convinced of what has been said above, may judge whether she ought to lose her peace, and grieve at being deprived of a relish for devotion, and surrounded with interior temptations; whether it be reasonable to attribute to the malice of the devil, what comes from the hand of God, and to mistake the tokens of his tenderness for marks of his indignation.

All she has to do on such an occasion, is to humble herself in the sight of God, to persevere and bear with patience the disgust she finds in her exercises of devotion, conform herself to the divine will, and endeavour to preserve her tranquillity, by humbly acquiescing to what he is pleased to appoint, since it is the will of our Father which is in heaven. Instead of shrinking with sorrow and dejection, she ought to break forth into fresh acts of thanksgiving, establishing herself in peace and submission to the appointments of heaven.

CHAP. XIV.

How we must act respecting our Faults.

IF it should happen that you commit a fault in word or deed, give way to anger, interrupt your devotions out of some vain curiosity, indulge immoderate joy, entertain suspicious thoughts of your neighbour, or are guilty of any other failing, even often, though it be the same fault and such as you have resolved against; you must not be disquieted, nor let what has passed make too deep an impression, so as to afflict and deject you, fancying you shall never amend, that you do not perform your exercises in a due manner, or that if you did, such faults would not be so often repeated; for all this is an affliction of spirit, and a loss of time which you ought to avoid.

Neither ought you to dwell too long in sifting the several circumstances of your fault, whether it was indulged for any time, whether you fully consented to it or not; because all this only serves to fill your mind with vexations, both before and after confession, as if you could never say enough, nor in the manner it should be expressed.

You would not be so much molested with these vexations, were you well apprized of your own weakness, and how you ought to behave in regard to God Almighty after committing such faults. Not with anxiety and dejection of mind, which only disturbs and sinks the spirits; but by turning to him with great humility and affection; and this is to be understood not only of smaller failings, but likewise of greater faults; not only of such as are occasioned by sloth and indevotion, but even through malice itself.

This is not sufficiently understood by many; for instead of practising this great lesson of filial confidence in the goodness and mercy of God, their spirits are so wasted that they are almost incapable

of thinking of any good, and lead a wretched languishing life, by preferring their own weak imaginations to sound and wholesome doctrine.

CHAP. XV.

The Soul should recover her Tranquillity, and not lose Time with every Vexation.

LET therefore this be your rule as often as you are guilty of any fault, great or small, though repeated many times the same day, as soon as you perceive what you have done, to consider your own weakness, and have recourse to God with a humble heart, saying to him with a calm and amiable confidence: Thou hast seen, o my God, that I did what I could; thou seest what I am, sin can produce nothing but sin: as thou hast given me grace to repent, I beseech thy goodness to add to my pardon the grace never to offend thee more. This prayer being finished, spend no time in anxious thoughts whether God has pardoned you or not, but with great humility and calmness proceed in your devotions, without reflecting any farther on what has happened, exciting the same confidence and tranquillity of mind as before. And this method is to be observed, as often as the fault is repeated, though it were a thousand times, after the last time as well as after the first. For besides that thus we return immediately to God, who like a tender Father is always ready to receive us as often as we come to him, we likewise avoid losing time in vexation and solicitude, which only discompose the mind, and prevent its resuming its usual calmness and fidelity.

I heartily wish that those, who disquiet themselves and grow disconsolate on their committing faults, would study well this spiritual secret: they would soon comprehend how different their state is

from an humble chearful mind, where peace and tranquillity reign, and how prejudicial to their souls the loss of so much time in anxiety must necessarily be.



THOUGHTS ON DEATH.

Every Moment we stand on the Brink of Eternity.

Twelve Advantages in contemplating Death.

I. **I**T enables us to judge properly, and prevents our being imposed on in all affairs. Naked we were born, and naked we leave this world, why then should we scrape up riches? No one to accompany us, to what purpose then are we so fond of creatures? The stench and corruption of our carcasses, which will only serve to prepare worms and vermin in the grave, cures us of the folly of carnal pleasures. This wretched situation under ground among companions not worthy to behold the light, trampled on by the meanest beggar, will free us from the vanity of seeking preference above others.

II. It is the best instructor through life, laying down but one plain rule, to direct all our actions to our last end.

This consideration drives away all the busy troublesome insects this life is pestered withal; it keeps us steady in our course, and supports us on our journey.

III. It teaches us to despise all this world can possibly afford, peoples deserts and cloisters, and is the retirement of all true servants of God.

IV. It teaches us to know ourselves, one of the chief points of true wisdom.

V. It is like ice, and helps to chill and deaden the fire of concupiscence; it is a bridle which curbs our sensual appetites.

VI. It is a continual source of humiliation, a specific remedy against pride and vanity.

VII. It is an excellent preservative against sin. In all thy works be mindful of thy last end, and thou shalt never sin.

VIII. It brings exasperated minds back to peace and reconciliation. Whoever considers seriously that a certain and unavoidable death will one day place him before that Judge, who shews no mercy but to those who pardon others, he will easily be induced to forgive.

IX. It is an antidote against the pleasures and vanities of the world. Thus the prince, who placed the comedian in a crazy chair over a large fire, told him very justly, seeing his apprehension and uneasiness lest the seat should fail, that he ought to consider life to be like a decayed chair, which every hour, nay every moment might fall to pieces; and the fire under him to represent hell, into which every one ought to dread falling.

X. It teaches us a provident œconomy with regard to our salvation, by setting before our eyes that we are to dwell eternally elsewhere than in this transitory life; and consequently ought to lay up a treasure of good works while in our power.

XI. It induces us to embrace with great cheerfulness a penitential spirit.

XII. It encourages us to persevere in it steadily.



ON PENITENCE.

IT is the only way left us to return to God, when separated from him by sin.—There is a penitence of heart, and an active penitence; the one affective, the other effective; they must be united as our condition requires.—An active or effective penitence is to be practised when sickness and any involuntary

affliction befalls us, or when through a penitential spirit we punish ourselves.

We practise it when in afflictions ; as often as we receive them with this intention, that being criminals in the sight of God, we look upon them as punishments sent for our amendment by a merciful judge, who inflicts a penalty in this life in order to spare us in the next. In a word, as often as we confess our sins with true repentance, and receive the punishment with due submission. In order that these two interior acts may make the deeper impression on our hearts, it will be proper to accompany them with the following reflections.—That if the crimes for which we are punished were to be weighed against what we suffer, how light would the latter be, compared with the former ?—That what we endure is by the especial appointment of God.—That his design in sending it is our advantage, in satisfying by it for our offences.—That it is in order to remind us of our wickedness ; since we seldom think on it before we feel the hand of God.—That if by the sacrament of penance we are already restored to a state of grace, this affliction is sent us as a means of satisfying the divine justice for the temporal punishment due to our sins.

That the punishment due to mortal sin unrepented of, is eternal damnation, fire never to be extinguished, and an irrevocable banishment from God. That millions have perished, who perhaps were guilty but of one mortal sin after baptism, and many of them surprised by death the moment it was committed.

In order to apply these truths to our own case, when any affliction befalls us, we ought to retire into the closet of our hearts, and reason thus with ourselves : Is it not an article of faith, that when I committed the first mortal sin after baptism, my portion from that moment ought to have been with

those like myself, the reprobates in hell? Alas! my God, how many years should I have already passed in that place of horror? If I reckon from the first mortal sin, what must I not have suffered in that fiery furnace to this time, and what might I not expect to suffer for all eternity? It is through thy mercy alone, o my God, that I was not there from the first moment I deserved it, that I am not there at this instant, that I may still hope never to come there, and that thou hast not dealt with me, as thou hast with those miserable wretches who now burn there for all eternity.

Instead of those horrible and ever-enduring torments, from which thou hast graciously exempted me, thou art pleased to send this affliction; and yet I murmur, am impatient, and untractable.—What I suffer, cannot last long; what I have deserved, is eternal.—An active penitence is exercised by depriving ourselves of any satisfactions of body or mind, with an intention of making some atonement to the divine justice; by bearing patiently any contempt or injury, and offering it to the Almighty in expiation of our crimes.

Affective Penitence of the Heart

Is acquired by grace and our co-operation: *The grace of God with me.*—The means appointed by providence for obtaining grace, is to ask it; *Ask, and ye shall receive.* Let us pray and labor to obtain it.

We are to ask it

By repeated acts frequently every day. By words, suitable to the affections God gives us, saying: my God, why did I ever offend thee; and why, since I have, do I not conceive a sorrow for it, equal to that of the greatest pe-

nitents? Alas! to forfeit my baptismal grace, purchased with thy sacred blood! What ingratitude on my side! What gracious mercy on thine to pardon such a wretch! I now discern, o my God, the excess of thy love, by thy incredible patience in my regard; thou didst spare to crush me into nothing, when I audaciously rebelled against thee. The words of devout penitents in the holy scriptures will best suit the occasion. *O God, be merciful to me a sinner. Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee; I am not worthy to be called thy child. Against thee alone have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight. A contrite and humble heart thou wilt not despise;—* and the like.

We are to labor to obtain it.

Let us consider attentively those motives, which are most likely to affect our hearts.

The infinite goodness of God, the evident marks of which, we ourselves are. The greatness of his divine Majesty, which has no want of us. The severity of his just vengeance, which can at once destroy us for ever. Let such books be consulted as treat of these subjects. Let us sigh in the presence of God for having offended him, if these reflections move our hearts; but if they remain inflexible, let us bewail their insensibility. Let us beg of the divine goodness with the Samaritan woman, the water of life: *Lord, give me this water!* One penitential tear can disarm the anger of heaven.

When you ask your celestial Father to give you your daily bread, remember to pray for the bread of tears; that ought to be the daily bread of sinners. This grace is to be implored by actions, as well as aspirations.

When you are moved to good actions, as alms, fasting, some penitential work, or to deprive yourself of any diversion, offer it to God, beseeching him to bestow on you what of yourself you are unable to attain, a spirit of penance and sincere contrition for your offences.

Read over once a week on a set day these reflections, viz. ; on Saturday or Sunday. Make it a rule, if you desire to succeed, every day to set apart half an hour to be spent in reading pious books, under these two regulations ; the first is, to chuse such books as will most efficaciously stir up a penitential spirit in your heart : the other, to weigh attentively such passages as seem to affect you most, and lead you to an interior and true spirit of penance,

Assist every day at Mass, the principal object of devotion for a penitent heart, since JESUS CHRIST is there offered for our sins, and to merit grace for our necessities ; join with the priest in offering it to God for this end,



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or,

REFLECTIONS

on the

GREAT TRUTHS OF THE CHRISTIAN
RELIGION,

for

Every Day in the Month.

BY BP. CHALLONER.



Manchester :

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FOR T. HAYDOCK.



1801.

*Directions for the Use of the following
Considerations.*

MAKE choice of a proper time and place for recollection; and shut the door of thy heart as much as possible against the world, and its distracting cares and affection.

2. Place thyself in the presence of thy God, representing him to thyself by a lively faith, as filling heaven and earth with his incomprehensible majesty, or as residing with all his attributes in the very centre of thy own soul. Prostrate thyself in spirit before him, to adore this sovereign Lord; make an offering of thy whole self to him; and humbly beg pardon for all thy past treasons against him.

3. Implore with fervor and humility his light and grace, that the great truths of the gospel may make a due impression on thy soul; that thou mayest effectually learn to fear him and to love him.

4. Read leisurely and with serious attention, the chapter for the day: give thy soul time to digest what thou art reading; and pause more particularly on those points which affect thee most.

5. That thy reading may partake the more of the nature of mental prayer, strive to draw from

thy considerations such affections as are suitable to the subject, by stirring up for example in thy soul, the fear and love of God; a confidence in his goodness; a sense of gratitude for his benefits; a horror of sin; a sincere repentance for thy own past sins, and such like: open thy heart as much as thou canst to these affections, that so these great and necessary virtues may take the deeper root there.

6. Conclude thy considerations with holy resolutions of amendment of life, insisting in particular on the failings to which thou art most subject; and firmly determine with thyself to begin to put these resolutions in execution, upon such occasions as may occur that very day.

7. Often reflect in the day time on the chief points of thy consideration; lest the enemy rob thy soul of this divine seed, by making thee quickly forget what thou hast been reading and considering.





THINK WELL ON'T.



THE FIRST DAY.

On the Necessity of Consideration.

CONSIDER those words of the prophet Jeremias, *with desolation is the whole earth laid desolate, because there is no one who thinks in his heart*, Jerem. xii. 11. And reflect how true it is, that the want of consideration on the great truths of christianity, is the chief source of all our evils. Alas! the greatest part of men seldom or never think, either of their first beginning or last end: they neither consider who brought them into the world, nor for what, nor reflect on that eternity into which they are just about to step. Hence all their pursuits are earthly and temporal, as if they were only made for this life, or were always to be here. Death, judgment, heaven and hell make but little impression upon them, because they do not give them leisure to sink deep into their souls by the means of serious consideration. They run on with their eyes shut to the precipice of a miserable eternity, and only then begin to think, when they find themselves lodged in that place of woe, where their worm shall never die, and

their fire shall never be quenched. Ah! my poor soul, take care that this be not thy case!

2. Consider, that we cannot be saved without knowing God, and loving him above all things. Now we can neither know him or love him as we ought, without the help of consideration. It is this which discovers to us the infinite perfections of this sovereign being: his charming beauty; his eternal love for us, and all the benefits which he has bestowed upon us his most undeserving and ungrateful creatures. All which, alas! make no impression on us without serious consideration. All things that are about us, the heavens, the earth, and every creature therein, cease not to preach God unto us, and invite us to love him: but without consideration we are deaf to the voice of this whole creation; we are like those that have eyes, and see not; that have ears, and hear not. Ah! the great and dreadful mischiefs that follow from the want of that true knowledge of God, which is the fruit of daily consideration! Is it not upon this account that the whole world is over-run with wickedness; and that hell opens wide its jaws, devouring without end or number the unhappy children of Adam, because God is forgotten, *because there is no knowledge of God upon earth?* Osee iv. 1.

3. Consider, that to save our souls we must also know ourselves; we must know our misery and corruption, that we may be humble, and diffide in ourselves: we must know our irregular inclinations and passions, that we may fight against them and overcome them; we must study and watch the motions of our own hearts, that we may not be surprised by sin, and sleep in death. And how can this all necessary knowledge of ourselves, this science of the saints be acquired without the help of daily consideration? Ah!

how unhappy are they who know all things else, and are strangers to themselves! Let us then daily pray with St. Augustin, *noverim te, noverim me; Lord give me grace to know thee, Lord give me grace to know myself*: and let us labor to acquire these two most necessary sciences by frequent consideration.

4. Consider, that in order to nourish in our souls the wholesome fear of God, which is the beginning of true wisdom, and spur ourselves on in the way of virtue, we must also seriously reflect on the enormity of sin, and the hatred God bears unto it; on the dreadful effect of sin in the soul, and on the multitude of our own sins in particular; on the vanity, misery, and deceitfulness of the world; on the comfort and happiness that attend a virtuous life; on the shortness of time, and the dreadful length of a miserable eternity; on the certainty and uncertainty of death, and the sentiments we shall have when we come to die; on the small number of the elect, &c. Ah! christians, let us not neglect this great means of salvation! It was the consideration of these truths that made so many saints; that has so often reclaimed even the most abandoned sinners. O! what a profound lethargy must that soul be in which is not roused at the thunder of those dreadful truths, death, judgment, hell, eternity!

5. Consider the bitter but fruitless repentance of the damned, condemning their past folly, in having thought so little on those things on which they shall now think for all eternity. Senseless wretches as we were; we had once our time, when, by thinking upon this miserable eternity, we might have escaped it. Those endless joys of heaven were offered us at a cheap rate, when a little reflection on them might have put us

in the way of securing to ourselves the everlasting possession of them. But alas! we would not think then; and now it is too late. O my soul, learn thou to be wise by their misfortune; reflect in this thy day, on the things that appertain to thy eternal peace; think well on thy last end; meditate on the great truths of the gospel. Thou must either think of them now, or hereafter, when the thought of them will only serve to aggravate thy misery for all eternity.

THE SECOND DAY.

On the End of our Creation.

CONSIDER christian soul, that so many years ago thou wast not yet come into the world, and that thy being was a mere nothing. The world had lasted near upon six thousand years, with innumerable transactions and revolutions in every nation, and where wast thou all that while? Alas! thou wast ingulphed in the deep abyss of nothing, infinitely beneath the condition of the meanest creature upon the earth; and what couldst thou do remaining there? Learn then to humble thyself, whatever advantages thou mayest enjoy of nature or grace, since of thyself thou art nothing; and, all that thou hast above nothing has been given or lent thee by thy maker. Ah! poor wretch, what hast thou to be proud of? Or what canst thou call thy own, but nothing and sin, which is worse than nothing?

2. Consider, that the almighty hand of God, descending into that deep abyss of nothing, has drawn thee forth from thence, and given thee this being which thou now enjoyest, the most accomplished and perfect of any in this visible world, capable of knowing and loving God in this life, and designed for everlasting happiness

with him in the next. Admire and adore the bounty of thy God, who from all eternity has designed this being for thee, preferable to so many millions of others which he has left behind, that had as fair a title to a being as thou hadst. Look forward into that immense eternity for which thou hast been created, and thankfully acknowledge, that the love thy God bears thee has neither beginning nor end, but reaches from eternity to eternity.

3. Consider, that being created by almighty God, and having received thy whole being from him, by the justest of all titles thou belongest to him; and art obliged to consecrate to his service all thy powers, faculties and senses; and art guilty of a most crying injustice, as often as thou abusest any part of thy being, by employing it in the pursuit of vanity and sin. Ah! my poor soul, how little have we hitherto thought of this? How small a part of our thoughts, words, and deeds, has been referred to him who is our first beginning, and therefore ought to be the last end of all our actions? Be confounded at so great an abuse; repent and amend.

4. Consider, that God who gave thee thy being, and who created all things else in this visible world for thy service, has created thee for himself alone. Not that he stood in need of thee, or can receive from thee any increase or addition to his happiness; but that he might give thee his grace in this life, and the endless joys of his kingdom in the next. Stand astonished christian soul, at the bounty of thy creator, in making thee for so noble an end; and since thou wast made for God, be ashamed to content thyself with any thing less than God: learn then to contemn all that is earthly and tempo-

ral, as things beneath thee, and unworthy of thy affection. Lament thy past folly, and that of the far greatest part of mankind, who spend their days in vain amusements, in restless cares, about painted toys and mere trifles; and seldom or never think of that great end, for which alone they came into this world.

5. Consider that all the powers and faculties of thy soul, thy will, thy memory, thy understanding, and all the senses and parts of thy body, were all given by thy creator, as so many means to attain to this end of thy creation, to be employed during thy short abode in this transitory life, in the service of thy God, and so to bring thee to the eternal enjoyment of him in the sweet repose of his blessed kingdom. Alas! my soul, have we not perverted all these gifts of our maker, in turning them all against the giver? Have mercy on us, o Lord, have mercy on us; pardon our past treasons, and give us grace now to begin to be wise for eternity.

THE THIRD DAY.

On the Benefits of God.

CONSIDER, my soul, how many and how great are thy obligations to the bounty of thy God. He has thought of thee from all eternity: he has loved thee from all eternity: all the blessings and favors, which he has bestowed upon thee in time, he designed for thee from all eternity; they are all the consequences of his eternal love for thee. Is it possible that so great a God, the most high and the most holy, who dwells in eternity, should set his affections upon such a poor sinful worm of the earth? Is it possible, my soul, that thou shouldst have had a place from all eternity in the heart of thy God; and that his eternal

mind should never have been one moment without thinking on thee! Ah! poor wretch, what return hast thou made for this ancient love? How late hast thou loved him, who has loved thee from all eternity? How little hast thou thought of him, who always thinks on thee?

