

T H E
F L A I N P A T H
T O
CHRISTIAN PERFECTION,

S H E W I N G

That we are to seek for RECONCILIATION and UNION with GOD, solely by renouncing ourselves, denying the World, and following our BLESSED SAVIOUR, in the Regeneration.

TRANSLATED from the FRENCH.

JOHN xviii. 36. *Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not of this World.*

MAT. xvi. 24. *Then said Jesus unto his Disciples, If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me.*

ROM. viii. 13. *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye thro' the Spirit do mortify the deeds of Body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God.*

P H I L A D E L P H I A :

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P R E F A C E.

THE treatise of which the following is an extract, was written in the German language, about two hundred and fifty years ago, and since translated into the French.— 'Tho' the reader is not to expect elegance of language, in writings of that age; yet, it is thought, the plainness and honest simplicity of the author, who had solely the amendment of the hearts of his readers in view: and the divine unction which attends his writings, will make it acceptable and profitable to the awakened, unprejudiced inquirers, of every religious denomination.

In the first ages of christianity, humility and contrition of heart towards God, and love towards men, were taught to be the most acceptable sacrifice; and a compliance with those practical precepts so strongly enjoined, by our Saviour, was looked upon as the foundation of true discipleship and certain test of our affection to him, *John xiv. 15. If ye love me (saith this blessed Redeemer,) keep my commandments. John xv. 14. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Again, John xv. 8. Herein is my heavenly Father glorified, that ye bring forth much good fruit. And that none might*
mistake

mistake the true way to everlasting life, he concludes the precepts he delivered concerning it, with these remarkable words, *Mat. vii. 24.—Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock, &c.*

This continued to be the state of the church, till in after-ages the life of religion having much declined, the plain belief and practice of piety, founded solely on the power of the gospel, fell to decay; in the place of which pomp and shew, strange modes of worship and confused and dark opinions, till then unknown in the church, were introduced; the teachers and leaders assumed an authority and respect from their offices, which before was paid only to their virtues. Hence divisions and contentions ensued, by which that pure charity, which before had united and adorned the christian church, was gradually lost to the generality of professors. Nevertheless true religion still remains to this day, to be the power of God to salvation, changing and purifying the heart, and bringing it into true contrition and a submissive resignation to the will of God. This has, ever, been found to be the effect of its operation on all those, who by devoting themselves to God, are become the true followers and disciples of Christ Jesus.

Amongst the many instances of this kind,
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which might be mentioned, a particular one appeared, some years ago, in these parts, thro' the effectual workings of grace, on a number of our neighbouring Indians. These people were very earnest for the promotion of piety among themselves, which they apprehended to be the effect of an inward work, whereby the heart became changed from bad to good *. When they were solicited to join the other Indians in the war against the English, they absolutely refused, whatever might be the consequence to themselves, even if the fighting Indians should make *slaves*, or as they expressed it, *negroes of them*, rendering this reason for it, *That when God made men, he did not intend they should hurt or kill one another*. Upon being farther conversed with, in respect to their religious prospect, he who had been the principal instrument in raising them to a sense of good, gave in substance, the following accounts. That being by a particular providence brought under difficulty and sorrow, he was led into a deep consideration of the state of things in the world, when seeing the folly and wickedness which pre-

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* Isa. xlix. 6 I will also give thee (i. e. Christ our Saviour) for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth.

JOHN i. 9. Who was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

veiled amongst men, his sorrows encreased. Nevertheless, being impressed with a belief that there was a great power, who had created all things, his mind was turned from beholding this lower world, to look towards him who had created it, and strong desires were begot in his heart for a further knowledge of his Creator. He was then made sensible, that evil not only prevailed in the world, but that he himself partook much of its baneful influence, and he at last found that his own heart was bad and hard. Upon this great dejection and trouble seized his mind, with an inquiry, What would become of his soul? In this situation he cried unto that powerful Being who he was sensible had made the heart of man; and after a long time of sorrow and perseverance in seeking for help, God was pleased to reveal himself to his mind, and to put his goodness in his heart:—He found he was, as he expressed it, raised above himself and above the world, and felt that his heart had undergone some great change; the hardness and badness he had so long groaned under, was taken away,* it was now become soft and good; he

* EZEKIEL xxxvi. 26. A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

he found so much love to prevail in it, to all men, that he thought he could bear with their revilings and abuses without resentment, appearing sensible that as the hearts of all men were bad and hard, till God made them good; the ill usage he received from them, proceeded from the same evil seed under which he himself had so long groaned. This sense of the corruption of the human heart, accompanied with a constant application to his Maker, to take away the badness and hardness of the heart, and make it soft and good, was what he called religion; and what, upon feeling the power of God to his comfort in his heart, he was concerned to exhort his brethren to seek the experience of, in themselves. And farther said, that under this dispensation he was made sensible that the spirit of religion, was a spirit of love, which led those who obeyed it, into love to all men * ; but that men not keeping
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* *That this Indian had a true prospect of the happy effect of the power of the gospel-state, upon those who submit to its requirings, appears from many parts of scripture, particularly from the prophecy of the evangelick prophet. Isa chap. xxxiv. 1—9 “ The wilderness and the solitary places shall be
“ glad for them, and the deserts shall rejoice, and blossom
“ as the rose:” — It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing. — They shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God — a high way shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness. The way fare-
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to this spirit of love, an opposite spirit got entrance, in their hearts; that it was from hence, that arose all those disorders which so much prevail amongst men. That he was also sensible there was still an evil spirit labouring to get the mastery in his heart, in opposition to the gospel spirit; but that those who had been visited by a power from God, and were obedient to the degree of light and love, he was pleased to favour them with, would be more and more strengthened and established therein. He had also a prospect of the necessity of that baptism of spirit and fire which the scriptures and the experience of the faithful, in all ages, have testified every true disciple of Christ must undergo; whereby, thro' mortification, and death to self, the root of sin is destroyed. This he described by the prospect he had of something, like as an outward fire would be to the natural body; which he must pass thro' in order to attain to that purity of heart he desired to attain. He farther observed, that whilst he was anxiously beholding this fire, he saw a very small path close to the fire, by walking in which,

ing men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there. nor any ravenous beasts shall go up therein. it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there Chap. lx. 17. I will make thy officers peace. and thine exactors righteousness; violence shall no more be heard in the land, nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise.

which, he might go round the fire, and the painful tryal be avoided.——This he understood to represent the way by which those who were esteemed wise had found means to avoid that probation they ought to have passed thro' and yet retained a name amongst men, as though they had been purified by it. Thus this Indian, untaught by books and unlearned in what is called divinity, explained the mystery of godliness in a plain and sensible manner, and in that child-like simplicity, which our Saviour recommends as the badge of acceptance with God. This is the wisdom which on account of its plainness and simplicity, has in all ages been hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed only to babes, who in honest sincerity of heart look solely to God in their distress.

Another instance of the like kind, has lately appeared in the case of the conversion of a considerable number of the Indian natives of Greenland*. Those people were, during a long time, strongly solicited to become converts to christianity but with little or no success.

As long as the poor natives had no conception nor feeling of the corruption of their hearts; nor any longing for a better condition, but only apprehended christi-
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* See *D. Grantz's History of Greenland*, printed 1767.

ty to consist in the repetition of creeds and confessions of truths contained in the scriptures, little or no impression was made upon them. But as soon, as they became sensible of the corruption and hardness of their hearts, and believed the publication of the gospel, to contain in it itself, a power thro' which they might be delivered from that burden of sin and corruption which lay upon them, they embraced it with joy, and crying to God for power, many became the objects of redeeming grace; experiencing the stony heart to be taken away, and a heart of flesh to be given them. And indeed the grace which prevailed amongst these simple, ignorant people, was cause of amazement, and such as must, by its surprizing effect, oblige people to rise to the first cause, and acknowledge it could not proceed but from God alone. The author of the history, who was on the spot, observes, that he could not help thinking that those sceptics, who incline to doubt of every thing, which their reason cannot comprehend, and who deny the efficacy of the grace, or at least judge it insufficient, towards effecting a total change of the minds and morals of men, might be clearly convinced of their error, in beholding these Indians, who had been born and brought up in an uncontrouled licence, like wild beasts, destitute of education, totally ignorant

ignorant of religious impressions; and so careless and remiss, that they thought of nothing but what pleased and gratified their outward senses; these people thro' the grace and illumination of the holy spirit, to become so discreet, and carefully considerate, as voluntarily to submit their necks to the obedience of faith, and realize the great truths of the gospel to their souls, in so experimental and happy a manner, as to be able to deliver the most glorious testimonies thereof, with spirit and power, declaring to others, the grace which they had experienced in their own hearts; which together with their good deportment, amongst the unbelievers, adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

From these and many more instances which might be given, it evidently appears, that the gospel is the power of God to salvation in all those who believe, and in honest simplicity of heart resign themselves up to God*. The christian religion is indeed the simplest thing in the whole world, and the most easy to be understood if *self* is but truly renounced.

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* JOHN i. 12 To as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God.

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P R E F A C E.

TH E narrow path which leads to christian perfection, doth not consist in the attainment of much knowledge, neither in subtilty of argument, nor yet in the practice of many outward works; but it consists in this, that through grace we crucify our flesh, with all its sins and disorderly affections, resign ourselves with submission to the will of God in all things, and patiently bear with the slights and abuses which may befall us from our fellow men. That we daily take up our cross, and follow our Lord Jesus Christ, in his life and sufferings, and in the love of our enemies: It also requires that we renounce all inordinate love of parents, children, or friends; and that the love
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and desire of riches and other earthly delights be mortified in us: Thus we may attain to purity of heart, and be enabled to love the Lord our God, with all our hearts, with all our souls and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves, *Mat. xxii. 37, 38.* But this narrow and infallible path is become so desert, and so much neglected, and the love of God waxed so cold, that there are very few who are found walking therein. People are generally looking towards sensible objects, their principal desire being that their natural appetites, their covetousness, and their lusts may be satisfied: Too many being content with knowing, but not complying with, their Master's Will.

The reader will find in this abstract, a summary of the christian religion, and of the means whereby we may attain to that purity of heart and intimate union with God, to which we all are called, and for which we were created.

If this little book should, in the beginning appear too close and severe; nevertheless, let the reader take courage and beg for divine help, and if he perseveres in doing that which God will manifest in his heart to be his duty; he will infallibly meet with divine aid.

CHAPTER I.

Wherein is shewn, that if we are desirous to live a truly christian life, we must die unto sin, and withdraw our affections from the creatures.

EVERY person who sincerely desires to be converted to God, must, thro' divine help, begin by forsaking all gross sins, and dying to every vicious inclination, such as pride, impurity, anger, covetousness, hatred, self-love, &c. and to all other sins, which are committed in thought, word or action. We must turn away from all sensual pleasures, renounce our attachment and dependance on the creatures, and from every thing that tends to encrease our natural corruption, and attachment to the world and the things of it, and every thing wherein the good pleasure and service of God is not our principal aim. We ought also, to be careful not to ~~transfer~~ our affections to fix on particular persons; as we are too easily led aside, by conforming to other people's natural dispositions; but let our regard be to all men, even as the sun equally enlightens the evil and the good, Mat. v. 45. All these good things which God in his providence

dence favours us with, should be used with discretion for necessities, but by no means, to indulge our fleshly appetites and desires, either in eating, drinking, sleeping, or other corporeal wants.

And when we are thus disposed, we may be assured God will freely afford every necessary supply, in order to enable us to fulfil the duties he requires of us.

If we sincerely desire to love God, we must, with fervent and humble sighs, beg for divine help, carefully watch over our thoughts, words and actions, in whatever we see, do or omit, upon all that passes both within and without us, shunning, with the greatest care, all occasions of sin, such as needless company, idle conversation, &c. &c. so as continually to keep our hearts in the fear of God, which is as a fountain of spiritual strength, with the eye of the mind bent towards him in reverence and love. For he who neglects these divine and powerful supports, will be left as a city open on all sides, and become a prey to worldly mindedness and sensuality, and will finally be brought to ruin. For this reason we must exert our utmost strength against those things which we are sensible have the greatest hold of our affections, that our hearts being preserved in liberty, simplicity and purity, free from agi-
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tation and uneasiness, may not become a prey to any of those evil desires, so apt to dissipate the spirit and engross the affections. Thus may we, thro' timely care, overcome all temptations; for he that is not careful to avoid small evils, will gradually fall into greater, in which the farther he sinks, the more difficult will his conversion to God be.