2. Consider that thy God has not only given thee by creation thy soul and body, with all their powers and faculties, and in a word, whatever thou hast, and whatever thou art; but also preserves them each moment by the benefit of conservation, which may be called a continual creation. For as nothing but his almighty hand could give thee this being, so none but he could preserve thee from falling back into thy former nothing: which must infallibly have happened to thee, if thy God had but for one moment withdrawn his supporting hand. Poor sinner! why didst thou not think of this when by thy repeated crimes thou wast waging war with thy God; and he with incomparable love was night and day watching over thee? How didst thou dare presume so often and for so long a time to provoke him, who held the thread of thy life in his hand, and who every moment could have crushed thee into nothing, or cast thee headlong into hell! O blessed by all creatures be his mercy for ever, for having borne with thee so long.

3. Consider the inestimable benefit of our redemption, by which our loving God has rescued us from sin, and from hell the just reward of sin. Alas! my poor soul, we must have been lost for ever, had not this sovereign Maker and Lord of heaven and earth loved us to that degree, as to deliver himself up to the most cruel and ignominious death of the cross for our redemption. *Greater love than this no man hath, that one lay down his life for his friend. St.*

John xv. 13. But, o dear Lord, thou hast carried thy love much farther than this, in dying for those who by sin were thy declared enemies: in dying for such ungrateful wretches, as would scarce ever thank thee for thy love, and seldom or never so much as pity thy sufferings, or take any notice of them. Ah! christians, what shall we most admire, to see this great monarch of heaven and earth (in comparison with whom the whole creation is just nothing, or rather less than nothing) expiring on a cross for such despicable worms as we are? Or to see those, who believe this amazing truth, take so little notice of this immense love, which will be a just subject of astonishment to men and angels for all eternity.

4. Consider how much we owe to God for having called us to the true faith, preferable to so many millions whom he has left behind in darkness and the shades of death. Alas! poor souls, how deplorable is their condition, void as they are of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, or of his only spouse the true catholic church! How little do they think of God, or of the life to come! With how little apprehension or remorse do they run on from sin to sin, and die impenitent: Ah! the goodness of God, that has not suffered us to fall into such misery, though born and bred up amidst a people seduced by error! Or, if we have also had the misfortune, like our neighbours, to have gone astray from the womb, has by a more distinguishing mercy drawn us out of the dragon's jaws, and brought us to his fold, the catholic church! Blessed be our God for ever for all his mercies. O! what an inestimable happiness it is, to have, by the means of this grace of vocation, God himself for our father, and his holy church for our mother!

To pass this transitory life in the happy society of the only spouse of God's only son! To be daily partakers of the sacraments, those heavenly conduits of divine grace! To live and die in the communion of the saints, &c. Ah! *blessed is the people who have the Lord for their God: Ps. cxliiii. 15.*

5. Consider, christian soul, whoever thou art, the particular providence of God towards thee! With how many graces he has prevented thee from thy tender years: from how many misfortunes he has preserved thee. Has he not borne with thee for a long time, whilst others have been cut off in their sins? Are there not millions now burning in hell for less sins than thou hast committed? Reflect on the advantages thou hast received above thousands: what conveniencies of life, what friends, what health, &c. whilst so many more worthy than thyself, have been abandoned to poverty and misery. Ah! admire the unspeakable goodness of thy God to thee: be astonished and confounded at thy past ingratitude: resolve from henceforth never to cease giving him thanks and blessing his name.

THE FOURTH DAY.

On the Dignity and Obligations of a Christian.

CONSIDER that every christian by nature, and inasmuch as he is a man, is the most perfect of all visible creatures, endowed with understanding and reason; composed of a body whose structure is admirable, and of a spiritual and immortal soul, created to the image and likeness of God, and capable of the eternal enjoyment of him; enriched with a free will, and advanced by his creator, to the dignity of Lord and Master of all other creatures; though

not designed to meet with his happiness in any of them, but in the creator alone. Ah! my soul, hast thou hitherto been sensible of the dignity of thy nature? Hast thou not, too often like brute beasts, looked no farther than this earth, that is, these present material and sensible things? Hast thou not too often made thyself a slave to creatures, which were only made to serve thee?

2. Consider that every christian, by grace, and inasmuch as he is a christian, has been by the sacrament of baptism advanced to the participation of the divine nature, and made the adopted child of God, heir of God, and co-heir with Christ. He has been made the temple of the most high, consecrated by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, and the unction of his grace; and has received at the same time an unquestionable right and title to an everlasting kingdom. O! christian soul, didst thou ever yet entertain a serious thought of the greatness of this dignity to which thou hast been raised at thy baptism? How has thy life corresponded with this dignity? O child of heaven, how long wilt thou be a slave to the earth?

3. Consider, that as the dignity of a christian is very great, so also the obligations that attend this dignity are greater than the generality of christians imagine. These obligations are in short comprised in our baptismal engagement. The first condition upon which we were by baptism adopted into God's family, was that of faith. The minister of Christ examined us at the font upon every article of our belief; and to each interrogation we answered by the mouths of our godfathers and godmothers, *credo*, I do believe. What has thy faith been, o my soul? Has it been conformable to this thy profession? Has it been firm without wavering? Has it been

generous, so as not to be ashamed of the doctrine of thy heavenly Master, or the maxims of his gospel? Has it shewed itself in thy actions? Or hast thou not been of the number of those whose life gives the lie to their faith? Of whom the apostle complains, Tit. i. 16. *Who make profession of knowing God, but deny him by their works.*

4. Consider, that at our baptism we made a solemn renunciation of the devil, and all his works, and all his pomps. Have we ever seriously reflected upon this renunciation? Or do we rightly understand the obligations of it? And yet our title to the inheritance of our heavenly father, is forfeited in the moment that we are false to this sacred engagement. Ah! my soul, if thou hast renounced satan, take care that in the practice of thy life, thou keep far from him: take care thou be no longer his slave by sin. Fly from all his works, the works of darkness: let him henceforth find nothing in thee that he may claim for his own, and by means of which he may also lay claim to thee. Despise his vain pomps, the false appearance of worldly grandeur, the prodigality, vanity, and sinful divertisements by which he allures poor worldlings into his nets: and if at any time thou art invited to take part in these fooleries, repeat to thyself those words of St. Augustine, "what hast thou to do with the pomps of the devil, which thou hast renounced?"

5. Consider, that at baptism each one of us, according to the ancient ceremony of the catholic church, was cloathed with a white garment, which the minister of Christ gave us with these words: receive this white garment, which thou shalt carry without spot or stain before the judgment seat of Christ. Happy souls, that comply with this

obligation! What a comfort will it be to them in life, what a joy and satisfaction in death, to have kept this robe of innocence undefiled! But, O baptismal innocence, where shall we find thee in this unhappy age? O blindness and stupidity of the children of Adam, that part so easily with such an inestimable treasure! Alas! my poor soul, has it not been thy misfortune? O make haste to wash away, with penitential tears, those dreadful stains of sin, which otherwise must be the eternal fuel of hell's merciless flames.

THE FIFTH DAY.

On the Vanity of the World.

CONSIDER those words of the wisest of men, Eccles. i. 2. *Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity:* and reflect how truly vain are all those things which deluded worldlings seek with so much eagerness; honors, riches, and worldly pleasures are all but painted bubbles, which look at a distance as if they were something, but have nothing of real substance in them; and instead of a solid content and joy bring nothing with them but a trifling satisfaction for a moment, followed with cares, uneasiness, apprehensions, and remorse.— Ah! bubbles indeed, which their admirers no sooner offer to lay hold on, but they dissolve into air, and leave their hands empty! Oh! how justly were all worldly enjoyments by the royal prophet likened to a dream? They have slept out their short sleep, and when they awake they find nothing in their hands of all those things, which in their dream they seemed to possess. *O ye sons of men, how long will you be in love with vanity, and run after lies?* Psalm iv. 3.

2. Consider that saying of St. Augustine, L. i. Confes. C. 1. *Thou hast made us, O Lord, for*

thyself; and our hearts cannot rest till they rest in thee: and reflect, that our great creator has given us a noble soul, made to his own image, and like him spiritual and immortal; which therefore can never find its happiness in earthly and fading things. No, my soul, thou hast an understanding and a will capable of contemplating the sovereign beauty and sovereign truth, and of enjoying the one supreme infinite good; and whatever is less than him, is not worthy of thee. Ah! resolve then no longer to tire thyself, and waste away thy spirits in running like a child after these butterflies: but since thou canst not be without seeking for happiness, seek it in God's name, where it is to be found, that is, in the way of virtue and devotion, and not in the bye-paths which lead to endless misery.

3. Consider the shortness of all worldly enjoyments. Man's days are very short: the longest life is less than one moment, if compared with eternity. *A thousand years, in the sight of God, that is, in the very truth, are but as yesterday that is past and gone,* Psalm lxxxix. 4. Alas! does not daily experience shew us, that we are here to day, and gone to-morrow, and no sooner out of sight, but out of mind too? For as soon as we are in the grave, those that we leave behind think no more of us. *All flesh is grass, says the Prophet Isaiah, chap. xl. 6. and all the glory of it but like that of the flower of the field.* And what is that, but flourishing in the morning, and fading in the evening? O! how truly is our life likened by St. James, chap. iv. to a vapor or a thin smoke, which is dispersed by the first puff of wind, and we see no more of it? How justly is it compared by Solomon, Wisdom, chap. v. to a shadow, or to the passing of a bird upon the wing, or an arrow from the bow, which leaves no mark behind it? Ah! how

vain it is to set our hearts upon what we must leave so soon?

4. Consider, what is now become of all those great ones of this world, those mighty monarchs, those gallant generals, those wise statesmen, those celebrated beauties, &c. which made such a figure a hundred years ago? Alas! they are all long since dead and gone; and now few or none ever think of them, or scarce know there ever were any such persons; just so will it be with us a few years hence. Ah! worldlings, give ear for one moment to those who are gone before you, who, from their silent monuments, where the remainder of their dust lies mingled with the common earth, call upon you in the words of the wise man; *Eccles. xxxviii. 23. Remember what we are come to; it will soon be the same with you: it was our turn yesterday, it will be yours to day.* We once had our parts to act upon the stage of the world; we once were young, strong and healthy, as you are now, and thought as little as you of what we are now come to: like you, we set our hearts upon those trifles and toys, that we could but enjoy for a moment; and for these we neglected eternity. Senseless wretches as we were, we chose rather to be slaves to a cheating world, to unconstant perishable creatures, which abandoned us so soon, than to serve that Lord and Master to whom nothing dies; and who neither in life or death ever forsakes those who forsake not him. O christians, let us take this warning; let the miscarriages of so many others teach us to be wise; let us not set our hearts on this miserable world; nor look upon any thing as truly great, but that which is eternal.

THE SIXTH DAY.

On the Happiness of serving God.

CONSIDER those words of the Prophet Isaiah, *say to the just man, it is well*, Isai. iii. 10. and reflect on the manifold advantages which this short world well comprises and ensures to the just, both for time and eternity. Honor, riches and pleasure are the things on which the world sets the greatest value. But they are not to be found where the world seeks them, but only in the service of God. Can any honor upon earth be compared to that of being a servant, a friend, an adopted son of the great king of heaven? Such a soul is far more dignified in the eyes of God and his angels; than the greatest emperor in the universe. She is a child of the eternal father, a spouse of the eternal son, a temple of the eternal spirit; heiress of the kingdom of heaven, and sister and companion to the angels. O! my soul, let such honors as these be the only object of thy ambition.

2. Consider that the truest riches are to be found in the service of God; not indeed always those worldly possessions, which are attended with so many cares and fears; are daily exposed to so many accidents, and which are not capable of satisfying the heart: but the inestimable treasure of the grace of God, which is the seed of everlasting glory; the gifts of the holy ghost; the love of God; in a word, God himself; whom the whole world cannot take from the soul, unless she be so miserably blind as to drive him away by mortal sin. Add to this the fatherly providence of God over the just; that his eyes are always upon them to take care of their welfare: that his angels always encamp about them to guard them by night and by day. Ps. xxxiii. v. 8. That as he formerly said to Abraham, *Gen. xv. he himself is their protector, and their*

reward exceeding great. He is their friend, and the best of friends; the shepherd of their souls, who leads them out to his admirable pastures, to the fountain of living water. His tenderness towards them is beyond that of a father, nay, beyond that of the tenderest mother, Isaiah xlix. 15, 16. In short, God is all things to those that fear him. O! my soul, seek no other treasure than him. Fear nothing but the losing of him. If thou hast him, nothing can make thee miserable; but without him nothing can make thee happy.

3. Consider the pleasure that attends a virtuous life; the satisfaction, peace and joy of a good conscience, which by the wise man is likened to a continual banquet; the consolations of the Holy Ghost; the comfortable expectation of a happy eternity after our exit out of this vale of tears; a holy confidence in the protection and providence of God, and a perfect conformity in all things to his blessed will. From these fountains flow such delights, as cannot be conceived by worldlings who have no experience of them: pleasures pure and spiritual, which sweeten all the crosses of this life, are an unspeakable comfort in death, and carry with them a certain foretaste of the immortal joys of heaven. Whereas all worldly pleasures, like the world itself, are false and deceitful, always besprinkled with something of bitterness; and attended with uneasiness, followed with remorse, and end at last in eternal sorrow.

4. Consider that saying of our Saviour, *one thing is necessary*, Luke x. 42. And what is that one thing, o my soul, which alone can make thee happy, both here and hereafter? It is to serve thy God, and to provide in earnest for eternity. All time compared to eternity is less than nothing. So are all temporal concerns,

if compared with the concerns of eternity. This in reality is thy only business; if thou take care of this, all is well; if thou neglect this, all is lost, and lost for ever. As for all other things of which thou mayest stand in need in this life, give ear again to the same Saviour, Mat. vi. 33. *Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be given you over and above.* Conclude then, my soul, since both thy temporal and eternal welfare depends on serving God, to make this for the future thy only care. Thus only shalt thou meet true comfort here: thus only shalt thou come to never-ending happiness hereafter.

THE SEVENTH DAY,

On Death.

CONSIDER, that there is nothing more certain than death. It is appointed for all men once to die: and, after that, judgment. The sentence is general, it is pronounced upon all the children of Adam: neither wealth, nor strength, nor wisdom, nor all the power of this world can exempt any one from this common doom. From the first moment of our birth, we are hastening to our death: every moment brings it nigher to us. The day will come, it will certainly come, and only God knows how soon, when we shall never see the night: or the night will come, when we shall never see the ensuing morning. The day will most certainly come, when thou, my soul, must bid a long farewell to this cheating world, and all thou hast admired therein; and even to thy own body, the individual companion of thy life; and take thy journey to another country, where all that thou settest a value upon here, will appear as

smoke : learn then to despise this miserable world, and all its enjoyments, with which thou must part so soon, whether thou wilt or not.

2. Consider, that as nothing is more certain and inevitable than death, so nothing is more uncertain than the time, the placé, the manner, and all other circumstances of our death. "O my soul, says St. Francis Sales, thou must one day part with this body : but when shall that day be ? Shall it be in winter or in summer ? In the city or in the country ? By day or by night ? Shall it be suddenly, or on notice given thee ? Shalt thou have leisure to make thy confession ? Shalt thou have the assistance of thy ghostly father ? Alas ! of all this thou knowest nothing at all : only certain it is, that thou must die ; and that, as it almost always happens, much sooner than thou imaginest."

3. Consider, that death being so certain, and the time and manner of it so uncertain, it would be no small comfort, if a man could die more than once, that so if he should have the misfortune once to die ill, he might repair the fault by taking more care a second time. But, alas ! we can die but once : and when once we have set our foot within the gates of eternity there is no coming back. If we die once well, it will be always well : but if once ill, it will be ill for all eternity. O ! dreadful moment, upon which depends an endless eternity ! O blessed Lord, prepare us for that fatal hour.

4. Consider the folly and stupidity of the greatest part of men, who, though they daily see some or other of their friends, acquaintance, or neighbours carried off by death, and that very often in the vigor of their youth, very often by sudden death, yet always imagine death to be at a distance from them, as if those arrows of

death which are falling on all sides of them, would not reach them too in their turn; or as if they had a greater security than so many others who are daily swept away. Senseless worldlings! Why will you not open your eyes? Why will you fondly imagine yourselves secure from the stroke of death; when you cannot so much as promise yourselves one single day of life? How many will die before the end of this month, that are as young, as strong, and as healthy as you are? Who knows but you may be of that number? Ah! christians, take care lest you be surprised. Set your house in order: and for the future fly from sin, the only evil which makes death terrible. Live always in those dispositions in which you would gladly be found at the hour of your death. To act otherwise, is to renounce both religion and reason.

5. Consider the state and condition of this corruptible body of ours, as soon as we are dead. Alas! it immediately becomes pale, stiff, loathsome, and hideous; insomuch, that our dearest friends can scarce endure to watch one night in the same room with it, much less bear to lie in the same bed. And so fast does it tend to stench and corruption, that its nearest relations are the first to desire to get it out of the house, and to lay it deep under ground, that it may not infect the air. But what companions, what attendants must it meet with there? Worms and maggots. For these, o man, thou art pampering thy body: these are to be thy inheritance, or rather they are to inherit thee: whatever thou art to-day, to-morrow thou art to be the food of worms. Ah! worldlings, that are enamored with your own and others' beauty, and thereby too often drawn from your allegiance to God, vouchsafe for once to reflect upon

the condition to which both you and they must so soon be reduced, and you will see what little reason you have to set your affections upon these painted dunghills, which will so quickly betray what they are, and end in noisomeness and corruption. We read that St. Francis Borgia was so touched with the bare sight of the ghastly countenance of the empress Isabella after death, whom he had seen a little before in all her majesty, and all her charms, as to conceive an eternal disgust of this world, and a happy resolution of consecrating himself wholly to the service of that king who never dies. Let the like consideration move us to the like resolution.

THE EIGHTH DAY.

On the Sentiments we shall have at the Hour of our Death.

CONSIDER, christian soul, what will be thy sentiments at the hour of death with regard to this world, and all its perishable goods, vain honors, false riches and cheating pleasures. Alas! the world must then end in thy regard; it will turn upside down before thy eyes; and thou wilt begin to see clearly the nothingness of all those things on which thou hast here set thy heart. How wilt thou then despise all worldly honors and preferments, when thou seest thyself at the brink of the grave, where the worms will make no distinction between the king and the beggar! How little account wilt thou then make of the esteem of men, who now will think no more of thee? How wilt thou undervalue thy riches, which must now be left behind thee, when six foot of land, a coffin and a shroud will be all thy possession? How despicable will all worldly pleasures then seem to thee, which at the best could never give thee any true

satisfaction, and now fly from thee, and dissolve into smoke in thy sight! Ah! my poor soul, enter now into the same sentiments which thou shalt certainly have at the hour of thy death: thus, and only thus, thou shalt be out of danger of being deceived by this deceitful world.