Let us be particularly careful to shun all occasion of superfluous discourse, and watch over our words, that we utter nothing but what may tend to the glory of God, or the good of our neighbour. Our blessed Saviour himself has declared, "*That in the day of Judgment we must give an account for every idle word.*" Mat. xii. 36. wherefore when we speak, let it be done with an heart full of charity; in meekness of expression, and with deep humility.

Endeavour to avoid all occasions of strife, rather suffer loss than contend. Maintain thy peace with God, and be careful not to give occasion of stumbling to any one. Have also a special care over thy eyes, for it is by them thou art drawn into temptation, and exposed to ~~many~~ hurtful snares.

In all ~~trials~~ and contradictions look up to God, earnestly begging for strength, courage and patience; so thou mayst, by persevering in the exercise of virtue, be enabled to bring thy body in subjection, 1 Cor. ix. 27.

Those who practice these precepts have good reason to hope that the spirit of God will abide with and operate in them, and that often in a wonderful manner.

The operation of the divine power is much prevented, and the love of God extinguished in us, by those sins which we, knowingly suffer to prevail over us; such as pride, hatred, presumption, self-will, evil desires, and an unwarrantable attachment to children and relations; the desire of riches, of a name amongst men, wrong indulgence in the gratification of our appetites, and the like, which carry our thoughts and affections away from God, and to which our hearts are so attached, that we are not able to free ourselves from them, nor forsake them, for the love of God's sake. Here the creatures are possessed of that seat which God ought to occupy in the heart. Alas! how many things do we suffer to take hold of our minds, and how many things have we in our intentions to do, wherein we neither see nor seek God; thus it is that the measure of our sins are filling up, and that so many people are so long consumed by the fire of a troubled conscience, and will finally be cast into eternal sufferings, if they die without repentance.

There is a strong will in most people to live in a manner agreeable to their natural will,

will, to gather abundance of wealth, and live in affluence, without ever making sincere and upright inquiry whether their conduct is agreeable to God, or tends to his glory.

There are others who appear virtuous in the sight of men, yet are still under the power of evil habits, which they conclude to be but small failings, not thinking themselves bound to forsake them, but look upon their state as good, because they abstain from gross sins; nevertheless, these people not being willing to give up their hearts wholly to God, the work of religion is hindered; and these very trifles which they indulge themselves in, and of which they think God takes no account, become a wall of separation between God and them. These, tho' they apprehend themselves secure, yet are walking as on the very brink of hell, and frequently fall into such grievous sins as border on destruction. Ah! how great will the lamentation of an infinite number of these kind of people be at the last day, when the thoughts of all hearts will be laid open, and every one shall clearly see whether in the course of their lives they have chosen to serve God or themselves. But how few are affected with these things; most men are; as it were, sunk into a deep lethargic state of mind, heedless of the dangers

dangers that surround them, which, if they were sensible of, would raise such deep distress of mind within them, as would not allow them rest day or night till they were delivered from this deplorable condition.

As to those failings which sometimes prevail in persons otherwise sincerely disposed to please God, which proceed from weakness, and are not the effect of an unwarrantable attachment to the creatures, but happen thro' surprise, or that weakness so prevalent in our nature, such as sudden anger, indiscreet expressions, or the like, they are not so hurtful as when they are the effect of indulgence or habit; the ground of the heart of such being good, when ever they are made sensible of their fault, they are ready to condemn themselves with true humility, and, from a lively sense of their weakness, to implore the divine mercy to deliver them from such evils.

But ~~that~~ which is very prejudicial to us, and prevents our being possessed with a true love to God, is a desire which prevails in many people to serve both God and the creatures at one and the same time; this is very hurtful to them, and prevents their being possessed of a true love to God: this the lip of truth has declared to be impossible, *Mat. vi. 24.* For in that degree that the heart is suffered to be filled with the love of the

the creatures, in that degree it is emptied of God and of his grace.

We must suffer ourselves to be stripped from all love and solicitude after terrestrial things, 1 *Pet.* v. 7. and be habituated, even from our youth, to serve God in spirit and truth, if we are desirous to rejoice in old age. It must be allowed that the beginning is difficult, but, thro' divine help, all things will become easy. Our kingdom is not of this world, *John* xviii. 36. therefore we may at least take as much pains and expose ourselves to as much inconveniency for the attainment thereof, which consists in the knowledge of, and an union with, God, as an infinite number of people do to possess those honours and delights which belong to this world, and which are sought after by its votaries with so much labour, patience and danger.

C H A P. II.

On Repentance and true Contrition.

TH E state of our minds ought to be carefully inspected into both morning and evening, and even often during the day time, with earnest supplication that our resolutions to live unto God might be strengthened,

ned, otherwise we shall easily slip aside. And as soon as we are sensible that we have misfed our way, and are fallen into sin, let us retire into ourselves, with a sincere acknowledgment of our unworthiness, and with deep sorrow for our transgressions, not so much for the evil consequence that attend it to ourselves, but that being thereby made more sensible of the deep depravity of our nature, and how far this depravity separates us from the fountain of goodness, we may, by such conviction, have our hearts the more purified, and fitted for receiving that spirit of holiness which unites us to God. We ought always therefore, by inward recollection, carefully to observe our failings, and freely confess them to God, notwithstanding we are sensible they are not unknown to him.

All those attainments we are possessed of, and those we are endeavouring to attain to, which are not the gift of God, nor tending to unite us to him, are as so many coverings, which hide us from ourselves, and prevent our knowing ourselves as we ought; wherefore it is necessary that, thro' the help of grace, we labour to be found in the practice of every virtue, returning thanks to God for having favoured us with a state of contrition and sorrow; looking with a steady faith and an entire confidence towards

wards our suffering and merciful Saviour, and labouring to maintain a fervent love for God, our truest friend, who can never forsake those who have their reliance on him. *Isa.* liv. 10. Indeed when in faith we consider the nothingness of all the works we can do, the enormity of our sins, and the excellency of the sufferings and merits of our perfect Saviour, how much he is inclined to forgive our sins, grant us his help, and give us comfort, we shall be as it were swallowed up in a deep sense of our nothingness, and of the infinite virtue contained in his merits. And when a willingness is thus begat in us to give glory to the divine justice, and patiently to submit to whatever chastisement is inflicted upon us, from a sense that the justice of God is, in mercy, exercised for the destruction of our sinful nature, with a true confidence and faith in God our Saviour, he can as easily deliver us from our sins as a drop of water is lost on a live coal.

CH A P. III.

On true Humility.

HE who desires to attain and remain in as constant a state of love and union with

with God, as his situation in this valley of tears will permit, must lay the virtue of humility as a basis or foundation, and persevere therein, otherwise the spiritual building cannot subsist, *1 Pet. v. 5.* Our blessed Saviour has, in a particular manner, given us an example of the necessity of this virtue, when he says, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, Mat. xi. 29.*

Humility is nothing but a deep submission to God's Almightyness; if therefore we desire to attain to this virtue, we must ask it of God, who himself begets it in us, *James i. 17.* We must gather up all the strength of our soul, and turn our eyes, with love, towards God, to contemplate his infinite excellency with deep admiration, from a consideration of his Almightyness, thro' which he created all things, and has called us to a state of such glory, that a greater can hardly be conceived, having created us in his image, that we might, thro' grace, be even what he is in his nature. Besides which he has given us, as we may say, the whole world for our entertainment and pleasure, *Psf. civ. 13, 14, 15.* And when, by means of sin, we lost this felicity, and were become miserable brands of hell, he humbled himself so low, as even to take our nature on him, *Phil. ii. 7, 8.* and therein to perform such marvellous acts of goodness and

and mercy, and live a life of so sublime virtue, that these ought to be the continual objects of our contemplation and love, *Heb.* xii. 2, 3. He was poor, abject and despised on earth, and altho' he led an amiable, humble and virtuous life, *John* viii. 46. nevertheless he suffered the most ignominious and bitter death; and this thro' an unexpressible love for the deliverance of these very sinners, who were his murderers, for whom he could pray, even when they were putting him to death, saying, "*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do,*" *Luke* xxiii. 34. Let us consider his daily kindness and care over us, in providing all that is necessary either for the soul or body, and preserving us from a thousand afflictions which might befall us each moment, if this good and bounteous benefactor did not continually protect and succour us, *Psa.* cxxvii. 1.

The truly humble soul who loves God, is always ready to give him the glory which is his due; and, when under a sight of his own nothingness, will freely acknowledge that God's goodness is purely the effect of his love to his creatures, as they cannot add to his happiness. Such a soul, from a feeling sense of his misery, will freely acknowledge, that from its own nature, it is as nothing, yea less than nothing, being become as a defiled vessel, which corrupts every
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thing which is poured into it; that he is a child of wrath, and under the curse, ready every day to fall back into his fearful nothingness. Nay, he cannot but acknowledge himself so filled with evil, and so unable to help himself, that if God did not continually prevent him, by his grace, he would be liable, each moment, to fall into the most enormous sins, and precipitate himself with the devil into eternal fire. In this humble state the soul sensibly perceives how many sins it has committed, in thought, word and action; how unfaithful and ungrateful he has been towards so good and so faithful a God, having omitted to seek, with sincerity, his glory to whom alone it is due, and thus miserably lost his time; that nevertheless God has been so good as to forgive his sins, even so fully as never to remember them any more, *Mich. vii. 3.* and to cause him to pass from a life of sin to a divine life; that thus from an enemy he is become his friend, which is a more excellent work than to have created a world. For God not only re-establishes in such a person what was destroyed, but also makes him a farther partaker of his most excellent gifts, which he every day experiences to encrease, if so be he, on his own part, occasion no hindrance to the drawings of God's Holy Spirit. When thus, in deep humility,

humility, we enter into ourselves, and consider the wonders which God has display'd in our favour, we must acknowledge that we are not only unworthy of the least of his benefits, but that if he should deal with us in the rigour of his justice, and according to our deserts, *Psf. cxxx. 3.* we could expect nothing but to experience his just indignation. Under this consideration we ought patiently and resignedly to bear every dispensation of his will, tho' ever so humbling, from a sensibility that we have no just cause of complaint, but rather reason for continually returning thanks to God for the multitude of his benefits, of which we have been such unworthy receivers, with fervent desires that the will of God may be done in and by us, and all other creatures, both in time and eternity. In this situation a man will easily bear to be despised and reputed what he indeed esteems himself to be. Those who are truly humble are not afraid of being looked upon as unworthy of honour; these equally rejoice under the exertion of that justice of God which suffers reproach to come upon them, as under the effect of that mercy which will cause every thing, even that which may be esteemed deep afflictions, to work for good to all those who love and fear him.

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When we contemplate on one hand our own nothingness, and on the other view the majesty of God and his goodness so abounding in grace and love, it is astonishing that we are not wholly taken up in the exercise of humility, this being the foundation of our perfection, and of that true peace of heart which it is out of the reach and power of any creature to disturb.

Many are the straits and difficulties to which we are reduced, and the temptations and frailties under which we are liable to fall; but when any thing of this afflictive nature is suffered to attend, if we did but sink into our nothingness, we might, thro' divine help, suffer the whole vehemence of the storm to fall on us, without hurting of us; for if the devil, and all the creatures, should fall on us, in this humble resigned state, they would not hurt us, but all would work for our good, *Rom. viii. 18.* When a man thus sinks into his nothingness, thro' an humble resignation and submission to God, and for his sake humbles himself before men, God will necessarily be united to him; for tho' God is as nothing to man, yet he is not so in himself, he is the Jehovah, in whom are all things; yet he is as nothing with respect to the creatures, whilst their thoughts do not tend to this sovereign good, as is written, *Pf. xliii. "The fool has said in*
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“ His heart there is no God.” Wherefore when we are in a state of true contrition, from a sense of our nothingness, with respect to God, we must be obliged to acknowledge the nothingness of all our works, and that tho’ God has so long been as nothing to us, yet we must, in eternity, be something to God, in his wrath, except we become something to him in time, thro’ Jesus Christ. This is the thing principally necessary, that thou know thyself, and the necessity thou art under to refrain from a pursuit after vain science and needless labour, avoiding all disputes and solicitude after earthly things, but carefully make thyself fully acquainted with the virtue of humility, and thou wilt be wise and learned enough; for the excellency of humility, and the favours and grace it draws down from God is so great, that the tongue of man can scarcely utter it to the full.

In a truly humble state we remain empty and passive before God, as an instrument or tool, which suffers itself to be handled and led by the hand of God just as it seemeth good unto the master workman.

A person thus humbled, receives all things as coming immediately from the hands of God, *Lament. iii. 37, 38.* looking upon himself as unworthy of the least favour; if sick, or in any other afflicting dispensation,

he accepts of his sickness and trouble as a messenger sent from God for his good, thanks him for it, making this very affliction an occasion of awakening his zeal for his service. If despised, he submits, as being what he deserves; if he is in honour, he esteems himself unworthy, humbling himself the more on that account; so great a sense of his nothingness prevails, that he is ready to confess himself unworthy of all the benefits he has received, and that he has well deserved all the afflictions and sufferings which are come upon him.

It is by thus setting the virtue of humility as a basis, that we shall attain to that which is really and substantially good.

We must, with one of old, *Job xlii. 6.* be displeased with, yea *abhor ourselves*, before a right amendment will take place in us, for how shall I amend in that which does not displease me. In every afflictive dispensation, there is nothing more effectual than this salutary dislike of ourselves, *Luke xv. 21.* This will cause us to bear in patience the slights and scorns of men; indeed nothing is of more advantage than those slights and afflictions, provided we are capable and willing to make a proper use of them.

When a man acknowledges both with heart and mouth, that he is full of guilt, and deserving of eternal death, such a sincere

cere acknowledgment goes a great way towards his justification and reconciliation with God, 2 Sam. xii. 13. who is always ready to forgive and deliver a truly contrite sinner; but he that saith *He has no sin, deceives himself, and the truth is not in him*, 1 John i. 8. Our natural as well as spiritual pride is an obstacle to our receiving abundance of divine grace; for in the degree wherein we humble ourselves, in that degree God exalts us; and in the degree that we exalt and love ourselves, in that degree we are abased, *Mat. xxiii. 12*. Nature must pass thro' many deaths, before true humility becomes so rooted in our hearts that we can bear to be despised, and that honour from men becomes a burden to us, *Mat. v. 11, 12*. There are people who may, in some degree, be said to be naturally disposed to humility and other virtues, but God does not esteem these people more holy on that account. He only may be said to be truly humble who, thro' the effect of grace, is desirous to ~~renounce~~ himself, and do the will of God in word and deed, *Mat. xii. 50*. It is not what a man has been, nor the good works he has performed, for God regards solely the love he bears, the inclination he has to please him, thro' a pure disinterested love. True love to God is never fruitless; where ever it dwells it brings forth most excellent

cellent fruit; where there is no fruit, there is no true love, 2 *Pet.* i. 8. Thus a man may have a natural bent towards what is called virtue, but we are no farther truly virtuous and agreeable to God, than so far as we love him, and that is only according to the degree of our humiliation or willingness to die to ourselves, and all that is esteemed valuable in this world.

C H A P. IV.

On renouncing our own Wills.

A MAN must intirely renounce his natural will, committing himself, and all that he is possessed of to God's holy will, both in time and eternity, *Mat.* x. 37. carefully attending to the inspiration of truth, *Heb.* iii. 15. taking up the cross to his own inclinations, to that degree of ability and knowledge which, thro' grace, is afforded him, *John* vi. 65. submitting himself to all men, agreeable to the example left us by our Saviour, with humility and affection, *Pet.* v. 5. causing his wilful disorderly spirit to submit, saying with the Apostle, *Acts* ix. 6. *Lord what wilt thou have me to do.* God, the infinite good, is nearer to each creature than they are to themselves, *Acts* xvii.

xvii. 28. for nothing can happen nor subsist one moment but thro' his will; wherefore they who are continually resisting him, and seeking only to fulfil their own wills, are like a troubled sea, never at rest, and have nothing to expect but misery hereafter.— God dwells with him that is of a submissive resigned spirit, making him partaker of his grace, and causing his peace to flow into his heart. The truly resigned, meek spirited, man has not only to expect happiness in a life to come, but to him it is began, even, here already, upon earth, for he enjoys celestial comfort, with an assurance that nothing can separate him therefrom, but that all that happens to him will in the end work for his good.

True renunciation requires that we cheerfully submit our wills to God's will. Our whole salvation depends upon our being brought into the disposition expressed, by our dear Saviour, when he said, *Nevertheless, Father, not my will but thine be done*, Luke xxii. 42. The best supplication we can offer to God is, *Lord let thy will be done in me; let me be in all things conformable to thy will*. This prayer exceeds all others, and reaches even unto heaven.

Ah! how sweet a state is it to live always in submission to the divine will; to seek him in all things, and above all things! A
man

man who dwells in his selfishness is neither in fellowship with God nor his children; what he once undertakes he will not quit or give up; this springs from a bottom of pride; he always prefers his own choice; he enjoys no peace, not being disposed to receive God's grace. For disquiet always springs from an indulgence of our own wills. Wherefore, if we desire peace, the first step we ought to take is to cease from all disorderly love of ourselves; till then we will not find true freedom, nor be masters of ourselves. The world and our other enemies attack us, only thro' ourselves; wherefore if we have gained a victory over ourselves, we shall have subdued all our other enemies.. Nothing more worthy of hatred than self-love; this is the cause of all our griefs, and this is what hinders us from enjoying God, with all the treasures of his grace.

The less we have of selfishness, the more agreeable we are to God, and the more disposed to receive his grace. As a man who lives in self-love cannot deny himself, and had rather lead others, than be led by them; in the same manner, a man who has forsaken all things, is more inclined to suffer and follow others, than to command them; for such an one seeks to die to all pride, and

God

God readily compleats his work in him and leads him to perfection.

If a man should forsake a kingdom, and all the world, if he cannot renounce himself, he has hardly done any thing.

Wilt thou know if thou art in the true nothingness, if thou art not yet under the dominion of a disorderly love, observe if thou art more moved at those revilings, injustice or other accidents, which happen to thyself, than those which happen to others. He who is afflicted at the loss of temporal goods, shews thereby that he is unworthy of possessing them, as claiming them in his own right: Whereas God alone is the true owner and master of all. So also he who resents affronts, shews that he indeed deserves to be despised, because he arrogates to himself that vengeance which belongs alone to God, and plainly discovers that selfishness and the love of the creatures are yet deeply rooted in his heart.

Our Saviour says, *Mat. xvi. 24. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, (that is, his own inclination and will) and let him take up his cross and follow me.* This is the infallible way to salvation: therefore give diligent heed to thyself, in this matter; the sooner and more thou art in the practice of this essential duty, the easier it will become to thee. Here it is thou must begin, if thou desirest

desirest to attain to any degree of solid virtue, In that degree thou renounceth thyself, and the creatures; so far God will visit and dwell in thee, by his grace, and thou wilt be enabled to become conformable to him. The more thou dieth to thyself, the more thou wilt feel the good spirit predominant within thee; for in the degree that thou art unclothed from sin in the self-same degree wilt thou be raised up to the love of God, and make advances in the way of holiness.

Wherefore give all, *for all*, sell all that thou hast, (i. e. thyself) to obtain all, and thou wilt find *that all*, in every thing, and withal a constant peace in thy heart, for nothing can alter and effect that peace which has its foundation in God. That happiness and peace which we are pursuing with so much pain and difficulty, whilst self is only in view, will be abundantly bestowed on us, if we renounce ourselves, and fix our love solely upon God. We must not so much look, at what we do, as at what we are; if the bottom of our heart was good, all our deeds would be upright and good; for a heart whose centre is sanctified and disposed to glorify God is always favoured by him.

If we gave up ourselves and were willing to hazard all, as well that which is within, as that which is from without, we need fear

no danger, and should possess true content of spirit. There are but few who entirely give themselves up to the will of God, for no one can so fully renounce himself, but what he may still find something to renounce, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 10.

The Lord's prayer expressed, even but once, in true self-denial, for the glory of God, is of more worth than thousands of prayers proceeding from our own will, and under the dominion of self.

An upright man, who endeavours to renounce himself, in whatever he does, is fixed in God; and God so far protects him, that to attack him is in effect to attack God. All that this man does, and all that happens to him, necessarily comes from God; hence he enjoys the greatest delight. Nothing can hurt such a man; scorn, injustice, the devil, death or hell itself, can do him no harm. Hence it appears that submission to the will of God both inward and outward, is the shortest way to attain to the highest pitch of truth and perfection.

When a man truly becomes so far conformable to the will of God, as entirely to renounce himself, ceasing from seeking his own honour and advantage; desiring nothing but barely that the honour and good pleasure of God may, in all things, be established; such an one will be freed from the

guilt of his sins, even tho' they were of the deepest dye. For *what a* drop of water is when compared with the sea; such are the sins of a truly resigned penitent man, compared with the ocean of God's mercy. But this is a mighty work, to be thus entirely given up to do, and suffer the will of God; nature will be always seeking to satisfy herself, and is very unwilling, totally, to submit and die.

C H A P. V.

Of Brotherly love.

PURITY and peace of heart, in the love of God, is much strengthened, and increased by a constant and sincere charity towards all men; and a tender compassion for them, in their afflictions. This we are taught by our Saviour himself, when he says, *John xiii. 35. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another, Mat. v. 7. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. And with the same measure that ye mete with, it shall be measured to you again, Luke vi. 38.* If you have but little charity you can expect but little mercy. If you have none at all, neither have you reason to expect to obtain any yourselves. Wherefore
let

let us demean ourselves towards all men, in that manner in which we desire they should act towards us; agreeable to our blessed Saviour's injunction, *Mat. vii. 12.* Our hearts ought always to be disposed to succour every man, whom we perceive to be under sufferings, either of body or mind. We ought to pray, earnestly, to God, that he would bestow on us the gifts of compassion and brotherly love. If it is in our power to assist our fellow-creature, either in word or deed, we ought to do it to the utmost of our power, with a free and willing heart; if much is not in our power, however, let us do what we can, with a lively and sincere compassion: at least give him some comfort, and we shall find God will also extend his mercy to us.

It is our duty to respect the image of God, and to regard his divine majesty in all men, and without delay, to use our best endeavours that every degree of bitterness or slight may be removed out of our hearts, which may have insensibly slipped into them, against any person, whether high or low, rich or poor, for God is no respecter of persons. Let us forgive and not condemn others, as we desire God should also forgive and not condemn us. We ought always to keep a severe eye on ourselves, not esteeming ourselves above measure,

measure, rather magnifying than extenuating our own failing: 'On the other hand we should look with tenderness and compassion on the failings of our neighbours; endeavouring to behold them with an eye of indulgence; and let us be particularly careful never to speak evil of any in their absence, *James iv. 11.* If christian charity prevails with us, we shall also endeavour to think the most favourably, even of the evil actions we hear of others; rather supposing their intentions not so bad as represented; or to have been the effect of weakness; that God has suffered it for their humiliation, and that if ourselves had been exposed to the same temptation we might have fallen therein; hoping that they may have repented and obtained forgiveness of God. Thus endeavouring to make the best of things.

Some people are so much inclined to judge, that they are always ready to censure and correct others; these instead of repenting, are often lost and do great hurt to those that hear them, by raising in their minds a slight and scorn of their neighbours; this generally proceeds from pride and an unwarrantable esteem of themselves. Poor blind man. Why dost thou not, rather, judge and condemn thyself? How canst thou be acquainted with what is hid in the heart of thy neighbour; or what knowest thou of the means by which it pleases the

wisdom of God to guide him, in order to bring him to a participation of his grace. And shall such a poor worm be weak enough to think, that, that which is only known of God, must be conducted agreeable to thy fancy; hence thou hast reason to blush, as before God and his saints.

Those who presume to judge, in matters which God has reserved to himself, draw on themselves unexpressible evil. When thy neighbour has taken displeasure at thy conduct, or when he has offended thee, thou oughtest to seek him, with meekness, to speak kindly to him, with an heart filled with compassion, and of love to God; thus according to the apostles advice: *To overcome evil with good*, Rom. xii. 21. And if it should be thy duty to lay his failings before him, be very careful not to make five wounds in endeavouring to cure one: But as God waits upon and invites thee to repentance, by goodness and patience, in order to make thee an heir of salvation; so thou oughtest to act towards thy neighbour, not in slighting him on account of his weakness, but rather in praying to God, that he would forgive him his sins; even as Jesus Christ hath prayed for thee. Otherwise thou wilt be sorely burdened thro' the freedom thou hast taken in judging other men. Wherefore rather exercise thyself in

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judgment

against thyself, than be employed in insulting others, by hard speech and uncharitable judgments.

C H A P. VI.

On the contemplation of the life and sufferings of Christ, &c.

WE ought to consider and meditate, with an heart filled with love, on the doctrine and sufferings of our crucified Saviour, in order to imitate and become conformable to him, *Heb. xii. 2.* Wherefore earnestly call upon God that it may please him to imprint on thy body, and in thy soul, the image of his death, that his holy will may be fulfilled in thee. Such meditation leads to the possession of divine wisdom and supreme happiness; for hereby a man will be humbled in prosperity, and meet with encouragement in adversity; and maintain an equality of soul, both in joy and in suffering. Great are the advantages of such a meditation; it is as a book wherein all things are found: Happy is the man who has Christ and his sufferings always present with him; he will obtain true wisdom and unexpressible grace. If other religious exercises are too difficult for thee, let it be thy principle

principle work to meditate on the sufferings of Christ, and to preserve a lively remembrance of them in thy mind, 1 *Cor.* ii. 2.