2. Consider, what will then be thy thoughts with regard to thy sins; when the curtain will begin to be withdrawn, with which thy busy self love has industriously hidden or disguised the deformity and malice of thy crimes: and they shall be set before thy eyes in their true light: when so many things which thou wast willing to persuade thyself were but small faults, or none at all, will present themselves before thee in other kind of colors, as great and hideous offences: when that false conscience, which thou hast framed to thyself, and under the cover of which thou hast passed over many things in thy confessions, as light and inconsiderable, which thou wast ashamed to declare, or unwilling to forsake, shall no longer be able to maintain itself at the approach of death. Ah! what anguish, what confusion, what dreadful temptations of despair must such a sight as this give to the dying sinner? Learn thou, my soul, to take better measures now in time, and thus to prevent so great a misery.

3. Consider, and take a nigher view of the lamentable state of a sinner at the hour of his death; when all things seem to conspire against him, and which ever way he looks for any ease or comfort, he can find none. Before his eyes he sees a whole army of sins mustered up; a viper's brood of his own offspring, which stick close to him, and assailing him with their united forces, make him already begin to feel the gripes of that never-dying worm of conscience, which shall be the eternal torment of the damned. O! how gladly would he shake off this troublesome company: but all in vain; they

are resolved not to leave him. If he looks back into his past life, to seek for some good works, to oppose to this army of sins; alas! he finds the good that he has done has been so inconsiderable, so insignificant, as to give him no hopes of his weighing down the scales, when balanced with its multiplied crimes. His very prayers, the confessions and communions which he has made, fly now in his face, and upbraid him with his wretched negligence, and his sacrilegious abuse of these great means of salvation. The sight of all things about him, his wife, his children, his friends, his worldly goods, which he has loved more than his God, serve for nothing now but to increase his anguish. And what is his greatest misery is, that the agonies of his sickness give him little or no leisure or ability to apply himself seriously to the greatest and most difficult of all concerns, which is, a perfect conversion to God after a long habit of sin. O! how truly may the sinner now repeat those words of the Psalmist; *the sorrows of death have encompassed me, and the perils of hell have found me*, Psalm cxiv. 3. O! what unspeakable anguish must it be to see himself just embarking upon eternity, an infinite and endless duration, an immense ocean, to whose further shore the poor sailor can never reach; and to have so much reason to fear, it will be to him an eternity of woe.

4. Consider, my soul, what thy sentiments will be at the hour of thy death, with relation to the service of God, to virtue and devotion: how lovely then will the way of virtue appear to thee! How wilt thou then wish to have followed that charming path! O! what a satisfaction is it to a dying man to have lived well! What a comfort to see himself now at the end of all his labors and dangers; to find himself at the gates of eternal rest, of everlasting peace, after a long and doubtful

war! He may now securely come down from his watch-tower, and repose himself for ever in the kingdom of his father. O! what a pleasure, what a joy to look forward into that blessed eternity! O! how *precious in the sight of God is the death of his saints*, Psalm cxv. 15. Ah! *Let my soul die the death of the just, and let my last end be like to theirs*. Numb. xxiii. Christians, if we would die the death of the just, we must live the life of the just! The only security for a good death, is a good life.

5. Consider, or rather conclude from the foregoing considerations on death, to make it the whole business of your life to prepare for death. Upon dying well depends nothing less than eternity. If we die ill, we are lost, and lost for ever. As then we came into the world for nothing else, but to provide for eternity, so we may truly say, we came into the world for nothing else but to learn to die well. This is the great lesson we must all study. Alas! if we miss it, when we are called to the trial, an endless woe must of necessity be the consequence. Ah! how hard it is to learn to perform that well, which can be done but once.

THE NINTH DAY.

On the particular Judgment after Death.

CONSIDER, that the soul is no sooner parted from the body, but she is immediately presented before the judge, in order to give an account of her whole life, of all that she has thought, said, or done, during her abode in the body; and to receive sentence accordingly. For, that the eternal doom of every soul is decided by a particular judgment immediately after death, is what we learn from the gospel in the example of Dives and Lazarus: and the sentence that passes here will be ratified in the general judgment at the last day. Christians, how stand your accounts with God? What could you be able to say for yourselves if this

night you should be cited to the bar? It may perhaps be your case. Remember that your Lord will come when you least expect him; take care then to be always ready.

2. Consider, how exact, how rigorous his judgment will be, where even the least idle word cannot escape the scrutiny of the judge. O! what treasures of iniquity will here come to light, when the veil shall be removed, which hides at present the greatest part of our sins from the eyes of the world, and even from our own; and the whole history of our lives shall at once be exposed to our view. Good God! who can be able to bear this dreadful sight? Here shall the poor soul be brought to a most exact examination of all that she has done, or left undone, in the whole time of her pilgrimage in this mortal body: how she has corresponded with the divine inspirations; what use she has made of God's graces; what profit she has reaped from the sacraments which she has received, from the word of God which she has heard or read; what advantage she has made of those favorable circumstances in which God Almighty has placed her; how she has employed the talents with which he has entrusted her: even her best works shall be nicely sifted; her prayers, her fasts, her almsdeeds; the intention with which she has undertaken them, the manner in which she has performed them: all shall be weighed, not in the deceitful balance of the judgment of men, but in the scales of the sanctuary. Ah! how many of our actions will here be found to want weight, according to that of Dan. v. *Thou hast been weighed in the balance, and art found of too little weight, O! enter not into judgment with thy servant, o Lord; for no man living shall be justified in thy sight.* Ps. cxlii.

3. Consider the qualities of the judge before whom we must appear. He is infinitely wise; and therefore cannot be deceived; he is infinitely powerful, and therefore cannot be withstood; he is infinitely just, and therefore will render to every one according to his works. No favor is to be expected at this day: the time of merit and of acceptable repentance is now at an end. Ah! christians, think well on it now whilst it is your day: you may now wash away your sins by penitential tears, and thus hide them from the eyes of your future judge: you may at present tie up his hands by humble prayer; you may appeal from his justice to the court of his mercy, and cause him to cancel the sentence that stands against you: but at that day you will find him inexorable: your prayers and tears will then come too late.

4. Consider the inestimable comfort that the souls of the just shall receive at this day from the company of their good works, which like an invincible rampart shall surround them on all sides, and keep their hellish foes at a distance. O! my soul, let us take care to provide ourselves with such attendants as these against that hour, which is to decide our eternal doom. These are friends indeed, that will not forsake us even in death; and will effectually plead our cause at that bar where no other eloquence will be regarded.

5. Consider in what a wretched plight the sinner, who has taken no care to lay up any such provision of good works, shall now stand before his judge. O! how all things now speak to him the melancholy sentence, that is just now going to fall upon his guilty head. Whatever way he looks, he sees nothing that can give

him any comfort; but on the contrary, all things contribute to his greater anguish and terror. Beneath his feet he sees hell open ready to swallow him up: above his head, an angry judge prepared to thunder out against him the irrevocable sentence of eternal damnation: on his right hand he sees his guardian angel now abandoning him; on his left the devils, his merciless enemies, just ready to seize upon him, and only waiting for the beck of the judge: if he looks behind him he discovers a cheating world which now retires from him; if he looks before him he meets with nothing but a dismal eternity. Within him he feels the intolerable stings of a guilty conscience: and on all sides of him he perceives an army of hideous monsters, his own sins, more terrible to him now than the furies of hell. Good God! deliver me from ever having any share in such a scene of misery.

6. Consider, that in order to prevent the judgment of God from falling heavy upon us after our death, we must take care now during our life to judge and chastise ourselves, by doing serious penance for our sins. Thus, and only thus, shall we disarm the justice of God enkindled by our sins. Let us follow the advice of him who is to be our judge, who calls upon us to watch and pray at all times, that so we may be found worthy to escape these dreadful dangers, and stand with confidence before the Son of man, Luke xxi. 36. Ah! let this judgment be always before our eyes: let us daily meditate on this account that we are one day to give. Let us never forget that there is an eye above that sees all things; that there is an ear that hears all things; that there is a hand that writes down all our thoughts, words and deeds, in the great accounting book; and that all our actions pass from our hands to the hands of

God ; and what is done in time, passeth not away with time, but shall subsist after all time is past. *O ! that men would be wise, and would understand these truths, and provide in earnest for their last end !* Deuter. xxxii.

THE TENTH DAY.

On the great accounting Day.

CONSIDER, that nothing can be conceived more terrible than the prospect which scripture gives us of the last accounting day, with all the prodigies that shall go before it. The sun shall be darkened, the moon red as blood, the stars without light, and seeming to fall from the firmament ! the earth shaken with violent earthquakes, the sea swelling and roaring with unusual tempests, the elements all in confusion, and whole nature in disorder. *The day of the Lord, says the prophet Joel, ii. a day of darkness and obscurity, a day of clouds and whirlwinds. Before its face devouring fire, and behind it burning flames. The earth shall tremble at the appearance of it, and the heavens be moved at its sight. The sun and moon are darkened, and the stars have withdrawn all their light.* And the prophet Sophonias, i. cries out, *That day, a day of wrath, a day of tribulation and anguish, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and obscurity, a day of mists and whirlwinds.* Can any thing be more frightful than these descriptions ? Ah ! what will then be the thoughts of sinful man, who sees himself threatened by all these signs. Alas ! he shall perfectly wither away with fear, in expectation of that tragedy which must follow these dreadful preludes.

2. Consider, that the last day being come, a fire, raging like an impetuous torrent shall, by the command of God, consume the whole surface of

the earth, and all that is thereon; nothing shall escape it. Where, o worldlings, will be then all your stately palaces, your pleasant seats, your gardens, fountains and grottos? where your gold, silver, and precious stones, &c? Alas! all that you have set your hearts on in this world, shall in a moment be reduced into ashes; to shew you the vanity of the things you loved, and your own folly in placing your affection upon such glittering shadows, upon such painted bubbles. Learn then, my soul, to despise this world, and all its goods, since all must end in ashes and smoke; and lay up for thyself a treasure in heaven, which alone will be out of the reach of this last fire.

3. Consider, that the final end of this world being now come, the archangel shall sound the last trumpet, and raise his voice with a *Surgite mortui*. Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment: a voice, that shall be heard at once all over the universe, that shall pierce the highest heavens, and penetrate down to the lowest abyss of hell: at this voice in an instant, by God's almighty power, all the children of Adam, from the first to the last, shall arise from the dust, and every soul shall be again united to its respective body, never more to part for eternity. O! my soul, let this last trumpet always echo in thy ears! O! take care to prevent the terror of this summons, by hearkening now to another summons of the great trumpet of the Holy Ghost, who calls upon thee by the mouth of the apostle, *arise thou that sleepest, and rise from the dead*, that is from the death of sin, *and Christ shall enlighten thee*. Eph. v. It is thus by having part in the first resurrection, thou shalt provide in time against that dreadful hour, when *time shall be no more*,

Apoc. x. It is thus thou shalt escapè the second death.

4. Consider the wonderful difference there will be at the time of this general resurrection, between the bodies of the just and those of the wicked. The just shall arise in bodies most beautiful, more pure than the stars, more resplendant than the sun, immortal and impassible: but the wicked shall arise in bodies suitable to their deserts, foul, black, hideous, and every way loathsome and insupportable; immortal, it is true, but to no other end than to endure immortal torments. What an inexpressible rack will it be to these wretched souls, to be forced into such carcasses, to be condemned to an eternal confinement in so horrid, so filthy an abode! Ah! take thou care, my soul, to keep thy body now pure from the corruption of carnal sins, lest otherwise it be one day an aggravation of thy eternal misery.

5. Consider, with how much satisfaction and joy the souls of the just shall be united again to their bodies, which they have so long desired; with what affection they shall embrace those fellow partners of all their labors; of all their sufferings and mortifications; and now designed, by sharing in the glory of the heavenly Sion, to give an addition to their eternal happiness. But, o! what dreadful curses shall pass at the melancholy meeting of the souls and bodies of the reprobate? Accursed carcase! will the soul say, was it to please thee, to indulge thy brutish inclinations, that I have forfeited the immortal joys of heaven? Ah! wretch, to give thee a filthy pleasure for a moment, I have damned both myself and thee to all eternity. O thrice accursed carrion! it is just, it is just, that thou

who hast been the cause of my damnation, shouldst be my partner in eternal woe. But oughtest not thou rather, unhappy soul, to be a thousand times accursed by the body, since it was thy business, and was in thy power to have subjected its passions and lusts to the rule of reason and religion? and thou didst rather chuse, for the sake of a momentary satisfaction, to enslave thyself to its sensual inclinations, and so to purchase hell both for thyself and thy body. Ah! christians, let us learn to be wise by the consideration of others misfortunes.

THE ELEVENTH DAY.

On the General Judgment.

CONSIDER, that the dead being all risen shall immediately be assembled together in the place designed for the last judgment, commonly believed to be the valley of Josaphat near Jerusalem, in the sight of mount Olivet and mount Calvary, where our Lord heretofore shed his blood for our redemption. What a sight will it be to behold here all the children of Adam, that innumerable multitude of all nations, ages and degrees, standing together without any distinction now, of rich or poor, great or little, master or servant, monarch or subject; excepting only the distinction of good and bad, which shall be wonderful and eternal. Alas! how mean a figure will an Alexander or a Cæsar make at this appearance, or any of those great heroes of antiquity, whose very name has made whole nations tremble? Those mighty monarchs, who had once the world at their beck, are now levelled with the meanest of their slaves, and would wish a thousand times never to have borne the sceptre, nor worn the diadem.

2. Consider, that the dead being now assembled all together, the great judge shall descend from heaven, with great glory and majesty, environed with all his heavenly courtiers, and all the legions of angels. O! how different from his first coming will this second appearance be? His first coming was in great meekness and humility, because that was our day, in which he came to redeem us by his mercy: but at his second coming, it will be his day, when he shall arm himself with all the terrors of his justice, to revenge upon sinful man the cause of his injured mercy, with a final vengeance once for all. Miserable sinners! how will you be able to stand before his face, or endure his wrathful countenance? Ah! then it is you will begin to cry out to the mountains and rocks to fall upon you, and hide you from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb. Nay, such a dread and terror will the very sight of the incensed judge carry with it, that you will even wish a thousand times to hide your guilty heads in the lowest hell, rather than endure this dreadful appearance: but all in vain, you must stand it out.

3. Consider, that before the judge shall be borne the royal standard of the cross, shining more bright than the sun, to the great comfort of the good, and the unspeakable anguish and confusion of the wicked, for having made so little use of the inestimable benefit of their redemption. Here they shall plainly see how much their God has suffered for their salvation: how great has been his love for them, that boundless and unparalled love, which brought him down from the throne of glory, and nailed him to the cross, O! how will they now condemn their own obstinacy in sin, their blindness and

ingratitude! O! how will this glorious ensign justify in the face of the whole universe, the conduct of God, and the eternity of hell's torments: for what less than a miserable eternity can be punishment enough for so much obstinacy in evil, after so much love?

4. Consider, how at the command of the sovereign judge, which shall be instantly obeyed, the servants of God shall be picked out from the midst of that vast multitude, and placed with honor on his right-hand; whilst the wicked, with all those evil spirits, whose part they have taken, shall with ignominy be driven to the left. O! dreadful and eternal separation, after which these two companies shall never more meet. And thou, my soul, where dost thou expect to stand at that day? In which of these two companies shalt thou be ranked? Thou hast it now in thy choice: chuse then now that better part, which will never be taken from thee. Fly now from the midst of Babylon; renounce now the false maxims, the corrupt customs, and sinful divertisements of worldlings; separate thyself from the wicked in time, that thou mayest not be involved in their eternal damnation.

5. Consider, what will then be the thoughts of the great ones of this world; what fury, what envy, what bitter anguish and confusion will oppress their souls; when they shall see the poor in spirit, the meek and humble, who were so contemptible in their eyes whilst they were here in this mortal life, now honored and exalted in the sight of the whole universe; and themselves treated with so much contempt? Harken to their complaints, as they are set down by the wise man, *Wisd. v. These are they, whom heretofore we laughed at, and whom we made the subjects of our scoffs. Senseless wretches as we*

were! We esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor. See how they are now reckoned amongst the children of God, and with the saints in their eternal lot. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth. Alas! after all, we are the persons that have been mistaken; we, that have unfortunately run on in the wrong way! And they were truly wise in making a better choice, which afforded them comfort in life, and has now entitled them to endless joys.

6. Consider, how much the anguish and confusion of the wicked will be increased, at the opening of the books of conscience, when all the guilt of their whole lives shall be laid open to the public view of the universe. Poor sinner! what will thy thoughts be, when those crimes which thou hast committed in the greatest secrecy, and which thou wouldst not have had known for the world; those abominations which thou imaginest covered with the obscurity of night and darkness, and which thou didst flatter thyself, thy friends and acquaintance would never know; those works of iniquity, which perhaps thou couldst not find in thy heart to discover to one person, tied by all laws to a perpetual secrecy, shall all now be exposed in their true colors to the eyes of the whole world, angels and men, good and bad, to thy eternal shame. Ah! christians, it is now in your power to prevent, by a sincere repentance and confession, this confusion which you must otherwise one day suffer.

THE TWELFTH DAY.

On the last Sentence of the Good and Bad.

CONSIDER how this great trial shall be concluded by a final definitive sentence in favor of the just, and for the condemnation of the wicked. And first, the sovereign judge, turning

himself towards his elect, with a most sweet and amiable countenance, shall invite them into the happy mansions of everlasting bliss; *Come ye blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.* Mat. xxv. O happy invitation! Happy, thrice happy they, that shall be found worthy to hear that comfortable sentence! What unspeakable satisfaction, what torrents of joy and pleasure will the hearing of it give to those blessed creatures! *I am filled with joy,* says the royal prophet, *at the happy tidings which I have heard, we are to enter into the house of the Lord,* Ps. cxxi. But, o! what envy, what rage, and malice will the reprobate feel at the hearing of this invitation, when they shall see several of their acquaintance called to take possession of that eternal kingdom, which they might also have so easily purchased; but by their own folly and stupidity, have blindly exchanged it for the flames of hell.

2. Consider and ponder at leisure upon this happy sentence: *Come,* says the judge, *ye blessed of my Father, &c.* Come from the vale of tears, where for a little while you have been tried and afflicted by the appointment of my providence, to the kingdom of never-ending joy; where grief and sorrow will be no more. Come from the place of banishment, where for a time you have sighed and groaned at a distance from your heavenly country, to your everlasting home, where you shall meet with all that your heart can desire to compleat your happiness; where you shall be for ever inebriated by the plenty of my house, and drink for ever at the fountain of life: arise, my beloved, the winter is now past, the floods and storms are over, arise and come, O universal and eternal blessings! How my

poor soul contemns all other happiness, in hopes of having a share one day in this blessed sentence !

3. Consider, how the great judge, after having invited the just to his glorious kingdom, turning himself towards the wicked on his left hand, with fire in his eyes, and terror in his countenance, shall thunder out against them the dreadful sentence of their eternal doom in these words : *go from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels.* Christian souls, weigh well every word of this dismal sentence. Go for ever from me, and from the joys of my kingdom. O terrible excommunication ! O cruel divorce ! O eternal banishment ! Who can express, who can conceive what it is to be for ever separated from our God, our first beginning and last end, our great and sovereign good ! Ah wretches, who make so little now of losing your God by mortal sin, what will you then think when you shall be sentenced to this eternal banishment from him ; doomed to seek him for all eternity, and yet, never to meet with him in any of his attributes, only in his avenging justice, the weight of which you shall feel for ever. But take notice whither you are to go, when you go from your God. Alas ! into everlasting fire, there to lead an ever-dying life, there to endure a never-ending death, in the company of the devils and his angels ; to whom you made yourselves slaves, and who shall now, without controul, exercise for ever their tyranny over you.