Accustom thyself to compare all thou doest and sufferest with the life and sufferings of Christ, and nothing will appear too difficult to thee; for God will help thee to support thy sufferings, and will, in the end, make thee a partaker of his mercies, thro' Jesus Christ our Saviour.

God's unspotted purity requires that all thy sins should be thoroughly purged; he, therefore, who has lived a great part of his life, as it were, without God in the world, and who still lives too much to the flesh, with its affections and lusts, can scarce sufficiently resign himself up to him in humility, and lowliness of spirit, begging him for his mercies sake, in Christ Jesus, to purge him from that evil spirit of rebellion, which has taken so deep a root in his heart, and separated him from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

And if thou art one of those who have neglected or forgot this most essential duty, until thou thinks thyself on a death bed, and should then be distressed with a sense of thy sins; take this salutary counsel, plunge thyself, as it were, in the ocean of thy Saviour's sufferings; entreat him to wash away thy sins, thro' his infinite mercy,
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and hereupon abandon thyself to him, with a true faith and confidence in his holy will, and thou wilt experience, that the promises of Christ will be fulfilled, *viz.* that he will not reject the truly repenting sinner. And shouldest thou survive, be careful to watch during the remaining part of thy life, against sin, and serve God with all thy power, that on thy death bed, thou mayest have a sense of peace and reconciliation with God, which will be of more value to thee than if thou shouldest gain the whole world.

The sufferings of Christ ought not to be meditated on in a superficial manner, but with a lively inward sensibility and an ardent and constant love. If thou can'st not do it with tears and delicious sigh, do it with praise and thankfulness, under a consideration of the infinite goodness of thy Saviour. And tho' thou can'st not attain to such sensible feelings as thou desirest, and thy heart should remain dry and hard: Yet cease not from such meditation; keep thy mind in submission, and this offerings will be agreeable to God.

Thou art not only to consider thy Saviour as being perfect in holiness, as a man, but also as an Almighty God, who by his word created the heavens and the earth, and who can also bring them to nothing: Who, tho' he is infinite and incomprehensible, has condescended

descended to abase himself so far, for the sake of so poor a creature. From this sight thou oughtest to be covered with confusion, in that thou dardest give way to the least degree of pride. The sufferings of Christ may be considered in a three-fold manner. First, In themselves, to move us with compassion, at the sight of his poverty, his misery, his persecutions, his sorrows and painful death upon the cross. Secondly, By his obedience, his patience, his humility and charity, in a word all those virtues which we are called to imitate. Thirdly, in the cause of his sufferings, which was the ardent love he bore to us, which he manifested in so striking a manner. It was thro' the effect of this love, to us his creatures, that he lived in so destitute a state, as not to have whereon to lay his head, *Mat. viii. 20.* and finally ended his life in pain, so that he spared nothing, but gave up all freely and willingly for us. There is no mortal man who has so vehement a desire for life as Jesus Christ had to redeem sinners, and to deliver them from that sin, by which they had separated themselves from him. Ought not this consideration to incite us to reciprocal love towards him. It is surprizing, that the consideration of our Saviour's most bitter sufferings, doth not inflame our hearts with his love, and penetrate even to the very bottom:

bottom of our souls. But none do testify more gratitude to God, nor compassion for the sufferings of our Saviour, than he who labours to imitate him; this is as agreeable to God, as if we gave our life for him. If we submit to his cross, either outwardly or inwardly, this will cause our proud spirit to bend, under his crown of thorns, and our sufferings will produce living fruit in us.

If thou art really desirous to manifest thy gratitude for the infinite goodness of God, and to bear in thy body the marks of the dying of the Lord Jesus, before the world, and in the face of the celestial armies, *Gal. vi. 17.* thou must submit to God, without reserve; thou must die to thy wandering eyes, thy curious ears, thy vain talk, and to all thy fleshly lusts, *Col. iii. 5.* thus wilt thy feet be, as it were, nailed to the cross. Neither thy spiritual nor thy corporeal strength must be overcome by sloth, but thou must, agreeable to the example of Christ, suffer thy arms to be extended in the service of God; and thy body to persevere in spiritual exercises, for the glory of thy Redeemer, and to fulfil his will. Those spiritual sufferings, thro' which thou finds thyself so pressed, ought to drive thee towards the Lord, then wilt thou appear as it were clothed with his righteousness, and lovely in the sight of God and his holy angels. Thy willingness to suffer,
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ought to be as a bed for thy Saviour to repose himself on: Thy resistance against sin, and thy efforts to surmount thy evil nature will rejoice his spirit, and thy prayers allay his grief.

And if when thou hast done to the best of thy power, and art nevertheless despised, abused, persecuted, and ranked with sinners, and thereby brought the more to die to thyself; and that thou freely forgives and prays for those who abuse thee, then art thou, indeed, with Christ under his cross. When thou art willing to be deprived of thy friends and of all that can be as a wall of separation between God and thee, it is then thou (as it were) helps thy Saviour to bear his cross. When God will permit thee to be deprived of all comfort; to remain in an inward dryness, without any sense of grace, in which state thou art ready to cry out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*; and when, in this situation, thou seeks no strange consolation, but looks to God alone in humble submission to his will, then the more bitter thy sufferings are, and thyself given up to God; the more thou art conformable and agreeable to him; for this is the last trial of God's children.

Break off from those desires which thirst for any thing else but God, and turn them entirely towards him; then, indeed, wilt thou
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thou satisfy that longing of thy Saviour, which causes him to weep over the stubborn and obstinate. Sigh for the salvation of all men, commit thy soul into the hands of thy heavenly father, with a mind turned from time to eternity, as tho' each hour was to be thy last, and here thou wilt be conformable to thy Saviour, who *thro' much tribulation has entered into the glory of his father*. This is the path thro' which thou art to follow him, if thou expectest to become a partaker of his eternal glory, *Rom. viii. 17.*

C H A P. VII.

Of the advantage of outward suffering.

THERE are three sorts of crosses which the Almighty dispenses to his children. The first is, when a man is converted to God from the course of the world, dies to his evil lusts, and forsakes those sins to which he is inclined. This is hard to the flesh, for in this case that which was before his pleasure, now becomes his grievous pain. This is one of the heaviest crosses he has to bear, *Mat. v. 29, 30.*

The other kind of cross is that which God himself dispenses, when he sends to a man many sorts of inward and outward trials

tryals and crosses. If we could receive these tryals as proceeding from the depth of God's love, from which they indeed proceed, *Heb.* xii. 7, 8. then would we be happy; for God cannot bestow on thee a more precious gift, than when he brings any kind of sufferings on thee, this being the only way to cure thy wounds, and heal thee of the plague and leprosy of sin, *Isa.* xlv. 7. Whether thou hast deserved these evils or not? Whether thro' thy own fault or without thy having contributed thereto: Know this, that it is God who sends them to thee; therefore suffer them patiently, and return him thanks for having thus accomplished his will in thee.

And that we should not be left without a witness, of the necessity of adversity, and suffering, all the creatures, and the very elements declare the same. The wild beasts, the hail, snow, cold, heat, storms, plagues, war, famine and sickness, testify to man, that it is thro' many tribulations that he must enter the kingdom. These are the lively paints, colours, and drapery wherewith God animates and perfects his glorious picture of meekness and humility in his beloved creature man. Let all kinds of afflictions and sufferings therefore be patiently endured by thee, if thou desirest God to perform his good pleasure in thee.

There are people who being convinced of this doctrine, are not satisfied with those crosses which are allotted them, but are desirous to impose more upon themselves; these do but torment themselves without reaping much fruit, as they are building on their own will and fancy, *Mat. xv. 9.* they hinder God's work, and, as it were, oblige him to wait their time. Thus it happens, that when God would work, on such, their nature being depraved, cannot follow God's draught; and when great temptations come, they have no strength to resist. Wherefore it is sufficient that thou mortify thy evil lusts, and thy corruption without tormenting thyself, but rather dwell in the patience, which is most agreeable to God. The third kind of crosses are very bitter, for they consist in hard temptation, in distress and frightful darkness, which at times press so hard on a man, that he chooses death rather than life. These tryals alter a man's nature more than the hardest outward suffering; for God sometimes so visits him with strange inward temptations, darkness and dryness, that none can apprehend them, but he who passes thro' them. Nevertheless God knows well to what end he does these things. They are certainly the effect of his love; so that if we bear them as we ought, they will be of unexpressible benefit unto us.

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For all sufferings will be productive of good to thee, if thou canst but silently submit to them, and resign thyself up to God; he will cause good to spring up to thee from these very sufferings; but if thou seekest for comfort any other way; comforts of another kind will also spring up in thee. Wherefore we ought freely to offer up ourselves to God, as being willing to suffer all those afflictions with which he shall please to visit us, whether inward or outward, that we may therein be made conformable to Christ. For God even also suffers with him, who wholly resigns himself to the divine will. And when sufferings thus proceed from God, they are sweet in the end, and turn to great advantage to us. Wherefore we ought rather to prefer scorn before honour, grief rather than joy; for he who is assured he suffers for God's glory, cannot but feel a lively joy proceeding from it.

All those sufferings which we suffer patiently, and from which we do not, even, desire to be delivered, but agreeable to God's will, are ~~more~~ agreeable to him, than the best of our works, and all burnt offerings,
1 Sam. xv. 22.

It is also more agreeable to God, and of more advantage to us, in our religious progress, to suffer with pure resignation, than to be employed in many good works; for suffer-
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ing being more opposite to nature, it is thereby more abased and the spirit the more exalted; for this reason that God requires of a strong and vigorous beginner bodily exercises, altho' with discretion, in such sort that spiritual exercise may be thereby helped; but from old men already humbled by submission and resignation, he expects that they suffer, in patience and resignation all that may befall them.

To be willing to suffer in and according to the will of God is so excellent a thing, that our frail nature could not support, in this life, the fruition and reward which God intends to give, in eternity, for the most slight sufferings, to which we have been willing to be subject, for his sake. Wherefore it is said, *That the sufferings of this time is not to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us*, Rom. viii. 18. so that we cannot sufficiently return thanks to God for those sufferings he permits to come upon us. All the saints have drank of this cup, and have testified that it has not been hurtful but salutary to them, *Psal. cxix. 67. James i. 12.* so that they have not refused to expose themselves thereto, and often even to spill their blood for that cause. Let us remember that the saints were men as well as we, and that we may obtain the same help that they were favoured with, *James v. 17.*—

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When in seeking for rest, we turn from God and seek comfort in the creatures, we expose ourselves to fall into enormous sins, in dangerous temptations, and finally into eternal death; wherefore God at such times visits us with affliction, that our lusts may be subdued, and that we may return to him with a sincere sense and confession of our sins. Wherefore let us not fear sufferings, but rather give thanks to God when he sends them, *Job* v. 17. It is a patient bearing of sufferings which fits us for the possession of supernatural gifts. Many have fallen by prosperity, but few have been hurt thro' adversity; the one as it were, undermines the foundations of virtue and goodness, but the other lays it stedfastly sure in a profound humility, *Isa.* xxvi. 16.

When we receive chastisement; when we are despised and persecuted, and bear these tryals without complaint; and that so far from allowing ourselves in any thoughts of vengeance, we are not even anxious to vindicate ourselves, leaving the whole to God; we shall, thro' divine goodness, receive a plentiful reward of peace and comfort; and shall experience those earthly chains which bind us to the world to be much loosened; and a desire will prevail that we may, even, be more abased before God and men, *Sam.* xi. 22. To suffer patiently those afflictions

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which

which God sends, is a principal means to obtain his grace, 2 *Tim.* ii. 12. And let us be particularly careful not to give way to resentment against such persons as God may make use of as a rod, for our amendment. But seriously consider in what spirit we suffer, that it be done with patience and resignation, then will all things work for our good. It is often our impatience, under sufferings, which causes our greatest hurt.

There are those who fast, who watch, and assist the poor, or give themselves up to other outward exercises; but we meet with very few, who can, with patience, suffer to be despised and treated with injustice. People are generally full of hidden pride; holding themselves in much esteem; and are desirous to be thought well of by others. But to what purpose is it to appear clean without, and yet to permit anger, revenge, and other impurities to remain in the heart; this is but the whited sepulchre of a religious Pharisee. For altho' outward purity is so far well, yet it cannot be accounted of any worth, in the sight of God, whilst sin and the love of the creatures defile the inward part; which ought to be God's dwelling place; wherefore first see that the inside be cleansed, and the outside will soon become clean also. It's rather a mark of divine displeasure that we should pass the whole
time

time of our life in peace and happiness, without affliction, as the apostle witnesseth, *Heb. xii. 8. If you are without chastisement, you are bastards and not sons.* Lazarus had his evil things in this life, and the rich man his good things; but observe how it fared with each after death. The one is comforted, the other tormented; thus each received the reward meet for him, and such as his humility or pride had fitted him for; thus every man receiving according to his works. It is almost the highest degree of the spiritual life, to be destitute of comfort, either from God or man, and to bear such a state, with patience and submission.

We may become martyrs without passing thro' the sword of persecution from the world, provided we maintain true patience in sufferings.

Let us then suffer with joy, since none will be crowned *if he has not warred*, 2 Tim. ii. 5. A man may attain to a knowledge of himself by spiritual exercises; but it is thro' suffering alone that he manifests what his growth in religion is.

The Lord our God is with us in our sufferings, and will deliver us from them in his own time; for he is faithful and will not suffer that we should be tempted beyond our strength; but with the temptation will make such way, as that we may be able to
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support it. *The sufferings of the present time are not to compare with the glory which will be revealed, Rom. viii. 18.*

C H A P. VIII.

That we ought to attach ourselves to God in true love.

IT is necessary, as much as possible, to keep our minds disengaged from outward things, looking with ardent desires towards God, our good and beneficent Lord; continually watching, with prayer, against all vain and needless thoughts; otherwise we shall make but little progress in virtue. We must also be careful to avoid all sloth and idleness; for these soften the heart, and cool charity; but let us endeavour to keep, continually, as in the presence of God, with deep and serious recollection, remembering, that he is near us, always beholding and ready to assist us with his grace and love. Wherefore let us cast ourselves often, as at the feet of his divine majesty, in deep humility, begging for the forgiveness of our sins; often meditating on the life and sufferings of Christ, with grateful acknowledgements of his benefits, and sincere desires to imitate him. Let us also meditate upon God's wonderful

wonderful works in his creatures; as also, on his infinite wisdom and inexpressible love.

We ought also, with deep reverence, to consider that God is in himself, the sovereign God, incomprehensible, unmovable and infinite; that he, only, is worthy to be sought and embraced with an entire and constant love: In him ought all the desires of every heart to be reunited, without measure; the more he is known, the more he is loved; and the more we draw near to him, the greater evidence we have of his love. The most feeble ray of joy which a chaste soul, who loves God, feels of his divine presence surpasses all the pleasures the creatures can produce; they are but bitterness compared with divine joy. He who gives up his heart wholly to God, abides in joy, and dies with an assurance of its everlasting continuance. He is already possessed of heaven and earth, and will enjoy it to all eternity: *For the things which God has prepared for those who love him, are such as never entered into the heart of man to conceive,* 1 Cor. ii. 9. There is no comparison to be made between the love of God and the love of the creatures; all that appears amiable in the world will be seen to be mere illusion, when the inward eye is opened in us. What doth the love of the world afford to its votaries, but a deplorable misuse of time, spent in vanity, and a soul filled with sin. This

This is all to be gained from the world, a short joy and long and lasting regret and sorrow. We desire to fly from scorn and suffering, and we often deeply plunge ourselves into them; we are not willing to bear Christ's easy yoke, and we find ourselves oppressed under the iron yoke of vanity and sin; but if agreeable to our Saviour's exhortation, *Mat. xxii. 3.* We desire to love our divine Lord, *with all our heart, and with all our soul*; we must turn the inward eyes of the soul with a sweet inclination, and an invariable love towards him; endeavouring to be always united to, and fighting sincerely after him. This ardent love of God is the spring of perfection, it is hereby; we die to all sin and are made conformable to God, and *partakers of the divine nature*, 2 Pet. i. 6. But in order to attain to this happy disposition, our wills must be given up, to do or suffer that which the holy spirit calls us to: We must forsake all these pleasures the sensual mind is so much taken up with, either in vain amusements, fleshly indulgence, unprofitable conversation, or other vanities; *these must be mortified*, Col. iii. 5. as also, all other disorderly affections, such as fear, joy, and grief; endeavouring to draw away from the multiplicity of cares and inquietudes, so apt to carry away the heart, that it may be fixed in God, and disengaged from all those accidents
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which human life is subject to; that an equality of soul may be maintained, as well in prosperity as in adversity; *and as we cannot do this, by our own strength*, John xv. 5. we ought with the most ardent desire to beg help of God, that we may be preserved from sin, and enabled to walk constantly in the footsteps of Christ, in all good works; consecrating to God's glory, our wealth, our honour, and our life itself.

Let us labour to give up our wills into God's will, to unite ourselves closely to his will, that the fulfilling of it may be the end and purpose of all our wishes and our sweetest pleasures; agreeable to our Saviour's example, *John* iv. 34. then may we bear all outward evils, as shame, sickness, persecutions, and even inward poverty and barrenness of spirit, without seeking comfort in any creature, remaining, always, faithful to God, in all states. This hidden way is generally made known but to God's intimate friends, that they may be willingly stripped from all false supports, and that fervent prayers may prevail in them for the attainment of solid virtue and divine love; which God is more ready to give, than we are ready to ask, *Isa.* lxxv. 24. If we earnestly pray to him from a sincere desire to love and please him, we shall infallibly, in his time, obtain the end of our wishes, *John.* ii. 4. tho' perhaps not till the latter end of our lives. God

God is so filled with love to his creatures, that he is better pleased to give the greatest, than the smallest gifts. He who asks in a true confidence, and with a sincere self-denial of himself, will obtain whatever he asks, *Psalms* cxlv. 18, 19. We must not imagine that he is gone far from us, because it is not in our power to do great works, provided there be but a sincere desire towards him, and a will to do our duty. God looks at and requires only the heart. *My Son give me thy heart*, *Prov.* xxiii. 26. And altho' such a person should think himself at a distance from God; nevertheless he is not so; for tho' God has not yet revealed himself to him; yet if he remains at the door and knocks, it will finally be opened to him, *Mat.* vii. 7.

All consists in our good will, and in the sincerity of our desires. He who desires to be possessed with humility, the love of God, or any other virtue, and seeks it with a fervent and sincere heart, has it already, and none can take it from him. It was in this sense that a servant of God returned thanks to his Maker in these words. "I thank thee, in that I find thee in all places; that thou accepts the sincerity of my will, and that none can falsely accuse me unto thee."

Dost thou sincerely desire to please God, to love him, to render him the most pure praise,

praise, to renounce thyself, to do good to all men, even as thou would'st have them to do to thee; in fine, to live as holy as it is possible; if this is indeed thy case so that nothing is wanting, but strength to fulfil these good desires, God will take pleasure in thee, and with them will also give ability to fulfil his will agreeable to his good pleasure, for he is faithful, *Phil.* ii. 13. 1 *Thess.* v. 24.

The foundation of our love to God, lies in the sincerity of our will, and is perfected by good works, which if they are sincere, will be constantly maintained, to the utmost of our power, even in the midst of sufferings. Love is as it were, imprinted in our nature, and when this love is under proper government; man loves God more than all the creatures, and even more than himself. It is a deplorable case, that we should have so perverted the excellent order of our nature, as not to direct this most precious treasure of love towards the sovereign good, but fix it on ourselves and on the poor fleeting creatures of this world. This so much afflicts those who are indeed the friends of God, that they could, as it were, pour down floods of tears, under a sense, that our blessed Redeemer is thus drove away, with so much indignity, from those hearts, for whom he laid down his life, and on whose behalf he is still pouring forth his prayers to his Father.

Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also, Mat. vi. 21. Inquire carefully where that treasure which thou lovest the most is, if in God or the creatures. If thou lovest God with uprightness, thou wilt continually sigh after him, as one oppressed with a burning thirst. *As the hunted hart panteth after the water-brooks, so doth my soul after thee O God*, is the language of all truly longing hearts. We cannot more acceptably serve God, than in thus desiring to keep near him, always keeping watch over our hearts, *Prov. iv. 23*. God loves the heart; he looks not at what is outward; he looks not as man looks, who sees that only which the natural eye perceives; but he looks even into the bottom of the heart, *1 Sam. xvi. 16*. He regards only a lively inclination for divine and virtuous things. Those works done by men with esteem and complaisancy of themselves, are disagreeable to God. Wherefore all thy works should proceed from an heart sincerely given up to God; having the good pleasure of him, to whom all things belong, solely in view. Wherefore in the use of those gifts and comforts which he affords us, we ought to seek nothing but his glory and most holy will, *1 Cor. x. 31*. It is scarce to be expressed, how much God loves a man so disposed, and how abundantly he opens to him his hidden treasures. God

is always inclined and ready to receive every one who in sincerity of heart, is willing to be converted to him, who empties and frees himself from the creatures; he, as it were, runs to meet such a man, and embraces him, with sweetness and love, *Luke xv. 20.*

We can wish for nothing, but what is to be found in God. Dost thou wish for love, for fidelity, for truth, for comfort, all these are found without measure, and in the most perfect manner in him? Dost thou desire beauty; he is beauty itself? Dost thou desire almightiness; he is the Almighty? Dost thou wish for riches; he is the master of all things? Thus thou wilt find in the only sovereign good, which is God, all thy heart can desire in the most accomplished manner. Wherefore drive far from thee all the creatures, in order that thou mayest, without ceasing, raise up thy spirit to the Creator, and thus abide in his presence. For whilst the creatures still remain, with affection, imprinted in thy mind; whilst thou yet esteamest these uncertain things, as matters of weight, thou hast but very little love for God, and art still much a stranger to that which is heavenly, *1 John ii. 15.*

Turn thyself each moment towards God, for he is so good, that all those who seek him with sincerity, will obtain all things from him, *Psalms clxv. 19.* He not only clears them
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from the punishment they have merited; but also delivers them from their sins. Let us therefore look diligently unto him who gives those good desires and operates thro' his grace, to the perfecting of them; carefully observing the day of our visitation, that it pass not over, *Isa. lv. 6. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.*

C H A P. IX.

How we may attain to a state of purity and an union with God; and the necessity we are under of keeping our affections loose from the creatures.

IF thou desires to attain to that purity and perfection which the gospel proposes, thou must keep in silence and retirement as much as thy several duties will permit, avoiding the conversation of men; always seeking for time and opportunity to meditate on God and heaven. Keep the door of thy senses shut to all vanity; and the door of thy heart and reason closed to all images, and impressions from passing objects. Thou oughtest also to hold the power of thy desires at liberty from all that can bind thy freedom, and engage thy will in affectionate solicitude or anxious care for the things of this

life; and having thus gathered together by desires and thy reason, turn them towards the sovereign and only good, and rest quiet there; thus thy mind will be raised above temporal things, and set upon God, in a continual contemplation of him, *Psalms* cxxi. We must, as it were, bind ourselves to God, in an entire resignation to his holy will, keeping our eyes upon him, and receiving every thing as coming from his immediate hand. But as we cannot always dwell in a steady contemplation of God, we ought, as much as is in our power, to persevere in such a state. And when we find ourselves deprived of the sight of God, don't let us rest satisfied under this deprivation, but turn into ourselves, gather all our inward strength in order to seek after God; even tho' it should be an hundred times in a day, and we shall find daily more ease and satisfaction in this labour; so that it will be easier for us to think on God in retirement, than it was before to be scattered in the multitude of objects.

If thou desires to make any progress in this way, remember that God is every moment saying unto thee, *My child enter into thyself, watch thy heart, that it may be kept pure from every vice, and thy desires free from all solicitude and love of earthly things.* Hold the strength of thy imagination directed towards

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God,

God, and attach thyself to him, as to the sovereign good, with fervent love; that so thy whole soul, with all its faculties, may be gathered in God, and become one spirit with him. This is in short, an abstract of the foundation of all happiness. It is by this means thou shalt receive all that is most sublime and perfect, to which very few attain, because most people are so much taken up with solicitude and love of earthly comforts.

But seek thou the hidden wisdom, which the heavenly doctor himself has inscribed, thro' his divine inspiration, in the hearts of those who seek him, with an humble confidence and serious desires, in a quiet silence, and renouncing all fleshly freedoms; to the utmost of their power. God often manifests more of himself to a simple country man, or to a weak woman who are in this frame of mind, than to those wise ones of the world, whose knowledge is not founded on a true humility of heart, *Mat. xi. 25.* It is a most deplorable case, that we who were created for to be partakers of this sublime grace; who are called to it, who may receive it continually, from God, should neglect it in this life, to such a degree as may occasion our being eternally deprived of it.