4. Consider that dreadful and universal curse which this just, but dismal sentence involves. Go from me, ye cursed, says the sovereign judge : as if he was to say, go, depart from me, but let my curse go with you. I would have given you my

blessing, but you would not have it; a curse you chose, and a curse shall be your everlasting inheritance. It shall stick close to you like a garment for all eternity; it shall enter into your very bowels, and search into the very marrow of your bones. A curse upon your eyes, never to see the least glimpse of comfortable light: a curse upon your ears, to be entertained for all eternity with frightful shrieks and groans: a curse on your taste, to be for ever embittered with the gall of dragons: a curse on your smell, to be always tormented with the noisome stench of the pit of hell: a curse on your feeling, and on all the members of your body, to burn and never consume in that fire which shall never be quenched: a curse upon your understanding, never to be illustrated with any ray of truth: a curse on your memory, to be always revolving in the bitterness of a late and fruitless repentance, the shortness and vanity of past pleasures: a curse upon the imagination, ever representing present and future miseries: a curse upon the will, obstinate in evil, to be torn in pieces with a thousand violent, and, withal, opposite desires, and unable to accomplish any of them: a curse, in fine, upon the whole soul, to be a hell to itself for all eternity! Good God! let it never be our misfortune to incur this dreadful curse!

5. Consider, how, after sentence is given, the elect shall enter without delay upon the possession of that everlasting kingdom, which God has prepared for those that serve him, where sorrow can have no place, and joy no end. But as for the wicked, the earth shall immediately open and swallow them all down at once, with the devils who seduced them, into the bottomless pit, and the gate shall be shut, never, never more to be opened. This is the end of all

worldly pride: this is the end of all carnal pleasure. *O! how horrid a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!* Heb. x. 31.

THE THIRTEENTH DAY.

On Hell.

CONSIDER, that as it is said in holy writ, that *neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those that serve him.* 1 Cor. ii. 9. So we may truly say with regard to hell's torments, that no mortal tongue can express them, nor heart conceive them. Beatitude, according to divines, is a perfect and never-ending state, comprising at once, all that is good, without any mixture of evil. If then damnation be the opposite to beatitude, it must needs be an everlasting deluge of all that is evil, without the least mixture of good, without the least alloy of ease, without the least glimpse of comfort; a total privation of all happiness, and a chaos of all misery.

2. Consider, more in particular what damnation is, and how many and how great the miseries it involves. A dying life, or rather a living death; a darksome prison, a loathsome dungeon, a binding hand and foot in eternal chains, and a land of horror and misery; a lake of fire and brimstone; a bottomless pit; devouring flames; a serpent ever gnawing; a worm that never dies; a body always burning, and never consumed; a feeling always fresh for suffering; a thirst never extinguished; perpetual weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. No other company but devils and damned wretches, all hating and cursing one another, all hating and cursing God; spirits always in an agony, and sick to death, yet never meeting with this death which they so much

desire; cast forth from the face of God into the land of oblivion; none to comfort, none to pity them; wounded to the heart with the sense of lost happiness; and oppressed with the feeling of present misery. And all these sufferings everlasting, without the least hope of end, of intermission, or abatement. This is a short description, drawn for the most part from God's unerring word, of the miseries which eternal damnation imports; this is the bitter cup of which *all the sinners of the earth must drink*, Ps. lxxiv.

3. Consider, that God in all his attributes is infinite: as in his power, wisdom, goodness, &c. so in his avenging justice too. He is a God in hell as much as in heaven. So that by the greatness of his love, mercy and patience here, we may measure the greatness of his future wrath and vengeance against impenitent sinners. By his infinite goodness he has drawn them out of nothing; he has preserved and sustained them for a long time; he has even come down from his throne of glory, and suffered himself to be nailed to a disgraceful cross, for their eternal salvation: he has frequently delivered them from the dangers to which they were daily exposed; patiently borne with their insolence and repeated treasons; still graciously inviting them to repentance. Ah! how justly does patience, so long abused, turn at length into fury! Mercy at last gives place to justice: and a thousand woes to those wretches, that must for ever feel the dreadful weight of the avenging hand of the living God!

4. Consider, and in order to understand something better what hell is, set before your eyes a poor sick man lying on his bed, burning with a pestilential fever, attended with an universal pain over all his body, his head perfectly rent asunder,

his eyes ready to fly out, his teeth raging, his sides pierced with dreadful stitches, his belly racked with a violent cholic; his reins with the stone and gravel; all his limbs tormented with rheumatic pains; and all his joints with the gout; his heart even bursting with anguish, and he crying out for a drop of water to cool his tongue. Could any thing be conceived more miserable! and yet, let me tell you, this is but an imperfect picture of what the damned must endure for eternity; where these victims, immolated to the justice of God, shall be salted all over with fire; and endure in all the senses and members of their body, and in all the faculties of their souls, most exquisite torments!

5. Consider, that the state of the poor sick man, of whom we have just now been speaking, how deplorable soever it may seem, might still be capable of some alloy or ease, or some degree of comfort: a good bed to lie on, a good friend to encourage or condole with him, a good conscience to support him, a will resigned to the will of God, and in fine a certain knowledge that his pains must shortly abate, or put an end to his life. But the damned have nothing of all this. Their bed in hell is a lake or pit burning with fire and brimstone, to which they are fastened down with eternal chains. Their companions are merciless devils, or what will be to them worse than devils, the unhappy partners of their sins. Their conscience is ever gnawed with the worm that never dies. Their will is averse from God, and continually struggling in vain with his divine will. And what comes in to compleat their damnation, is a despair of ever meeting with an end or abatement of their torments. Good God! what would not a prudent man do to prevent the lying but for one night in torments in this

life? And where then is our faith and reason, when we will do so little for escaping the dreadful night of hell's merciless flames!

THE FOURTEENTH DAY.

On the exterior Pains of Hell.

CONSIDER the description which holy Job gives us of hell, Job. x. *when he calls it a darksome land, and covered with the obscurity of death, a country of misery and darkness, where no order but everlasting horror dwells.* In this gloomy region, no sun, no moon, no stars appear; no comfortable rays of light, not even the least glimpse, are ever to be seen. The very fire that burneth there, contrary to the natural property of that element, is black and darksome, and affords no light to the wretches it torments, except it be to discover to them such objects as may increase their misery. Christians, what would you think, were you to be sentenced to pass the remainder of your days in some horrid dungeon, or hole, deep under ground, where you could never see the light! Would not death itself be preferable to such a punishment? And, what is this to that eternal night, to which the damned are sentenced! The Egyptians were in a sad condition, when for three days the whole kingdom was covered with dreadful darkness, caused by such gross exhalations, that they might even be felt by the hand. But this misery was soon over, and they were comforted by the return of light. Not so the damned in hell; whose night shall never have a morning, nor ever expect the dawning of the day!

2. Consider, that the horror of this eternal night shall be beyond measure aggravated by the dismal music, with which those poor wretches shall be for ever entertained in this melancholy

abode, which shall be no other than dreadful curses and blasphemies, the insulting voices of the tormentors, and the howlings, groans and shrieks of the tormented, &c. And that the other senses may also come in for their share in misery, the smell shall be for ever regaled with the loathsome exhalations of those infernal dungeons, and the intolerable stench of those half putrified carcasses which are broiling there: the taste shall be oppressed with a most ravenous hunger and thirst, and the feeling with an insupportable fire.

3. Consider, that of all bodily torments, which we can suffer in this world, there is none more terrible than to burn alive: but, alas! there is no comparison between burning here, and burning in hell. All our fires upon earth, are but painted flames, if compared to the fire of hell. The fire of this world was made to serve us, and to be our comfort; that of hell was created to be an instrument of God's vengeance upon sinners. The fire of this world cannot subsist without being nourished by some combustible matter, which it quickly dispatches and consumes: the fire of hell, kindled by the breath of an angry God, requires no other fuel than sin; and feeds on this without ever decaying or consuming. O! dreadful stain of sin, which suffices to maintain an everlasting fire! The fire of this world can only reach the body: the fire of hell reaches the soul itself, and fills it with the most exquisite torments. Ah! sinners, which of you all can dwell with this devouring fire? Which of you all can endure this eternal burning?

4. Consider, and in order to frame some better notion of hell's torments, give ear to a most authentic vision, related by St. Teresa, chap. xxxii. of her life. "As I was one day, says the saint,

in prayer, on a sudden I found myself in hell; I know not how I was carried thither: only I understood, that our Lord was pleased that I should see the place which the devils had prepared for me there; and which I had deserved by my sins. What past here with me lasted but a very little while; yet if I should live many years, I do not believe I should ever be able to forget it. The entrance appeared to me to resemble that of an oven very low, very narrow, and very dark. The ground seemed like mire, exceeding filthy, stinking, insupportable, and full of a multitude of loathsome vermin. At the end of it there was a certain hollow place, as if it had been a kind of a little press in a wall, into which I found myself thrust, and close pent up. Now, though all this which I have said was far more terrible in itself, than I have described it, yet it might pass for a pleasure in comparison with that which I felt in this press. This torment was so dreadful, that no words can express the least part of it. I felt my soul burning in so dismal a fire, that I am not able to describe it. I have experienced the most insupportable pains, in the judgment of physicans, which can be corporally endured in this world, as well by the shrinking up of all my sinews, as by many other torments in several kinds: but all these were nothing in comparison with what I suffered there: joined to the horrid thought, that this was to be without end or intermission for ever: and even this itself is still little, if compared to the agony the soul is in; it seems to her that she is choaked, that she is stifled, and her anguish and torture go to a degree of excess, that cannot be expressed. It is too little to say, that it seems to her that she is butchered and rent to pieces: because this would express some violence from without, which tended to her destruction; whereas

Here it is she herself, that is her own executioner; and tears herself in pieces. Now as to that interior fire and unspeakable despair, which comes in to complete so many horrid torments; I own I am not able to describe them. I saw not who it was that tormented me; but I perceived myself to burn; and at the same time, to be cut as it were and slashed in pieces: in so frightful a place, there was no room for the least hopes of comfort; there was no such thing as even sitting or lying down: I was thrust into a hole in a wall: and those horrible walls close in upon the poor prisoners, and press and stifle them. There is nothing but thick darkness without any mixture of light, and yet I know not how it is, though there be no light there, yet one sees there all that may be most mortifying to the sight.—Although it be about six years since this happened which I here relate, I am even now in the writing of it so terrified that my blood chills in my veins. So that whatsoever evils or pains I now suffer, if I do but call to my remembrance what I then endured, all that can be suffered here appears to me just nothing." So far the saint, whose relation deserves to be pondered at leisure: for if such and so terrible torments had been prepared for her, whose life from her cradle, setting aside a few worldly vanities which for a short time she had followed, had been so innocent, what must sinners one day expect?

5. Consider, that there is no man on earth that has not quite lost his senses, who would be willing, even for the empire of the world, to be broiled like a Laurence on a gridiron, or roasted for half an hour by a slow fire, though he was sure to come off with his life; nay, where is the man that would even venture to hold his finger in the flame of a candle for half a quarter of an hour, for any reward that this world can give? Where is then

the judgment of the far greater part of christians, who pretend to believe a hell, yet live on with so little apprehension and concern, for years together, in the guilt of mortal sin; in danger every moment of falling into this dreadful and everlasting fire, having no more than a hair's breadth, that is, the thin thread of an uncertain life between their souls and a miserable eternity! Good God! deliver us from this unfortunate blindness, from this desperate folly and madness.

THE FIFTEENTH DAY.

On the interior Pains of Hell.

CONSIDER, that the fire of hell, with all the rest of the exterior torments, which are endured there, are terrible indeed; but no ways comparable to the interior pains of the soul: that *Pæna Damni*, or eternal loss of God, and of all that is good: that extremity of anguish which follows from this loss; that rueful remorse of a bitter but fruitless repentance, attended with everlasting despair and rage: that complication of all those racking tortures in the inward powers and faculties of the soul, are torments incomparably greater than any thing that can be suffered in the body.

2. Consider, in particular, that pain of loss, which, in the judgment of divines, is the greatest of all the torments of hell; though worldlings here have difficulties of conceiving how this can be. Alas! poor sinners, so weak is their notion of eternal goods, and so deeply are they immersed in the things of this world, amusing themselves with a variety of created objects, which divert their thoughts from God's sovereign goodness, that they cannot imagine, that the loss of God can be so great and dismal a torment, as the saints and servants of God, who are guided by better lights, all agree it is. But the case will be quite altered

when they shall find themselves in hell. There they shall be convinced, by their own woeful experience, what misery it is to have lost their God ; to have lost him totally ; to have lost him irrevocably ; to have lost him eternally ; to have lost him in himself ; to have lost him in all his creatures ; to be eternally banished from him, who was their only happiness, their last end and sovereign good, the overflowing fountain of all good : and in losing him to have lost all that is good, and that for ever. As long as sinners are in this mortal life, they many ways partake of the goodness of God, who makes the sun to rise upon the good and bad, and rains upon the just and unjust. All that is agreeable in this world, all that is delightful in creatures, and all that is comfortable in life, is all in some measure a participation of the divine goodness. No wonder then, that the sinner, whilst he so many ways partakes of the goodness of God should not in this life be sensible of what it is to be totally and eternally deprived of him. But in hell, alas ! those unhappy wretches shall find, that in losing their God, they have also lost all kind of good or comfort, which any of his creatures heretofore afforded ; instead of which they find all things now conspiring against them, nor any way left of diverting the dreadful thought of this loss, which is always present to their minds, and gripes them with inexpressible torment.

3. Consider, that every damned soul shall be a hell to herself, and all and every one of her powers and faculties shall have their respective hells. Her memory shall be for ever tormented, by revolving without ceasing her past folly, stupidity and madness, in forfeiting the eternal joys of heaven, that ocean of bliss, which she might have obtained at so cheap a rate, and which so many of her acquaintance are now in possession of, for an

empty, trifling pleasure that lasted but for a moment, and left nothing behind it but the stain of sin, and the remorse of a guilty conscience; or, for some petty interest, or punctilio of honor, by which she was then robbed of all her treasures, and all her honors; and, upon account of which, she is now so miserably poor and despicable, eternally trodden under foot by insulting devils. Oh! what will her judgment then be of this transitory world, and all its cheating vanities, when after having been millions of ages in hell, looking back from that immense eternity, and scarce being able to find out in that infinite duration, this little point of her mortal life, she shall compare time and eternity, past pleasures and present pains, virtue and vice, heaven and hell?

4. Consider, that the understanding of the damned shall also have its hell, in being for ever deprived of the light of truth, always employed in false and blasphemous judgments and notions concerning God and his justice, to the great increase of its own misery; and ever dwelling upon the thoughts of present and future torments, without being able for a moment to think of any thing else: so that all, and every one of the torments which the damned endure, and are to endure for eternity, are every moment before the eyes of their understanding; and thus in every moment they bear the insupportable load of a miserable eternity.

5. Consider, that as the obstinate will of the sinner has been the most guilty, so this power of the soul shall suffer in proportion the greatest torment; always seeking what she shall never find, and ever flying from what she must for ever endure. Ah! what fruitless longings, what vain wishes shall be her constant entertainment, whilst she is doomed for eternity, never to attain to any

one the least thing which she desires ! O ! who can express that violent impetuosity, with which the will of these wretches is now carried towards God ; sensible as they are of the immense happiness, which is found in the enjoyment of him ? But, alas ! they always find an invisible hand that drives them back, or rather they always find themselves bound fast down in eternal chains, struggling in vain with that hand which they cannot resist, and unable to make the least approach towards the object of their restless desires. Hence they break forth into a thousand blasphemies ; hence the whole soul is torn in pieces with a whole army of violent, and withal opposite passions of fury, envy, hatred, despair, &c. These torments of the interior powers of the soul, are attended with that never-dying worm of conscience, which shall for ever prey upon those miscreants. By which is meant an eternal remorse, a bitter but fruitless repentance, which is ever racking their despairing souls. Sweet Jesus, deliver us from such a dreadful complication of evils !

THE SIXTEENTH DAY.

On a Miserable Eternity.

CONSIDER, that what above all things makes hell intolerable is the eternity of its torments. It is this eternity, which is an infinite aggravation to all and every one of them : it is this bitter ingredient which makes every drop of that bitter cup of the divine vengeance of which the sinners of the earth must drink, so insupportable. Were there any hopes that the miseries of the damned would one day have an end, though it was after millions of ages, hell would be no longer hell, because it would admit of some comfort. But, for all those inexpressible torments to continue

for ever, as long as God shall be God, without the least hopes of ever seeing an end of them: oh! this it is, that is the greatest rack of the damned, O! eternity, eternity! How little do worldlings apprehend thee now! How terrible wilt thou be to them one day, when they shall find themselves ingulfed in thy bottomless abyss, there to be for ever the butt and mark of all the arrows of God's avenging justice!

2. Consider, if one short night seems so long and tedious to a poor sick man in a burning fever; if he tosses and turns, and no where finds rest; if he counts every hour, and with so much impatience longs for the morning, which yet will bring him but little relief or comfort; what must this dreadful night of eternity be, accompanied with all the interior and exterior torments of hell! No man in his senses would purchase a kingdom at the rate of lying for ten years on a soft bed without coming off! Ah! what misery then must it be to be chained down to a bed of fire and brimstone, not for ten years only, nor yet for ten thousand times ten, but for as many hundred thousand millions of ages, as there are drops of water in the ocean, or atoms in the air: in a word, for an immense eternity.

3. Consider, and in order to conceive still better what this eternity is, imagine with thyself, that if any one of the damned were to shed but one single tear at the end of every thousand years, till he had shed tears enough to fill the sea; what an immense space of time must this require! The world has not yet lasted six thousand years, so that the first of all the damned would not have shed six tears. And yet, o dreadful eternity; the time will certainly come when any one of those wretches, that are now in hell, may be able with truth to say, that at the rate

of one tear for a thousand years, he might have shed tears enough to drown the whole world, and fill up the immense space between heaven and earth: and happy would he be if his torments were then to have an end. But, alas! after these millions of millions of ages, he shall be as far from the end of his misery, as he was the first day he fell into hell. Compute after this, if thou pleasest, as many hundred thousand millions of years as thy thoughts can reach to; nay, suppose the whole surface of the earth to be covered with numeral figures; cast up, if thou canst, this immense sum of years, and then multiply it by itself, and multiply again a second time the product by itself; and then, at the foot of this immense account write down, here begins eternity. O terrible eternity! Is it possible that they who believe thee should not fear thee? Is it possible, that they who fear thee, should dare to sin?

4. Consider, that in this eternity it would be some small comfort to the damned, if their pains, like those of this life, had any intermission or abatement. But, alas! their torments are always the same; their eternal fever never abates. For as their sins are always the same, and the gate of mercy and pardon is eternally shut upon them; so the punishment of their sins shall always continue in one and the same degree of rigor, without the least remission or diminution. *The rich glutton in hell*, Luke xvi. has not yet been able to obtain so much as that single drop of water, for which he so earnestly begged; nor will he ever obtain it for all eternity. Nor shall length of time enure these wretches to those evils which they suffer, so as to make them the more supportable; nor use and custom harden them against

them; but after millions of ages their torments shall be as fresh, and their feeling of them the same, as on the first day. O great God! who can bear thy indignation, or support the weight of thy avenging hand? O! dreadful evil of mortal sin, which can enkindle this eternal flame!