The soul of man is placed between time and eternity; if it turns towards time, it forgets eternity and all divine things appear little

little and at a distance, as an object appears small when we behold it afar off. In this world the body is, as it were, in its own country, surrounded with natural conveniences, which are as its friends, by whom it is continually served, as meat, drink, and all terrestrial things! But the spirit is here below in misery, its friends having their residence in heaven, *Phil. iii. 20.* Wherefore the body must be kept under, by mortification, thro' watching and prayer, *1 Cor. ix. 27.* If thou desirest to attain to a pure and divine life, dispose thyself as tho' thou wert to die each moment, *Gal. ii. 20.* as in effect thou must soon leave this body. Imagine thy soul to be already separated from the body and united to God for all eternity; this will shew the emptiness of lower things. Endeavour, by the help of thy superior faculties, to remain always with God, whilst with thy inferior thou submittest thyself on earth, and sink into thy proper nothingness in profound humility. Thou oughtest to use temporal things only for necessity, to lead to that happy eternity which ought to be the end thou proposdest to attain.

Shun needless employments, and conversations, and every attachment to the creatures, even with such as may appear well disposed; such converse often brings much dimness over the spiritual mind; wherefore

we ought to give great attention in this respect, and endeavour to maintain a due converse with God. We shall frequently experience the falshood and unfaithfulness of such supports, even in those from whom we expect to receive much comfort. God is to be met with in a more especial manner in retreat and solitude, *Isa. xxx. 15. Hos. ii. 14.* Wherefore be silent, keep thyself disengaged from men, and gathered into thyself. Seek rather the time and place where thou mayest be alone, and fly the tumults and the dangers of the world. If thou really desirest to make a progress in the christian life; be advised (in true charity) contract no familiarity with any who are not possessed of these dispositions; make short work with all others, answer them with kindness, in few words and if such a behaviour cause some to be offended or to speak evil of thee, endeavour, thro' grace, to bear it without uneasiness or murmuring.

It is better, for thee, that God should be thy friend and thy protector against all men, who may be against thee, than if all the creatures were on thy side, and God should on that account be against thee.

Keep thy outward man in tranquility, and thy soul in purity; for purity and innocency afford more knowledge and wisdom than great study, *Psal'm cxi. 10. Wis. i. 4.* Turn
thyself

thyself from the creatures; and if any accident befall thee, be not hasty to come out of trouble, for he who makes haste to get from under trouble, will not find succour from truth. *Let the dead bury their dead*, but remain quiet in thyself; as if thou hadst forgot thyself, trust in God who will provide all that is necessary for thee.

If thou desirest to be united to God, thou must resign thy own will, thy carnal cares and delights, in order to obtain this sovereign good: If thou expectest that God will take his residence in thy heart, it must be empty and naked, and thou must be poor in spirit and preserved free from solicitude, *2 Tim. ii. 4. 5.* then will the sun of righteousness marvelously operate therein. Keep out of thy mind all those images and figures which will be presenting themselves to take possession of thy mind and heart, retain them not with thee, and they will soon vanish away; for all images of the creatures must be erased out of thy mind, that the mind of Christ may be imprinted therein: Neither suffer thy will to be fixed in any thing, but let it rest upon God alone, *Psalms lxxiii. 25.* Preserve thy heart in simplicity, and keep closely inward with all thy strength; thus mayest thou remain firm and unshaken in the divine unity. Watch that thou mayest accomplish the divine will, then will thy soul pass from the wounds

wounds of thy Saviour's humanity, to the light of his divinity, and thou wilt, with delight, begin to taste that which is heavenly.

If thou can'st even do nothing more, than to strip thyself from all imaginations, and from all self-love; attaching thyself to God alone, there is no temptation can overcome thee. Be not careful what derision and scorn thou hast to meet with; what perfection thou hast to suffer; the word of God, which is God himself has separated thy body from thy spirit, so that thou looks upon a sensual man, so far off as to think little of him; for the soul in this situation is more united to God, whom it loves, than to the body it animates: Watch carefully over thine inward man, for in him is contained all the happiness of man, *Prov. iv. 23.* Remain fixed in watching over thyself, till thou art freed from selfishness. Nature must always be watched over, *1 Cor. ix. 27.* and one misstep produces another.—Keep clear from every thing which may captivate thy will; do not seek to please the fleshly appetite, any farther than what is necessary; feed it with such temperance as may fit thee for farther good works. Keep always inward, for it is there that all truth will be made known to thee, and where thou wilt be taught what thou oughtest to do or to leave undone.

Pass thro' all the accidents of life, as thro' that

that which thou holdest in little esteem; be concerned only for that which is necessary; suffer not thy mind to be affected by what may happen to thee, whether it be good or bad; entrust all into the hands of God, and endeavour to preserve, in simplicity, the presence of God in thy heart. And if thou should apprehend thou hast lost this comfort, bend all thy strength to remove all obstacles, in order to its return to thee. Those who are espoused to God, ought rather to suffer death than voluntarily to do any thing which may displease God: Nothing ought to give joy to such an one, but God alone, and that which pleases him: For to his penetrating eyes all things are present. As often as a man turns his heart towards God in true confidence, so often, tho' sometimes insensibly, does he receive of the holy spirit, a fresh supply of grace. When a man, in deep humility, sincerely labours to draw near to God, this real and sincere return to God, will infallibly be rewarded: Whilst for all other works, where the honour of God is not the principle end, we must expect but a slight recompence. Do not scatter thy strength in outward words and actions, for these are productive of great dissipation, but, with Mary of old, chuse the better part, *Luke* x. 42. Don't loose time in running hither and thither, of complaining
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of this or the other, for this is the manner of those who have little good in them: Thou mayest thereby so scatter this strength, as not to recover it in twenty years, if ever.— Seek rather, always solitude, and say within thyself, *He whom I seek is above all senses, incomprehensible to reason; it is a pure heart which desires and receives him. This is he, alone, which I seek*, Psalm lxxiii. 25. *Whatever else befalls me, I will bear it and travel on.*

When thou thus witnessest, this Lord of all Lords sitting, as it were, on the throne of thy soul, he will enlighten thy heart and so inflame it with his love, that thy faculties will be strengthened and made participaters of the divine nature. Wherefore thou needest no other exercise but to bring thy will in submission to the will of God; and to make an entire offering up of thyself on all occasions; and thus wilt thou return to God, from whom thou dost proceed. Wait for the Lord, be courageous and intrepid in sufferings. *Yea attend on God constantly until the time of thy deliverance be accomplished.*

CHAPTER. X.

That we ought to attend to the motion of God's spirit, within us, and labour to preserve its presence, even whilst employed in outward concerns.

AR T thou desirous of being favoured by grace, abase thyself, deeply, at the feet of God, the inexhaustible fountain of divine love, from a sense of thy nothingness and vanity. ~~First~~, humbly, to him that he may enable thee to glorify him; be deeply abased in the center of thy heart; there wait for a revelation of the will of God, in deep silence. Cease from running hither and thither, for this exercise is better than if thou could'st move the whole world. If thou art in doubt what may be most agreeable to God, ~~consult with thyself~~, and join with that part which is ~~most~~ opposite to nature; for, ~~this is the safest choice~~, and that to which ~~nature~~ is the most inclined, is the most doubtful.

There are those who look outward, when God, by his Spirit, would draw them inward, and who seek to be inwardly gathered, when he calls them to outward service; thus they join not with, but resist God's will.

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Some undertake mighty things, so that it appears as tho' they were like to become extraordinary people; yet many of these are apt to return to their old course of life, to join with nature and to seek comfort in the creatures. Others come on with courage and pass, as it were, thro' fire and water, but not having passed thro' death, tho' they endeavour to gather inward, cannot come to any settlement, but meet with much anguish and pain; ~~the~~ sooner these people die to themselves, the sooner they attain to peace.

As many diversities of dispositions as there are amongst men, so many different means doth God use to lead us to peace. That which is the life of one, is the death of another; wherefore grace is dispensed, in common, according to the frame and disposition of men. Be careful not to endeavour to imitate other men's ways, except it be in their ~~essential~~ virtues, for the essential path which leads to God is but one and always the same. ~~He who is~~ attend to thy religious call, and inquire what God requires of thee. He who properly attends to what passes in the inward center of his heart, and is rightly sensible of his natural corruption, will renounce himself, and follow God, in that path into which he pleases to lead him; such an one remains stable in himself, and receives

receives all which happens to him, whether inward or outward, as coming from the hand of God. He submits to God's hidden judgment, having the will of God and not himself sincerely in view. He will not be in doubt what he ought to do, and will soon overcome all obstacles, however strange and difficult they may be; such a state is of more worth than the most sublime exercises. God will not permit such a man to go astray, however dangerous his way may be.

A continual attention to one's self is difficult in the beginning, but it becomes easy. When a man truly proves his whole life, his ways, his words and habits, in order to discover if they are agreeable to the will of God, he will learn to know himself and will discover his sins and be painfully desirous to be delivered from them.

A man of God should accustom himself to have God as much as possible present in his mind. Keep thy spirit in the same disposition, both in the time and out of the time of prayer. Thou oughtest also when in company, strongly to labour to keep God present in thy mind. Let not any thing thou seest or hearest be retained or dwelt upon in thy mind, more than is really necessary, lest thy imaginations and thy desires be defiled by strange images or a disorderly love; for what we suffer to be impressed on

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our minds, whether it be agreeable or the contrary, presents itself, and will disturb us when in prayer. Thou must not be satisfied with having thought upon God, as a passing object, for such thoughts soon vanish, and where there is one thought of God, there will be ten others relating to temporal things, which drive away the first. Wherefore it is necessary that we labour vigorously to turn our minds entirely towards God, to preserve a sense of God's presence within, with a simple and sweet inclination towards him; so that whatever happens to us, we may always maintain the equality of soul, a fidelity and constant sincerity to God, that he in all things may be the principle object of all our actions. Thus none will be able to turn, or separate us from God. And he who remains thus united to him, will not easily be drawn into sin. But it is a most deplorable case, that almost every one descends from that holy mountain, and so far debases himself, as to be taken up with things of comparatively no worth. And it is a surprising instance of love, that our Lord Jesus should, still, condescend to visit souls, who have been so unfaithful to him.

But don't be so far mistaken as to imagine, that outward acts of obedience and charity; such as the worship of God, visiting the afflicted, taking care of and administering

nistring to the necessities of the poor, and such like, will draw thee away from God, lest thou neglect thy duty under the presence of more perfectly serving God in spirit; it is solely thy want of submitting to the order of truth, following thy own will and not having thy eye single enough to God, which alone wilt hurt thee. If thou performed these outward acts of duty purely from love to God, he would make up all wants and deficiencies to thee, so that they would not impede thy spiritual progress. And even if thou shouldest sometimes find it difficult to gather in the scattered powers of thy mind. God can easily make this up to thee; he requires but little time to perfect his work, *Psf. xxx. 9.* If thy sin and thy attachment to the creatures doth not cause a distance betwixt thee and God, neither outward works, nor any accident whatever can occasion it.

Wherefore it is not necessary to be very solicitous for the improvement of inward consolation; it is sufficient that thou remain united to God, from a sincere desire of pleasing him; for a sincere will of pleasing God exceeds all gifts and endowments. He who finds in himself a good will and disposition to serve him, cannot be sufficiently thankful and ought to be very careful to preserve it to the end. Wouldst thou know whether thy thoughts, words, and actions are agreeable

to God consider, carefully, whether thou art more weaned from the love of the creatures, encreasest in humility and art more and more inwardly gathered to God; if that is thy case, thou mayest be assured that thou art growing in grace, but if on the contrary thy words and actions tend to trouble and dissipate thee, it is a sign they are not wholly and purely directed to the glory of God, and that something remains, in thee, of which God is not solely the cause and end.

C H A P. XI.

That we ought to receive all things as coming immediately from the hand of God; and that we should place our whole trust and confidence on him alone.

THE strong will of man acting in opposition to the divine will, is a principal obstruction to our progress towards the land of rest, in proportion as a man is more or less given up to do and suffer the will of God, so he is the more or less sensibly touched with things that happen to him.

He that is truly given up receives all things as coming from the hand of God, esteeming the creatures only as God's instruments. Hence his labour is, that neither accidents

accidents nor adversity should be grievous to him; knowing that if God is for him, nothing can really hurt him, *Rom. viii. 28* To such a man nothing is an evil, all is equal. He is not cast down by disgrace nor exalted in prosperity. He is able to bear pleasure and grief, sweet and bitter, honour and shame, health and sickness, elevation and abasement with an equality of mind, *Phil. iv. 11, 13*. He is always giving thanks to God, and his eye is ever upon him from a sense of his goodness, and an assurance that all the creatures are under his direction. The heavens and the earth are as his book in which he reads and meditates on the mighty wonders of God; such a man being delivered from his own will, rests in God, in an inward peace of mind, for in that degree that we dwell truly in God, in that degree we find ourselves in peace; and in that degree we are out of him, in that degree we are in inquietude, *John xvi. 33*. It is in this peace of the soul that God dwells, and it is in him who is, indeed, possessed of this peace that God works, and makes use of as his instrument; Oh! how happy is such a man, thus truly given up to God, his heart is preserved from sin, and he enjoys much divine comfort. A steady labour to give ourselves up to God, and to be freed from any attachment to the creatures, is the most noble exercise we can be employed in; but the

great enemy of mankind endeavours, with all his power, to draw the soul from this labour, by temptation to anger, disquietude and cares, needless discourses, vain and subtle studies and other missteps. Indeed a little matter will put us by; wherefore be careful not to be surprised; when in danger retire quickly, as it were, under the wing of God's care. In controversies or differences, that may happen, give up all, that thy duty will permit, rather than dwell in contention and debate: Whatever thou seest, hearest, or dost, do not suffer the thought of it to fix in thy imagination, so as that it may dwell much in thy mind, then will it not be a temptation to thee; and that which thou hast not suffered to be imprinted on thy heart and memory will not hurt thee, thy soul will always be gathered in its center and strong to resist temptation; wherefore forsake thyself, whatever happens to thee, trust in the immutable providence of God, and commit thy whole concerns to his care, 1. Pet. v. 7, for it is certain, that if thou castest all thy cares upon him, he will provide better for all thy wants, both inwardly and outwardly, than if thou wast day and night taken up with solicitous cares and should'st consume thy strength therein; wherefore receive all things with contentment, from God's paternal care over thee, with an entire confidence:

confidence in his everlasting providence; looking upon all events such as wealth, poverty, health, sickness, good or evil, life or death as directed for thy happiness, *Mat. x. 29, 31.*

God gives being, strength and motion to all things, they have their numbers and measures, nothing can draw from under his divine providence: All things even the least (sin excepted) are under God's direction; wherefore when thou dost not wholly confide in God, but givest thyself much pains and care; he often leaves thee in trouble and necessity, that thou mayest know how far thy own solicitude and care can reach.—God is so full of grace and faithful, that in him is found all that we stand in need of, *Mat. vii. 7, 8.* and so much as we open the breast of our trust in him, so far he fills it; for the riches of his grace are infinite or *without end.* As we can never love God too much, neither can we confide too far in him and the more that confidence is firm, humble, and respectable, the more and in greater abundance, do we receive what we ask, *Deut. iv. 29, 31.*—Let not even thy sins be an hinderance to thy trust and confidence. God can as easily forgive the most enormous sins, as the least and it is as impossible for thee to forsake only one sin by thy own strength as a great number.

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He who in his last hours puts his trust in God and gives himself up entirely to his care, with an assurance that every thing will turn to his good, whether joy or grief, and that he is willing and able to succour him, such ~~an~~ one forces and penetrates into his heart, ~~in such~~ a manner that God (if we may so speak) cannot refuse him his help, *Isa. xlix. 15, 16.* For if God would not succour him, nothing could comfort him. He who asks of our Lord that which seems impossible, with entire confidence, will sooner have his request granted, than ~~the~~ who asketh little with a weak confidence. For our Saviour himself declares, *that every thing is possible to him that believes, Mat. ix. 29.* And he tells his disciples, *Mat. xxi. 21. Whatsoever ye ask in my name, if ye believe, ye shall receive it.*

C H A P. XII.

Of our indigitation to virtue; and how we may thro' the effect of fervent prayer, be enabled to turn away from sin.

A TRUE christian ought, daily, by divine help, to grow stronger and stronger in the path of virtue, never allowing himself to commit the least sin, either voluntarily or thro' custom. For habitual sins prevent

prevent all progress in virtue; wherefore it is absolutely necessary to watch continually over the roots of sin, in the heart, of which great numbers often remain, tending to disorderly passions, even in those who have been long exercised in the practice of piety; such as anger, hatred, luxury and other vices, which have often drawn away and sunk into perdition, even persons who had made great progress in piety and had been much favoured by God, for want of having carefully watched over these dangerous roots. Evil thoughts and loose imaginations also greatly hinder the divine operation, trouble the heart and drive from it the holy spirit, which cannot dwell with impure or vain thoughts; the more they are given way to, the deeper roots they make in the heart.

The devil is always about us and mixes with that to which he knows our nature is most inclined, in order to strengthen sin in us. *He walketh about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. 5. He seeks to find us in a weak moment of our watch and destitute of devotion, when one of the windows of our senses are, as it were, open, to give entrance to some bad thoughts; then, if we are not on our guard he comes in and robs us of what we have. It is a most lamentable case when a christian suffers himself to be overcome by satan, more especially

especially as we may obtain from God the most powerful help against him, if we seek properly for it.

If thou wilt overcome thy spiritual enemies, thou must shun company and all occasions of sin; keeping thy flesh under, with discretion, and driving away satan by thy prayers.

As soon as thou art sensible of the motion of any evil passion in thee turn from it, without delay, enter into thy nothingness, and hasten to draw near to God, by a wise renunciation of thyself; even, as a poor beggar and servant freed with sin. Lay before God, with a religious fear, the depth of corruption attending on the sin; confide fully in him and altho' he does not immediately grant thy request, do not run out into words and deeds; thou shalt be safe; for it is certain that there is none but God, alone, who can and will deliver thee from the burden of thy sins. Thou oughtest also, thro' a contemplation of Jesus Christ, to withdraw the image of, and inclination to thy former corruptions; for as God has inclosed great virtue, even in stones and plants, towards curing of bodily diseases; how much more thinkest thou, there is virtue contained in our blessed Saviour's sufferings, to cure the maladies of the soul. It is there thou oughtest to cast thyself, at the feet of thy

thy heavenly Father, that he may vouchsafe, to come to thy help, thro' the mediation of his Son's sufferings; it is by this holy mediation, that thou mayest obtain every particular grace from God.—When we find ourselves guilty of any fault, don't let us dwell thereon, but gather up the scattered powers of our minds under a sense of deep sorrow, for our transgression, having our recourse, in simplicity, to God alone, pouring out our grief with deep sighs into his bosom; making fervent application to our dear Lord for forgiveness and grace in time of need; with a renewal of our good resolution of living entirely to him, and a firm confidence in his mercy. Let us not stand, as it were, afar off thro' fear of approaching him; our strength lies in being near him. On humble application to God, confessing and forsaking our sins he will forgive them, *Sam. xii. 13.*

God is much more disposed to receive us, than we are to go to him. Our daily sins can never be more easily blotted out, than by a quick, fervent and sincere return to God and turning away from sin, to the utmost of our power. Wherefore continually watch over thyself, and maintain a mutual return from thee to God, and from God to thee; with sincere thanks, more especially as thou

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hast, so frequently, found forgiveness, thro' the precious treasure of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, *Zach. xiii. 1.*

C H A P. XIII.

How we ought to gather our minds unto God.

A Servant of Christ has said, *If thou wilt gather thyself into God, thou must be divorced from thy senses, for God is a spirit, John iv. 24.* Observe if thou hast not suffered something to come betwixt thee and God, by giving way to a self-seeking disposition. Be careful to observe by his light and grace, the presence of the divine essence in thee, how God reveals himself to thee in himself, and in all creatures, *Go continually forth from thy selfishness and activity;* (much is contained in these expressions) and in order more distinctly to understand them, thou must observe that the more thy soul is poured out, thro' the force of reason and the senses, the more it is filled with imaginations. The more it labours for that which is outward, the more it is weakened and becomes inwardly sick as to God. For when the inferior faculties attend on their own operations, the soul is obliged to co-operate with them. Here the creatures darken the spirit,

spirit, and so fill it with other objects, that the soul cannot see God, nor give itself up entirely to him.

We must seek God in ourselves, by the strength of a chaste love, which gathers up all the powers of the soul, and draws them from all outward dissipations and operations; that we may re-enter the inward rest, and the door may be shut to every figure and image which may disturb the mind.—

Wherefore let us turn our senses, our reason and our memory with love towards God, in the center of the soul, and there cleave to him, in humble silent adoration, where all thoughts and imaginations are brought down and silenced; it is in this interior recollection that grace begins its operation and from whence this pure spirit flows into the faculties of the soul.

Turn thyself in this manner towards God, amend thy evil practices, abstract thy senses, as much as possible from exterior objects. It is by submission of the will, by drawing off from the creatures and a proper application of God's gifts, that thou wilt be clothed with true humility, and receive the spirit. For in order to do God's work, he requires a soul empty and freed from care; depending on him alone: God has no want of any thing else to do his work in us, but
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that we be truly emptied and stand in pure nothingness before him.

Dwell under a sense of thy proper nothingness, thy natural nothingness, thy sinful nothingness, and there remain firm.—And if, at any time, thou feelest thy heart raised in love and gratitude towards God, and finds a disposition to celebrate his majesty and goodness towards thee, do it with humility and return immediately into thy nothingness, there to meditate on this wonderful bounty as well to mankind in general, as to thee in particular; also, to contemplate with awe on his humanity and his sufferings. Return him hearty thanks for all these benefits.—Ask of him all those virtues which thou standest in need of; submit thyself, with all thy heart to his secret will, in an entire submission of thyself; thus flow, as it were, entirely into God.—Embrace him, in a full confidence; represent to thyself, at all times, thy bloody spouse, and thus pass from the wounds of his humanity into the light of his divinity; in this exercise adhere strongly to the advice given in scripture, *Psalms xxxvii. 5, 7. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him.*

The creatures as they come out of the hand of God are good and amiable, but they are not the goodness itself; nor are they that on which we ought to fix our love.— God is alone the essence of goodness and of love. Consider that he, tho' so great and good is always with thee; that he looks upon thee in his inexpressible love, that he sees thee, in all thy actions, thy words and thy thoughts; even a thousand times better than thou seest thyself, and withal is always, thro' his benignity, waiting upon thee and willing to receive thee. Wherefore labour with all thy strength and desire to be united to him, in a perfect and efficacious love; that thy nothingness and weakness may be quite swallowed up and reformed, so may thou become something in him, who is the only true and truly existing being.

Then consider the secret places of the Almighty; for he is hidden in all things as saith, *Isa. xlv. 15. Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.* It is marvellous concerning the Almighty, that he so hideth himself that we cannot perceive nor contemplate his presence, except at such times and moments as he disposes us, in spirit, thereto.

And yet he is nearer to all things than they are to themselves, who altho' he dwells in the center of the soul, nevertheless is hid

to all the senses and unknown to all outward things, yet there is nothing so easy to be obtained as God, where a good will and sincere desire prevails, we may reach his immensity with a poor and broken spirit.

Thou oughtest to enter upon the work of thy salvation, with a resolute and unshaken mind, which in a lively and chaste love of God, as it were, hates itself and dying to all creatures, renounces earthly loves, that it may eternally possess God, in a pure and faithful love. And when thy merciful Father perceives thy heart thus purified and tending towards him, he will pour himself into thy soul, as the sun pours out its rays into the open air.

When the spirit is sensible of the presence of God, it goes, as it were, out of itself, all that it has leaves it, and it plunges itself into its own nothingness, even sometimes imagining that its intelligence is more stupid than that of the brute creation. But then the King upholds it by its divine virtue, for the more we are abased, the more we are exalted, and we do not properly see the height of God but in the valley of humility.

Here a man receives so great light, and so much knowledge of the truth, that all that is not God is irksome to him, *Psalms lxxiii.*
15. The more humility he maintains in his heart, the more light he receives. Hence proceeds

proceeds great joy in spirit. The whole world cannot hurt him that is fixed in this state; neither can he ever fall from it, except he should take a delight in himself, or should attribute to himself those graces he has received, as tho' he was the author of them.

C H A P. XIV.

How we may be delivered from all selfish desires; with some account of the sufferings which God permits to come upon those he loves.

WHEN a man finds himself deeply exercised and nature is quite poor, he is, as it were, surprised and would have something to himself; he would willingly look into and understand the work of God; but be careful of such an inquiry, else the Lord may leave thee in this time of need.— Before nature becomes wholly mortified many sorrowful things come to pass, for she is so corrupted since the fall of our first father, and has so vehement an inclination to satisfy herself, that she would willingly have always before her some object, wherein to delight herself, either in words or actions amongst men or in solitude; and when overcome on one side, she raises on the other, always seeking to satisfy self, even in the gifts

gifts of God; so that she prefers herself to God in appropriating all things to herself, by which she deprives God of his praises and glory, and imperceptibly hinders his gifts and graces from operating in the soul.