THE SEVENTEENTH DAY.

On Heaven.

CONSIDER, that if God's justice be so terrible in regard to his enemies, how much more will his mercy, his goodness, his bounty, declare itself in favor of his friends! Mercy and goodness are his favorite attributes, in which he most delights: *his tender mercies*, says the royal prophet, Ps. cxliv. *are above all his works*. What then must his blessed kingdom be, which in his goodness he has prepared for his beloved children, for the manifestation of his riches, his glory and magnificence for all eternity? A kingdom, which the Son of God himself has purchased for us, at no less price than that of his own most precious blood. No wonder then that the apostle cries out, 1 Cor. ii. 9. *That neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those that love him*. No wonder that this beatitude is defined by divines, a perfect and everlasting state, replenished with all that is good, without the least mixture of evil; a general and universal good, filling brimful the vast capacity of our affections and desires, and eternally securing us from all fear or danger of want or change. O! here it is that the servants of God, as the psalmist declares, Ps. xxxv. *shall be inebriated with the plenty of God's house, and shall be made to drink of the torrent of his pleasure*; even of that foun-

tain of life, which is with him, and flows from him, into their happy souls for ever and ever.

2. Consider, that although this blessed kingdom abounds with all that can be imagined good and delightful, yet that there is one sovereign good, in the sight, love and enjoyment of which consists the essential beatitude of the soul, and that is God himself, whom the blessed ever see face to face; and, by the contemplation of his infinite beauty, are set on fire with seraphic flames of love, and by a most pure and amiable union are transformed in a manner into God himself: as when brass or iron in the furnace is perfectly penetrated by the fire, it loseth its own nature, and becometh all flame and fire. Happy souls! What can be wanting to compleat your joys who are in perfect possession of your God, the overflowing source of all good; who have within and without you, the vast ocean of endless felicity! O the excessive bounty of our God, who giveth his servants, in reward of their loyalty, so great a good, which is nothing less than himself, the immense joy of angels. O! shall that not suffice, my soul, to make thee happy, which makes God himself happy!

3. Consider the glory and beauty of the heavenly Jerusalem, which the holy scripture, to accommodate itself to our weakness, represents to us under the notion of such things as we most admire here below; so St. John in the Apocalypse, describing this blessed city, tells us, that its walls are of precious stones, and its streets of pure and transparent gold: that these streets are watered with the river of the water of life, resplendent as chrystal, which flows from the throne of God: and that on the banks of this river on both sides grows the tree of life; that there shall be no night, nor any sun nor moon,

but that the Lord God shall be its light for ever, O blessed Jerusalem! O! how glorious are the things that are said of thee, o city of God! But what wonder? For if our great God has given us such, and so noble a palace here below, in this place of banishment, beautified with this sun, moon and stars, furnished and adorned with this infinite variety of plants, flowers, trees and living creatures of so many sorts, all subservient to man; if, I say, he has so richly provided for us in this vale of tears, and region of the shade of death, what must our eternal habitation be in the land of the living! If here he is so bountiful even to his enemies in giving them so commodious, so noble a dwelling, what may not his friends and servants expect in his eternal kingdom; in which, and by which he designs to manifest to them his greatness and glory, for endless ages, in an everlasting banquet, which he has there prepared for his elect? Blessed by all creatures be his goodness for ever.

4. Consider the blessed inhabitants of this heavenly kingdom, those millions of millions of angels, of whom the prophet Daniel, having seen God Almighty in a vision, tells us, Dan. vii. *That thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand of hundreds of thousands stood before him*: that infinite multitude of saints and martyrs, and other servants of God of both sexes, gathered out of all nations, tribes and tongues; and above them all the blessed Virgin Mother of God, queen of saints and angels: their number is innumerable. But, o! who can express the happiness of enjoying this pleasant company? They are all most noble, most glorious, most wise, most holy. They are all of blood royal, all kings and queens, all children and heirs of the most high God: ever beautiful, and ever young;

crowned with wreaths of immortal glory, and shining much more brightly than the sun. Their love and charity for one another is more than can be conceived: they have all but one heart, one will, and one soul; so that the joy and satisfaction of every one is multiplied to as many fold as there are blessed souls and angels in heaven, by the inexpressible delight that each one takes in the happiness of all, and every one of the rest. Christians, let us imitate their virtues here, that we may come to their happy society hereafter, and with them eternally sing to our God the immortal song of Sion.

5. Consider, that what renders all the joys of heaven, and the felicity of the blessed completely great, is the eternity of this bliss, and that infallible certainty and security which they enjoy; that their happiness is even linked with God's eternity; that as long as God shall be God, they shall be with him in his blessed kingdom. O! my soul, how pleasant, how delightful it is to look forward into this vast eternity, and there to lose thyself in this happy prospect of endless ages! O! bless thy God, that has prepared these immortal joys for the reward of such small services, and designed them from all eternity for thee! Nor shall this immense eternity render these enjoyments any ways disagreeable or tedious by the length of the possession; but as God is an endless ocean of all good, and his divine essence an inexhaustible infinite treasure of delights, so the happiness of those that eternally enjoy him shall be always fresh, always new. Conclude then, christian soul, to contemn and forsake all that is earthly and temporal, and from this hour to begin thy journey towards this glorious, heavenly and eternal kingdom. There

thou shalt find all that thy heart can desire, immortal honors, immense riches, pure and eternal pleasures, life, health, beauty never fading, &c. O! this alone is thy true home, the land of the living.

THE EIGHTEENTH DAY,

On the small Number of the Elect.

CONSIDER those words of Christ, *many are called but few are chosen*; which contain a great and dreadful truth, frequently inculcated by the mouth of truth itself, to rouse unthinking mortals from their profound lethargy, into which the enemy has lulled them. This is one of those lessons, which he has laid down for a foundation of christian morality, in his divine sermon on the mountain: where he bids us, St. Mat. vii. 13, 14. *Enter in at the narrow gate, for broad is the gate, and wide is the way, that leads to damnation, and many there are that enter by it.* O! how narrow is the gate and strait the way that leads to life, and few there are that find it. Hence in the same sermon, he declares to us, that *not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father that is in heaven, viz. by a faithful compliance with the law of God and his Gospel.* Without this, he assures us, that it will avail us nothing, even to have done miracles in his name. *Many shall say to me on that day (of judgment) Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and done many wonders in thy name? And then I will declare to them, that I never knew them, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.* Good God! what will become of us, if those, that have even done miracles in thy name, shall nevertheless be excluded thy eternal kingdom?

2. Consider how many ways this frightful truth has been declared or prefigured to us in the Old Testament. Of all the inhabitants of the earth, only eight souls, viz. Noah and his family, were preserved by the ark, from the waters of the deluge: of six hundred thousand of the children of Israel, who came out of the land of Egypt under the conduct of Moses, only two persons, Joshua and Caleb, entered Canaan, the land of promise; which figure the apostle St. Paul expressly applies to us christians, 1 Cor. x. To the same effect the prophet Isaias, chap. xxiv. 13. 14. likens those that shall escape the divine vengeance, to that small number of olives that remains on the tree after the fruit is gathered; or to the few branches of grapes that are found on the vines after a well gleaned vintage. Ah! christians, hear then, and obey the voice of your Saviour, when he bids you, St. Luke xiii. 24. *Contend, that is, strive with all your force to enter in at the narrow gate, for many, I assure you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able: because the generality of christians, though they use some endeavours to enter, yet do not strive with all their force; they are not thoroughly in earnest in their seeking, and therefore shall never find.* Hear again with fear and trembling the great apostle St. Peter, when he tells you, that *if the just will hardly be saved, where will the sinner appear?* First epistle, chap. iv. 18, O my soul, let us then *take care, as the same apostle admonishes, 2 Pet. i. by good works to make our election sure;* and if others will go in crowds to hell, let us resolve not to go with them for company's sake

3. Consider, that though the scripture had said nothing of the small number of the elect, yet that this truth must appear evident to us, if we

compare the lives of the generality of christians with the gospel of Christ, and his holy commandments. *If thou wilt enter into life, says our Lord, Matt. xix. keep the commandments.* There is no other way to life everlasting. And *the first and greatest* of all the *commandments* is this, *thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength,* Matt. xxii. Now how few are there that keep this commandment? It is easy to say, with the generality of christians, that we love God with our whole heart; but what is the practice of our lives? Does not self-love, vain-glory, sensuality, &c. on every occasion take place of God? If so, it is in vain to say we love him above all things. And yet, there is no salvation without this love. Think well on this. Besides, the apostle St. James declares, chap. iv. 4. *That whosoever will be a friend of this world, becomes an enemy of God.* And St. John, Epist. 1. chap. ii. 15. *If any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* And Christ himself declares, that *we cannot serve two masters,* Mat. vi. 24. How then can we think to reconcile the conduct of the greatest part of those that call themselves christians (whose whole study is to please the world, and to conform themselves to its false maxims, corrupt customs, and deluded vanities) with their expectation of the kingdom of heaven, which is not to be obtained but by using violence to ourselves, by renouncing this sinful world, and by a life of self-denial and mortification?

4. Consider how great a corruption is generally found even amongst the greatest part of true believing christians, and from thence make a judgment of their future lot. How few are proof against human respects, and the pernicious fear

of what the world will say! Alas! what numbers sacrifice their eternal salvation to this cursed fear, by rather chusing to forfeit the grace of God, than the false honor and esteem of this world! How many of those, whose birth and fortune have advanced them above the level of their fellow mortals, live continually in the state of damnation, by a cursed disposition of never putting up with an affront, and of preferring their worldly honor before their conscience! Unhappy men! who, by conforming themselves now to those false maxims of deluding worldlings, will be trampled under foot by insulting devils for all eternity! How few masters of families are sincerely solicitous for those under their charge, to see that instructions be not wanting, devotions be not neglected, &c. and that nothing scandalous or sinful lurk under the favor of their negligence or connivance! and yet the apostle assures us, that if any man neglects the care of his family, he is worse than an infidel, 1 Tim. v. 8. How few parents effectually take care to bring up their children from their infancy in the fear of God, and early to inspire into them the horror of sin above all evils! Ah! what a double damnation will the greatest part bring upon themselves, by sacrificing these tender souls to the devil and the world, which they might with so much ease have consecrated to heaven! In fine, not to run over all states of life in particular, is it not visible that injustice, impurity, pride, detraction, &c. every where reign amongst christians; and that the number of those who live up to the gospel is very small? Good God! have mercy on us, and give us grace to be of the number of the few, that so we may be of the number of the saved.

THE NINETEENTH DAY.

On Mortal Sin.

CONSIDER, that there is not upon earth, nor even in hell itself, a monster more hideous, more filthy and abominable, than mortal sin: a monster, that is the first-born of the devil; or to speak more properly, is the parent both of the devil and hell. There was not in the whole universe a creature more beautiful, more perfect, more accomplished with all kinds of gifts, both of nature and grace, than was the bright angel Lucifer and his companions: yet one mortal sin, and that only consented to in thought, changed them in an instant into ugly devils, just objects of horror and abomination to God and man. What effect, think ye, will sin have upon man who is but dust and ashes, if it blast so foully the stars of heaven? It was this monster, sin, that cast our first parents out of paradise, and condemned both them and their posterity, to innumerable miseries, and to both a temporal and eternal death. It was sin drowned the world with the waters of the flood; and daily crowds hell with millions of poor souls, to be the fuel of endless flames. Good God! deliver us from this cursed evil.

2. Consider, that sin is the death of the soul. For as it is the soul of a man, which gives life to his body, and consequently that body is dead, from which the soul is gone; so it is the grace of God which is the life of the soul; and that soul is dead, which by mortal sin has lost her God and his grace; if, then, a dead carcass, from which the soul is gone, be so loathsome and frightful, that few could endure to pass one night in the same bed with such a bed-fellow; how is it possible, unhappy sinner, that thou canst

endure to carry continually about with thee a carcase of a soul dead in mortal sin, which is far more loathsome and hideous! Ah! beg of God that he would open thy eyes to see thy own deplorable state, to detest the hellish monster sin, which thou hast so long nourished in thy breast, and which is the true cause of all thy misery.

3. Consider what the soul loses by sin; and what she gains to recompence this loss. She loses the grace of God, the greatest of all treasures; and in losing this, she loses God himself. She loses the fatherly protection and favor of God; she loses the dignity of a child of God, and spouse of Christ: she loses her right and title to an eternal kingdom: she is stript of all the gifts of the Holy Ghost, robbed of all the merits of her whole life; becomes a child of hell, and a slave of the devil; spiritually possessed by him, and with him liable to an eternal damnation: and this is all she gains by sin; because *the wages of sin is death*, Rom. vi. the death of the soul here, and a second and eternal death hereafter. Ah! wretched sinners, open your eyes to see, and bewail your lamentable blindness, in thus exchanging God for the devil, heaven for hell.

4. Consider that sin is infinitely odious and detestable in the sight of God, as being infinitely opposite to his sovereign goodness. He hates it with an eternal and necessary hatred; and can no more cease to hate it, than he can cease to be God. Hence if the justest man upon earth were to be so unhappy, as to fall into any one the least mortal sin, he would in that same moment become the enemy of God, and if he were to die in that guilt, would certainly feel the weight of God's avenging justice for all eternity. Ah! christians, never let us be so mad as to venture to be at war with God. Alas! how many and how dreadful

judgments does he daily exercise upon sin and sinners? How many, in punishment of sin, are snatched away in the flower of their age, by sudden and unprovided death? How many die in despair? How many, after having long abused God's graces, are given up to a reprobate sense, to a hardness of heart, the worst and most terrible of all his judgments? O! let us tremble at the thoughts of so great a misfortune; let us be convinced that there can be no misery so great as that which we incur by mortal sin; and that we are more our own enemies, and do ourselves more mischief, by consenting to any one mortal sin, than all the men upon earth, and all the devils in hell could do us, though they were all to conspire together to do their worst: because all that they can do, so long as we do not consent to sin cannot hurt the soul; whereas we ourselves by consenting to any one mortal sin, bring upon our own souls a dreadful and eternal death. Good God! never suffer us to be so blind as to become thus the murderers of our own souls.

5. Consider, o my soul, and tremble at the sight of that multitude of treasons against thy God, by which thou hast so often provoked his indignation in the whole course of thy life. Alas! is it not too true, that thou no sooner didst come to the use of reason, than thou didst abandon thy king and thy God, under the wings of whose fatherly protection thou hadst happily past the days of thy innocence? Ah! how early didst thou run away from the best of fathers, and, like the prodigal child, squandering away thy substance in a strange land, hast sought in vain to satisfy thy appetite with the husks of swine. Pass over in thy remembrance, in the bitterness of thy soul, all the years of thy life; and see what treasures of iniquity in thought, word, and deed, will discover

themselves to thy eyes: see how long thou hast unconcernedly sported thyself on the brink of a dreadful precipice, having no more than a hair's breadth betwixt thy soul and hell. Be confounded at thy past folly; admire and adore the goodness of thy God; and now at least resolve to embrace his mercy.

THE TWENTIETH DAY.

On the Relapsing Sinner.

CONSIDER, that if any one mortal sin be so heinous a treason against the sovereign majesty of God, as we have seen in the foregoing chapter; if every such sin be an abomination to our Lord and the death of the soul of that unhappy sinner, who is guilty of it; what must we think of the miserable condition of relapsing sinners, that is, of such christians who are continually falling again and again into the same mortal sins, after repeated confessions and solemn promises of amendment? Alas! what can we think, but that by this method of life they are treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath: and will in all appearance, sooner or later, draw down a dreadful vengeance upon their own heads? Because by every relapse their crime is aggravated, and their latter condition becomes worse than the former.

2. Consider the ingratitude, the perfidiousness, the contempt of God, which the relapsing sinner is guilty of, as often as, after his reconciliation, he returns like a dog to the vomit. He is guilty of the highest ingratitude, in treading under foot the grace of reconciliation, by which he had been a little before raised from the dunghill of sin, and even drawn out of the jaws of hell; and by a distinguishing mercy restored to the friendship of

God, to the dignity of child of God, and heir of heaven. He is guilty of a base perfidiousness, in breaking his solemn word given to God in his confession. He is guilty of a notorious contempt of the divine majesty, in banishing God from his soul, after having invited him in, and introducing satan in his place; and this after a full knowledge and experience of both sides. Good God! to put the whole universe in balance with thee, would be a most heinous affront; since heaven, and all the powers thereof, the earth and seas, and all things therein, are less than a grain of sand, if compared to thee: what then must we think of the unparalleled injury done thee by the relapsing sinner, when putting thee and satan in scales, he gives the preference to the devil!

3. Consider the dreadful danger to which the relapsing sinner is daily exposed, from the sword of the divine justice hanging over his guilty head, and, daily provoked by his ingratitude and insolence. Alas! we are all mortal: we neither know the day nor the hour that will be our last; if we be surprised by death in the state of mortal sin, as millions have been, we are irrecoverably lost. If then it be a madness at any time to risk eternity, by consenting to a mortal sin, how much more to provoke the almighty by frequent relapses, and by a practice of abusing his graces and mercy at every turn? Ah! what multitudes of souls have been thus betrayed into that dismal pit of never-ending woe, where the worm never dies, and the fire never is quenched! Unhappy wretches! they designed as little to damn themselves as any of us; but God will not be laughed at.

4. Consider another evil which the sinner, who frequently falls back into the same sins, has too just reason to apprehend, is the insincerity of his past repentance. For, in reality what appear-

ance is there that his sorrow and resolution of amendment have been such as God requires, when after so many confessions he is still the same man? True contrition is a sovereign grief, by which the penitent detests his sin above all other evils, with a full determination and firm resolution of never returning to it any more. Now how is it likely, that the relapsing sinner detests sincerely his sin above all evils, with a firm purpose of amendment, when he is soon so easily prevailed upon by the first temptation to return to it again?

5. Consider the remedies and means, by which we are to be preserved from this pernicious evil of relapsing into mortal sin. The first is to avoid the dangerous occasions, which have or probably may draw us into the same sins: without this care to fly the occasions of sin, the strongest resolution of amendment will prove ineffectual, as we daily see by woeful experience: for *he that loves the danger shall perish in it*, Eccl. iii. 27. No pretexts of worldly concerns must here be put in balance with eternity: we must part with hand or eye, sooner than lose our souls. Another main preservative against relapse, is to labor by fervent prayer, and diligent frequenting of the sacraments, to suppress the unhappy dispositions that insensibly lead thereunto; vigorously to resist the first motions to evil; and to strive with all possible diligence to root out that wretched propensity to sin, which former sins have left in the soul. Ah! how hard it is to maintain a castle, where the enemy has already surprized the avenues, and has a strong party within, ready to open the gates to him! The third and chief remedy against relapse, is for the penitent carefully to nourish in his heart a truly penitential spirit, daily to renew his sorrow for his sins, and to

recount in the sight of God, in the bitterness of his soul, all his past iniquities; daily to admire and adore that mercy, which has borne with him so long, and to value above all treasures that grace of reconciliation, by which he has been drawn out of so much misery; daily to beg of God with all the fervor of his soul, sooner to take him out of this world, than to suffer him any more to die to him by mortal sin. Good God! grant that this may be always the disposition of our souls. Amen. Amen.

THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

On doing Penance for our Sins.

CONSIDER those words of Christ, Luke xiii. 3, 5. *Except you do penance, you shall all perish.* Behold here a general rule, nor does our Lord make any exception. Penance then is necessary, first, for all those whose conscience accuses them of mortal sin: alas! such as these must either do penance for their sins, or burn for them for all eternity. Poor sinners! their state is most deplorable! they are playing upon the brink of hell, and every moment one or other of them is tumbling down into that bottomless pit; and is it possible, they should be unconcerned under so great and evident a danger? Why then do they not lay hold of the grace of penance, the only plank that can save them after shipwreck; the only means left for the salvation of their souls. Secondly, penance is necessary for all those, who, though their conscience accuses them not at present, yet have in their past life been guilty of such mortal offences. Ah! christians, any one mortal sin is enough for us to do penance for all our life. And how can we do less, if we consider what mortal sin is; what it is to have been the enemies of God; what it is

to have been under the sentence of eternal damnation; and never certainly to know whether this sentence has been cancelled? Is not this sufficient to oblige us to a penitential life? Can we otherwise pretend to be secure? Even these, (and God best knows how few they are) who are not conscious to themselves of having committed any such sin in their whole life time, must not therefore think themselves exempt from the obligation of doing penance, as well because of their hidden sins, as those which they may have occasioned in others; for *no man knows whether he be worthy of love or hatred*, Eccl. ix. 1. as also because a penitential life is the best security against sin, which will insensibly prevail over us, if not curbed by self-denial, mortification, and penance.

2. Consider that as to the method of penance, different rules must be prescribed to different persons. Those who have the misfortune to be actually in the state of mortal sin, or what is still more deplorable, are plunged in the depth of a habit of one or more kinds of mortal sins, as soon as their eyes are opened to discover the hellish monster, which they carry about with them, must, like the prodigal child, arise without delay, to return to their father. A sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart is what God above all things calls for at their hands; this ought to be the foundation of all their penance: without this, corporal austerities will be of small account. Such sinners ought to give themselves no rest, till they have made their peace with their God: their sin ought to be always before their eyes. Their first thoughts in the morning ought to be upon their misfortune, in being at so great a distance from their God, enslaved to the devil, and liable to be his companions in eternal misery:

the like ought to be their last thoughts at night; when, like the penitent David, they ought to wash their beds with their tears. As often as they appear before God in prayer, it ought to be in the spirit of the humble publican, looking upon themselves as unworthy to lift up their eyes to heaven, or towards the altar of God; and with him, striking their breasts, with a Lord be merciful to me a sinner. Thus will they certainly obtain mercy from him, who is the father of mercy.

3. Consider, that after the sinner has done his endeavours to seek a reconciliation with his offended God, by a sincere repentance and confession of his sins, he must not think himself exempt from any further penance, as if he had now no just debt to discharge to the justice of God, no obligation of making satisfaction for his sins by penitential works, and of bringing forth fruits worthy of penance. This would be a great and dangerous error. Nor must he content himself with barely acquitting himself of the penance enjoined by his confessor, which it is to be feared seldom is sufficient to satisfy fully the justice of God. Alas! if sinners were truly sensible of the enormous injury done to God by mortal sin, as true penitents must be, they would certainly do penance in another manner than too many do; they would be more in earnest in chastising their own sinful flesh by penitential works, and thus making a more proportionable satisfaction for their past treasons.

4. Consider that the true manner of doing penance for our sins, is better learnt from the holy fathers and doctors of the church, than from the loose maxims of worldlings, or the practice of too many penitents in this degenerate age. Let us give ear then to those lights of the church, and follow their directions on this important subject.

“God himself has taught us,” says St. Cyprian. (*L. de Lapsis*) “in what manner we are to crave mercy of him, he himself says, *return to me with your whole heart, in fasting, and weeping and mourning*, Joel ii. Let us then return to the Lord with our whole heart; let us appease his wrath by fasting, weeping, and mourning, as he admonishes us.—Let the greatness of our grief equal the heinousness of our sins.—We must pray earnestly, we must pass the day in mourning, and the night in watching and weeping, spending all our time in penitential tears. Our lodging should be on the floor strewed with ashes. Our covering hair-cloth, &c. After having cast off the garment of Christ, we should not now seek any worldly clothing.—We must employ ourselves now in good works, by which our sins may be purged away. We must give frequent alms, by which our souls may be delivered from death.” So far St. Cyprian. With whom agrees St. Pacian, in his exhortation to penance. “If any one call you to the bagnio, you must renounce all such delights. If any one invite you to a banquet, you must say: such invitations are for those that have not had the misfortune to lose their God. I have sinned against the Lord, and am in danger of perishing eternally. What have I to do with feasts, that have offended my God? You must make your court to the poor; you must beg the prayers of widows; you must cast yourself at the feet of the priests; you must implore the intercession of the church: you must try all means, which may prevent your perishing everlastingly.” And St. Ambrose, in his second book of penance, chap. x. “Can any one imagine that he is doing penance, whilst he is indulging his ambition in the pursuit of honors, whilst he is following wine, &c. The true penitent must renounce the world, must

abridge even the necessary time of sleep, must interrupt it with his sighs, and cut it short with his prayers." And St. Cæsarius of Arles, Hom. viii. "As often as we visit the sick, or those that are in prison, or reconcile together those that are at variance one with another; as often as we fast on days commanded by the church—give alms to the poor that pass by our door, &c. By these, and such like works, our small sins are daily redeemed. But this alone is not enough for capital crimes; we must add tears and lamentations, and long fasts; and give large alms to the utmost of our power." Thus, as the same saint tells us, Hom. i. "By present mortification will be prevented the future sentence of eternal death; thus by humbling the guilty will the guilt be consumed: and by this voluntary severity, the wrath of a dreadful judge will be appeased—These short, penitential labors will pay off those vast debts, which otherwise everlasting burning will never be able to discharge." Christians, let us follow in practice these excellent guides.

THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

Against Delay of Repentance.

CONSIDER that of all the deceits of satan, by which he deludes poor sinners to their eternal ruin, there is none greater or more dangerous than this, by which he persuades them to put off their repentance and conversion from time to time, till there is no more time for them. Alas! thousands and millions of poor souls have been thus betrayed into everlasting flames, who never designed to damn themselves by dying in sin, any more than any one of us at present does. But by putting off their conversion, they have, by a just judgment of God, been surprised by death, when they least expected it; and, dying as they lived, have

been justly sentenced to that second and everlasting death: unhappy wretches! who would not believe their just judge, who so often warns them in the gospel to watch; and declares to them that otherwise he shall come at a time when they least expect him. Ah! how dreadful and how common are these unprovided deaths!

2. Consider the great presumption of sinners, who put off their reconciliation with an offended God till another time, shutting their ears to his voice, by which he calls them at present; and refusing him entrance into their heart, where he stands and knocks. Alas! if he withdraws himself they are undone for ever: how dare they then treat him with so much contempt? Is it not an infinite goodness, and inexpressible condescension in this sovereign majesty to call after them, when they are running from him; and so earnestly to press them, without any interest on his side, to return to him who is their only good, and only happiness? What then ought they not to apprehend from his justice, if they obstinately and insolently refuse to embrace his mercy? How dare they pretend to dispose of the time to come, or promise themselves greater graces hereafter, than those which they now abuse? Do they not know that God alone is master of time and grace, and that by his just judgment those who presume to tempt him in this manner, generally speaking, die in their sins? Ah! it is too true, that he who has promised pardon to the sinner that is sincerely converted, has neither promised time nor efficacious grace to those who defer their conversion.

3. Consider the great folly of sinners, who put off their conversion to God till another time, upon pretence of doing it more easily hereafter: whereas, both reason and experience make it evident, that the longer they defer this work, the harder it is

to bring it about. And how can it be otherwise, since by this delay, and by adding daily sin to sin, their sinful habits grow daily stronger; the devil's power over them increases; and God Almighty, who is daily more and more provoked, by degrees, is less liberal of his graces, so that they become less frequent and less pressing: till at length, by accustoming themselves to resist God's grace, they fall into the wretched state of blindness and hardness of heart, the very broad road to final impenitence!

4. Consider the unparalleled madness of those who defer their conversion upon the confidence of a death-bed repentance; designing to put a cheat upon God's justice, by indulging themselves in sin all their life time; and then making their peace with God, when they can sin no longer. Unhappy wretches! that will not consider that *God is not to be mocked: that what a man soweth, the same shall he reap*, Gal. vi. 7. 8. The general rule is, that as a man lives so he dies. A rule so general, that in the whole scripture we have but one example of a person who died well after a wicked life, viz. of the good thief; an example so singular in all its circumstances, as to give no kind of encouragement to such sinners, who entertain a premeditated design of giving the slip to God's justice by a death-bed conversion. Ah! how dreadfully difficult must it be for a dying sinner, in whom the habit of sin by long custom is turned into a second nature, to attain to that thorough change of heart, that sincere sorrow and detestation of sin above all evils, that love of God above all things, which he never thought of in his life-time; and which now at least is certainly necessary. Ah! how deceitful too often are those tears, which are shed by dying sinners, (as we see in the case of king Antiochus) which, being wholly influ-

enced by the fear of death, prevail not with the just judge. And if there be so much danger, even when tears are plentifully shed, what must there be, when, as it commonly happens, either the dulness and stupidity caused by the sickness, or the pains and agonies of the body and mind are so great, as to hinder any serious application of the thoughts to the greatest of all our concerns; for if a little head-ach be enough to hinder us from being able to pray with any devotion, what must the agonies of death, be? No wonder then, that the saints and servants of God make so little account of these death-bed performances. Especially since, as we see by daily experience, those who have made the greatest shew of repentance, when they were in danger of death have no sooner escaped that danger, but are still the same men they were before. O christians, let us not then be imposed upon by the false and flattering discourses of men, who are so free in pronouncing favorably of all those, who after a life spent in sin, make some shew of repentance at their death. Let us rather tremble at the deplorable case of such souls; and remember that God's judgments are very different from those of men.

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

On Time and Eternity.

CONSIDER how precious a thing time is which we are apt to squander away, as if it were of no value. Time is the measure of our lives, and as much as we lose of our time so much of our life is absolutely lost. All our time is given us in order to gain eternity; and there is not one moment of our time, in which we may not work for eternity; and in which we may not store up immense treasures for a happy eternity: as many therefore as we lose of these precious moments, they are so many lost eternities. This present time is the only time of working: it is the

only time we can call our own, and God only knows how long it will be so. It is short, it flies away in an instant, and when once it is gone, it cannot be recalled; the very moment in which we are reading this line, is just passing, never, never more to return. Every hour is posting away without stopping one moment till it be swallowed up in the immense gulph of eternity: and as many of these hours or moments as are lost, are lost for ever, the loss is irreparable. Learn hence, o my soul, to set a just value upon thy present time; learn to husband it well, by employing it in good works.

2. Consider, christian soul, what thy thoughts will be, at the approach of death, of the value of this time, which thou makest so little of at present. What wouldst thou not then give for some of those hours, which thou lovest now in vanity and sin? Ah! the dreadful anguish that will rack the soul of the dying sinner, when seeing himself at the brink of a miserable eternity, he shall wish a thousand times, but all in vain, that he could but call back one day, or even one hour of this time past, and had but the same health and strength as he formerly had, to employ it in the love of God, and sincere repentance for his sins. Ah! worldlings, why will you then be so blind as not to see, that any one of these hours which you daily squander away, is indeed more valuable than ten thousand worlds!

3. Consider what will be the sentiments of the damned in hell of the value of time, when time shall be no more: how bitterly will they regret for all eternity, all those hours, days, months, and years, which were allowed them by the bounty of their Creator, during the space of their mortal life; by the due employment of which, they might have prevented that misery, to which they are now irrevocably condemned;

and might have made themselves eternally and infinitely happy; but alas! they would not work whilst the time was, whilst they had the day-light before them: the night, the dismal and eternal night is now come, in which it is too late to work; and during which, they shall eternally condemn their past folly and madness, in neglecting and abusing their precious time. Ah! christians, let us be wise at their expence. But what do you think will be the sentiments of the blessed in heaven of this precious time? Truly, if it were possible, and if their happy state could admit of such a thing as grief, there is nothing those blessed souls would regret more than the loss of any of those moments, which in their life-time had not been well husbanded: when they shall clearly see, in the light of God, what an immense increase of glory and happiness they might have acquired, by the due employment of those precious moments.

4. Consider that as all time is short, and passes quickly away, so all temporal enjoyments, honors, riches, and pleasures of this world, are all transitory, uncertain and unconstant. Only eternity, and the goods or evils, which it comprises, are truly great, as being without end, without change, without comparison; admitting of no mixture of evil in its goods, nor any alloy of comfort in its evils. O! the vanity of all temporal grandeur; which must so soon be buried in the coffin. O! how quickly does the glory of this world pass away? A few short years are more than any one can promise himself: and after that, poor sinner, what will become of thee? Alas, the worms will prey upon thy body, and merciless devils on thy unrepenting soul. Thy worldly friends will forget thee. The very

stones, on which thou hast got thy name engraved, will not long out-live thee. O! how true is that sentence, *Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity: but to love God and serve him alone?*

A. Kempis. It is thus only we shall be wise for eternity; all other wisdom is but folly.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY,

On the Presence of God.

CONSIDER, that God is every where. *If I ascend into heaven, says the Psalmist, Psal. cxxxviii. 8. thou art there; if I descend into hell, thou art there.* He fills both heaven and earth; and there is no created thing whatsoever, in which he is not truly and perfectly present. In him we live, in him we move; our very being is in him. As the birds, wherever they fly, meet with the air, which encompasses them on all sides; and the fishes swimming in the ocean every where meet with the waters; so we, wherever we are, or wherever we go, meet with God; we have him always with us; he is more intimately present to our souls, than our souls are to our bodies. Alas! poor soul of mine, how little have we thought of this? And yet it is an article of our faith, in which we have been instructed from the very cradle. Let us seriously reflect on this truth for the future: let us strive to be always with him, who is always with us.

2. Consider that God being every where, sees us wherever we are, all our actions are done in his sight; our very thoughts, even the most secret motions and dispositions of our hearts, cannot be concealed from his all-seeing eye. In vain does the sinner flatter himself in his crimes like the libertine mentioned by the wise man, Eccl. xxiii. 28. that *darkness encompasses him,*

and walls cover him, and no one sees him whom he fears. Alas! the eyes of the Lord are infinitely brighter than the rays of the sun; and no darkness, no clouds, no walls or curtains can keep out his piercing sight, which clearly sees the very centre of the soul: and no wonder that he should clearly see what passes there, where he is always present.

3. Consider that God, who is in all places, and in all things, is every where whole and entire, because he is indivisible; he is every where with all his majesty, with all his attributes, with all his perfections. We have then within us, my soul, the eternal, immense, omnipotent, self-existent, infinite Lord and Maker of all things; and we are within this infinite being; wherever we go we have him with us. He is every where with his omnipotence, to which all things are subject; what then have his friends to fear? He is every where with his infinite justice; how then can his enemies be secure? He is every where infinitely good to his children; his love and kindness to them surpasses that of the most tender mother: he watches over them with his providence, his wisdom wonderfully disposes of all things for their greater good: what comfort then, must this thought of the presence of God afford his servants, and those that truly fear and love him?

4. Consider that God being every where, requires of us that we should every where take notice of his presence. Can there be an object more worthy of our attention? And shall we then be so unfortunately blind, as to amuse ourselves about every trifle that comes in our way, and let our God, the sovereign beauty and sovereign good, pass unregarded? Ah! let us never regret our being alone, since we have always

in our company that infinite being, the sight and enjoyment of which is the eternal felicity of angels. What if we see him not with the eyes of the body, is he the less present? And have we not within us other more noble eyes, viz. the eyes of the understanding, which, assisted by divine faith, may and ought to contemplate their God, always present in the very midst of us? Ah! the sweetest repose is to be found in him; all other recreations are vain, if compared to this.

5. Consider that God being every where present; requires of us that we should comport ourselves, both as to the interior and exterior, in such manner, as becomes those who are standing in his sight. The presence of a person, for whom we have a respect, is enough to put a restraint upon us from doing any thing that is light and indecent: and shall not the infinite majesty of God, in comparison with whom the greatest monarchs of the earth are less than nothing, by his presence keep us in that exterior modesty and interior reverence, which may please his eyes? Ought we not even to annihilate ourselves in the sight of this immense divinity! But, o good God, how far are we from these dispositions, as often as we dare to sin in thy almighty presence, and fly in the face of thy sovereign majesty! Alas! my poor soul, how should we be ashamed to have our sin known to such and such persons, whose esteem we covet! we should be ready even to die with confusion to have them published to the whole world. We should be very unwilling to have even our vain and ridiculous amusements, though otherwise innocent, laid open to the eyes of our neighbours. And why will we not consider the all-seeing eye of our great God, which is always

upon us, which clearly discerns all that passes in the most secret closet of our heart? Why will we not reflect, that our evil thoughts being known to God, is indeed a greater shame, a greater loss of our true honor, than if they were published by sound of trumpet over the universe.

6. Consider that God, being every where present, every where requires our love: he is every where infinitely amiable, infinitely beautiful, infinitely good, infinitely perfect: and wherever we are, he is infinitely good to us. Why then do we not love him? He is all love, *Deus Caritas est*, says St. John, 1 John iv. *God is love*. We have this loving and most lovely God always with us; and always in us; why do not we run to his embraces? He is a fire that ever burns: this fire is in the very centre of our souls; how then come we to feel so little of its flames? It is because we will not stand by it. It is because we will not keep our souls at home, attentive to that great guest who resides within us, but let them continually wander abroad upon vain created amusements. *Turn, o my soul into thy rest*, Psalm cxiv. 7. Turn away my soul, from all these worldly toys which keep thee from thy God; and return to him thy true and only happiness, and in him repose for ever.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

On the Passion of Christ: and first on our Saviour in the Garden of Gethsemani.

CONSIDER how the Son of God, who came down from heaven, and clothed himself with our humanity, in order to be our priest and our victim, and to offer himself a bleeding sacrifice for our sins to his eternal Father, was pleased to begin his passion by a bloody sweat and agony,

in the garden of Gethsemani, the night before his death. Here having left the rest of his disciples at some distance, and taken with him Peter, James, and John, who before had been witnesses of his glorious transfiguration on mount Thabor, he begins to disclose to them that mortal anguish, fear and sadness, which oppressed his heart. *My soul, saith he, is sad even unto death, Matt. xxvi.* That is, with a sadness, which even now would strike me dead, if I did not preserve myself, in order to suffer still more for you. Sweet Jesus, what can be the meaning of this? Didst thou not lately cry out, speaking of thy passion, and the desire that thou hadst of suffering for us; *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I streightened till it be accomplished? Luke xii.* Whence then comes this present sadness? Was it not thou, who hast given that strength and courage to thy martyrs, as not even to shrink under the worst of torments? And art thou thyself afraid? But, o dear Lord, I plainly understand that it was by thy own choice, that thou hast condescended so far, as to let thyself be seized by this mortal anguish. It was for my instruction; and that thou mightest suffer so much the more for me. I adore thee under this weakness, (if I may be allowed to call it so) no less than on thy throne of glory; because it is here, that I better discover thy infinite love for me.

2. Consider how our dear Saviour under this anguish and sadness betakes himself to prayer, the only sure refuge under all afflictions, the only shield in the day of battle. But take notice, my soul, with what reverence he prays to his eternal Father, prostrate on the very ground: with what fervor, *with a loud cry and tears,* says the apostle, Heb. v. 7. And learn to

imitate him. In this prayer he condescended so far as to allow the inferior part to petition, that the cup of his bitter passion might be removed from him; but then he immediately added; *yet not my will, but thine be done.* To teach us, under all trials and crosses, a perfect submission and resignation to the divine will.