This immoderate love of one's self reigns at this time in a deplorable manner in all states, 2 *Tim.* iii. 2. Nevertheless it must perish and be entirely extinguished. We must die to ourselves and be entirely stripped of our own will, of a vain complacency in surveying our own attainments, with delight, as well as of all other sins, if we are sincerely willing to be united to God; but this will not come to pass without sustaining several grievous combats, by many victories obtained, and by renewedly making a sacrifice of our selfishness. This is not the work of a day, it will require much pains and labour before the mind can be drawn away from temporal things; and our own wills so reduced as to submit to God's will as well in prosperity as in adversity.—Contrary things cannot subsist together. If we will have fire, the wood must be consumed. The seed must die before we can reap fruit: If thou desires that God may always operate in thee, thou must remain in a passive state, and keep thy faculties from their own operation, in a full and entire renunciation of self from a sense of thy inability and nothingness.

thingness. The deeper this nothingness is, the more real is the divine operation; *for our own righteousness is as filthy rags*, Isa. lxiv. 6. When God speaks, all the faculties of thy soul must keep silence and must cease from action. This death and destruction of self is so heavy to him that bears it and his nature so pressed thereby, that he knows not what to do; this pain proceeds from an unwillingness in the creature to die, nevertheless we must necessarily pass thro' it by virtue of the death of Christ. The more there is of sin and selfishness in our natural state, the more sensible is the pain. Our salvation is sooner perfected in suffering and in cessation of action, than in activity. In this state we meet with many hinderances, for nature is active and would willingly co-operate and have some object wherewith to ease her pain, as pious readings, religious conversations, and the like; but in this state it is better to deny ourselves of such comforts, if able to support without it. For the new spiritual birth will not attain its perfection, if not preceeded by deadly anguish; and every thing that alleviates these sufferings, will prevent that birth which would have been attained thro' a constant perseverance therein.

Our dear Saviour conducts those of his friends whom he would bring into the
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greatest perfection, by a path so strait and desert that they are often fearful what will become of them. He proves them for their greater advantage, as he did that good man Job. Sometimes he withholds, from them all sense of his grace, of his union and of his love, leaving them thus stripped and barren; as tho' he had never known nor loved them. This was the state of desertion wherein our dear Saviour was in, when upon the cross he cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*, Mat. xxvi. 39. From whence we learn, that in whatever state we be, either of joy or grief, we ought to remain quiet, and to labour, truly, to give ourselves up, even tho' all sense of grace should be taken from us: Our virtues mostly proceed from our afflictions as patience proceeds from persecution; humility from disgrace; and so of all the rest.

Sometimes God permits his friends to be exposed to many sorts of temptations, as pride, luxury, hellish envy and other sins which they thought they had already overcome.—They are sometimes exposed to checks of conscience, to doubts, incredulity, blasphemy and hatred of God and to other like terrible assaults, which it seems impossible to support. These temptations are at times so pressing that they seem to have overcome us: Nevertheless there is yet some resistance

resistance in the superior part of the soul;
 but which is hardly to be perceived, on ac-
 count of the obscurity and weakness in
 which we find ourselves.—This pain be-
 comes the harder when the faculties of the
 soul most strongly resist sin; especially in
 fleshly liberties, for he who is pressed down
 with sorrow, willingly seeks for comfort
 from nature; except when forbidden by
 the spirit. But whatever may be thy trials,
 whether light or hard, bear them with pa-
 tience, don't endeavour to withdraw from
 under them; but remain in quiet, don't turn
 away from the presence of God, however dis-
 tressing may be the thoughts which trouble
 thee; let them return as they come, don't
 notice them. For tho' all the devils in hell
 and the whole world should pour into thy
 soul and body, all their malice and all their
 impurities, if thou art truly sincere before
 God, and thy resolution be to die rather than
 voluntarily to commit any one sin, they will
 purify thee in the virtue of Christ, and will
 prepare thee for the most excellent gifts!
 If thou couldst only remain in humility
 and be truly given up, thy heavenly Father
 would not fail to deliver thee in a suitable
 time and send thee comfort, from himself,
 in a manner which would infinitely exceed
 all thy afflictions. All accidents, whatever
 they be, will prepare thee for God, if thou
 wilt

wilt only note and make proper use of them in silence and patience.

It is thus God often tries his children, and they also meet with tryals from those with whom they live, by hard words and violent reproaches, condemning their ways and actions, as mere folly and dangerous heresy and error, that thereby, they may be truly humbled, as well in their own spirits, as in the eyes of the world. For they must be fastened to the cross of Christ, naked and destitute of all support, and freed from every thing they were naturally attached to; so that their own will may be truly brought under subjection. Wherefore suffer with patience; forsake thyself, be circumspect and keep silence, saying in thyself, *Lord thou knowest I seek thee alone*, then God will combat for thee. Be thou silent. Ah! if thou knewest the inexpressible good which results from this state and how great is the love of God to thee, even in the pains he brings thee under, and with how much ease these tryals drive away the evil spirit, thou wouldst run to meet the cross and wouldst look upon that day as lost, wherein thou shouldst have no occasion of suffering.

He who can suffer in patience, with an humble trust, under the secret judgments of God, as long as it pleaseth him, is sure
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of his protection, God draws him to himself and fills him with his love.

Turn thyself towards God, with all thy strength, verify in acts what thou hast now read; retire into the inward center of thy heart, it is there that truth resides; it will not be thro' a multitude of words that thou wilt attain it, but rather in keeping silent, in suffering and remaining quiet, in denying thyself, and confiding in God. Ever remember, what thou art, where thou art, from whence thou sprung, and where thou wouldst go. Take also care what thou dost, why thou dost it, and persevere constantly in virtue and truth until death.

C H A P. XV.

Describing some weaknesses and frailties that attend many pious people, the giving way to which proves a great hinderance to their establishment in a truly christian life.

OUR spiritual progress is much hindered thro' giving way to self-love of any kind, as also to an unwarrantable affection for any creature whatever. Every love that takes possession of the heart of man, and which kindles in him the desire of seeking, hearing, or possessing any thing, that does
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not tend to the glory of God, is a disorderly love of the creatures: such as is the love and desire after earthly things; money, wealth, houses, clothes, books, furniture and such things which we may possess, or make use of, for necessity, or for superfluity; and which we often seek after thro' fleshly liberty; setting our affections thereon, in such sort, that we bear with impatience to have them taken from us. Such persons, as these, are esteemed to have a propriety in those things, as they hold them without regard, whether their possessing of them is, or is not agreeable to the will of God; this situation is by some spiritual writers called PROPRIETY the will of the creature not being subservient to the divine will, which requires of those who are truly poor in spirit, that their desires be so disengaged from what they possess, as *that they possess them, as tho' they possessed them not*, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 31. being ready, freely to give up and forsake all, when God requires it; so that if these things are taken from them, by God's permission, their understanding and will should consent thereto, without murmur.

Another hinderance arises from the desire of riches and honour; from sensuality and immoderate indulgence, in eating, drinking, &c. giving way to vain, needless and uncharitable words and actions; also in
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vain curiosity and other dissipations and diffusions of our senses. It is by means of these things, that we lose a taste to spiritual exercises; for a sensual man has no relish for those things which belong to the spirit: Here the inferior powers debase the spirit, and turn it away from the sovereign good, causing it to take its rest in things that are sensible and vile. Truth allows us all that is necessary, provided we do not desire to satisfy our fleshly appetites; for the beginning of the spiritual life is a death to the natural senses; and requires that we turn away from all the creatures in whom we used to confide; in order that we may attach ourselves to that which is eternal and divine.

A further hinderance in our spiritual progress lies in *the good opinion we have of ourselves, and our hidden pride*, this often arises from the esteem we have of our good works, and other religious exercises; as also from the sweetness and inward joy we are sometimes sensible of. Here the very progress such make in virtue is itself a cause of stumbling to them; this false esteem of their virtues becomes their chief hinderance, as it proceeds from an heart unmortified, impure and proud; such persons possess all they have in propriety. They depend more on their own works than on the freedom of the children of God, purchased by the precious sufferings

sufferings of Christ, in which alone, they ought to seek for peace and rest, *Rom. iii. 24, 25.* Hence they fall into pride; seek a vain reputation; look upon themselves as of consequence and are too ready to judge other people with sourness and passion.—There is nothing so hurtful in a spiritual life as pride and self-love; this casts many into perdition who had made a good beginning and been once divinely favoured.

There also arises a great obstruction to an establishment in religion from a desire which prevails in some to be esteemed and favoured by men, *James iv. 4.* Many, from a desire of these things, do that which they ought not to do, and omit to do what they ought, in order to gain favour, or avoid being exposed to the jest, the scorn and hatred of men; these forget the apostolick advice, *Gal. i. 10. Do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.* Such if they do not humble themselves and amend, will suffer an irreparable damage.

An inordinate care for and desire of earthly things, is also often a considerable hinderance; the apostle tells the believers, *That he that goeth to war does not entangle himself in the affairs of this life,* *Tim. ii. 2, 4.* Nevertheless most are solicitous, and even torment themselves to attain to many things they do not really stand in need of: In these the inclination is
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so much on outward things, and the desire of the soul is filled therewith, that it is painful for them, to think of, and confide in God as they ought to do. We are indeed, exhorted in scripture to labour and be careful for that which is necessary, nevertheless lest the heart should be carried away with such cares, distrust and solicitude is wholly forbidden to the disciples and believers in Christ, *Mat. vi. 25, 28.* These things obscure our faith in, and dependance on God; lessen our charity to our neighbour, and expose us to many temptations and snares of the devil, *1 Tim. vi. 9.*—We must also be very careful to preserve our hearts from bad or vain thoughts, and even from such thoughts, which tho' not evil in themselves, yet are not of use. Indulgences of this kind shew the heart to be relaxed and vain; and to have but little love to God. Those bad thoughts and suggestions proceed from the enemy and altho' we may not wholly give ourselves up to them, yet where they are indulged, they are a great hinderance to true piety and tend to drive away the holy spirit. They manifestly shew that there is a want of mortification, and that a sufficient watch is not kept. If a sufficient degree of zeal prevailed we could not thus abuse our time; but these thoughts would, thro' divine help, be drove away and the heart continually

recur to the contemplation of Christ, and meditation of his sufferings.

These hinderances and many more, which might be mentioned, must sooner or later be mortified, and entirely stripped off, thro' the divine power, *Eph. iv. 12.* The reason that they still live in us, is because we do not closely enough observe and watch over the inward state of our hearts. The foundation of the heavenly life lies in retirement, silence, tranquillity and a continual attention to the voice of God speaking inwardly to our hearts.

Those who voluntarily indulge themselves in these evil dispositions, either in whole, or in part, will still remain alive, unto sin, nor will they be delivered, notwithstanding their confession of them, *Prov. xxviii. 13.* Even the good works of such people are defiled with sin; they can make no progress in the spiritual life: For the vices to which they are still attached, are like so many thick veils, black and hard, which cover the eyes of the soul, so that they know not themselves; for the light of grace cannot enlighten them, because this covering of their inward eyes and ears hinders them, so from seeing and hearing that they will excuse and even vindicate their practice, which occasions their still remaining under captivity to sin. The tye by which they are united to the light is so small, that they easily fall into great sins, and there is scarce one amongst an hundred of such persons, but are

carried away by death, before they are prepared. If we could but sensibly feel the deplorable state of such souls, who after they have been in a good degree enlightened, give way to such evil indulgences, we should very much dread the dangerous consequences of voluntarily giving way to commit even one sin. On the other hand, how happy is that soul who dies to itself; how pure, how chaste and free from sin and of all inordinate desire; how quiet and free from pain and fear; united to God in spirit here and eternally hereafter.

The sum of what has been said, is contained in two expressions, that is in *self-love* and in *the love of God*. Self-love seeks its own advantage. The love of God seeks his will and glory, and the advantage of others. So much love as a man has to God so much does he despise himself, and so much does he renounce his own will, thro' the power of God. Self-love can go so far as to cause us to despise God; and the love of God can so encrease, that we come so to hate ourselves, and our own will, that in all things we wholly renounce ourselves for the love of God:—Hence it clearly appears that *self-love* and the *love of the creatures* and of *sin*, is the spring which defileth the heart, and casts it into trouble and disorder. God give us grace, with entire sincerity, to enter into this labour, and to love him, in time, and dwell with him in an happy eternity.