3. Consider how our Saviour made two interruptions in his prayer to come and visit his disciples, but found them both times asleep. Ah! my soul, is it not thy case, like these apostles, to sleep, that is, to indulge thyself in a slothful, sensual way of living; whereas the whole life of thy Saviour was spent in laboring for thy salvation; and all that he now suffers, he suffers for thee. Ah! pity now at least his comfortless condition, whilst on the one hand his Father seems deaf to his prayers, and on the other hand his disciples are too drowsy to give any attention to him. In this desolate state an angel from heaven appears to comfort him, who is the joy of angels. O! what humility! But what kind of comfort think you, did this angel bring? No other to be sure; but the representing to him the will of his eternal Father; and humbly intreating him, in the name of heaven and earth, not to decline the imparting to poor sinners, by his infinite love, that plentiful redemption, for which he came into the world, and to undergo the ignominies and torments of one short day's continuance, in a prospect of the salvation of mankind, and of that eternal glory and honor, which the Godhead should receive from all his sufferings. Let the like consideration of God's will, his greater honor and glory, and the good of thy own soul, comfort thee also under all thy anguish and crosses. There can be no more solid comfort.

4. Consider the mortal agony which our Saviour suffered in his soul, during the prayer of this night. We may judge of the pains and anguish of his soul, by the wonderful effect they produced in his body, by casting him into that prodigious sweat of blood to such degree, as to embrue the very ground on which he lay prostrate. Sweet Jesus, who ever heard of such an agony as this? But what thinkest thou, my soul, was the true cause of all this anguish, and of this bitter agony of thy Saviour? Chiefly these three: First, a clear view and lively representation of all that he was to suffer during the whole course of his passion: so that all the ignominies and torments, that he was afterwards successively to go through, were now all at once presented before the eyes of his soul, with all their respective aggravations; by which means he suffered his whole bitter passion twice over, once by the hands of his enemies, and another time by his own most clear and lively imagination of all that he had to suffer. But why, dear Jesus, these additional agonies? Only thy love can answer me. Another cause that contributed to our Saviour's anguish, was, a distinct view of all the sins of the world from the first to the last; of all the horrid crimes and abominations of mankind, all now laid to his charge, to be canceled by the last drop of his blood. Ah! how hideous, how detestable were all these hellish monsters in the eyes of our Saviour; who alone had a just notion of their enormity, by having always before him a clear sight of the infinite majesty offended by them! O Lord, how great a share had my sins in this tragical scene! How much, alas, did they contribute to thy pains and grief? A third cause of our Saviour's agony, was the knowledge that he had of the little use

that the very christians would make of all his sufferings? To see their blindness and hardness of heart, by which they would pervert this antidote into a mortal poison, and tread under their feet his precious blood; and the eternal loss of so many millions of souls, for which he was to die. All these sad and melancholy thoughts, attacking at once the soul of our Redeemer, cast him into that mortal agony, and forced from him those streams of blood. Christians, pity now your Saviour's anguish, and resolve never more to have any hand in afflicting his tender soul by sin.

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

On our Saviour in the Court of Caiphas.

CONSIDER how our Saviour arising from his prayer, having conquered all his fears, comes to his disciples, bidding them now sleep on and take their rest, that his hour was just come, and that the traitor was just at hand. But thou, dear Lord, when wilt thou rest or sleep? Not till the last sleep of death on the hard bed of the cross. Contemplate, christians, with the eyes of your souls, the courage and readiness to suffer for you, which your Saviour shews on this occasion, by going forth to meet the traitor and his band: see with what meekness he receives the treacherous kiss of peace. And yet to make it evident that no power upon earth could take him, but with his own free will, with two words, *Ego sum, I am he*, he struck down the whole multitude that was come to apprehend him, making them all reel back and fall to the ground. After which he delivered himself into their hands: and they having bound him, dragged him along into the city, whilst his disciples all abandoning him, ran

their way, leaving him in the hands of his enemies, who presented him first before Annas, the father-in-law of the high-priest, where he was insulted by a vile servant, that gave him a blow on the face. From thence they led him to the court of Caiphas, where the chief priests and elders were assembled, longing to see this new prisoner before them, and determined to make away with him, right or wrong. Follow thou thy Saviour, my soul, every step of the way, abandoned now by all his friends: contemplate this meek lamb in the midst of these ravenous wolves, loaded with their scoffs and insolences: but carry the eyes of thy understanding still further, view the interior of his soul, and see the joy and satisfaction that he takes in complying with his eternal Father's will, and suffering for thee: and learn from hence the like dispositions in all thy sufferings.

2. Consider how our Lord was no sooner brought to the court of Caiphas the high-priest, where the great council of the Sanhedrim was assembled, but immediately after a scornful welcome they proceed to his trial, and call in the false witnesses, who were to depose against him. But see the providence of God, see the force of truth, and the wonderful innocence of this Lamb of God, notwithstanding all the malice of this impious court and their witnesses, men of neither honor nor conscience, yet all that they could alledge against him was either insignificant, or they could not agree in their story, which made their testimonies of no weight. But whilst thou adorest this providence, see and admire the meekness and patience of thy Saviour who was silent under all the provocations given by these false witnesses; giving thereby a most convincing proof of his being something more than man,

who could thus calmly hold his peace, whilst his reputation and life were both attacked by palpable calumnies. The malice of our Saviour's enemies being thus confounded, the high-priest arises, and adjures him by the living God, to tell him if he was the Christ, the Son of God! In reverence to which adorable name, our Lord made a solemn confession and profession of the truth, teaching by his example, all his followers when called to the like trial, never to be ashamed of him, or of his faith. Upon this, Caiphas rends his garments, crying out blasphemy! And they all pronounce him worthy of death. But thou, my soul, on the contrary, cry out with the angels, and all the elect of God, Rev. v. 12. *The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction, from all creatures for ever.*

3. Consider how that unjust sentence against our Redeemer was no sooner pronounced by the great council, but immediately they all, with unheard of barbarity, fell upon him like furies of hell rather than men, and discharged upon him all kinds of injuries, blows, affronts and blasphemy. See, my soul, how these hell-hounds spit in thy Saviour's face, and disgorge their filthy phlegm on that sacred forehead, where beauty and majesty sit: see, how they buffet, kick, and strike him with merciless rage, whilst he with his hands tied behind him, is not able to ward off one blow, nor has any friend there to wipe his face, or afford him any other help. See, how they cover and muffle up his face with some filthy rag, and then in scorn (as if he were a mock-prophet, and an impostor) at every blow they bid him prophesy who it was that struck him; besides many other affronts, which

he endured with an invincible patience and fortitude.

4. Consider that of all which our Saviour suffered in the court of Caiphas, nothing touched him so much to the quick, as the dangerous fall of Peter, the chief of all his apostles, and who had received the most signal favors from him. Who, after having boasted that very night, that although all the rest of the disciples should abandon their master, he would never forsake him: and that he would sooner die with him, than deny him: yet see the weakness and inconsistency of human nature; at the voice of a silly maid, he forthwith denies his master, repeats this denial a second and third time, and even swears and damns himself if he ever knew the man! Sweet Jesus! what is man? O Lord, look to me and support me by thy grace, or I shall also deny thee. The causes of Peter's fall were first, a secret pride, and presumption upon his own strength. Secondly, his neglect of the admonition of our Saviour, in sleeping, when he ought to have watched and prayed. Thirdly, his exposing himself to the danger by running into ill company. See that the like causes have not the like effect in thee, by drawing thee also to deny, and even crucify thy Lord by sin. Learn to imitate the speedy repentance of this apostle, who immediately after his fall, going out, wept bitterly; a practice which it is said, he ever after retained, as often as he heard the cock crow.

5. Consider how the high-priest and scribes, after having given sentence of death against our Saviour, retired to take their rest, leaving him in hands that were not likely to suffer him to take any rest. Oh! what a night did our Lord pass in the midst of that rabble, who, to satisfy

their own cruelty, and the malice of their masters, acted over and over again all that scene of inhumanity, which they had begun whilst their masters were there, loaded him with all kind of outrages and blasphemies. So that we may boldly affirm that one half of what our Saviour suffered that night, will not be known till the day of judgment. All which insolencies he bears in silence, and even then, whilst they are abusing him, is praying for them, and excusing them to his Father, and offering up all his sufferings in atonement for their sins. Sweet Jesus, give us grace to imitate thee.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

Our Saviour is brought before Pilate and Herod.

CONSIDER how early in the morning, notwithstanding their late sitting up, the high-priest, and his fellows in iniquity, convene a more numerous assembly of the Sanhedrim, and there again put the same question to our Saviour, Whether he was the Son of God? And receiving the same answer, confirm their former sentence. Yet as they did not think it safe for themselves, being subject to the Roman empire, to put this sentence in execution without the consent of Pontius Pilate the governor, they determined to carry him to Pilate, and by his authority to have him crucified: a kind of execution which their malice made choice of, because it was at the same time most ignominious, as being only for vile slaves and notorious criminals; and most cruel, as being a long and lingering death, under the sharpest and most sensible torments. Come now, christian soul, and contemplate thy Saviour, as he is hurried along the streets with his hands bound, from the house of the high-priest to the court of Pilate, attended

by the whole council, and their wicked ministers publishing aloud as they go, that now all his impostures were laid open, his hypocrisy discovered, and himself convicted of blasphemy. See how the giddy mob, who a little while before revered him as a prophet, now all on a sudden join with his enemies, following him with opprobrious shouts, insulting him all the way that he goes, and discharging a thousand kind of injuries and affronts upon him.

2. Consider and view the Judge of the living and the dead, standing with his hands bound as a criminal before a petty governor; and behold the process. The chief priests and princes of the people having delivered him up, and Pilate demanding what particulars they had to alledge against him, they made no scruple of inventing new calumnies, that he was a factious and seditious man, a traitor and a rebel to the government, that forbid tribute to be paid to Cæsar, and set himself up for king of the Jews. Once more take notice of the invincible patience of thy Saviour, in hearing with silence such notorious falsities as they laid to his charge; so that the governor was astonished that a man could hold his peace under such accusations, which aimed at nothing less than procuring his condemnation to the worst of deaths. However, as he plainly saw through all the disguise of the high-priest and scribes, he interpreted his silence in favor of our Saviour, only boggling a little at the word king, and having received full satisfaction upon that head, by being made to understand that the kingdom of our Saviour was not of this world, and therefore not dangerous to Cæsar's government, he determined to set him at liberty. Admire the force of innocence, which could even move a heathen, and one of the worst of men, such as Pilate was, and assure thyself,

that generally speaking, patience and silence are a thousand times better proofs of thy innocence, than returning injury for injury, and making an opprobrious and clamorous defence.

3. Consider how Pilate being convinced of our Saviour's innocence, and desirous of setting him at liberty, met with an obstinate resistance from the malicious princes and deluded people; and therefore understanding that our Saviour, as being an inhabitant of Galilee, belonged to the jurisdiction of Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee, he took occasion from thence to rid himself of their importunity by sending him to Herod. Accompany thy Lord, O my soul, in this new stage, and take notice of his incomparable meekness, whilst he passes through the streets, lined on all sides with an insulting multitude, and echoing with their reproaches and clamors. Herod was most glad of his coming, in hopes to see some miracle, and therefore put a thousand questions to him: whilst the princes of the Jews, with untired malice were repeating all their false accusations against him; but our Lord was silent still, nor would he satisfy the curiosity of Herod, nor do any thing by which he might incline this prince to free him from that death, which he so ardently desired, as being by the decrees of heaven the only means of our redemption. Blessed by all his creatures be his goodness for ever!

4. Consider how Herod, provoked by our Saviour's not consenting to gratify his inclinations of seeing a miracle, sought to revenge himself by treating him with mockery and scorn, exposing him to the scoffs of all his guards, and ordering him to be clothed in contempt with a white garment as with a fool's coat, or perhaps as a mocking; and in this dress sent him back again to Pilate, attended in the same manner as he came,

with an insulting mob, headed by the scribes and pharisees. Stand amazed, my soul, to see the wisdom of the eternal Father treated thus as a fool; and learn from hence, not to repine, or be solicitous about the judgment of the world.

5. Consider how Pilate, seeing our Saviour brought back again to his tribunal, contrived another way to bring him off, so as to give at the same time as little offence as might be to the high-priest, and the chief of the Jews. It was the custom of that nation on the day of their paschal solemnity (which was celebrated that very day) in memory of their delivery from the Egyptian bondage, to have one criminal set at liberty, whom the people should petition for: wherefore Pilate, taking advantage of this opportunity, proposed to their choice our Saviour, on one hand, and Barabbas, a notorious malefactor, robber, and murderer, on the other; making sure that they would rather chuse to have the innocent Lamb of God released, than Barabbas, the worst of criminals, to escape due punishment. Ah! Pilate, what an outrageous affront dost thou here put upon the Son of God, whilst thou pretendest to favor him? What! must the Lord of life and immortality, the King of heaven, stand in competition with the vilest of men, with the most notorious criminal that could be pitched upon? Must it be put to the votes of the mob, which of the two is the better man, and which the more worthy of death? O! the unparalleled injury! o! the unparalleled humility of my Saviour! o! King of glory, how low hast thou stooped to raise me up from the dunghill!

6. Consider, if it was an intolerable affront to compare our Saviour with Barabbas, what idea must we frame, or what name must we give to that blind people's choice, when they preferred Barabbas to Christ, and desired that the latter

might be crucified, and the former acquitted? O! see, my soul, in this wonderful humiliation of thy Lord, how deep, how dangerous was the wound of pride, which could not be cured but by such and so great humility: O! see if thine be yet cured. Examine also thyself, if thou hast not often been guilty, like these blind Jews, of preferring Barabbas to thy Saviour; by turning thy back to him for some petty interest, or filthy pleasure? If so, thou art more inexcusable than they, because thou knowest him to be the Lord of glory, at the same time as thou persecutest him by sin: whereas if they had known him to be so, they would never have preferred a Barabbas before him.

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

Our Saviour is scourged at the Pillar and crowned with Thorns.

CONSIDER how the Jews still continuing to cry out against our Lord, and in a tumultuous manner to demand his crucifixion, Pilate takes another way to bring about his being set at liberty, which was by striving to satisfy their cruelty, in ordering him to be most severely scourged. O! Pilate, how cruel is thy mercy! Is it thus that thou treatest him whom thou declarest innocent? Is this thy justice? But our sins, o my soul, required that the Lord of glory should be thus cruelly handled, and subjected to this ignominious punishment, to which none but common slaves, or the meanest wretches are liable, and to which a Roman citizen could upon no account be condemned. Stand thou and see, my soul, in what manner this sentence is executed. See how the bloody soldiers lay hands on this Lamb of God, how they strip him of all his cloths, and tie him fast to a stony pillar:

see how they discharge upon his sacred back and shoulders innumerable stripes, lashes and scourges; see how the blood comes spouting forth on all sides; see how his body is all rent and mangled by their cruelty, and the flesh laid open to the very bones; see how his enemies are all the while insulting over him, and rejoicing at his torments; whilst he, with his eyes cast up towards heaven, is offering up all that he suffers for their sins, and for those of the whole world. Ah! sinners, take a serious view of your Redeemer now, and see in his torn and mangled body the malice of sin: and learn to detest this hellish monster, which has brought the Son of God to all these sufferings.

2. Consider how these bloody ruffians having by this cruel scourging, made our Saviour's body one wound from head to foot, loose him at last from the pillar; leaving him to help himself on with his clothes as well as he can. Ah! christians, pity now your Saviour's abandoned condition, who has no one to lend him an helping hand to bind up his gaping wounds, or stanch the blood that comes flowing from them! O! present yourselves now, and offer him what service you are able: offer at least to assist him in putting on his clothes to cover his green wounds from the cold air. But o! how rough are these woollen clothes to his wounded back! Alas! instead of affording him any ease or comfort, they do but increase his sores, by their rubbing upon them.

3. Consider how the bloody soldiers had scarce given our Saviour a short respite after his scourging, when they were pushed on by the devil to act another scene of cruelty, such as never was heard of before or since: and that was, to make themselves a barbarous sport, in crowning him for a king. Therefore they drag him into the court of the Prætorium, and assemble together the whole

regiment: then violently strip him again of all his clothes, which now begin to cleave to his wounded body; set him on a bench or stool, throw about him some old ragged purple garment, twist a wreath of long hard and sharp thorns, and press it down on his sacred head, put in his hand for a sceptre a reed or cane: then in derision, coming one by one, they bend their knees before him, with a scornful salutation, Hail, King of the Jews; they spit in his face, buffet him, and taking the reed or cane out of his hand, strike him with it on the head, so driving the thorns deeper in, whilst the blood trickles down apace from the many wounds which he receives from their points. Sweet Jesus, what shall we here say, or which shall we most admire; the malice of these ministers of satan, or thy unparalleled charity, which made thee undergo such unheard of reproaches and torments for ungrateful sinners? Blessed be thy goodness for ever.

4. Consider, how Pilate hoping now, that the rage and malice of the Jews would be satisfied, so as to insist no longer upon our Saviour's death, after they should see with how much cruelty and contempt he had been treated in compliance to their fury, leads him forth as he was, with his crown of thorns on his head, and his ragged purple on his shoulders; and from an eminence shews him to the people, with an *Ecce homo*, *Behold the man*. Behold in what manner he has now been handled; cease then to seek his death any longer. Let his body, mangled from head to foot, bespeak your pity. But thou, christian soul, *behold the man*, with other kind of eyes than these hard-hearted wretches: and see to what a condition thy sins, and his own infinite charity have reduced him. Behold his head crowned with a wreath of sharp thorns, piercing on all sides his

sacred flesh, and entering into his temples with excessive pain. Behold his face quite disfigured with blows and bruises, and all besmeared with spittle and blood. Behold his whole body inhumanly rent and torn with whips and scourges; and now covered with a hard ragged garment rubbing, and at each moment increasing his wounds: and then look up, and contemplate him upon his throne of glory, and see what return thou canst make him for having thus annihilated himself for the love of thee. He desires no more of thee than an imitation of his patience and humility: see, then, in what manner thou art to practise these lessons.

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

Our Saviour carries his Cross, and is nailed to it.

CONSIDER how the malice of the Jews, no ways relenting at the sight of the Lamb of God bleeding for the sins of the world, but continuing still in a tumultuous manner to demand that he might be crucified, Pilate at last yields to their importunity, and against his own conscience, sentences our Saviour to the death of the cross. Ah! christians, has it never been your misfortune by the like cowardice to condemn your Saviour and his doctrine, and basely to renounce in the practice of your lives the maxims of his gospel, for fear of what the world will say? Has not too often a much weaker temptation than the fear of losing Cæsar's friendship, induced you to crucify again the Son of God? Be confounded and repent.

2. Consider how this sentence of death, how unjust soever from Pilate, yet as being most just from his eternal Father, and necessary for our salvation, was received with perfect submission, charity and silence by our Redeemer; who thereupon was immediately stripped again of his purple

garment, and clad with his own clothes; and a heavy cross, of length and bigness proportionable to the bearing of a man, was laid on his wounded shoulders; and two thieves or highway robbers were appointed to bear him company, and to be executed with him: to verify that prophecy, *With the wicked he was reputed*, Isai. liii. Come now, devout souls, and take a view of our Lord in this his last progress or procession. A crier leads the way, publishing aloud the pretended crimes and blasphemies of this never heard of malefactor: then follow the soldiers and executioners with ropes, hammers, nails, &c. After whom goeth, or rather creepeth along, our high-priest and victim, all bruised and bloody, with a thief on each hand, and the cross on his shoulders, dragging it forward step by step; followed and surrounded on all sides by the priests, the scribes, and the whole mob of the people, cursing, reviling and scoffing at him: whilst the cruel hangmen are hastening him forward with their kicks and blows. Ah! christians, now at least take pity on your Saviour's sufferings, and add not to his load by sin.

3. Consider how our blessed Lord having for some time, with unspeakable labor and torment, carried his cross through the streets, at last falleth down under the weight, unable to carry it any further. Wonder not, my soul, at this, since besides the load of the cross oppressing his wearied body, wounded in every part, and exhausted by the loss of so much blood, his heavenly Father has laid upon his shoulders another more insupportable weight, viz. that of the sins of the whole world. Ah! christians, it is under this intolerable burthen that your Saviour faints and falls down. Nor is he any way eased of this merciless load by Simon of Cyrene, who was compelled to take up

the cross, but bore no part of the weight of our iniquities, all which the heavenly Father laid upon his beloved Son to be cancelled with his blood and death. O infinite goodness of the Father! o infinite charity of the Son! to do and suffer so much for wretched man. O my soul, see thou never more be ungrateful to so loving a God.

4. Consider, how our Saviour being now arrived at Mount Calvary, quite wearied and spent, the ministers of hell still persecute him with unwearied cruelty: and whereas it was the custom to give to the criminals that were to die a strengthening draught of wine seasoned with myrrh, they contrived to mingle gall with the portion designed for him. After which they violently strip him of his clothes, which by this time clove fast to his sores, opening again his wounds, and exposing him naked to shame and cold in the sight of an immense multitude Draw nigh now, my soul, and see him bleeding afresh for the love of thee. Oh! see how while the cross is preparing, he falls upon his knees, and offers himself to his eternal Father a bleeding victim to appease his wrath enkindled by thy sins.

5. Consider, how the cross lying flat on the ground, they lay our dear Redeemer stretched out upon it, who like a meek Lamb makes no resistance. And first drawing his right hand to the place designed to fix it on, they drive with their hammers a sharp gross nail through the palm of his hand, forcing its way with incredible torment through the sinews, veins, muscles and bones, of which the hand is composed, into the hard wood of the cross: in the mean time the whole body, to favor that wound and the pierced sinews, was naturally drawn towards the right side; but was not long permitted to remain so; for immediately these cruel butchers laying hold of his other arm

and hand, violently drag him towards the left side, in order to nail that hand also to the place designed for it. Then pulling down his legs, they fastened his sacred feet in like manner with nails to the wood: and all this with such violent cruelty, that, it is thought, with stretching and pulling they very much strained his whole body, and dis-jointed it in many parts, according to that of the royal prophet; *they have dug my hands and feet, they have numbered all my bones*, Psalm xxi. Ah! christians, if the contracting or piercing of any one nerve or sinew; if the disjuncting or displacing of any one bone, ever so small, be so cruel a torture, what must we think of the torments which our Saviour endured in his disjuncted body? What must we think of what he suffered, when his hands and feet, where so many sinews, muscles, veins and bones all meet, were violently bored through with gross nails! O! let us never cease to admire, adore, and love his mercy.

THE THIRTIETH Day.

Our Saviour on the Cross.

CONSIDER how the bloody executioners, having now nailed our Saviour fast to the cross, begin with ropes to raise him up in the air. O! what shouts did his enemies now make, when he appeared above the people's heads? With what blasphemies did they salute him? whilst his most afflicted mother, and other devout friends, are pierced to the heart at the sight. At length they let the foot of the cross fall into the hole prepared for it, with a jolt, by which our Saviour's mangled body was not a little injured, and the wounds of his hands and feet widened, and thus he now hangs, poised in the air, in most dreadful pangs and torments, the whole weight of his body sustained by his pierced hands and feet, by which

his wounds are continually increased ; no place to rest his head on, but upon thorns ; no other bed for his wearied, and wounded body, but the hard wood of the cross.

2. Consider the infinite charity of our Saviour, and the unparalleled malice of his enemies. He, amidst his torments, cries out, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.* They grin and shake their heads at him, saying, *Vah! thou that destroyest the temple of God, and rebuilddest it again in three days, save now thyself, If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross.* With a thousand other reproaches and blasphemies, with which he is loaded, not only by the common people and soldiers, but also by the chief priest, scribes, and elders, which he hears and bears in patience and silence. But, O ! who can tell us the interior employment of his blessed soul all this while that he hangs upon the cross ? his thoughts of peace towards us, his prayers for us, the anguish and dreadful agonies of the interior part of his soul, and the inexpressible joy in the supreme part thereof, in the glory of his Father, which was to arise from that plentiful redemption, which he was then imparting to poor sinners.

3. Consider, the part that the blessed Virgin Mother bore in the sufferings of her son : and how truly here was verified that prophecy of old Simeon, *that the sword should pierce her very soul.* O ! how killing a grief must have oppressed this most tender and most loving of all mothers, when during the whole course of the passion of her dearest Son, whom she loved with an incomparable love, she was an eye-witness to all the injuries, outrages and torments that he endured. Ah ! blessed Lady, may we not truly say that the whips, thorns and nails, that pierced thy Son's flesh,

made as deep a wound in thy virgin heart: and that nothing but a miracle could have supported thy life under such excess of pain? But o! what a deep wound didst thou feel in thy soul, when thy dying Son recommended thee to his beloved disciple St. John? giving to thee the son of Zebedee in exchange for the Son of God? Blessed Virgin, we gladly acknowledge thee for our mother, bequeathed to us all in the person of St. John: o! by all thy sufferings, remember us poor banished children of Eve, before the throne of grace. Christians, learn the admirable lessons which your Lady teaches you at the foot of the cross; learn her unshaken faith and undoubted hope; learn her perfect resignation, patience and fortitude. O! learn from her to love Jesus, and detest sin, the true cause of his sufferings.

4. Consider, how all things seem now to have conspired against our dearest Lord. His father has forsaken him! his mother's presence and grief pierce him to the heart. As for his own apostles, one of them has betrayed him: another has denied him; all have abandoned him: his friends, and those whom he had most favored and miraculously cured, now either join with his persecutors, or at least are ashamed of him: his enemies triumph and insult over him; his own body by its weight is a torment to him. But what most of all afflicts him, is to see the ingratitude of christians, the little benefit they will make of his death and passion, and the eternal loss of so many souls redeemed by his precious blood. Ah! sweet Jesus, suffer me not to be one of that unhappy number: suffer me not to be so miserable, as to join with thy enemies in crucifying thee by sin!

5. Consider the lessons that our Saviour gives us by his last words upon the cross. 1st. Of per-

fect love and charity to his enemies, by praying for them, and excusing them to his eternal Father: *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* O! let us learn from our dying Redeemer this necessary lesson, to love and pray for those that hate and persecute us: and instead of aggravating their crime to excuse it and impute it to their ignorance! O! how true is it of every sinner, he knows not what he is doing, otherwise he would never dare to fly in the face of infinite majesty; he would never be so mad as to renounce heaven for a trifle, and cast himself down the precipice that leads to hell. 2dly. Learn the efficacy of a sincere conversion, and a humble confession of sins, in the plenary indulgence given by our dying Saviour to the good thief, *Amen, I say unto thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise.* 3dly. Learn a filial devotion to the Virgin Mother, recommended to us all by her Son, in the person of St. John, *Behold thy mother.* 4thly. Learn the greatness of the interior anguish of thy Saviour's soul, from those words, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Alas! it was for no other reason, but that poor sinful man might not be forsaken. 5thly. From that word of thy crucified Jesus, *I thirst,* take notice of two violent thirsts which thy Saviour endured upon the cross; the one corporal, proceeding from his having fasted so long, passed through so many torments, and shed so much blood: the other spiritual in his soul, by the vehement desire of our good and salvation. But, o! cruel wretches, who would give him nothing but vinegar to quench his corporal thirst! more cruel sinners, who instead of satisfying his spiritual thirst by gratitude and devotion, give him nothing but the gall and vinegar of sin and wickedness! 6thly. From these words of our dying Saviour, *It is consummated,*

learn to rejoice that the whole work of man's redemption is now perfected : that the figures and prophecies of the law are fulfilled : and the handwriting that stood against us is now completely cancelled by the blood of our Redeemer. 7thly. From those last words of our expiring Lord, *Father into thy hands I commend my spirit*, learn both in life and death to commit thyself wholly to thy God. Happy they, that study well these lessons which their great Master teaches them from the chair of his cross.

THE THIRTY-FIRST DAY.

On the Death of our Saviour.

CONSIDER, how our Lord having spoken these last words, *Father into thy hands I commend my spirit*, with a loud and strong voice : leaning down his head in perfect submission to his Father's will, and perfect charity to us poor sinners, to whom in this posture he offered as it were the kiss of peace, breathed forth his pure soul, and thus ended his mortal life ; which from the very first moment, till now, had been nothing else but a series of sufferings endured for us. Run in now, my soul, and approach boldly to thy Redeemer, kiss his sacred feet, view his pale limbs, count at leisure all his wounds, and lament thy sins, for which he suffered them all.

2. Consider, in the passion of our Saviour, the truth of those words which he himself delivered upon another occasion, *He that shall humble himself shall be exalted* : and see how our Lord, having humbled himself to the death of the cross, was even at that very time honored and exalted by his heavenly Father, and that many ways. For during the time he was upon the cross, the sun for three whole hours withdrew his light ; and at his death the earth trembled, the rocks were split,

and the monuments were opened: the veil of the temple, which hung before the sanctuary, was rent from top to bottom: the people touched with these wonders, went home striking their breasts; and the centurion or captain of the guards, publicly professed, that this man, whom they had crucified, was truly the Son of God. Rejoice, christian soul, to see thy Saviour's death thus honored; and learn under all events to confide in God, who will make all the malice of thy enemies turn at last to thy honor and advantage. Sit now down at the foot of the cross, and there at leisure,

3. Consider and repeat in thy mind the multitude and vast variety of sufferings which thy Saviour has endured for thee, from his entrance into the garden of Gethsemani till his expiring on the cross. View them one by one, and thou shalt see, that not one part of his sacred body (which being the most perfect, was at the same time the most sensible of pain of any that ever has been) was free from its peculiar torment. His head was crowned with thorns; his face defiled with spittle, all bruised, and black and blue with blows; his hair and beard plucked and torn; his mouth drenched with gall and vinegar; his shoulders oppressed with the weight of the cross; his hands and feet pierced with nails; his whole body exhausted with a bloody sweat; mangled and laid open with whips and scourges; his limbs wearied out, and all disjointed upon the cross. What he suffered in his soul was not one jot less, but rather infinitely more than what he suffered in his body. Witness that mortal anguish which cast him into his agony in the garden; witness that grievous complaint on the cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* He suffered moreover in his reputation (which is often dearer to a man than life) by false witnesses, and outrageous calumnies

and impositions. He suffered in his honor by all kinds of reproaches and affronts: he suffered in his goods, being despoiled of his very clothes, and hanging naked upon the cross: he suffered in his friends, being forsaken by them all: not to speak of other sufferings, which are usually most sensible to flesh and blood, viz. the ingratitude of those whom he had favored with his miracles, the triumphs of his enemies, their insults over his disciples, &c. And in all these sufferings, he denied himself those comforts which he usually affords his servants under their crosses, and which have made the greatest torments of the martyrs not only tolerable, but oftentimes sweet and comfortable. But he would allow himself no more comfort, but that of doing the will of his Father, and purchasing our redemption.

4. Consider who it is that suffers all this, and thou shalt find, that he is the eternal Son of God; equal and consubstantial to his Father; the great Lord and Maker of heaven and earth, infinite in power, infinite in wisdom, infinite in all perfections. But for whom does he suffer all this? For poor man, a wretched worm of the earth; for ungrateful sinners, traitors to his eternal Father, and to himself; for those very Jews that crucified him; for us mortals, who for the most part were never like to thank him, or even so much as think of his sufferings. O! how admirable art thou, o Lord, in all thy ways, but in none more than in the contrivances of thy mercy! O! how does this passion of our Redeemer set out and illustrate all the attributes of God! It is here we discover his infinite goodness and charity, in thus wonderfully communicating himself to us, and laying down his own life for us. It is here we discover his unparalleled mercy, in taking upon himself our mis-

ries, and enduring the stripes due to our sins. Here we see the admirable wisdom of his providence, in opening to us by his own death the fountain of life. Here we learn to fear his justice, which fell so heavy upon his own Son, who had but clothed himself in the resemblance of a sinner, in order to make atonement for our sins. O! what must the guilty themselves one day expect at his hands, if they do not prevent the terrors of his justice, by laying hold of his present mercy?

5. Consider, in the sufferings of thy Saviour, the infinite malice, the unparalleled heinousness of mortal sin, which was not to be cancelled, but by the last drop of blood of the Son of God. This is one of the chief lessons which thy Saviour desires to teach thee from the cross; thou canst not please him better than by studying well this great lesson. O never be so ungrateful as to crucify him again by mortal sin. O! let not that monster live in thee, for the destroying of which Christ himself would die.



RULES

of a

CHRISTIAN LIFE.

To be observed by all that desire to secure to themselves a happy Eternity.

SETTLE in thy soul a firm resolution, upon no account whatever, to consent to mortal sin. This resolution is the very foundation of a virtuous life: whosoever is not arrived thus far, has not yet begun to serve God. Without this resolution, it is in vain for any one to flatter himself with the hopes of living holily, or dying happily.

2. In order to enable thyself to keep this resolution, be diligent in flying all dangerous occasions, such as bad company, lewd or profane books, immodest plays, &c. *For he that loves the danger shall perish in it*, Eccl. iii. 27.

3. Watch all the motions of thy heart, and resist the first impressions of evil; keep a guard upon thy senses and thy imagination, that the enemy may not surprise thy soul by these avenues. Contemn not small faults, lest by degrees thou fall into greater.

4. Fly an idle life, as the mother of all mischief; and take it for a certain truth, that an idle life will never bring a christian to heaven.

5. Never omit, upon any account, thy morning and evening prayers. In the morning remember always to present to God the first fruits of the day, by giving him thy first thoughts: make an offering to him of all the actions of the day; and renew this oblation at the beginning of every thing thou dost, *Whether you eat or drink*, says St. Paul. 1 Cor. x. v. 31. *or whatever else you do, do all for the glory of God.*

6. In thy evening prayers, make a daily examination of thy conscience, calling thyself to an account how thou hast passed the day; and whatever sins thou discoverest, labor to wash them away by penitential tears, before thou layest thyself down to sleep. Who knows but that night may be thy last? In going to bed think on the grave; compose thyself to rest in the arms of thy God: and if thou wake in the night, raise thy thoughts to him, who is always watching over thee.

7. Besides thy morning and evening devotions, set aside some time in the day for prayer, more particularly mental, by an interior conversation of thy soul with God, her only true sovereign good; in the midst of all thy employments, keep thyself

as much as possible in the presence of God, and frequently aspire to him by short ejaculations. Read often spiritual books, as letters or messages sent thee from heaven. And if thy circumstances permit, assist daily at the sacrifice of the mass.

8. Frequent the sacraments at least once a month, and take special care to prepare thyself to receive them worthily.

9. Have a great devotion to the passion of Christ; and often meditate upon his sufferings.

10. Be particularly devout to his blessed mother; take her for thy mother, and seek upon all occasions her protection and prayers; but learn withal to imitate her virtues.

11. Study to find out thy predominant passion, and labor with all thy power to root it out.

12. Let not a day pass without offering to God some acts of contrition for past sins: and strive to maintain in thy soul a penitential spirit.

13. Beware of self-love as thy greatest enemy; and often use violence to thyself by self-denials and mortification: remember the kingdom of heaven is not to be taken but by violence. St. Matt. xi. 12.

14. Give alms according to thy ability: *For judgment without mercy, to him that has not shewed mercy*, St. James ii. 13. Set a great value upon spiritual alms deeds, by striving all thou canst to reclaim unhappy sinners; and for that end daily bewail their misery in the sight of God.

15. Be exact in all the duties of thy calling, as being to give an account one day to that great Master, who has allotted to each one of us our respective station in his family.

16. *Remember always thy last things, and thou shalt never sin*, Eccl. vii. 40.

THE LIFE OF FAITH.

Be ye Followers of me, as I also am of Christ,
1 Cor. xi, 1.

MEDITATE often on these words of the apostle; *The just man liveth by faith,* Rom. i. 17. O what great things are contained in this life of faith!

The life of faith supposes, that one first dies to oneself. The spiritual death is here the beginning of life. *You are dead,* said the apostle, Col. iii. 3. *and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

To live in faith is to be only taken up with the objects of faith; to think only on the promises of faith; and to make our judgment of all things here below, only with respect to their agreeableness with the things of faith.

To live by faith, is to lead as to the exterior, a common life; but as to the interior, to unite oneself continually to God through Jesus Christ.

The life of faith maintains itself principally by mental prayer and the holy communion. Prayer puts to death the old man; and the holy communion gives life to the new man.

Nothing is more contrary to the life of faith, than the frequenting the high-life world, with its companies and assemblies; idle visits, vain compliments, frivolous letters, &c. But on the other hand, the life of faith grows in us by godly conversation, by an union with those who are truly good, and by the reading of such spiritual books, as are solidly pious and affecting.

The life of faith is much hindered by the tumult of business, by the trouble of scruples,

by the prejudices of the mind, by the desires of seeing, of acquiring, of possessing, of pleasing, or of being esteemed; all these things destroy that life of faith, which is the life of the soul.

The man of faith is mild, he is kind, he is courteous, he is true, he is plain and sincere, he is generous, of good counsel, of good company; he is always even in his temper, easy in his conversation, and sets no bounds to the help he is ready to afford every one under the variety of human events.

To live well the life of faith, three things are necessary. 1. To love entirely Jesus Christ. 2. To have a great contempt of the world, and of all that the world esteems. 3. To live only, and to count only for the present day.

That the life of faith may be more conformable to the life of Christ, it ought to be accompanied with these three things: the love of humiliations; rejoicing in sufferings; and embracing poverty. All the saints have lived by faith. Amongst these heroes of faith I shall name in particular, St. Paul, St. Francis and St. Teresa.

We need but to cast one glance of the eye on what passes in the world, to see that scarce any one there lives by faith. Many people pray, frequent the sacraments, give alms, practise austerities; and yet with all this, they cease not to live in themselves, with themselves, and for themselves. They have their humours, their pretensions, their eagernesses, their vanities, their oddities, their singularities; they are unwilling to suffer, or to be forgot, or to want any thing, or to deny themselves the liberty of judging of their neighbours. They are devotees quite living of self-love: they have never known the life of God, the life of faith, the internal man, the interior union with Jesus Christ.

He who said, *I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me*, Gal. ii. 20. was indeed a man of faith, a soul quite animated by faith, a heart from which the world was totally banished. He had no longer a being of his own, a life of his own; Jesus Christ was all in him, and he was all in Jesus Christ. St. Paul was this man. O let us live by faith, and we shall be cheerful, easy and happy; the kingdom of God will be in us; we shall neither fear men, nor devils, nor death. We shall have for our wealth the cross of Jesus Christ, the sacraments of Jesus Christ, the body of Jesus Christ, and our riches shall surpass the riches of kings.



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